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Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA

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The House met at 10 a.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): Admit strangers, please.

Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 7, second reading of Bill 58.

Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Parliamentary Secretary for Municipal Affairs and the Environment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAGG: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, that Bill 58 be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 58 entitled, An Act To Amend The Regional Service Boards Act, 2012, Bill 58, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act To Amend The Regional Service Boards Act, 2012.” (Bill 58)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Parliamentary Secretary for Municipal Affairs and the Environment.

MR. BRAGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed an honour to stand here this morning to speak on Bill 58, An Act to Amend the Regional Service Boards Act, 2012.

I guess the gist of this act is the importance of the Regional Services Boards and the ability to appoint a chairperson through the Independent Appointments Commission.

Mr. Speaker, again, I’m certainly pleased to stand today and speak to Bill 58, An Act to Amend the Regional Service Boards Act. With

this amendment, we are proposing to allow the Independent Appointments Commission to make merit-based recommendations on candidates who serve on regional service boards as chairpersons.

Mr. Speaker, that’s not taking away anything from anybody who currently serves on any of these boards. I think there are six or seven of these boards that currently circulate and work throughout this province, and this is in no way an act to basically take those people out of these positions. We look at, down the road, when the time comes for those – when their term of office is up, we will replace those people on a merit-based system through the Independent Appointments Commission.

Through this amendment, the chair appointments will be made by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council through the IAC that we enacted and we formed in government in 2016. The regional service board is what we considered a tier-one entity. To that, Mr. Speaker, it sort of raises our regional service boards to a whole new level. It brings them up to a level that we recognize their importance throughout the province. Again, we already realized their importance, but we would just like to raise their profile a little more.

We’re going to elevate the regional service boards and indicate their priority that government placed on waste management shared. They’re not just waste management, Mr. Speaker. Regional service boards could reach out and do any number of things. The waste management is one of the main ones, I think that’s been a focus of most that’s been in this province in the beginning, but we’re looking at reaching out and expanding their services. In some cases, they already have – I’ll give you an example of that later on. The Northern Peninsula has reached out and they’ve done some work with fire services. We have areas that are doing work with water treatment and waste water treatment. So the regional service boards, as it employs, will portray and cover an area of great importance in this province.

We have looked at the ongoing implementation of provincial Waste Management Strategy and in January our government initiated a complete review of this strategy and that review is

ongoing. To continue our work on improving the implementation and strengthening the waste management system across the province, we are introducing this bill to increase and enhance the regional service boards – the selection process.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we don't want to just be seen as it is taking away from the current role of the chairperson. We want the chairperson to know how much we appreciate and value the work they're doing and we're going to enhance that by raising the profile of that and it will be all done on a merit-based system.

The current government structure of the regional service boards allows for the board members to be nominated and elected through the municipal authorities in their wards. This process will not change through these amendments. Anybody who wants to serve on the regional service boards, through the ward system, they'll still be able to do the same thing.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, I should go back and explain the ward system a little more. The ward system is set up in such a way, it shows that it's equal throughout the region, the representation, because without a ward system you may have an area with a larger town, so the larger town could actually influence a board by having way more people or representation on the board. But with a ward system, you break it up into certain areas.

A ward system, I guess, Mr. Speaker, is not unlike the way we do it in the province. We have 40 districts that are spread out, based on population and geography, and the ward system for any region will be basically the same thing.

If you look at the ward system with Central waste management, one that I'm really familiar with. Central waste was set up maybe over 20 years ago, and I was a part of that in the beginning, and it was how to be fair to everyone. We took in an area – if you can visualize the map of Newfoundland, from Terra Nova Park to Buchans – then we reached north and we did out around Twillingate and Fogo Island. We took everything along the Trans-Canada on the north and the south side of the Trans-Canada, so all of Central Newfoundland. Then how would we make that fair?

When we sat in those very first meetings talking about the ward system, how could it be fair for a town like Greenspond to be able to be represented as a town like Grand Falls? When we developed the ward system, we did it in such a way that we spread it out throughout the area. The ward system for Central Newfoundland Waste Management, I know that there are some that we have combined, but there are others like, I think we have Indian Bay area, Gander Bay area, Gander, Lewisporte, Botwood has a ward system, Buchans has a ward system, Point Leamington would have a ward system.

So, you get the picture, Mr. Speaker, of what we're talking about with the wards. Each individual section of that region gets fair representation. When it comes time to go to a meeting, each ward would have one vote when they go to the meeting. Now, traditionally, the way it was done through all the wards – and in Central there are 12 wards – through those 12 people there was a chairperson selected.

The way that it's being proposed now, the chairperson – and there may still be a mechanism after this in which the board can say we recognize the member for, or the ward number 27 to be a candidate. So they could recommend their person to the IAC, which would enhance then – so you know then you have the IAC and you have the wishes of the people that serve.

Now, that wouldn't have to be always the case, but the ward could also bring in some bylaws where they could enhance someone to bring forward to the IAC. With the IAC doing the appointments commission, it takes out any chance then of anything that anybody could see as being skewed as one side or the other, because it's being done unbiased and an Independent Appointments Commission.

We feel this would be a great move for all these boards. It shows them at the tier-two level. It shows the importance to government. It shows their ability of how they're being seen throughout the province. I'm sure anyone being recognized for one of those boards and being selected through the IAC, that's sort of – I don't know if I would say put a feather in your hat, Mr. Speaker, but it sort of gives you the encouragement, and do you know what? I've

been seen by a group of unbiased people that I am the person to lead this group. So I see where we can get great leadership; again, not that we don't have great leadership there now, but it's a way to promote great leadership down the road.

So again, current chairs will serve their term on the IAC and no, they would not be replacing them until their term in office is up. Municipal councils, local service district members who are elected to the regional service boards will still be eligible to serve as chair, but it won't be the same process. It will be the process where they will apply, through the Independent Appointments Commission, to be selected.

Through that, they can have their peers in that group as a part of their reference, as a part of their résumé going up, those people can really say, you know what, I really think the member for Ward 27 is the right person for this job and here's our reasons why, but the Independent Appointments Commission would make the final in saying that.

So the provincial government places significant value on the hard work and dedication of the regional service boards. Their work has been an integral part of the implementation of the strategy over the past number of years, and the proposed amendments do not affect the current chairs, but commences when the new appointments are made for the next term.

I can't say that enough, Mr. Speaker, because I'm sort of afraid, through this bill, that people may get the illusion that every chair of every regional service board, their term will become null and void overnight. That is not the case. They will work out their term of office. Because we do not want the current board chairs to think that their job is affected, that they're sort of under the gun at any moment, that they are the people that are going to serve their term out. Now, if they choose to step down before that, that's entirely on their own; but, right now, every term of office for every board chair is pretty well designed. Everyone, by the way, if they have to follow their constitution, you would now when your term of office is up.

Our government is committed to improving the delivery of quality programs and service to all regions in the province. We are working to

achieve local government sustainability, and this includes supporting regional co-operative initiatives. We continue to work with the regional service boards and stakeholders to ensure that they are able to move forward with the work, cost efficient, transparent and sustainable. And depending on the region in question, this could include fire services, water and waste water operators, in addition to waste management services.

So we see the regional service board being able to expand their role. As I said before, I'm pretty sure there are seven in the province. I may be corrected on that, but most of these seven would be set up to cover waste management.

If you look at our province, we are looking at, on any given day, 120 to 150 boil orders. The minister has instilled in me to look at the regional concept of governing of our towns. Well, a regional service board may be able to assist us in that because there is nothing worse than going in – and most people may not look at a boil order as a bad thing, Mr. Speaker, but if a boil order can be prevented, if through some sort of regional service board we can get a reasonable operator that can go in and can eliminate even half of the boil orders in this province, what a great benefit that would be for our residents.

We need to look at the regional service boards as being able to expand their role to offer services. We have a lot of small, unincorporated areas, areas that – I don't know if I would call them cabin areas, but people who are living sort of off the grid, outside of the reaches of towns. So there are services that need to reach those people.

It's something that maybe our regional services board – and on the Northern Pen, Eastern Regional Service Board here on the Northeast Avalon, they have expanded their services to what they're looking at. We have a regional water service board, waste water, but the Northern Pen – I go back to the Northern Peninsula, they've taken on fire services.

A while ago, we met with the fire services committee and they realized their problem of attracting – their retention and recruitment of their volunteer firefighters and so they're

looking at a way to co-operate, to work with neighbouring towns, neighbouring fire departments.

What a better way than the example of the Northern Pen. They have two fire halls. They have three fire trucks. They have a fire rescue truck with the jaws of life and they have approximately 30 firefighters. They've seen the need to bring that together, to make something happen on the Northern Peninsula to give the people who live there the confidence that when a fire department is called, when there's an accident, that they know there's going to be a qualified person that's going to come forward to their area that's going to provide the first responder treatment that they need.

What a great example. Without it, on their own, maybe the fire departments would – I don't know if they would fall apart, but they wouldn't be as reliable as what they are now. So the Northern Pen encourages this regional fire department (inaudible). So they have the support of the people up there and what a great way to do things around this province.

Again, there are so many fire departments that are struggling out there and everybody expects when they call the fire department to hear *Chicago Fire* that's coming to their door, but it's your neighbour that is your volunteer firefighter. So if we could regionalize some of those services for better training, because training is also the most important thing out there for any volunteer group, so if we could get the training brought in.

So the scope and the ability of the regional service boards, to me they're sort of unlimited. You wouldn't want them to take over the control of the government, obviously, but you would certainly want them to provide the service in the region in which they're set up.

I know some of the Members opposite smile over that and said that would make our job a little easier, no doubt, but the regional service board is certainly something that our government supports. It's something that I think has a great future. Their ability to go forward and provide services in areas that would normally not see these services are very important. The appointment of their chairs, we

cannot underestimate the importance of the appointment of those chairs.

If the appointment of these chairs are done through the Independent Appointments Commission what a better way to promote their full profile. Let's say we're bringing provincial – we're bringing the whole province together. We're looking at how you guys have done, we're raising the bar to what we think that you guys are and we're raising your profile.

The chairperson who steps out and chairs the first regional service board after being appointed through the Independent Appointments Commission can honestly say I'm not there because four or five of my friends put me there, I'm there because the province and the Independent Appointments Commission put me there because I'm the person for the job. And what a better way to serve a region, to serve the people that you represent.

Mr. Speaker, on that note, I'll take my seat and I look forward to the Members opposite for their comments.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

Indeed it's a pleasure to get up here again today and represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis. As part as of the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis, we have a number of towns that are in our district that are involved in the regional service board. They have a representative on the regional service board that is a representative from all the towns. It gives municipalities a voice, it gives them a say on how waste management is done in the area and they get a voice to be able to make sure that the proper waste management is done through all the communities.

This bill today changes the process. I recognize the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels and

understand what he's saying there today, but I disagree with him wholeheartedly on what's happening here today, because this appointment of a chair is done by individual communities.

What happens in my area is communities have an opportunity to select a representative to put on the board. So each community, the towns get together and they look at the representation that's there. People put their names forward and they get an opportunity to get on that board. They're representing towns like Torbay, which is where the representative is from now today, but that town also – the representative on that board represents Flatrock, represents Bauline, represents Pouch Cove, and represents Logy Bay - Middle Cove - Outer Cove. So it's an opportunity for these towns to have a say.

Now, if that representative is one of a group of people that also – in the whole area – comes together and they look at a person they'd like to have as chair of that board. Now these are municipalities in our province that have a voice in our province, and what's done here today is we've changed their voice. We gave them no voice. So right off the bat, it's not going to be done. They're not going to have a selection. They're not going to be the people that are going to be able to select their chair, which they should be.

The hon. Member says it's going to go to the Independent Appointments Commission. Well, let me tell you, the Independent Appointments Commission is not the final say. They'll suggest somebody; they give a suggestion to Cabinet but we'll never know who Cabinet actually decides who is going to be the person that's going to be chair of this. We'll never know. It won't be the Independent Appointments Commission. They'll give a suggestion. We don't know what Cabinet will want to do.

Now you're putting it into political hands, and they have a choice. It could be a friend, it could be a former member. It could be anyone they want to have as the person to chair that. The choice that was given before as communities – municipalities in this province had a choice. They made their selection, and now it's gone to the political part.

I spoke to a member of one of the councils down my way last night, and he said this is unbelievable that government would do this. This was a great process that was in place. It gave us the opportunity to select, to have a voice in how the waste management was done in our province and government is taking it away. It's unbelievable. He said, I can't believe they're doing this and I don't understand why they're doing it.

Now I guess there is some hidden agenda here that maybe we don't see, but the chairperson is currently elected by the regional representatives, our people, councillors who are on this municipal board. They have a choice to make, and they are elected by the people in their municipalities. Then the municipalities get together; they are the ones that elect. So I don't know what's wrong with the process right now.

Then to say that, okay, it's the Independent Appointments Commission and that person can go to the Independent Appointments Commission like any other person. Sure, but at the end of the day, it's government that will decide who the chairperson is. It's not the Independent Appointments Commission, it's not at all. Sure, they can suggest somebody, they can advise – in the legislation it says they will advise Cabinet – but they don't get to select. The Cabinet will – at the end of the day, it will be done by the government party of the day to select who the chairperson for the regional service board is.

As I spoke to one of the municipal leaders last night, I agreed with what the person was telling me, that this process – he sees that there was some head-butting, he called it, with government and the service boards right now. Again, he said that municipalities across the province were in favour of the way this was done. He, especially as a leader, municipal leader – every year they get a report from the representative on that board.

So now government has their hands right in and they're going to be the people that are going to decide who the chairperson is, what the board's direction is going to be, and it's not going to be the municipalities. The way this was supposed to be set up in the first place was to let the municipalities in the province have a voice, and

he felt last night that their voices were going to be taken away by this appointments commission.

Mr. Speaker, regional service boards – and I agree with the Member, the parliamentary secretary for Municipal Affairs. I agree, they play a very important role. They play a very important role. He mentioned firefighting services, and we look in this province – and it's probably something we should be doing is regionalization with some fire services in the province. Whether that chair is appointed by government or appointed by municipalities, I think that makes a big difference, because at least it'll give municipalities a say in the way fire protection is delivered. It'll give them a say in what's being done with our fire protection, and that's what they want.

Municipalities in this province want to be heard. They want to have their voices, go to government and say: listen, these are our concerns, we have a problem. He mentioned the Northern Peninsula and different fire services that are available.

I look in my area, and right now we have two fantastic volunteer firefighting communities. Pouch Cove, which does Pouch Cove and Bauline; Torbay, which helps service Flatrock. Those services are important. Now they have agreements amongst themselves, and they back each other up. In some cases – for example, Torbay has a water truck. There are some areas in other communities where there are no hydrants, obviously, and it's important that that truck, if it's needed, gets called. They have this agreement among themselves.

So the region itself can help each other, and that's what we want to see in this. We want to see some regionalization. We don't want to see duplicating of services that are not necessary. If there's a piece of equipment that's available on the Northern Peninsula in one community and the other community, that's what the boards are there to set up.

These are elected representatives. It's better to let them make the decisions and see how things are done rather than for government, because sometimes political choices get put in the way. That's what happens when we have appointments, whether government appoints

them or municipalities. At least when the municipalities appoint, that's their choice of a person for the chair.

Mr. Speaker, again, the people who serve on these boards – and I know the Member said the same thing I'm going to say now – they put a lot of time and effort into serving on these boards and they do a great job. Most municipal leaders in this province are volunteers, and they put in a lot of time. I know being a former mayor myself of a town, and it was only a small town, but it takes a lot of time. It's a lot of stuff that'll happen in your town that are really – it's a different level than what we deal with here provincially.

Municipal politicians are different. They're your neighbours. They're the people on your side. They're people you grew up with. It's your community, and it's a whole different way to represent them. To be a volunteer – and I applaud every municipal leader in this province for doing what they do.

Then a person who volunteers to go on the regional service board, they step up to the plate, too. I know the lady that's the representative from my area, she's been a councillor now for 26 years or 27 years, I think it is, and for her to step up and work on this committee shows what she's doing for her whole area, and she represents it well.

I really don't understand why we want to do this. I think I know why we want to do this, but I don't know what the impact of the changes are going to have on the delivery of services. Because the impact of the changes will give the direction of what government wants to do with the person that they select. Now, granted, I hope that it's done through the Independent Appointments Commission, and I hope it'll be done through a person that may be selected from municipalities in the area. It could be that person, but you're taking away from the voice of communities in our province. You're taking away their selection and putting it in the hands of government, which could be political. It could be wanting to do what direction government wants to lead in rather than the direction that the municipalities want to lead to.

Again, the chairperson, whoever gets elected for the regional service board, I hope they do a fantastic job. I don't know why you want to make this change. Why does government want to get in and run these boards? I don't know. They can be advice to government but it's better left in the hands of our municipal leaders in this province that are on the ground and want to do what they want to do to represent their communities.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It's always a pleasure to speak to legislation, of course, that we pass here in the House of Assembly and it's always a great honour to represent the people of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave District. I say it's a strong district.

My perspective that I'm bringing to this – the hon. Member, my colleague, who I respect and consider a friend across the way here, just made a point about taking away the voices of people throughout the province and whatnot. Well, having said that, the perspective that I want to speak to, in this bill, is that was exactly what happened with regard to the current process that was just in place. I'm going to speak on behalf of cabin owners.

Cabin owners, of course, in my district and in the region, in particular the area of the Old Track, it's an unserviced road but they were getting charged with a \$180 hefty fee annually in an unserviced area. Some of these areas are not even accessible year-round. This is something – you want to talk about taking away voices. Well, I say to the hon. Member, Mr. Speaker, that the voices of these cabin owners were taken away. I mean, they tried to implement a one size fits all with regard to the garbage tax or the trash tax.

I also have to commend the group COATT that have come together. You want to talk about

democracy; we saw democracy exercised in its right with this group of citizens who've come together. They took the initiative. You want to talk about volunteers; they're also volunteers and they spent a lot of time coordinating meetings with government.

I also invited the chair at the time and the executive director of the Eastern Regional Service Board to my district some years ago. When I first became elected, this was an issue that was brought to my attention. I took the initiative; I got these officials out in the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave. We actually held a meeting at the Spaniard's Bay Legion and it was an opportunity where I could bring these cabin owners together face to face with these officials who make these decisions.

I'm speaking on behalf of the people I represent, but they said this is simply not fair. It's not fair to go and to implement a fee for areas – and I'm told, by cabin owners, that the service wasn't even offered in the areas. Talk about picking up garbage – well, people have been watching. People have been setting up their own cameras, their own monitoring devices. They say they simply didn't get the service, yet being charged for the service. Having to go to the Small Claims Court, Mr. Speaker, and spending money out of their own pocket. Most of these residents are already paying municipal bills, hefty municipal bills each year, of course, for the taxes and services provided by the municipalities in which we all live. We all know, of course, we have to pay these fees.

I want to commend everyone who comes forward as a municipal leader, a municipal councillor, certainly volunteer firefighters because they are relentless in what they do for our communities. So, I don't think anybody is taking away from those efforts and that dedication. I have, I would argue, the strongest volunteers in my district, in Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, among firefighters, municipal leaders there, committee leaders; you name it, run the gamut.

I just wanted to get up and say this because it's something that I've spent a lot of time on with my colleagues here in this House – certain colleagues who will also be speaking to this act – An Act to Amend the Regional Service Boards

Act, 2012, Bill 58, I think it's very important. I commend the minister for the changes that were made just recently with regard to taking away this \$180 robbery, I'll say, Mr. Speaker. I think it's robbery to be charging these cabin owners that fee and, again, not being offered the service, not being able to access these areas year-round. The Old Track is not even accessible for six months of the year. So, it's not a one size fits all. It's my understanding that service boards across the province work with their people in other parts of the province, in other regions, and I want to see that happen here.

So, as you can appreciate, my priority is the constituents I represent and I will always voice their concerns and I will do everything in fairness. Of course, no one is saying we don't want to be fair. Of course, we want to be fair. We want to exercise our democracy, but I felt it very important to get up and say that. Again, I commend the changes made. We're getting positive feedback from the districts, again, the cabin owners in the Old Track –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Some order, please.

MS. P. PARSONS: – Suttons Pond, Spread Eagle, in the neighbouring District of Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde and I look forward to this healthy debate but, again, I commend this change.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. P. PARSONS: I'm proud of what our government has done with this change.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: And again, it is an honour to represent the people of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave. Mr. Speaker, I will always get up and represent them and what's fair to them and their concerns.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to get up and speak on this piece of legislation. It's not a deep piece of legislation, but it got a lot of meaning when you're changing the process that was in place to appoint a chair. We're opening up the *Regional Service Boards Act, 2012*. Basically we're changing the policy, how you appoint a chair. Now, we're going to do it through the IAC as opposed to what was previously in place with the board. ‘

Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Cape St. Francis alluded to the communities, and he's absolutely right. But one piece that he never said was those communities are represented by elected officials. Those elected officials sit on this board. They make up the regional service board. Those elected officials are duly elected by the residents in each individual community. That's democracy. That's how democracy works. They, in turn, then sit on the board and they speak for the people they represent. No different than every Member in this House of Assembly. We're elected by the people to do the job we're elected to do. They're elected by individual communities and one of their roles is to sit on the regional service board.

In 2017, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador opposed the former minister's request to have the IAC appoint a chair. There was a lot of pushback at MNL and they backed away from it. The board – which they had the authority to do and elected by the people – appointed the chair; and that is a true form of democracy.

Now, in the last number of years – most of us here on the Avalon Peninsula, we have cabin owners. As recently as 8:30 this morning, I was having conversations and I understand their argument. I don't get on the public sites and play politics with it, I just speak to them individually and I get emails and phone calls and meetings and what have you, because I feel that's the best way of dealing with it. It's a dicey issue, Mr. Speaker, but it's not one that I don't think anyone here has shied away from is how you

handle it. You deal with your constituents as need be.

What you can't help but notice and feel with this here is this is being driven by a group and the government is playing politics with this. There is nothing more certain in my mind that the government is playing politics with changing this legislation, because the system that was there worked. People may not have liked the chair, and that's not getting into the issue, that's outgoing, that's ongoing, the trash tax issue, I'm not talking about that issue. I'm talking about the process.

This person was duly appointed by duly-elected people. You have an opportunity, if you have a problem, deal with the board on it. I've spoke to the board many times. I've gone directly to the board. I've spoken to elected members who sit on that board and I've expressed my concerns with this overall trash tax. I didn't get on COATT and do it. I went to the board members. I went to the people working there. I've had debates with all those people and they've been colourful, some have been argumentative, but that's what I'm elected to do. That's what democracy is about. That's what these people are put there for.

Now, we're going to change it. We don't like the outcomes. We don't like how this is done. We're going to control this. Isn't that what we were told we were getting away from? Isn't that what this government came in on? They were getting away from doing that sort of thing. Is that what they campaigned on? Really, it is truly what they campaigned on? They were removing all that stuff. Now they're gone backwards, but they're going to do it under the guys at IAC.

Now, we all know, we've heard it now for going on four years what the IAC does. Fair enough, and no disrespect to the members who sit on the IAC; it's the process, Mr. Speaker. We know that they don't have to accept what comes up. The final decision is made by Cabinet, and we know how that works. The names come up. We don't like them. We like this person. End of story. Done.

We'll never know, we don't know who came up. We don't know who was sent back. We don't know that, but it was picked by the IAC, but, in

essence, it can be picked by Cabinet. So, then you can control over this board.

I'm not opposed to government having some control over boards that make decisions that affect the residents of the province. There's a part of me feels that government needs to have some sort of leverage there, should things go off the rails. That's what this place is for. It's the Legislature. You come in, you change legislation if you feel stuff is not working, but what you're doing here is, you're not changing the legislation to make it a better system, you're changing the legislation so you can put your person in charge to make decisions that you want them to make.

Control is what it is, Mr. Speaker. It's control. It's not fixing a problem, it's controlling the outcomes, because regardless of personalities, and park all of that at the door and park this issue of the trash tax at the door, too, that's decided by this board that's made up of duly-elected members who, up until after this legislation goes through, appointed the chair.

That process, I think, was a fair process. If you didn't like the chair, that's something that we have no control over. That's something that's picked by this board and if they didn't like the process or didn't like how the chair operated, they got a place to do that. Right now, you're dealing with a situation where, you haven't liked what's happening, you haven't liked the response you're getting, therefore, you're going to take it upon yourself, you're going to bring power and control and you're going to bring in a new chair.

So fast-forward now. We get this legislation through, government appoints the chair of their choice and they bring in a policy that's not sitting well with the cabin owners, that's not sitting well with a lot of residents. How are they dealing with it then? Because that's the goal.

You're in an election year, quiet the masses, please everybody. That's what's happening here, and anyone to think any other got their head in the sand because that's the reality. I'm not out against any one group in particular, I support all their causes. I agree, cabin owners make some valid points. They do.

There's another side of that argument too. There are people who live there year-round. They're quieter, they have concerns. I feel we have to try to find a compromise in this review that's going to take until after the election to complete, and we don't know what the costs will come in on that review. When that's done, I guess we'll answers, but that's going to be after the election.

On another point, Mr. Speaker, we heard last week who is doing the review. It's not going to be cheap work, but we're looking forward to the outcomes, but it's going to happen after the election. So, after the election the review comes back and you say: This process that was in place was a fair process, we're going back to that policy.

I spoke to a constituent of mine this morning and I told him, I'm not afraid to tell them the truth sometimes, unlike some people on the government side.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: I don't mind telling my constituents the truth, Mr. Speaker. I wish Members on the other side would be upfront with their (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: I don't tell them what they want to hear, Mr. Speaker, I tell them what I truly believe.

Now, I can play politics and say, oh, you're right, you're right, you're right, but I don't, but I do agree with both sides. I see the merits on both sides of the argument. You have to do it efficiently. It has to be cost effective. It has to make sense, Mr. Speaker. You have to look after everyone's interest.

Not the group that's really outspoken – and credit to them, hats off to them, they've made their stake. SOPAC did the same thing on the moose licence stuff. They're lobbyist groups, they deserve to be acknowledged for what they've done. They've made a great point,

they've rallied together. I know a lot of these COATT members, I know a lot of these people individually. Hats off to them, I'm not knocking them, but you have to make decisions that make sense, Mr. Speaker. You have to make decisions that make sense, not just to please a certain group. Make a decision that makes sense for all.

You got livyers, you got cabin owners and you got seasonal. You got all a mixed bag. There are some people who want user-pay, there are some people who don't mind paying the full amount and they all want different things.

We have a review that's happening, maybe they'll come back and it'll appease all groups. I hope they do, I really do, because I believe there are valid arguments on all sides.

To be getting into doing this now and changing your chair. For what? Because there's an election, the clock is ticking toward an election. Get this done, get it in the bag, we have them all pleased. After the election is over, next year they'll come back and say: Everything is fine the way it was, everything is fine, we're going back to what we had. So you have four years to let them appease themselves again.

I'm not so certain that's not what's going to happen. No one is telling me any other. This is buying time to get you past the election, because I know, when I knocked on doors – and Members opposite probably did too because I know they were having meetings, it was on their Facebook. They're having meetings with the cabin owners and the board over the cabin trash tax issue.

My colleague from Topsail - Paradise, when we knocked on doors in his district, we heard a lot of people were very fed up and frustrated with this trash tax, the lack of action government was taking. They were frustrated with how they were being treated.

We knocked on doors and I listened to them, I heard what they said. I didn't disagree with one word they said because everyone has a right to express their views. If they don't agree with something, that's their prerogative. They go to the ballot box and mark an X, but government then was feeling the pressure; they were feeling the pinch. They were having meetings. There

were messages coming out from ministers, we're changing it. Stay tuned we're making adjustments to it in the dying days of the election.

Is that not political, Mr. Speaker? Is that as raw a politics you're going to get? Now, they're changing the chair. They don't want this chair anymore. He resigned yesterday but this process was in place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: We're going to bring the hammer down now, we're going to put the person –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: – in who we want to make decisions.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the Members, we have somebody speaking.

MR. PETTEN: That's the issue we're talking about, Mr. Speaker. This is a minor – this is not a big piece of legislation. You're making a change but the change you're making is sending the wrong message. When you're sending the wrong message, you're sending the wrong message because the people who sit on this board are elected by individual communities throughout this province.

On the Eastern Regional Service Board – I live in CBS, members of my town council do, my colleagues from Paradise, St. John's, Torbay, they all sit on these boards. They were elected by us to represent, and the cabin owners, the livyers and the residents of all these communities, to represent them, not only for trash tax issues, for all of their regional service issues. Robin Hood Bay, obviously, is ran by them. They can make all these decisions.

My question to the government opposite: Who is running the regional service board? Truly, who is running it? They want to run it, obviously.

They didn't like the outcomes. I didn't like the outcomes. Did I ever think for a second we need to go in and trash the chair and change the policy how we pick a chair?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: No. Do I like what government does everyday? No. Did I like what government did when it was my party who was in power? No. But that's democracy, Mr. Speaker. That is democracy and that's telling the honest truth. That's being honest with people.

I've never once shied away from the fact, if I didn't like something, I don't like it. I don't sugar coat stuff, Mr. Speaker. I'm as straight a shooter as you're going to get. If I don't agree with something, I don't agree with it. Ask my colleagues, they'll tell you. The truest words ever said. I'm not argumentative but I don't mind saying: I don't agree with this, the way I see it. Sorry, I respect your opinion, that's my opinion.

I'm the same way with my constituents and I think they respect that too, but when I see stuff like this, I'll be honest, Mr. Speaker, it kind of galls me because that's not the way the system should be. That's not the way the system should be.

They were going around, they were chasing themselves the last two years. They were meeting with the cabin owners. They were going away, they were coming back. They were in this group, they were all over God's creation, until finally a decision came down.

I spoke to a person who sits on a board – an elected member who sits on that board, and they're very frustrated. They are upset. They feel government has drove the bus clearly over them. That was the words that was used by a member who sits on this board. A duly elected member, by the way, Mr. Speaker.

They feel that government – that was their words not mine, the government drove the bus over them. I challenge Members opposite to tell me if they were in that same boat, they wouldn't feel that way. When it was told me I said, I agree with you; I hear you. I'd feel that way, too. It's a

total lack of respect for the board members that sit there, Mr. Speaker.

Again, separating ourselves from the issue that's out there on a day-to-day basis, the issue of cabin owners, we all get that. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about the process and the respect that's being shown by government to this elected board that sit there and govern this regional service board. There's zero respect, Mr. Speaker.

Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador strongly opposed government interfering with the IAC. In 2017, government then backed away, but the heat has cranked up in the last two years, now they're stepping in. No consultation with the board. The board was not told; all of a sudden this legislation is coming down the chute.

The letter came out, a board member – I think I shared it with one of the board members, a letter from the minister about the changes that were coming. Is that respect? Is that how you treat your board members that are elected by the residents in each municipality? That's democracy, Mr. Speaker. Is that respect? No. They are there because of democracy, but they're not being treated with respect by this government that was duly elected. So where do we go? What's all this about? What's the end result?

The end result is you're putting someone there that will make decisions you want them to make, because your clock is ticking towards an election. We're going to get a review that's going to come out next year and I won't be surprised when that review comes out next year we're not going to hear that this existing system may need a little bit of tinkering, but it may very well have to go back to what it was – because there's a cost, Mr. Speaker. I've been told that when I inquired on behalf of constituents of mine. There's a cost. There are dumping fees. There's a spread-out cost to all residents.

If you cut back the revenue coming out of cabin owners, you're going to increase the revenue on residents in each municipality. So you're going to appease one group and you're going to make another group angry. That's when I say you have to make a decision that's going to be fair to all

groups. It's hard to do sometimes in government or any board or any organization, is trying – you have to be fair, though, Mr. Speaker. You have to be as fair and as open as possible. What I'm seeing now, I don't know if it's fair. I don't know what it's going to be. It's all up in the air.

We have this review that's ongoing, that's going to take, again, until after the election. We don't know where we are. I've talked to all parties involved and I tell you, they may be appeasing a certain group, and good for them if they're appeasing that group, but playing politics and showing lack of respect to elected members really, really frustrates me, and I think it should frustrate every person in this province because that's not where we are.

That's not what this government got elected on. They got elected on openness and transparency, taking the patriotism out of politics. You name it, they did it all, but actions have to meet the words. Action need to meet the words, Mr. Speaker, and they're empty. These promises have been empty. We all seen it.

Go out and talk to the people on the street. I don't have to repeat myself here, I've said it many times. They need to come out of this bubble and go out on the street and listen to the people. I'll tell you, if they go out and listen to the people, outside a certain group here or there that they feel is pressuring them, if they go out and talk to the public as a whole, they'll hear it loud and clear. They want government to govern, not to be interfering, not to be playing politics every time you look, and we have one after another. We can list off examples here.

I can go on forever more, Mr. Speaker, but I'm not going to belabour that anymore today. I just have to say, this here is raw politics and it's not right. You need to leave it to the elected members that me and you and everyone in this House elected to represent them in their regions and let them do the job they were put there to do and stay out of this.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I wasn't going to stand today and speak to this, but hearing Members on the other side, the hypocrisy of what I've heard. I want to give a little bit of a history lesson and then I'm going to talk a little bit about the IAC.

The history lesson, Mr. Speaker, is that prior to June of 2015, in the dying days of the PC administration, every single member of every single regional service board was appointed by the minister – appointed by the minister, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that was up to June of 2015. Every single member was appointed by the minister – every single member of every single regional service board, and they want to talk about politics.

Well, let's have another look at history, Mr. Speaker, because everybody from the head of the NLC was a political appointment. The head of Nalcor was a political appointment. The head of Central Health was a political appointment. The Privacy Commissioner, Mr. Speaker, think about that for a moment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. OSBORNE: The Privacy Commissioner was a political appointment. The NLC was a political appointment. Unless you consider that if you run for the leadership of that party and get appointed to the NLC, that's not political. I beg to differ.

The deputy ministers could leave, run political campaigns, get appointed as deputy minister again, leave, run a political campaign and get appointed as the deputy minister again. So if we want to talk about politics, Mr. Speaker, let's get down to the nitty-gritty of who practised political patronage in this province, because the people who perfected it was the PC Party.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. OSBORNE: The PC Party –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. OSBORNE: – practised political patronage.

Now, I want to talk about the IAC, because the absolute insult to the members of the IAC, Mr. Speaker, the absolute insult to the members of the IAC –and if we want to have heckling, I'll respond to each and every heckle.

The Member for Mount Pearl North, Mr. Speaker, blurted out a name. Well, let me tell you something, Len Simms, was that not a political appointment? Ross Reid, was that not a political appointment? Ed Martin, was that not a political appointment? Steve Winter, was that not a political appointment? The list goes on and on and on. The privileges to having a membership in the club known as the friends and family of the PC Party were well known in this province, very well known.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a bit about the insult that Members opposite made when they said there's a hidden agenda, this is very political. I challenge them to call any of the members of the IAC. They said the IAC can recommend people, but we don't know for sure if that's who government are choosing. What an insult to the IAC, because I would suspect that they would resign en masse if we were practising the politics that the party opposite practised and they accuse us of practising. The IAC would resign en masse.

To question the integrity of people like Clyde Wells and Shannie Duff and Zita Cobb and Philip Earle, Derek Young, and the new members, Earl Ludlow and Cathy Duke. I don't think any of those would put up with what they're accusing or suggesting or the innuendo that they suggest opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think the integrity of those people would allow them to continue to sit on a board if they were making recommendations and we were throwing it out the window and appointing whoever we wanted out of political patronage. We've had over 200 appointments in this province through a merit-based, independent process.

If you want to look at back in 2015, 2014, 2013, Mr. Speaker, the three years that we've had over 200 appointments made through a merit-based process in this province, each and every one of those tier-one and tier-two appointments would be done on a political basis and they have the absolute gall to question the integrity of the members of the IAC to suggest that they would put up with us appointing those 200-and-something people through a political process.

That process was put in place, Mr. Speaker, to clean up what was happening where, if you're a relative of one of the ministers you'd be appointed to a very high position or a friend or a party worker. That's not the way it works today. That is not the way it works today, Mr. Speaker.

Of those 200-and-something appointments, Mr. Speaker, that were not political, they were merit based and based on qualifications, through the IAC, through the tier-one and tier-two process, Mr. Speaker. The best people for those jobs were the ones that were recommended and they were the ones that were appointed. That's what's happening today.

Mr. Speaker, I would say, to question the integrity of the members of the IAC, in and of itself, is despicable, deplorable, political, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that that's the case, but the reality here, Mr. Speaker, is that there's no hidden agenda. The chair of the board will be appointed through the IAC. Through a very independent process, Mr. Speaker, they will choose the best people in the province to be chairs of these boards. Not the people who were serving on the boards selected by the minister in 2015 and prior but through an independent appointments process we will choose the best people for these positions, Mr. Speaker, the best people in the province.

People who are elected to municipal council can still apply for this Independent Appointments Commission process. People who are not elected to council but have a vast knowledge and background in waste management and regional services, can apply through the Independent Appointments Commission process. The Independent Appointments Commission, the people that I will say have a great deal of integrity, will determine who the best person to chair that board is. The remainder of the board

members, Mr. Speaker, are still elected and will still go through that normal process, but the chair, the person who guides this board or any of the boards throughout the province, will be selected based on qualifications, on experience and what they can bring to the table. Members of municipal councils can still apply, and that is the reality here.

So let's not just throw something at the wall and hope it sticks, because that is something they are very good at on the other side. We have the cleanest, most independent process in this province that we have ever, ever seen. So, there's nothing here, as the Members opposite will suggest, a hidden agenda, or political, or you never know if they're appointing the people that are recommended by the IAC or not. I challenge each and every Member opposite to contact the members of the IAC and ask if the people that are being recommended by them are the people that are being appointed, because the answer is yes.

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'm glad to speak today to Bill 58, an amendment to the Regional Service Boards Act.

Initially, when I looked at this act, I saw it as a simple amendment and thought, well, there's not going to be anything to this, but then when I sat and read it carefully and thought about the implications of this amendment, it became something that was important and serious, and I think the discussion that has been happening here in the past hour is indicating that.

I don't want to get into saying what government's motive is. They can figure that one out themselves and people can figure it out as well. I don't want to get into laying blame on either one of the parties in this House who've been in government. I don't want to get into

supposing what this is about. I want to speak to an overall major issue that has been alluded to by my colleagues in the Official Opposition, but I want to do it more specifically and speak intensely to it. It has nothing to do with the IAC or people on the IAC. I'm very disappointed to see the Member for Waterford Valley concentrating on the personalities of people on the IAC because that's not what this is about at all.

What really concerns me is that we are losing something that's really important to the democratic process and that has been alluded to, I think, by the Member for Cape St. Francis in talking with councillors in his area.

Government is deliberately stepping over the role of the elected representatives on the regional service board. These are people who come from the municipalities, as has been pointed out. This is a government that has said that they are interested in – and the regional services board show it – regional government. There was a point at which they were talking about regional government. Regional service boards are a way of municipalities sharing services, which is a level of regional government without forming another layer of government. The regional sharing of services is so important as we move forward in this province.

I don't want to concentrate on the waste management issue. I think that is a major bone of contention that has moved what's happened here, but I don't want to concentrate on that because the role of the regional service board is much more than waste management. The role of the boards have to do, yes, with waste management. They also have to do with offering policing services, ambulance services and animal control services. They also have power with regard to public transportation. They have powers and responsibilities with regard to offering regional recreational services and fire services.

The role of the regional service board is immense and it is a board of municipalities. That's what this government seems to be forgetting. It's not just any committee. It's a board of municipalities who are joining together on decision making for the region when it comes to very particular services. That's part of our

democratic process. It's part of our political process here in this province. This is what this government is denying by saying they are going to have the chairperson not chosen by the people who make up these boards, who are elected from their communities, that it's going to go through a provincial process. I'm not talking about the provincial process. The provincial process has been working fine where it should be working. I haven't had complaints to date, but that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about the democratic system in our province that says the regional services board, which is a board of municipalities, has its own powers.

I don't see it. I'm sure government is going to mock this one, but I don't see this to be any different than government saying that they can appoint the chair of the committee of a council or of the city. Imagine if they said we're going to make change to the *City of St. John's Act* and the change said that they would have power over who was going to run committees within the council of St. John's. It's no different.

This committee, the regional service boards, are elected people from their councils and have to have the same respect from this government as they do within their own individual councils. When they are sitting on this board, they are representing their councils. They are representing the people who elected them and they have the same responsibilities on this board as they have inside of their own individual councils.

Now, this is the issue for me. So there's no way that I can vote for this. The more I studied it, the more I thought about it, I said this is absolutely ridiculous, taking away the power from the people who are elected in the regions. As I just said, I'm sure they'd like to laugh at me when I just made the example that I did, but it's true; that is the parallel. It's no different saying that government is going to take control over the chairing of a regional services board than to say government would want to go in and take control over the chair of a committee inside of a council. It's exactly the same thing.

If this government thinks that the sharing of services regionally or looking at different ways in which that we can operate regionally to maximize who we are in this province for the

good of the people, if they think that's a way in which to go, then this government has to trust the people who are elected in their communities to do that. That's what they're not doing with this. They're not trusting the regional services board to have the knowledge and the will to have good people as the chair of the board.

They're not trusting the voice of the people in the districts. That's the part that's very, very disturbing: the lack of trust of the judgment of the people in the communities who elect their municipalities, and then those people who sit from their municipalities on their board, they're not trusting them. They're not trusting the process.

I'm shocked. The more I thought about it and the more I really looked at the issue, I realized that's what's here. They're not trusting. They're not trusting the process. You just can't turn around because of some incident or some individual and make a change like this to our democratic process because you feel you may have lost control over something. Well, you know what? That's democracy. When people vote, it's the voice of the people that counts.

We all know that. We're all here because people voted us to be here. We might have different views about who we'd like to see to be the government – I'm sure we do. Each party has its own view on that. We may have different views on that, but ultimately we all say the people's voice rules, the people know best. They're the ones who've made the decision, and that's the way it is on the municipal level as well.

We have our municipalities. We do a Municipalities Act. We do have regulations that are in place that make for accountability from municipalities. They're not just out there running roughshod over people. They also have a complete electoral system that's under our regulation, provincial regulations. So when they speak through the people they elect, the province then has to trust the voice of the people. They have to, and what they're doing here – I'm not against the IAC and the IAC process. I voted for that process when we discussed it here in this House, and I thought it was a good step towards removing political interference from appointments where those appointments should be made.

So, I'm not talking about that process. I'm saying this process shouldn't come under it. The choice of the chairs of the regional service boards should not come under the IAC. It doesn't belong there because government doesn't belong in telling the people from the municipalities how to run their municipalities. If people vote the people they do vote, then we have to honour that vote. So this is a lack of respect for the people from the municipalities who are sitting on the regional boards, it's a lack of respect for the municipalities themselves, and it's a lack of respect for the voters who put those people in their municipalities and put them on the board.

So it's for that reason, Mr. Speaker, and no reason other than that – I have no reason for getting involved in the waste management debacle that's been talked about. I have no reason for getting involved and talking about the IAC. I have no reasons for getting involved and even talking about the cabin owners issue because I think I may have gotten one message from a constituent in my district about that.

None of that is what I'm concerned about. What I'm concerned about is the flying in the face of our democratic process and the lack of respect for municipal elections and the role of municipalities.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly a delight to stand, any chance I get to represent the good people of Placentia West - Bellevue. It's been a fascinating conversation. I say to my hon. colleague from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, I think you missed the mark on some of your comments and certainly if you're comparing regional management boards to, as an example, the special events committee of the Town of Marystown, I'll use as an example, that organizes the Shining Seas Festival and participates in the Relay for Life, I'm not quite certain that it's the same parallel as compared to a waste management board which provides an

essential municipal service to the people of the Burin Peninsula, Mr. Speaker.

So I think it really shows that sometimes Members can be out of touch with what's happening in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I would encourage all Members to verse themselves in what's happening on the ground in all parts of the province, not just in St. John's, Mr. Speaker.

Just a few weeks ago we were in Gander, myself and the Minister Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, and it was so good to see city councillors there, the deputy mayor, Ms. O'Leary was there and Councillor Debbie Hanlon was there taking the time to meet with tourism operators and ensure that they're getting the rural perspective, Mr. Speaker. That was very good coming from two very strong female leaders in the City of St. John's and I certainly applaud them for attending that conference. I would encourage all Members of the Legislature to verse themselves on these issues.

I will say that I do believe that Member was not really making good comparisons with respect to the regional service board and committees of cities or towns. I also found it interesting, Mr. Speaker, from my colleague from Conception Bay South, speaking of truths. I'm wondering where the ferry is that went to Romania that could've and should've been built in Marystown would fall into the truths. I'm wondering about things like Humber Valley Paving, Mr. Speaker, where that would fall into the truths.

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the hon. Member to be relevant, please.

MR. BROWNE: This is all very relevant, Mr. Speaker, to regional waste management.

As we talk about political appointments and we talk about appointments being done, Steve Kent, the outgoing deputy premier, in September of 2015, appointed 44 people – 44 people – on his way out the door. That's your record on political appointments I say to the Member opposite: Steve Kent, the former deputy premier, appointed 44 people in September of 2015, ministerial appointments –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BROWNE: – on the eve of an election. Not letting the people of the province have the opportunity to elect their own government and make appointments subsequent to it, Mr. Speaker, they appointed their friends on their way out. That's about speaking truths. Only when it's convenient, I say to the Members of the Official Opposition.

This afternoon, Mr. Speaker, we'll be talking about rate mitigation and I can't wait for that debate, but we're still waiting to see if Members opposite think Muskrat Falls is a mistake. We still haven't heard that, but I digress.

The waste management system on the Burin Peninsula has been one that I feel has been very successful. The Member for Burin - Grand Bank, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, and I, we've spent several meetings meeting with the waste management board. It's a beautiful, beautiful place they have built just down from Jean de Bay on the Burin Peninsula Highway. They have a very competent executive director, Mr. Joseph Pittman, working out of that facility, with a staff that provide a good professional service.

The chair of the board actually is someone who I think is a good friend of mine, but was appointed by my predecessor who I also think is a good friend of mine, Clyde Jackman. Mr. Harold Murphy is the chair of the board and was appointed by the former administration while the former MHA was a sitting minister of Cabinet. He's done marvellous work in my opinion. He's a steady hand at the wheel for waste management.

Mr. Murphy is a good steward of waste management on the Burin Peninsula; in fact, I would call him an advocate of a strong waste management system – one that can stay local and keep costs down for both residential and commercial waste management.

I've certainly reached out to Mr. Murphy and assured him that there are no plans to do anything with him and his position because he's doing a great job, and that's not what this is about. This is about in the future when there are

vacancies, Mr. Speaker. This is not about changing people who are already there.

The Burin Peninsula waste management board has been doing a good job at managing the costs to the residents. Nothing is ever perfect, Mr. Speaker, but I believe that they're on the right path. I think, as time goes, on we'll have some news to share with respect to waste management and what they're doing on the Burin Peninsula. I think the residents of the Burin Peninsula in both of our districts, Mr. Speaker, would say that it is a good system that we have now.

There is quite a bit of angst amongst the board of waste management, amongst the residents of the Burin Peninsula about following through with this PC plan of two dumps in the province, Mr. Speaker. Imagine when we talk about the effects of the environment – and we know that Members opposite haven't really made their position clear on whether climate change is happening, Mr. Speaker. They're big supporters of Andrew Scheer who is a known climate-change denier, and you have to wonder about the plan to have trucks leaving Fortune, Point May, Lawn, Marystown, Rushoon and Terrenceville and trucking in over the road to Robin Hood Bay.

I don't know where the voices opposite were when this plan was being devised. There is so much consternation over a simple appointment issue, but there seemed to be no consternation over the costs that was going to be passed on to the people of the Burin Peninsula, to the people of the Bonavista Peninsula, to the people of the Northern Peninsula because of this gamut into waste management, Mr. Speaker.

I would have to ask: Who benefited from this, Mr. Speaker? Who was supposed to benefit? Not the people, I say, Mr. Speaker, because costs kept increasing. And, thankfully, under the leadership of Harold Murphy and board of waste management on the Burin Peninsula, they've been able to keep it local, keeping those costs down. That's why we are so supportive of their approach. As I mentioned, this was someone that was appointed by the former administration and he's going a great job, and I support the work that they're doing.

So I think it's very important, as we progress through this debate, to take out the rhetoric of the Opposition, take out the fear and the doom and the gloom from over there, Mr. Speaker, and we look at the facts. The Burin Peninsula Waste Management, in my opinion, they're doing a good job. They're doing a solid job for the people that they serve. They are keeping costs down, when possible, Mr. Speaker. They're a professional, efficiently run organization and I fully support it.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank all my colleagues for their contributions to this debate and I look forward to continuing to hear from more of my colleagues on this matter. But suffice it to say, the municipal level of government and the regional service boards, it's kind of one of the toughest areas in terms of serving the public, because it is at that local level. It's waste collection, and it's sometimes difficult. These people do a great service to their communities by stepping forward to be a part of these communities, to be a part of this decision making and their goal is to provide a good service to the people that they serve and represent. So, I certainly commend them on that work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

MR. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Member for CBS here alluded to during my recent election campaign going around Topsail - Paradise District, the issue around the garbage and trash tax was evident at the doors, there's no doubt about it. No solutions; there's lots of opinions on it. We had lots of discussion around what's done differently in other parts of the province in terms of seasonal rates and so on.

Each of these is run by boards, as we know. As has been discussed very much today, we talk about democracy. We talk about trying to get more volunteers out in terms of participating on boards. So, when they are good enough to sit on

a board, and they've been elected by their constituents in their area, I would suspect that they're good enough to be the chair of the board. That's their expertise. If we continue to step in and run the boards, as the Member for Waterford Valley said, to guide the board, to run the board, in my mind, it's a shot at the integrity of the people who are elected.

Nobody on this side of the House had talked about the IAC, the integrity of the individuals in this discussion. What they've talked about is the IAC is there, puts recommendations in and essentially Cabinet makes a decision. There was no discussion, there was no mention of the people on the boards not having the integrity or the ability to carry out what their doing. But what we're doing here, in essence, is saying those elected officials out there cannot chair a board. So, that's a shot at integrity there.

Every region out there, as we know right now, has different ways in which their trash taxes, we'll call it, is applied. As I said, there are seasonal rates in some place; others are doing everyone pays. So, it's not an easy solution. I understand that, but I think to get up here – and I'm learning how to stay relevant to the issue because I understand it's a skill to get up and talk for 20 minutes and really say nothing, but I'll get there I'm sure as I go on.

You know, in terms of this, this is an important issue for people out there. It's something that needs to be looked at in a manner that keeps everyone involved.

I think the easy solution, as the minister responsible noted, and it's been on social media, is to go out and say, okay, we give you everything. That's essentially what people are saying on social media. Oh, we got it all; we got it now. We just got to change the legislation to take out user fee or put in user fee. That's in social media.

I think the public out there, they're not naive. I think the public out there understand what's happening. I don't think we need to get up here and tell them what's happening, I think they know what's happening when it comes to these changes and comes to government appointing a chair.

I think it's a shot at their integrity, the people that serve out there, if it's a shot at all because there are people that are duly elected by their representatives in their regions, in their towns and they know what's happening in their town. They know how to make decisions. They don't need a government-appointed chair to show them how to guide through this issue. They don't need that. They're running their councils on a regular basis.

This is an important issue and it's not an easy road, there's no doubt about it, but we don't need to be going like 1984 and Big Brother watching everything that's happening out there. They have an opportunity, our province runs on volunteers, people step forward because they have an interest.

If they're going to step forward and then have someone else step in and say: Thanks for you help but this guy is going to run the show. I don't think that's right. I don't think that's right.

All the conversations I've had with people on this garbage, trash tax they all have different opinions, they all have good points. I think we need to leave it in their hands and let them make the decisions and bring them forward for the decisions.

Again, I go back to the people, I think it's an insult to them to think that they cannot do this and cannot have a chairperson that runs a committee. I think it's an insult to them because there's a lot of knowledgeable people out there who have given us some good feedback on this issue.

My concern here is, I haven't seen a reason why, I don't know what's wrong with the system. I haven't heard an issue across that tells me, okay, this is why we're changing it because this is falling apart; I haven't heard that. I haven't heard any good reason why we should be stepping in and appointing chairs.

Again, I know it goes through a committee, but, at the end of the day, we're putting someone in there that's being appointed as opposed to judging, taking the judgment of the people in the region and saying you know your region, you know your people, put in the person that you

think can run and guide this process because, again, every region is different.

I thank you for the process. I know the Member opposite talked about this being the cleanest process ever. I don't know, I haven't been around long enough, so that's left to be seen, but I think we cannot be taking this out of the hands of the people that are dealing with this issue on a daily basis in the regions.

Thank you so much.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly glad to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 58. Before I start with my commentary, I do want to correct the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue. When he was speaking he was talking about the PC plan, the PC-to-dump plan, or whatever it was he referred to it as.

Just for the record, to be clear, and I'm not defending any party, it doesn't matter to me one way or the other, really, but I will say that this whole initiative for the regional waste strategy and so on, actually started during the Tobin administration, if I'm not mistaken, and it was actually the late Judge Lloyd Wicks who was the chair of the committee appointed by the Liberal government at the time, that came up with this strategy.

I'm sure Members might recall, at one point in time, they were going to put the regional waste site at Dog Hill. Of course, then, the City of St. John's, under former Mayor Andy Wells, they lobbied hard against it and it ended up going to Robin Hood Bay, they put a new liner in and so on.

So, in terms of the history, that's where it started. Like I said, it doesn't matter to me, but if we're going to start spouting things out, we should try to be accurate.

The other point that he did make is he said that this is not about removing anybody. The Member said this is not about removing a chair. This is about the future, is what he said, this is about future chairs.

I will point out in the explanatory notes, and there are three bullet points, if you look at the third bullet point, it does say: "allow the Lieutenant-Governor in Council" – being the minister – "to dismiss a chairperson of a regional service board."

So, this is not just about setting up a process for the future for a new chair of a board, or to set terms, it is also giving the minister the ability to dismiss the chair of a regional service board. So the minute this is passed, the minister could dismiss anyone who's there that he doesn't like for whatever reason.

Now, in the case of the Eastern Waste Management board, this has been pre-empted because the chair has resigned, so that will no longer be necessary, but I suspect, I got a feeling he might've known this was coming. I got a feeling he did. Had he not resigned, I suspect that once this was passed and received third reading tomorrow, I'm guessing that the minister would have said to the Clerk of the House, I want you to make a trip down to Government House and get his acclaimed immediately, and I'd say the letter was already written to the former chair of the Eastern Waste Management ready to send. That would be my guess. That would be my guess.

Anyway, I would say, Mr. Speaker, it's important to point out these facts. Now, I'm not going to get into a big debate over COATT and the trash tax and so on. I would say that I have several constituents who own cabins and over the last three or four years, I'm sure like a lot of Members, I received a number of calls from people in my district and other districts in the neighbouring area, Mount Peal North comes to mind in particular as well, of people who had concerns over the trash tax.

Of course, it was kind of staggered because what would happen was it wasn't all implemented at once because it took time to set up the regions and the garbage collection and to find out who own the cabins and so on. In year one, I might have been getting a bunch of calls from Deer Park and then the next year I started getting them from people up at Horse Chops somewhere. The next year I might have gotten them from the La Manche area or whatever, as

they started implementing the tax in those areas you would start getting calls.

I absolutely got calls from people and I would say to you that I had, I can't tell you the number of conversations I had with Mr. Kelly and with Mr. Grant at the board about these matters. I think the Member for Conception Bay South said we had some good conversations. We had some good discussions, we had some heated discussions. We had our disagreements on stuff.

I can understand both sides of the issue, I really can. I had said at the time that I personally felt that at the very least we should be, for cabins, looking at a seasonal rate. I would have said we should have been looking at a seasonal rate; it would have been fair. That would have been perhaps fair.

I would have said at the time that, absolutely, and I had those conversations that you can't go charging people to pick up garbage if you're not picking up the garbage. That made no sense and, at the very least, I had suggested maybe there should be a large type sanicare bin or something at the end of the road where everybody can, when they're leaving on a Sunday, they could put their garbage in it and go on, whatever the case might be, that you can't charge people for a service you're not receiving. I absolutely disagree fundamentally with that, but I would also say there are still challenges. I understand the challenges they have, because even with what's being proposed and suggested now, there are going to be challenges.

You take Horse Chops – I'll just use Horse Chops as an example. The Horse Chops Road is a serviced road but there are a number of side roads off Horse Chops Road. So if we're going to do what's being suggested now, the people on the main road going into Horse Chops are going to have to pay, but if you have a cabin on a little side road here and there, they won't have to pay. So you have people – they both have cabins. They're both in the same area. They're both only up there for a couple of months of the year and so on, and one has to pay and one doesn't have to pay.

I think government may not realize that this is going to be a very, very tangly issue to deal with. I really believe this is going to be tangly to

deal with; but, be that as it may, the decision was made by the minister and the directive given to the Eastern Regional Service Board on that matter, and we'll see how it all pans out.

I'm glad for the people. I'm glad for the people of COATT and so on that had that issue, had those concerns, and they got together and they lobbied. For a lot of them they're going to be happy, I know they are.

From my perspective, when this legislation was passed originally, if we go back in time, I'm not aware of it ever really being the intent to charge cabin owners, to be honest with you. That doesn't seem – I don't recall that being the focus. It was more about unincorporated areas and having a regional system that everyone had to pay in to; but, at the end of the day, the cabins got thrown into it, and I understand why people are not happy.

Like I said, at the very least, I think, a seasonal rate – and, by the way, when this new review is done, I suspect you may see recommendations to look at seasonal rates or something. Perhaps that may be the final outcome and it may be a fair outcome.

The other point I think, though – and the Member from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi raised this and she's absolutely right. This is the issue, that this board, in the case of Eastern – I'm sure they're all the same, but I'll just take Eastern as an example because it's the area I would be in and have representation.

For example, the Eastern Waste Management board is pretty much all the City of St. John's, the entire city council or most of them. So we have Mayor Breen and Deputy Mayor O'Leary and, I don't know, Sandy Hickman and whoever else. They're all on the board. There's a representative from Mount Pearl. There's a representative from Paradise. I think there's one from Conception Bay South. There's one from the Torbay region, if you will, and so on. Then there are other regions, the Southern Shore and St. Mary's Bay and whatever. These are all elected people. So those are the people who are making the decisions.

I realize the political benefit, if I can put it that way, and I've seen some things on social media.

People applauding, people who are unhappy with the trash tax; happy to see Mr. Grant gone, because Mr. Grant was the face of it. He was the bad guy. He was the villain in the story so to speak, but the reality of it is that Mr. Grant – just because government decides they're going to put in a process to select a chair, that's not going to change a thing.

That person doesn't control that board. It's still going to be Danny Breen and the council. It's still going to be Mount Pearl and Paradise. It's going to the councils that are still going to make the decisions. They're the ones who run the show. Ed Grant didn't run the show, he was simply the voice. He was the chair of the board. He's the one who would have met with council and met with groups on behalf of the board, but he's not the one who did it. It was the entire board. It was the entire council.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LANE: So nothing is going to change, whether it's Ed Grant or whether it's whoever the IAC appoints. It's still one person, and that person is not going to call the shots. It's still going to be the towns and the cities and whoever who are going to be the ones. Nothing is going to change in that regard. Nothing changes in that regard.

However, the only point, though, that I have to agree with the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, is that to simply throw the regional service board into the same pot, if you will, as government agencies, commissions and so on, to say, well, that's the same thing as going to the IAC to appoint someone to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing or to the Liquor Corporation and so on, it's not. It is different.

It's different because councils have autonomy. I know they're not an official level of government; they do serve on behalf of the government. They're sort of creatures of the provincial government, if you will, but they are recognized as a level of government, and all the people are duly elected people.

So, basically, by putting this process in place you're kind of saying to the Mayor of St. John's,

who is on that board, we don't think you're capable of selecting a chair amongst yourselves, we're going to do it for you. That's an issue. If I was serving on that board as an elected official on behalf of any of those towns, I don't think I'd be too happy about being told we want you to serve on this board. This is a municipal service because the collection of garbage is a municipal service. That's not something the province does. That's something the municipalities do, but we think this is the process that's going to be used. You can't select someone amongst yourselves, we're going to do it for you.

I would suggest the directive given by the minister about cabins and so on, I'm sure there are members of that board who are not happy about that either. Again, they said, well, we made a decision of how we're doing it and this is why we're doing it, and you're going to tell us no, you're going to do it this way. I know we have the right to do that but there are only so many times you can start interfering, if you will, with these elected officials before they're going to simply turn around and say: Do you know what? Do it yourself – do it yourself.

If you want to set up a board, I'm not going to sit on a board and then every time we make a decision that you don't like we're going to tell you what to do. It wouldn't be me. That has nothing to do with any issue in particular, but it's the fact that you're put on a board to do a job and if you're going to have all your decisions second guessed and told, no, change this, change that, change to something else, pretty quickly the person serving on that board is going to say, guess what? Do it yourself. Let the province run it. See how easy it is. Let the minister be the one to take all the phone calls from everybody on every individual complaint or whatever. Direct it all up there. See how you like that.

I can understand where municipalities wouldn't necessarily be happy with the concept of interference. It got nothing to do with the IAC, by the way. I will be the first to say, it got nothing to do with the IAC.

While the Members who talk about the IAC, technically, by legislation, they're right, that the Cabinet doesn't have to accept any of the names, but I honestly – I got to be honest. I really don't believe the people on the IAC would stand for

having their names just thrown out and people putting whoever the government wanted. I cannot believe they would ever want that. If I was on the IAC it would happen once and I'd say see you later. That's how I feel about that, but they are technically right in terms of the legislation of how it could go, right.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, again, the reality over there is we're putting a process in place. There's nothing wrong with the process in the sense that nobody would argue that we shouldn't have qualified, competent people on the board. Nobody would argue that the chair of the board should not be qualified, have experience and ability in that area. No one's arguing that. I certainly wouldn't argue that. I don't think anybody would argue having four-year terms, not having someone there indefinitely, I don't think anyone would argue that; and maybe the ability to appoint to second term, which we see that, that's fairly normal. Nobody would argue with that.

But the point that I think that the argument has to be made – and again, the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi made that argument very eloquently, I must say, and I agree with her a hundred per cent. It's the concept of this is not a government agency, board, commission the same as NLC or the same as the Liquor Corp or any of the committees of government. This is being run by a level of government. This is being run by our municipal governments, who are all duly elected people. This here really is interfering, is what it's doing, it's interfering in their role, it's taking some control, if you will, away from them, and I don't know why we'd want to.

I mean, I'm very confident that Mayor Danny Breen, and all the other Members here I'm sure that they're very capable of selecting a good chair. I don't think they need anyone to tell them how to select a competent person. I think I have enough faith. Mayor Breen and council, they got like a \$200-million budget or whatever it is, running the City of St. John's, and I don't have any misgivings about their ability to select someone to chair the waste management board, nor do I from our representative from Mount Pearl or Paradise or Conception Bay South or any of the other municipalities, I really don't. I think that this is sort of taking it a step too far

and it's interfering in a legitimate process, interfering in a process that belongs with the board.

The only thing it does, as I said, which I believe is perhaps the motivation, is that, from a political point of view, it's very good to be able to go to COATT and other groups and say: Hey, guess what, guys? We got rid of Mr. Grant; we got rid of him. The villain is gone. We've saved the day. He is gone. It gives that ability, politically, but people and anyone who is listening and anyone from COATT need to realize is that it wasn't Mr. Grant. It was the board, and the board is still there. It's still the same board. They're the ones making the decisions. Mr. Grant was the messenger. He was the messenger and I think that's an important point to make.

With that said, I do want to thank Mr. Grant for his service. He served five years, I believe. I thank him for his service. I think that while everybody may not have agreed with all the decisions he made, certainly a very competent, qualified individual, businessman, 24 years experience on city council, and served in many capacities on council. Can't argue the man's ability or his credentials. Whether you like the way he rolls, whether you like his demeanour on every issue, whether you like his decisions that were made and how he conveyed them, perhaps if you're not getting the answers you want to hear, you might not like it, but at the end of the day he served that position well. I believe he did.

That's not an endorsement of the decisions around Cabinet. He is the guy just conveying what the board has decided – not what he has decided, what the board has decided and they all decided.

I heard somebody say who appointed him, that it was all politics and so on. My final comment before sitting down on that one is that, in 2011, he had a blue sign on his lawn; 2015, he had a red one; and, in this coming election, he's going to have an independent one. So there you go.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: It certainly has been an interesting morning here in the House. I rise today with honour and privilege representing rural Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. One of the earlier speakers this morning talked about rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Well, I can assure you, I continue to live in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I've been in politics for 12 years; I have not moved to St. John's. I continue the trek every weekend because of my commitment to rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I will echo the comments of all of my colleagues on this side of the House when I say that this bill is indeed regressive to democracy. Our people in rural Newfoundland and Labrador are quite capable of electing their own representatives and they are quite capable of appointing chairs to the various boards and entities within the regions. I would say, Mr. Speaker, that our people living in the communities know our people best.

To me, this is indeed a regressive bill and it's, again, bringing back political patronage. Why, in God's name, would you need a political patronage appointment for a regional board that has clearly established guidelines around its mandate?

If you look at the Newfoundland and Labrador Waste Management Strategy which, as my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands clarified, was brought in by the Liberal government in 2002, each regional waste management area will prepare, for government's approval, a business plan, an operations plan and environmental assessments for the regional waste management system. Why, in the group preparing these submissions and reports and business plans, environmental assessments, it's all being handed to government for evaluation anyway – why does government see the need to appoint political patrons to the chair of these boards?

I say that again – one of the Members got up this morning and talked about the IAC and I, too, have great respect for the members of the IAC. I feel for them in that they aren't truly able to pick the best person for the job. They can pick three recommendations and the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, Cabinet, picks one of those three names. They have a role, but they don't have final say.

To describe that process as the cleanest process ever seen, all I can say to that, Mr. Speaker, is we have different definitions and understanding of what a clean process means.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Some order, please.

Thank you.

MS. PERRY: Again, it's nice to have the IAC model but, in practice, what are we seeing, we're seeing former Liberal candidates appointed to clerk of Executive Council, assistant deputy minister in Public Safety and Enforcement, assistant deputy minister in lands and Municipal Affairs, deputy minister of business, tourism, and rural development.

So while the act is in place, Mr. Speaker, the practice is far, far, far from lacking political patronage; in fact, it's the worst I've ever seen in my 12 years that I've been in politics.

I will move on, Mr. Speaker, from that. I see that some Members find that very funny. For all times –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: – in politics I will say this, political patronage appointments have been there since the days of Joey; they continued through all successive governments. It was the Members opposite who campaigned that they were going to do it differently and failed miserably, Mr. Speaker. So that's where we are with political patronage appointments in Newfoundland and Labrador today.

Another thing about this bill that's very disturbing, and the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi said it quite eloquently, this bill really does fly in the face of democratic reform. It will give the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, Cabinet, the ability to remove a chair from a position, for no reason. The reason's not spelled out. It could just be because maybe they're a Tory or maybe they're an independent or maybe they're an NDP, who knows? They can do what they want with that clause in this bill.

So, certainly as a person who represents rural Newfoundland, I will stand up here in this House any day to say rural Newfoundlanders are quite capable of shaping their own destiny. In fact, I'd say if you take politics out of the way, they'd do even far better because decisions being made for political reasons result in things like \$40-million tax breaks in a time when our economy is falling apart.

So, I certainly will not be standing in support of this bill. I concur with my colleagues on this side of the House that it is regressive to democratic reform, and it is absolutely terrible that we're seeing, this day and age, a bill like this come before the hon. House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HUTCHINGS: I just want to stand for a minute and to speak to Bill 58, An Act to Amend the Regional Service Boards Act.

When the parliamentary secretary spoke earlier in second reading to introduce the bill, I just want to clarify what the Explanatory Notes talk about: "require the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to appoint the chairperson of each regional service board;" – which is a significant change – "set a term of 4 years for chairpersons of regional service boards; and allow the

Lieutenant-Governor in Council to dismiss a chairperson of a regional service board."

It was my understanding – you can correct me when you get up to respond after second reading – is that, he kind of indicated there would be no change once someone's appointed for that four-year term and they would have the option to, in every circumstance, complete that term.

This, and the subsequent act, doesn't speak to, or speaks quite differently to it when it gives specific authority to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, the Cabinet, to dismiss a chairperson of a regional service board. That's quite clear. It's in the act, and it now gives that authority to Cabinet to carry that activity out if they so wish. So maybe the parliamentary secretary could clarify that when he gets up.

As well, it talks about transitional: "A person who is the chairperson of a board on the coming into force of this Act continues to be the chairperson of the board until reappointed, replaced or dismissed." So, again, the term dismissed is there, and that authority is now granted with the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, with Cabinet, any time, as soon as this bill is passed, that the authority now exists to dismiss any chair of any of the boards.

My colleagues have spoken to it in regard to the representative nature of the current system and how it's reflected in the wards that are set up and how that's very reflective of the grassroots democratic process where determination is now made, collectively, by those elected representatives, who is selected for chair and for that period of time, and work with those individuals in terms of carrying out the strategy and initiatives of the regional service board. What we're seeing here now, that's going to be changed. The process now is going to go through the Independent Appointments Commission.

There was some commentary made by the Minister of Finance in regard to not respecting, not acknowledging the work that's done by the Independent Appointments Commission. On this side, nothing can be further from the truth. We always recognize those individuals who engage and give their time in public policy or administration and do that work with their best

intent, many with a variety of skill sets, bring that to the process and provide that service. We all recognize that and certainly support that.

What the question was and discussion was is about the process of the Independent Appointments Commission. That's something we spoke about when this bill was brought to the House. It was the flagship bill for this administration.

Our concern had always been, we're taking this process now and replacing a current process, which is a very democratic, very grassroots initiative and putting in the Independent Appointments Commission where it is reviewed by that commission and names are put forward to the Cabinet who ultimately makes the choice at the end of the day, and that's quite distinct and different from what's happening today. That's the issue that has been identified by a number of speakers in the House this morning in regard to why this is being done, why the need is felt to take that authority away from the local representatives on the ground.

I met just last week with the members of the Southern Shore Joint Council. We had about 15 or 20 elected members in the room – municipalities, local service districts – who, based on some of the things we've heard this morning, much of that was reflected in their conversations in some of the things that are going on in regard to the changes and what's transpiring.

How the regional service boards have a distinct function that's outlined in legislation and how they give somewhat of an independence to the governance structure, as I talked about. That grassroots structure is on the ground today, and how they feel that maybe they're being infringed on and being directed to carry out activities of a government of the day, when in fact, there, through the legislation, is given the ultimate authority as an elected body to carry out things like a waste management strategy for those they represent, which is on the ground and provide that service as needed.

Mr. Speaker, those are the two points I want to just make. I hope when we close debate in second reading, the parliamentary secretary, on behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, can

clarify the issue in regard to – as this act clearly states, the Cabinet will have the ability “to dismiss a chairperson of a regional service board.” If he could confirm that, because that's what the actual act says. There have been no amendments put forward, so I guess it is what it is. So if we can have that clarified as we move forward into committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

MR. JOYCE: I'm just going to stand and have a few words on this, Mr. Speaker, and talk about – I'm going to go back with the history of the waste management in the province. I'm not sure, there may be one other person here that was here with the history of the waste management. I'm going back in 2002 when it was first initiated, and then 2003 the PC government took over the waste management itself.

I just want to look at going back with the funds that were provided by the federal government. The initial concept was to have three waste management sites in the province, and, of course, Labrador. One of the first sites was going to be developed in St. John's. The second one was out on the West Coast. That was scrapped. Then it went to Central; the second one went to Central.

I remember all the debate – and I'm going back in 2008, 2007-2008, '09, '10, '11, '12 – with the Western going to the Central. I remember when the PC government appointed this biologist, but the part of it they forgot to mention, it was a marine biologist by the name of Don Downer. That's the point they forgot. When Don Downer was put in there – and he was a good friend. The former premier, Tom Marshall, that was his really good friend; co-campaign manager and all that, Mr. Speaker.

This is where a lot of this went off the rails for the government, because what they did, instead of appointing the most qualified person through an independent appointments committee, what they did is appointed one of their buddies.

What happened with Don Downer, Mr. Speaker, I have to say with this marine biologist, he didn't have a clue about waste management. I remember, Mr. Speaker, I remember the day – it's personal but it's factual. That's what they put on his résumé. I say to the Member for CBS, look at the facts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I know he's upset with it, but I'm just giving the facts here.

And I have to say that what happened then, and I just want everybody in the province to know, the person that Don Downer, when he was appointed and he had the board, and they went ahead –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: The Member for CBS, you'll have your time. Jeepers. Mr. Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What happened, he was pitted to do the PC Party duties. There's absolutely no doubt. Here's what happened, and this is why you need someone qualified for it.

I want to make it quite clear to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador that someone on the board can put themselves forward to be appointed by the Independent Appointments Commission. I dealt with this last year a fair bit. Don Downer at the time, who was chair, and then of course they had a bit of bidding to do for his buddies, the PC Party, and here's what happened. They had a meeting – I think it might've been in May; it may have been May or early June, I can't remember the exact date, and I'm going way back now, back in probably 2008, 2009 – here's what happened.

They had a meeting, and part of it was about waste management, part of it was: How are we going to collect our waste? On the sub-part of that meeting there was a motion put forward on something that wasn't even supposed to be on the agenda: shipping the garbage, waste, to Central. In the report that they ship it to Central, they were going to ask for a \$1.8-million subsidy. That's what it was going to cost extra for that.

So what happened, and here are the facts of it – and I can get anybody in this House who wants the minutes to the meeting, I can get the minutes to the meeting. What happened is that they were adamant not to ship the garbage unless they got the subsidy from government. In the meeting in May or June, they had a meeting, a motion was put forward that wasn't even on the agenda, that they go ahead and ship the garbage.

Do you know who wasn't at that meeting that day, that night? Two representatives from the City of Corner Brook were never at that meeting, and the other person, Gary Bishop, the mayor of Pasadena, was never at the meeting. The two largest municipalities to ship garbage from Western out to Central were never at the meeting. That's how that happened, and Central became the central location of it.

So, when Mr. Downer wants to stand up and talk about me not doing it properly and this and that, there's something I got to say – and this is why the Independent Appointments Commission is very, very important. When Don Downer said that he was off the board, do you know who asked Don Downer to leave the board? His own members. His own members because he made in appropriate statements at a fundraiser. They phoned Don Downer and asked him to relieve himself of the board. That's the fact of it.

If you're going to put someone in place, Mr. Speaker, it can be someone who's already on the board. It can be an elected official but it should be someone who's the most qualified – the most qualified, that's the key here. It's not one of your buddies. It's not one of anybody's buddies in this room. It has to go through a process.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just give you a good example out in Central. How many meetings did we have out in Central to try to straighten things out?

How many meetings? A lot of meetings, and I remember they were looking for this piece of equipment. I remember distinctly they were looking for this piece of equipment. You got to remember the people of this province; it's the taxpayers' money that's going in there, so people who are the head of it should have the best qualifications to run it.

This is not disparaging on any councillor or any mayor in the City of Corner Brook or in Western Newfoundland for the Western Regional Waste Management. I'm confident they would agree that if there's a person who's qualified for Western Regional Waste Management – I use Josh Carey, for example, very qualified guy, great guy, very knowledgeable. If he's the most qualified, put your name forward. His name will come forward.

I know last year when I was looking at this myself, Mr. Speaker, a lot of the people said just let us pick from within. I said: Well, why can't you just add your names and put it forward? They said: Yeah, that's a good idea; we can do that too. So when you open this up as chair, there's no one on these 20 boards for the Eastern Region that can't put their name forward, they can. It's easy to do.

What happened with Central, as I said earlier, they were looking for this (inaudible) and I'm sure everybody is aware of it. It operates, what, four or five days a month I think. They were looking for some funds. They said: No, you can't get all the funds because here's what basically you need. What controls were in there? Very little. What are the controls on the Western Newfoundland? What are the controls that they have? If government is going to be putting the funds in we should have – not we, I should say government, the government should appoint the best qualified person to chair on the board.

I know the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands was talking about the Eastern Regional Service Board and the reason why they had some – there are 10 from St. John's and 10 from outside and they needed someone who would actually, if there was ever a need for a tiebreaker or whatever, someone independent.

Mr. Speaker, I know last year when we were talking about the tax on the cabins, there was a

lot of stuff went on there. A lot of things went on there that I'm not sure if the people were aware of – a lot of things. I know we were into a meeting with some of the groups and they were talking about this legal opinion they had. They never had a legal opinion. They might have won it in court later: a legal opinion. But there are some things that realistically you can change.

Ed Grant, no doubt, he was the follower of the board and absolutely, no doubt, Josh Carey is the board chair on the West Coast and he has to follow direction also. But by appointing the most qualified person – unlike Western Newfoundland now who has to subsidize their own garbage to ship it out, because they appointed Don Downer, a really good friend of the minister at the time, a very good friend who, in my opinion, left the West Coast in a bad spot with this \$1.8-million subsidy.

So, when you want to talk about appointing the best, qualified person, I think it's much better to appoint a most qualified person than appoint one of your political buddies, which the people in Western Newfoundland are about to pay the price from here for a nice while until we work something out.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to stand and say that I'm not against this bill. There's stuff that we can talk about, but by appointing an independent chair who is well qualified – do I think Josh Carey will put his name forward? Yes, absolutely. Do I think he's qualified? Yes. Do I think Ed Grant is qualified? Yes. Do I think he'll put his name forward? I don't know if he will. He might not, but this is the point: Then you could have a variety. I definitely don't want a marine biologist any more in there flaunting how good of a biologist he is, Mr. Speaker, just so he can get on the board.

I remember distinctly how they're supposed to go from Eastern to Western and Central, and they built this place in Central, Mr. Speaker. We all know the size of that place in Central. We all know that once you build that infrastructure, there's a certain amount of fixed cost to it that you have come up with the cost to make sure that this beast, this monster, is paid for, and that's what happened in Central. I going back in 2003 up to 2009, 2010, 2011 when it opened.

Mr. Speaker, the issue with all this here is that government is putting in these funds because I know government is always getting asked for additional funds so that they can improve certain sites and different initiatives, which is great, but you should have the most important person who is chair of the board, that should be the most qualified person of the whole group, Mr. Speaker.

There is absolutely no reason – and I know a lot of councillors, a lot of mayors out in Western Newfoundland. There are a lot of qualified people, and a lot of them can put their names forward. I tell you, if the ones that I know out in Western, and I'm sure there are a lot here in Eastern too, if they put their names forward, the IAC is going to have a hard time picking the most qualified person because there are a lot of qualified people to do it. People always say that we should put the most qualified person in it, so, Mr. Speaker, I think we should.

I want to thank all the volunteers that are on the boards. They're doing the best they can all throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm confident that once this goes through, a lot of the board members will agree with this, and people who are on the boards now can put their names forward, Mr. Speaker, so they can be chair of the board.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I do want to just read a little reminder to all Members of the House, and this is regarding reference by name to members of the public.

Members are discouraged from referring by name to persons who are not Members of Parliament and do not enjoy parliamentary immunity, except in extraordinary circumstances when the national interest calls for this. The Speaker has ruled –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker has ruled that Members have a responsibility to protect the innocent, not only from outright slander but also from any slur

directly or indirectly implied. It's suggested that Members avoid, as much as possible, mentioning by name people from outside the House who are unable to reply in their own defence.

Thank you.

The hon. the Parliamentary Secretary of Municipal Affairs and Environment, if he speaks now he will close debate on second reading.

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

MR. JOYCE: Just for clarification.

While I was listening to – I heard Ed Grant's name brought up about 20 times.

MR. SPEAKER: There's no such thing as a point of clarification, Sir. A point of order, a point of privilege.

MR. JOYCE: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Point of order.

Proceed.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, the ruling you just made; I heard Ed Grant's name brought up at least 20 times, 25 times, but this was never brought up. Why is it brought up now?

MR. SPEAKER: Sir, I just brought it up. I just recognized the extent of the discussion. I felt it's important to remind all the Members, so I'm reminding the Members. Nothing more to it than that. I'd ask you to consider that in your debate.

The hon. the Parliamentary Secretary of Municipal Affairs and Environment, if he speaks now he will close debate on this bill.

The hon. the Parliamentary Secretary of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

Thank you.

MR. BRAGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thanks for the opportunity to close debate on Bill 58, An Act to Amend the Regional Service Boards Act.

Mr. Speaker, I know there are a couple of questions, and a number of questions came up through the debate of this. I thank all Members on this side and the opposite side for their discussion today.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, in my preamble there was one very important thing that we were debating here, and it was the chairperson. Much of the debate was around the roles and responsibilities and duties, and what would happen to the regional service boards.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The parliamentary secretary is trying to speak to the second reading.

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to read into the record, the roles of a chairperson are to set the agenda, to lead the meeting, to maintain order at the meeting and ensuring fairness at the meeting.

The chairperson, regardless of what we may have seen or what we believed in the past, the chairperson – and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands alluded to it when he got up with his chance to speak on this motion. The chairperson's job is to direct the meeting. When the meeting is over, the chairperson's job is to – unless someone else is appointed – to be the spokesperson of the outcome of the meeting.

A chairperson being selected by unelected officials is not a new thing. The Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi compared it to a town council. Nothing could be further from the truth. In a municipality, incorporated municipality of a town council, every person in that town has the opportunity to vote for a councillor, and in a larger town, a separate election for the mayor or the deputy mayor. So it's a completely different situation all together. In an incorporated town everyone is elected in.

On our current regional service boards, all chairs are not elected officials. All chairs are not

elected officials currently as we speak. So we're not changing anything there, but the wards are the voice of the regional service boards. So let's be clear, the voice of the people who are the wards are the ones who bring the voice to a meeting.

The chair's job is to maintain order in that meeting and be fair in the meeting. That is the job of the chair. We should have debated the job of the chair more thoroughly for the past hour, but we sort of ripped everything to pieces from time to time. I took so many notes I ran out of paper on the last of it, Mr. Speaker.

I'm trying to get down to a fisheries demonstration, which I know is not related to this, Mr. Speaker, but it has to go without saying, simply the chair is the person who leads the meeting. So whether that comes from the Independent Appointments Commission, all it does is ensures the person who wants to be chair puts their résumé forward, puts their qualifications forward.

I've sat on numerous boards in which the members or the wards have no desire ever to sit as a chair. Because it's not what they're made of is basically what they say to me: I don't want to do that, I'd rather for someone else to do that. But they are more than willing to voice a concern for their ward or the area they represent. So they have a great voice on that board.

So the appointment of the chairperson is simply, we're raising it to a tier-one level. We're raising this on the same playing field of other agencies, boards and commissions throughout this province. It's nothing underhanded that's trying to be done here. We're not displacing anyone; we're not firing any current chairs.

The Member for Ferryland may have misunderstood me, or I'm not sure if I misquote. I guess *Hansard* would tell that, but we are not displacing any current sitting chairs on any regional service boards in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAGG: I can't be any clearer than that, Mr. Speaker. We are not doing it, but – and it'll

come out in Committee. When we go to Committee on this you can ask your questions.

Some allusion came to allow the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to dismiss the chairperson. Let's just look at this. You may have picked a perfect person for that job – I've seen it in town councils. You elect a perfect person, but the only opportunity you have to un-elect that perfect person is the next general election. The same as any of us sitting in this House.

You appoint someone to a board and they go rogue, for lack of another word. If they go off the rails, if they're outside of everything, they are just way over there and the board is way over here, we need something where you can reel that back in. So the board, under the Independent Appointments Commission, if we appoint them, you must have another way to (inaudible), and you're not going to take that job lightly. You're just not going to run out and say: oh, we're going to get clear of this board chair and that board chair because we want to.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAGG: That would come after so much conflict – I would think – within that association, that at some point someone would have to step in. Now, when this goes to committee we can be clearer on that.

So I think that might've answered the questions opposite, and it may raise more questions, but I thank everyone. I can't thank everyone enough who serve on all of the boards, all the smallest boards. I don't care if it's a board for making a cookbook for a fundraiser for the school, they're doing it on a volunteer level. Every person who volunteers in this province does it because they want to.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAGG: It's in them to do something better for their area, for the people they serve and for everyone around them. So, it is to make it all better.

So, for all those, I commend them. I spent 30-odd years before this, Mr. Speaker, volunteering

on boards. For all those boards, you know what, I put my heart and soul into it and I saw other people do the same thing. I wouldn't want those people tore down in any way.

It's easy; if you don't want to be a person in a town or an area that's talked about, don't serve on anything; sit back, get behind a keyboard and go to it. My hat is off to every single person who sits on any board from the smallest board to one of the largest boards that's across Canada. My hat is off to these guys. They do it because they have a desire to make it better for the people around them.

On that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak here today and I look forward to Committee.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

The motion is that Bill 58 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.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

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

Motion carried.

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

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

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Regional Service Boards Act, 2012," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill 58)

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: (Inaudible) clarity. In your ruling, did you say the nays had it?

MR. SPEAKER: I said the ayes had it.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Oh, sorry.

Okay, thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: I sit and make a decision based on quantity, not quality.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

A small but vocal minority.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Interpretation Act, Bill 59, 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 Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Interpretation Act, Bill 59, 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.'

That motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Interpretation Act," carried. (Bill 59)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Interpretation Act. (Bill 59)

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 59 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, given that it's 12:18, I would suggest that we recess and recommence at 2 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: This being Wednesday and in accordance with paragraph 9(1)(b), this House stands in recess until 2 o'clock this afternoon.

Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: Admit strangers, please.

Order, please!

I'd like to welcome all the Members back for the afternoon sitting. We have some special guests that I'd like to introduce.

First of all, in the Speaker's gallery, I understand there will be two presently, but I am very pleased to welcome Dr. Sandy Morris and his brother Doug Morris, who is on his way. They are the sons of Muriel Morris who will be recognized this afternoon in a Member's statement.

Welcome to you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Please pass along a hello to your brother.

Thank you.

In the public gallery today, I would like to welcome registered dietitians Adrianna Smallwood, Lisa Dooley and Stephanie O'Brien. They are from the Dietitians of Newfoundland and Labrador and they also represent Dietitians of Canada. I also like to recognize Heidi Boyd from the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development. They are all joining us today for a Ministerial Statement.

Welcome to you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Joining us from the arts community today we have, in the public gallery, playwright Robert Chafe and actor Courtney Brown.

Welcome to you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: And I'd like to extend here publicly a very proud congratulatory note to Alden Spencer, our Page. She has just received the very prestigious Lord Beaverbrook Scholarship for law at UNB.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Remember she got her start here.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today we will hear from Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, Windsor Lake, Torngat Mountains, Baie Verte - Green Bay and St. John's Centre.

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to deliver accolades to Mr. Richard Hickey, Harbour Breton's Citizen of Year for 2018. Richard is an

energetic and committed volunteer, who gives wholeheartedly of his time and talent to enrich life in his community.

Whether it's coaching both the Bantams and Peewees in the community's Minor Hockey Association, volleyball, ball hockey or softball, steadfast commitment sees Richard at every hour of every game in or out of town. Diagnosed with kidney disease in 2002, requiring dialysis three times a week, Richard still finds time to volunteer and make a great difference in the lives of others.

Richard's involvement in his community is greatly appreciated and admired by residents who appreciate his vigorous efforts to help offer youth the opportunity to enjoy childhood to its fullest. Parents surely appreciate his resolve to keep the children's best interests at heart, to offer a healthy alternative to video games and technology and to help alleviate stress in their lives through being active in sports.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating Richard for his dedication to his community and for being an excellent role model to others. We look forward to his continued commitment and thank him for being an amazing volunteer.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Winsor Lake.

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, I would extend congratulations to the organizers and students who participated in the Roncalli Elementary annual student Heritage Fair. I was privileged to act as a judge for the elementary schools annual competition and was extremely impressed by the dedication of both students and teachers to the great heritage of our province.

Student displays ranged from the *Titanic* and the Newfoundland dog, to our military heritage with

the Blue Puttees and the precursor to the RCMP in our province, the Newfoundland Ranger Force. I was also privileged to judge a display about the hon. Premier; very complimentary it was as well.

I wish to thank the teachers and students at Roncalli Elementary school for inviting me to participate in their heritage event. If the students at Roncalli are any indication of our future in this province, it is indeed bright.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize a wonderful event that is happening in Labrador this week. The 2019 Labrador Winter Games takes place every three years and is attended by almost every community in Labrador from Nain to L'Anse au Loup to Labrador City.

The games were first founded in 1983 and has grown to include a schedule of competitions that range from conventional sports like volleyball and floor hockey, to cultural events like the Northern games and the Labrathon. The Labrathon event includes everything from cutting wood, target shooting, to bringing a kettle to boil and is, by far, the most fun event and thrown off in memory of long-time volunteer Max Winters, who is also a co-founder of the Labrathon event.

Mr. Speaker, these games are also been called the Friendship Games, due to the healthy competition and respect for each other that Labradorians are so well known for.

I ask all hon. Members to join me and my Labrador colleagues in wishing the athletes, officials and volunteers the best of success throughout the 2019 Labrador Winter Games.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge, support and show my sincere appreciation to a dedicated group of men and women from the communities of St. Patrick's, Coffee Cove, Little Bay and Beachside who have amalgamated and revived the Little Bay and area regional fire department. This region totals a population of 280.

I remember just three short years ago being invited to meet with a group of four lead by, then, fire chief Steve Walker, who laid out their plan. Today, this fire department has recruited more than 25 members and through their fundraising efforts, constructed a new 32 by 40 fire hall that they are proud to say was completely built by volunteers.

They regularly hold card games and, presently, a Chase the Ace. There have been other numerous fundraisers including silent auction dessert nights, river ball race, fish derbies, community dinners and a gospel concert.

I would be remiss if I didn't take the opportunity to thank their local councils for their continued support and to all the citizens and businesses who have come out to support their own.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my hon. colleagues to join me in saluting the Little Bay and area regional fire department in all of their efforts.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Muriel Mary Morris has passed away just short of her 100th birthday. Moo lived a rich full life, mother of four, grandmother and great-grandmother. Her life embodied much of the history and culture of downtown St. John's.

Moo witnessed the Colonial Building riots against Sir Richard Squires and when she tried to run away her foot got stuck in the fence. As a girl, she played hockey, walking all the way to Long and Burton's Ponds.

She never drove but always proudly took public transit, working at various jobs in the city, including Woolco on Water Street with the very first set of moving stairs. More than anything, she was a joyful and committed volunteer for which she won numerous awards.

Moo spent the latter part of her life, until her passing, volunteering at The Gathering Place and Canadian Blood Services. Moo lives on in the lives that she touched.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize March as National Nutrition Month. Our government is pleased to support Nutrition Month in partnership with dietitians of Newfoundland and Labrador and our community partners.

This year's theme, "Unlock the Potential of Food," encourages us to understand how food can enhance our lives, improve our health, fuel our activities and bring people together.

Mr. Speaker, in *The Way Forward*, we committed to improving health outcomes for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians by increasing vegetable and fruit consumption and improving breastfeeding initiation rates. Achieving these goals can only be realized through public awareness of the importance of healthy eating and creating change by engaging individuals and communities to take action.

Our government recognizes the importance of our partnerships with community groups and initiatives that help these goals such as Kids Eat Smart and the School Lunch Association, which provide healthy, nutritious food to children at school and the Baby-Friendly Council of Newfoundland and Labrador, which is doing great work to promote and support breastfeeding.

Today, we also celebrate Dietitians Day across Canada. Dietitians in this province promote and support healthy eating in communities and hospitals, rehabilitation centres, primary care, long-term care, private practice, government, public health, industry and educational institutions.

Anyone who has questions about healthy eating, including how to make healthy food choices or how to tailor their choices to their specific health needs, can access our Dial-a-Dietitian service by calling 811 and asking to speak to a registered dietitian.

I invite all Members of this hon. House to please join me in thanking dietitians throughout the province, and to recognize and celebrate March as Nutrition Month.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member opposite for an advance copy of her statement. In partnership with the dietitians of Newfoundland and Labrador and other community partners, Members on this side of the House are pleased to support National Nutrition Month.

Mr. Speaker, the benefits of eating healthy as part of a balanced lifestyle is without question. From birth, the advantages of proper nutrition is the greatest contributor to the success in growth and development. We must all strive to do more as individuals and as community leaders in encouraging our friends and neighbours to eat better.

Sadly, our province has one of the highest levels of heart disease and obesity in the country. Many people are not getting the message, and government needs to do more to address chronic disease management.

Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Member noted, this is also Dietitians Day across Canada. Dietitians are an integral part of promoting and supporting healthy living across our provinces, including clinical and other public setting, but also in communities and neighbourhoods.

Mr. Speaker, all Members on this side of the House join me in recognizing National Nutrition Month and Dietitians Day across Canada.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement and happy to join with her in congratulating dietitians NL, Kids Eat Smart, the School Lunch Program and the Baby-Friendly Council for educating the public, ensuring children are well nourished and helping people with chronic disease.

The minister says government will improve health outcomes by increasing vegetable and fruit consumption. I ask the minister: Is government providing this food? The biggest challenge, I say to the minister, to good nutrition is insufficient income for nutritious food. It's one reason, I point out, for raising the minimum wage.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to spread the word about an important initiative of the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada to assist people in effectively planning and preparing for their outdoor excursions.

Through funding from the federal government, the new AdventureSmart Trip Plan App focuses on the three t's: trip planning, training and taking essentials. The App walks people through a comprehensive trip plan that can be shared with family or friends as well as gives outdoor survival tips, suggestions for appropriate clothing and additional information specific to the outdoor activity. There is also information on the essentials of any equipment list, including those specific to a chosen activity, season and location.

Mr. Speaker, the App incorporates a six-step process to ensure a person's emergency contacts have the detailed information of a trip, including time of departure and expected return, location and purpose of a trip, as well as names and contact information for all participants, which can be provided to the authorities in case of emergency. This App helps give people essential information to ensure a safe trip and is currently available on IOS and Android devices for free download.

Search and rescue volunteers are an integral part of public safety in this province and the work they do is extremely important. That's why this government introduced a new tax credit to support the volunteers who play such an important role in search and rescue operations in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the search and rescue teams across this province for their hard work, dedication and commitment to their communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: I thank the minister.

Mr. Speaker, as someone who failed to make it back to camp twice and spent two nights in the woods, I commend the many search and rescue volunteers –

MR. HUTCHINGS: It won't happen again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: – and associations in our province for their dedication, time and commitment.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I'd like to congratulate the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada on the launch of their AdventureSmart Trip Plan App. We all know that proper preparation is important when heading on a trip. This app will help individuals with the task.

Our province has a great outdoors, and I encourage our residents to download and try this app on their next adventure. I know I will.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, for someone who has been rescued by the fairies in the woods, I applaud this as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. ROGERS: Someone who is a fairy in the woods.

Bravo to the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada, as well as our own outstanding men and women who volunteer for search and rescue. Even the most experienced person can make a mistake and get into difficulties in the province's outdoors. Following the six steps is just good, common sense.

Bravo to government for winning them a tax credit, and bravo to the search and rescue

volunteers who help people lost or hurt in the outdoors. This is amazing dedication.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, sources in Ottawa say there's a pretty big gap in the Atlantic Accord fiscal review negotiations.

I ask the Premier, how confident is he that the negotiations are still on track to meet the March 31 deadline?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I did hear some public comments this morning by one of the local media outlets and talking about the Accord, Mr. Speaker.

The key to this: we're still talking about the Accord. So we're actually having meaningful discussions with the federal government. That was outlined this morning.

So negotiations are still ongoing, Mr. Speaker, and that is the way we carried out and conducted all the negotiations that we've been able to do in the last – over three years. We've had lots of successful negotiations with mining companies and with offshore companies, attracting people and investment to Newfoundland and Labrador, creating jobs, Mr. Speaker.

The Accord discussions are still ongoing. As the Prime Minister and I had said a few days ago, the deadline would be March 31. Mr. Speaker, at that point we'll be very proud to give the people

of the province the update on where we are as we bring these negotiations to a conclusion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I ask the hon. Premier: What is the consequence if the deadline date is not met?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, we're working towards a deadline, and that is what we're doing.

I will tell you, though, Mr. Speaker, we will not be selling this province short. The negotiations are ongoing. We will fight for every penny that we can get to support the primary beneficiary, the principal beneficiary of the Accord. That is what we are doing.

Key to all of this, though, Mr. Speaker, is we are still at that table, having productive and meaningful negotiations. That is why we have committed to see this through. If we do not make the deadline, I'll be more than pleased to update the people of this province and give the overview of why we are where we are, when we're there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, sources in Ottawa state that the federal government is digging in its heels at the proposition that it should make payments on account of past years.

May I ask the hon. Premier: If the deal with Ottawa, coming out of the review negotiation, does not include payment for past years, will he be signing the deal?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Here we go, Mr. Speaker, one more time.

The Leader of the PC Party wants to figure out, they want to find a way to get into these negotiations.

The federal government, I said, also think that the report this morning said this is one of the six or seven priority issues with the Department of Finance in Ottawa. We all know they've been very busy, but, Mr. Speaker, we are meeting with the Finance officials and talking with them on a regular basis on the Atlantic Accord. It is a priority for the Department of Finance, it is a priority for the prime minister, and it is a priority for the federal government.

When you look at forward-looking versus review, there's a reason why this is called a review in the arrangement in 2005. So we are working very hard on behalf of the people of this province, and I will tell you we are leaving no stone unturned in bringing those benefits back to this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, out of respect for the Premier's desire not to give out information which, in his judgment, might compromise the negotiations, could he inform the House whether the amount being sought on account of past years, to be adjusted on account of past years, is in excess of a billion dollars?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, this is not a chess game. This is a serious –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

PREMIER BALL: And that wasn't even – but, Mr. Speaker, as I said –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

PREMIER BALL: – we are trying to – it's still words.

Mr. Speaker, we are negotiating with the federal government to make sure that Newfoundland

and Labrador is a principal beneficiary. That is what we are talking about.

The Accord review was put in place in 2005. There are five things that are outlined in the review that we're currently doing, Mr. Speaker, and to put a number on the Table in this House of Assembly right now would not be smart negotiations, I would think.

We are at the table. We are negotiating. We are standing firm. We're having tough negotiations with the federal government, and that is why we're working towards a desired outcome for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, it's beginning to sound like the Premier might want to borrow the name of my energy plan, cheap, to describe –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. CROSBIE: – to describe his Atlantic Accord deal.

The Premier waited for over two years before he initiated the Atlantic Accord fiscal review by writing to the prime minister.

How many hundreds of millions has this delay cost the province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: First of all, to the preamble, Mr. Speaker. You have no worries about anyone on this side of the House taking the cheap plan, because the cheap plan doesn't work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, we're clearly going to outline to the people of this province, some time around 3:15, why the cheap plan actually increases electricity rates in Newfoundland and Labrador. This copy, paste, and paste again, Mr. Speaker, didn't work for

the cheap plan and it will not work for the Atlantic Accord.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Well, I guess I kind of invited that response.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: The next line of questions may not be so amusing.

For the Minister of Natural Resources, she's defended a \$336,000 contract for her former deputy minister, plus expenses, as she informed us; yet, the former employees of Astaldi languish in uncertainty and financial distress while they await their monies.

I ask the minister: Can she can give us an update as to when these workers can expect payment?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I take exception to the preamble to that question, Mr. Speaker. I merely informed this House that there was a contract with Aberdeen International which are global experts. I will say that Gordon – that the person he's referring to is a global expert with local knowledge, and certainly we will use whatever expertise we can to grow the industry.

Regarding the Astaldi workers, it's a very difficult situation. As I informed this House, all workers were paid up until October 20, at which time there was a stop work order put in place by Nalcor. If you've been following the inquiry, you might know why that would have taken place, Mr. Speaker. However, there were some workers that did work post-October 20 and they are owed wages, but they are also owed other employment benefits and that is in process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: This issue about payment has been dragging on for over six months. The minister has done nothing to address the concerns of these former workers, these Astaldi workers, who continue to face financial difficulty.

Why doesn't the minister show as much interest in these former employees as she does for her former deputy minister?

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, again, I take exception to the preamble to the question. I can tell you that I have worked very diligently to ensure that the Muskrat Falls project is on track. It's too bad the former Progressive Conservative government didn't work as diligently when they were deciding to start the Muskrat Falls project; we wouldn't be in this mess to begin with.

Mr. Speaker, I will say that there are liens on behalf of both the unionized employees. As you know, Mr. Speaker, unionized employees are owed some employee benefits as well, not their wages but they're owed employee benefits, as are Astaldi workers that worked post-October 20. Some of them have engaged with legal counsel and have put in liens as well, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: You know, Mr. Speaker, I've always thought that after, say, 6 months in office, a new government should get over the misdeeds of a previous government and get on with owning the problem.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: Yesterday, the minister indicated that conflict of interest waivers are not uncommon.

I would ask the minister: How many conflict of interest waivers has your government issued and will you table them?

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say this as calmly and as clearly as I possibly can, because I'm offended as a Newfoundlander and Labradorian by the Progressive Conservative leader's preamble to his question.

Let me say this, I would never have sanctioned Muskrat Falls, the people of this province are paying for Muskrat Falls and it is shameful that he has not yet said that that project was a mistake.

Regarding the question that he asked me, and I'm trying very hard to remain calm because I certainly could go on about this.

PREMIER BALL: And you will.

MS. COADY: And I will, say the Premier.

I will say that all orders-in-council are placed on the website. The Member opposite could certainly look at them anytime they want. This order-in-council was posted on January 31.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: The former deputy minister of Natural Resources who is now being paid \$336,000 a year plus expenses, sole-source contract, had his going-away party before he left for Scotland at 7 Plank Road. We know that the cannabis consultant has ties to 7 Plank Road. Canopy Growth has ties to 7 Plank Road, and now the former deputy minister has ties to 7 Plank Road.

I ask the Premier why his government sole-source or no-bid contracts are all tied to 7 Plank Road.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now I'll again say this: There are a number of contracts let by agencies, boards and commissions and this government where global expertise is sought. I can tell you, for example, the Public Utilities Board just had a contract with Liberty and Synapse to clean up a mess of the former Progressive Conservative government, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that there are other contracts that are let because global expertise is important, especially when you're talking about growing the oil and gas business and industry.

Mr. Speaker, that is what this contract is designed to do. The Member opposite certainly – I'm sure he will speak widely and loudly about the opportunity in our offshore oil and gas industry, and we will be looking to grow that industry to ensure the benefits to the people of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

Representatives from all sectors of our fishery are protesting today because of the lack of consultation from DFO. They feel decisions are being made – they have no input in the decisions. The seven silent MPs are in Ottawa and not listening and not speaking for our fishery.

I ask the Premier: When are you going to stand up and speak for our fishery?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, we stand up and speak for every single industry in this province, every sector in this

industry in our province. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, we had quite a few of our Members that were actually at the protest today. But I can tell you, there were some people, even those that are asking questions today, what I understand, were glaringly absent.

So, Mr. Speaker, our Members were there standing with fish harvesters and fish plant workers in this province, and we will continue to do that.

As a matter of fact, just within the next few days I'll be meeting with FFAW, the union that was actually organizing this protest today. We are working very closely with this industry. We realize that the fishery, Mr. Speaker, is really the backbone of many rural communities and indeed this city of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we'll continue to work with them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: I remind the Premier that a photo opportunity is not standing up for the fishery in our province.

I had family members and good friends there today standing up for our province –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order!

MR. K. PARSONS: – and standing up for our fishery.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order!

MR. K. PARSONS: Premier: Why wasn't joint management included in the ministerial mandate letter? Has your government dropped joint management as a policy objective?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, we haven't dropped anything when it comes to working

with the fisheries, for the fisheries, on behalf of the fisheries in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, we know there are concerns within the fishery. Science is telling us this, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to joint management, DFO has made many decisions that we don't like as well but we understand where the jurisdiction lies within the fisheries, and I'm sure you do too.

So, I'm not here today to score political points on who is making these decisions. It is very clear, Mr. Speaker, that it's DFO that is making these decisions. That is the reason why Members of this party, Members of this government, were there today standing side by side with those protestors, Mr. Speaker. We are not shy in standing up for people of this province and we are certainly not shy of standing up for fish harvesters.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much.

Premier, we need a direct say in decisions that are made in our fishery. When will you finally take action with your government on joint management?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Parliamentary Secretary to Fisheries and Land Resources.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. REID: I thank the minister for his question on this very important topic. In fact, the snow crab fishery remains our most important fishery in this province. In terms of value in 2018, it was approximately \$300 million.

It's a very important fishery. We've expressed our views, as the Premier said, on this issue very much. We support the FFAW in their concerns about the fishery and we're going to continue. Both the Premier and the minister have spoken out on this today and we're going to continue to represent fishers of Newfoundland and Labrador and the people who depend on the industry.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: In order to stand up for our fishery, we need to be at the table when decisions are being made, and that's called joint management.

Minister, have you made any progress with the federal government on regulations concerning vessel size or the buddy-up system?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Parliamentary Secretary to Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. REID: I'll take that matter under advisement and the minister may provide further details when he returns.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: I respect that answer.

Thank you very much.

Right now, elected municipal leaders elect a chair of the regional service board. Now, with the new bill that we debated this morning, Cabinet will select the chair.

Minister, can you tell this House why you need to control the board through the selection of the chair?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Parliamentary Secretary to Municipal Affairs and Environment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member opposite for the question and I look forward to answering his question. The key thing today when Bill 58 was brought forward to this House this morning was to raise the level of regional service boards to a tier-one level. That puts them on a level playing field with all the

agencies, boards and commissions recognized throughout this province.

So, it's something that we're really boosting their profile, Mr. Speaker, and we look forward to that in the future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: With all due respect, you took the chair out of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador and elected officials in those municipalities that do make decisions.

With the current announcement for services from waste management being stopped for unserviced roads, as defined by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the projected reduction of 7,500 households with contracts in place.

How will these contracts be paid and who will make up the shortfall?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Parliamentary Secretary for the Department of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

MR. BRAGG: Once again, Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member opposite for the question, but I'm not really sure if it's two questions or not because he led off with something about MNL. Would that have been your first question because we have no interference whatsoever into how MNL is structured, how they elect their members or how they elect their chairperson. That is done by the electoral body of this province of the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. Everyone brings someone to representative their area. There's Avalon, Eastern, Central, Western and Labrador. There is maybe some more. There are large towns represent. So that is all done by the elected officials.

You talk about MNL, that is done by the elected officials. That is not recognized as a regional service board. That is a body of governing councillors that represent this province.

Thank you very much, 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.

Do you expect the fees to go up for municipalities to make up the reduction in the cost?

MR. SPEAKER: The Parliamentary Secretary for Municipal Affairs and Environment.

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank to the Member opposite for the question. We are reviewing the Waste Management Strategy for this province. If you look at a regional service board, most of these guys or all these guys are not-for-profit. They're not looking to make a profit. They're looking to cover costs. One would hope they're going to do that in the most effective and efficient way possible.

To say it's going to go up or go down at this point is more than anybody in this room can say and I think for most anybody in this province. But I can guarantee you, the people who are in place there have the best interest of the people of they serve and will do the best job possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

Again, someone is going to have to pick up the additional cost that this is going to be and more than likely it's going to be municipalities in this province.

How many permanent livyers are on these roads that will no longer be serviced and how will normal garbage collection and bulk garbage collection be collected in the future?

MR. SPEAKER: It's a busy day for parliamentary secretaries.

The Parliamentary Secretary for Municipal Affairs and Environment.

MR. BRAGG: Pick on the parliamentary secretary day.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Waste management, the strategy, once again – oh, first of all, I thank the Member opposite for the question. I'm getting ahead of myself, getting a little excited today, Mr. Speaker. This is the most questions I think I've ever seen a parliamentary secretary have to answer in this House.

On waste management, I can't say enough. We're reviewing the strategy. We're looking at all of Newfoundland and Labrador in that strategy. There are going to be unserviced roads. There are places, obviously, there are back-country roads, there is everywhere.

Waste management has to be addressed, and because someone lives in an unserviced area doesn't mean they're going to put a pile of waste in the woods. We're going to avert that. We're going to avoid that at all means necessary.

In Central, Mr. Speaker, if I could indulge you for one second, we closed out over 50 waste management sites and one site in Central Newfoundland is where the bulk of everybody's garbage goes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Will this change have any effect on the delivery of fire services to areas that are deemed unserviced, and these are often coordinated together?

MR. SPEAKER: The Parliamentary Secretary for Municipal Affairs and Environment.

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, this is the best question to answer – absolutely not.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Labrador transportation advisory committee advocated for a vessel with at least 12,000 horsepower. The current vessel does not even come close to this.

Why doesn't the minister follow the advice of the committee, which would have eliminated all recent problems that we are seeing with the new *Qajaq* on the Strait of Belle Isle crossing?

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

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

I thank the hon. Member for the question. Mr. Speaker, last week on the Strait of Belle Isle, we had an 18,000-horsepower Canadian Coast Guard vessel get stuck. This is unprecedented ice conditions we're seeing. I've heard reports of the last 30 years. I heard a gentleman this morning, actually, in a CBC article say he's been trucking to Labrador for 15 years, he's never seen this before.

The reality is, though, Mr. Speaker, working with the four MHAs from Labrador, we've been able to now deliver 10 loads of necessities, groceries, into Labrador. We're working with the people; there are daily flights available.

The reality is here, we're doing what we can in a tough ice situation and we will continue to work with the MHAs and the people of Southern and the rest of Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: I remind the minister, we should be reminded, but we have a contract, I think, if I'm not mistaken, it's \$12 million a year to provide that service. We even have the Coast Guard bringing humanitarian food supplies to the Straits today, Mr. Speaker, is reported.

The Canadian Coast Guard –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: – are telling us that the vessel is not powerful enough –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: – and the minister –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: – gets on his feet and gets on with that.

Mr. Speaker, we are hearing – so I want to confirm this – that the contract cost of the ferry is roughly \$1 million per month whether it sails or not.

I ask the minister: What is the monthly cost government is paying for this ferry?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, I sat in this hon. House this morning, and *Hansard* will reveal, I listened to the Member say: I tell the truth sometimes.

Mr. Speaker, I'm absolutely offended by the Member saying they're bringing humanitarian aid to Labrador. The fact is this government, under very challenging ice conditions –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. DEMPSTER: – we had a tanker on Sunday at the mouth of the Bay of Islands that required two icebreakers to get her free. That's what we're dealing with.

Mr. Speaker, in the face of all that, we have flights that are going daily, we have reached out to all the trucking companies and offered to pay their cost for going the alternate route into Labrador City. In addition to that, the Coast Guard vessel agreed to make a couple of trips, the equivalent of two tractor-trailers, far more than that government ever did for the people of Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I tell the truth all the time. Maybe she should go back and check *Hansard*.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: Getting on with that foolishness.

Mr. Speaker, the value of the contract is \$143 million over 12 years.

Minister: Was this a good value for taxpayers' money? It would've been more cost-effective to build the proper ferry to avoid all of these problems.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. PETTEN: Very funny, hey?

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

MR. CROCKER: Excuse me, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the question. I guess he wanted us to go to Romania and build a boat.

It's important to note, Mr. Speaker, that in 2015, under that administration, under the PC administration, the RFP that failed, the RFP in 2015 that failed the people of Labrador and the people of this province, did not even specify an ice class, did not even specify horsepower. They put a tender out in 2015 with no specifications.

We have an icebreaker now that's 1A ice class. It's an ice ferry, it came from an ice port. It's astonishing that the Member this morning can say what he said about the truth and now keeps on with this foolishness.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Mr. Speaker, the minister might want to go back and check; we're 15 days and counting.

We have spoken to people in Labrador, we're doing our homework. Maybe they should start speaking to the same people, because they find this very funny. The people in Labrador do not.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: We have been told there's only one company that bid on this tender for this vessel.

I ask the minister: Why wasn't the tender reissued and a broader search conducted so we get a better value for money on a boat that can run?

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

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, one thing that this administration will never do is take ferry advice from the former PC administration. Not going to happen.

He talks about talking to people in Labrador. I can assure the Member opposite I sit down on a regular basis with the four people that represent Labrador. They do an awesome job in representing Labrador. The Member for

Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair has spent days and days over the last little while making sure that groceries and other supplies are getting into the people of Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure you we will work with the MHAs to make sure services are provided for the people of Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Artists around the province are sounding the alarm through a letter-writing campaign to government and MHAs saying that ArtsNL's budget for grants, the only funding for primary research and creation of art, like first drafts of novels or scripts, hasn't increased since 2012. In fact, it has decreased from \$1.8 million to \$1.6 million, despite inflation and the growing number of artists seeking that funding. Artists are asking government to increase ArtsNL funding by \$1 million each year for three years to bring it to \$5 million.

I ask the minister: Does he understand the urgency of this, and will he agree to this increase?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly see the value of the arts and the cultural industries here in Newfoundland and Labrador. There are 5,000 people contributing \$450 million to our economy, and that's why we continue to support the vibrant arts community and we support their ongoing promotion and development. This is why we support ArtsNL with a grant each year; an annual grant.

The Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation also supplies upwards of close to \$20 million to support cultural funding to support artists here in this province. We've done a number of initiatives over the last – since our

term in office, to fund things like our Arts and Culture Centres with the federal government, over \$3.3 million of investment and so much more.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, world acclaimed *Oil and Water* and *Between Breaths* all started with a small ArtsNL grant to Robert Chafe. Fifty thousand people have seen *Oil and Water* so far. It has generated \$1 million, of which half was spent on jobs. Both productions are now travelling the country. These are very small grants that had huge investment benefits, and the minister knows that. We're not talking about arts and culture funding. We're talking about seed funding for research and creation.

I ask the Premier: Will he commit to increasing ArtsNL funding for creation by \$1 million per year for three years so this kind of work can continue?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We certainly value the work of our artists. This is why we introduced Status of the Artist legislation. We're renewing our cultural plan. We've been consulting with artists throughout this province.

I have to commend an artist, a creator, a visionary like Robert Chafe on being shortlisted for the BMO Winterset Award and numerous other recognitions that have been received.

We've invested \$1 million to expand Theatre Newfoundland and Labrador in Cow Head. We've also been supporting publishers through the Publishers Assistance grant, but we also want literary exports to happen. That's why we're supporting the Frankfurt Book Fair.

We're doing so much more to help support our artists than funding to ArtsNL. It is the department funding that we provide. We do funding to MusicNL and export development funding. We have artists and people moving to this province actually to talk about the tremendous support that our government is providing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, the minister is not listening to artists. Artists are predicting many are on the verge of leaving the arts sector or the province because of this inadequate funding for the artistic creation phase, and he knows what I'm talking about.

I ask the Minister of Culture: If he supports Canopy Growth and Biome, two wealthy, publicly traded companies growing recreational marijuana by letting them keep \$92 million of taxpayers' money, why won't he increase the funding to the ArtsNL grants so artists can grow a sustainable, cultural industry that creates jobs locally?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For every dollar that is invested in sales of cannabis here in this province locally, the provincial government gets more from that. There is no upfront grant. There is no money being disbursed, but we certainly see the value in our arts community and have proven that through the investments that we continue to make.

We see where The Rooms has renewed its Chevron Open Minds program, \$550,000. There are initiatives that we continue to provide in terms of theatre to organizations. ArtsNL receives a \$1.6 million grant that they disburse to artists, 50-50 in terms of organizations and individual artists. They have a \$2.3 million budget; \$700,000 of that would not be grants.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Time for Oral Questions has ended.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees

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

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

I have here a report of the Standing Orders Committee, dated March 19, 2019 that I would like to present.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further reports?

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce the following motion:

That Standing Order 63(2) be amended by deleting the words “new session” and inserting instead the words “General Assembly” and that this amendment have effect from the beginning of the 49th General Assembly.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - 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 the mandatory establishment of an adequate ratio of one to three staff to 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 required care. This law would include the creation of a specific job position in these facilities for monitoring and intervention as required to ensure the safety of patients.

Mr. Speaker, the petition I have today is signed by people in Centreville and Indian Bay, actually. I’ve spoken about this numerous times. I will continue to do so on behalf of advocates for senior citizens’ group. Basically, as the prayer of the petition states, the concern here is that seniors, particularly those with Alzheimer’s disease, dementia and so on in long-term care facilities, there is a concern that there’s not always enough staff to take care of those people.

Now, that is not to say there is never enough staff to take care of those people. Although, I'm sure there are people who would say that on a regular basis that that's the case; but, again, it's about making sure there are staff there to make sure people are fed on time, to make sure they receive all the care that's required, that they're bathed regularly, that they're changed as required and that there's somebody on the wards to make sure they don't harm themselves or harm others when they get confused and so on.

That's all they're asking for. I think it's a reasonable request. They're asking that it would be enshrined in legislation to ensure that happens at all times, not left to regulations that the minister can change or left to policies that the health care authorities can change.

That is the concern, to make sure our seniors receive the care they deserve at a time when they need it most. That's all this group is asking for. That's what they've asked me to present. I will continue to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further petitions?

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

THEREFORE we, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly as follows: We 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 their local economy and be able to return home to families at night.

Mr. Speaker, I stand again on this petition. I mentioned to the minister yesterday I'm hearing that some of the construction, the steel that they're bidding on is for 2020. I'm hoping that the construction will start as committed this fall. I'm just saying what I'm hearing from good sources, and the minister can confirm if it's still on schedule for it.

The other thing is last year, as we know, there was a commitment made that there were going to be local people hired on. We know who asked, who I was dealing with, and I can provide evidence on that, that there would be local people hired.

Mr. Speaker, there were no local people hired. The reason why, there was a company from PEI, which I have no problem with, but even the ironworkers were willing to put up \$100,000 out of their own funds to match any gap so it wouldn't cost the company or the province any extra money.

So there are lot of local good tradespeople, labourers, ironworkers, a lot of local people that would like to work on this project. I made the commitment that I will bring it up every possible opportunity to make sure that this year they're saying, well, we're not aware of it. You are going to be aware of it, I'm going to be aware of it and I'm very confident that the government will ensure that local people will be hired, not just in the Bay of Islands but the Corner Brook area, all through the Humber region, all throughout Port au Port. As many of the unions told me, they got a lot of union people with good skills ready to start in the whole Humber-Stephenville-Port au Port area.

I am very confident that what happened last year with very few, if any, local people hired, that we got to try to ensure that local people are hired. Good, trained local people hired on the hospital so they could have four years at home, Mr. Speaker – at home.

I'll say again that I'll bring this up every opportunity that I have, because it'd be great to have a great local hospital, which I know is going to happen, with construction done by local people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further petitions?

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. Like I've said in previous responses, Mr. Speaker, we've been working with TradesNL, we've worked with the Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Association to ensure that not only do we have Newfoundland and Labrador companies and Newfoundland and Labrador workers involved in this project.

Mr. Speaker, I can confirm for the Member opposite that we are on schedule with this build. Final submissions have been received; they're in review right now. The schedule for Corner Brook acute care is on for construction to begin in the fall of 2019, which will be this fall.

Mr. Speaker, with the situation we found ourselves in from the former PC administration, we've done remarkable work around infrastructure and health care infrastructure in this province. I can just list them: a new long-term care centre in Corner Brook; new acute care in Corner Brook as well; new Central long-term care, with a new facility in Gander and one in Grand Falls; a new mental health facility here in St. John's.

For the situation we found ourselves in, we've done tremendous work when it comes to infrastructure for health care in our province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

MR. SPEAKER: This being Wednesday, I now call on the Member for Windsor Lake to introduce his motion, Motion 3, standing in at his place.

Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

MR. CROSBIE: I thank the Speaker.

I move the following private Member's resolution, seconded by my colleague the Member for Ferryland.

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

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, much indignation has been expressed during Question Period today by Members of the front benches opposite. I doubt very much that the debate on this resolution will exercise a calming influence.

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me, Sir, your seconder is not present, so I require another seconder for the record.

MR. CROSBIE: Any volunteers?

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

Thank you.

MR. CROSBIE: Good to go?

MR. SPEAKER: Seconded by the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

Please proceed, thank you.

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, I doubt that this will have much of a calming influence on the Members opposite. How many times has the Premier reminded me since I became a Member of this hon. House in the by-election in Windsor Lake last fall in response to questions that he was looking for the PC, Official Opposition and me to bring forward our own Muskrat rate mitigation plan?

It crossed my mind to ask our research staff to actually do a search of *Hansard* and count the number of times. It's certainly in the dozens. It seemed to be in response to every second question I asked, whether the subject matter of the question had anything to do with Muskrat Falls or the general subject or not. It might've been a hundred times.

Well, now, the government, the front bench, the Premier and hon. Members opposite, have my response. They have our energy action plan to deal with the rate crisis we have been informed of, having to do with what have become the unfortunate misadventure of Muskrat Falls; the cost overruns and the over-schedule problem, missing of deadlines. They now have the plan. It's the CHEAP plan, and I call it that for a purpose. It stands for Crosbie hydro energy action plan.

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the Member to refrain from using the name of the sitting Member.

MR. CROSBIE: I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: And just to clarify, if that document had been tabled in the House, then it would be permissible, just for the Members to understand.

Please proceed, Sir.

MR. CROSBIE: I don't mind, but I got to read it first. My eyes aren't that good. I can't see it over there.

As of 10 days ago, they have it. Now, I've offered to lend the acronym to Members opposite to describe the outcome of their Atlantic Accord negotiation, but I take it the proffer is being refused, so I'll keep it for myself.

The reason for this resolution is that the government itself, while constantly needling the Official Opposition to bring forward a plan to cope with, deal with, and mitigate the rates, which we have been told are generated by Muskrat and might lead to a doubling of Hydro bills for consumers, we have responded. But why have we responded? It's not just because hon. Members opposite have been needling us

and asking us for our plan. No, it is because we have a duty to address the fears, the concerns, the worries of the public of the province, who have been told that their rates will double.

People, Mr. Speaker, have been living in fear of their rates doubling. I was reminded of that constantly going door to door in the District of Windsor Lake during my by-election. I was reminded of that constantly going door to door in the by-election in Topsail - Paradise with Paul Dinn. Perhaps I shouldn't mention names.

MR. SPEAKER: No.

MR. CROSBIE: With the Member who succeeded in that by-election.

Thank you.

It is much on people's minds. You encounter it from voters when going door to door; you encounter it in the supermarket; you encounter it when someone cuts your hair. It is a constant point of discussion and a constant point of concern.

I submit, we, as legislators, we, as participants in public debate, we, as the representatives of our constituents, owe it to them to reassure them that Muskrat Falls impact on rates need not be the disaster which it has been portrayed to be. What would be the components of a sensible, feasible plan to tackle the issue of mitigating Muskrat Falls rates? I have regard here to our plan.

Our plan would prevent power-rate increases due to Muskrat Falls by using Nalcor cash flow and returns and dividends for rate mitigation, while implementing best practices for cost reduction, demand management and export revenue generation as recommended by the PUB.

Mr. Speaker, if I might as an aside, I believe I have 15 minutes and our clock says five minutes after 3. Am I guided by that?

MR. SPEAKER: I refer you to the other clock, eight minutes and three seconds.

MR. CROSBIE: So I'm eight minutes into this now?

MR. SPEAKER: You have eight minutes and three second left.

MR. CROSBIE: To go, okay. It's a countdown, like Cape Canaveral.

I don't want to repeat the practice of front-bench Members opposite of constantly over-speaking their time.

Thank you.

As a temporary measure, our plan, if necessary, would use a modest amount of Atlantic Accord fiscal arrangement revenues owed by the federal government to Newfoundland and Labrador to achieve full rate mitigation. Mr. Speaker, it sounds like, given the news today about the unwillingness of the federal government to make payments in arrears that might be owing to this province, it's a good thing that a modest amount only is needed.

As a longer term measure, if necessary, we would use the August 31, 2016 expiry of tax exemptions for the export of power from the Upper Churchill to achieve what Quebec officials themselves have called a fair and equitable return to the province as the owner of the Churchill Falls resource. So you could call that two fail-safes if our finding of sources of finance and savings for Muskrat Falls rate mitigation turn out, for some reason, to be incorrect, and we need to seek other sources of finance to achieve the goal of zero impact from Muskrat Falls coming online and into service, there are those two fail-safe sources of funding to achieve that goal.

So, Mr. Speaker, just by way of background, the Minister of Natural Resources herself noted in her February 19, 2019 letter to the Public Utilities Board: "... the interim report contains preliminary findings and significant work remains to more fully assess and quantify cost impacts and the options to offset them"

We are perfectly aware of that. We are aware that the publicly available information is preliminary, and we all know the reason why that is, because this government triggered and referred to the board the question of finding sources of rate mitigation at a certain time when they did, after considering my advice on the

question for several months. If, in fact, this had started nine months earlier, we'd now have a final report. But we don't.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROSBIE: So we have to work with what we have.

So, what I say is that our plan is based on the best quality, most reliable information available publicly at this time. Of course, if that information changes, the plan is subject to revision. But, of necessity, the reason why we're doing this is to address the profound concern in the public about the affordability of life in this province and whether people should even think of moving away from the province given what they've been told about the doubling of rates. There is a need in the public for reassurance and that's what our plan, on this side of the House, achieves.

Mr. Speaker, I can table the plan. I will do that on the suggestion of the Minister of Finance. I won't go through all the details. I'll just mention that what we've done is we've been explicit on what our sources are, on what the sources of mitigation are, where the money is coming from, where the savings are coming from. Anyone can go to those sources and check it out for themselves. We've been transparent. We've been honest about this and I'm not claiming for it anything other than what it is, it's a best-efforts plan based on the best, currently available information.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I will note the Member opposite, the PC Leader, did say that he doubted that this would have a calming effect or a calming influence on this House. Mr. Speaker, I find nothing about

Muskrat Falls calming. I have been dealing with this project which was ill advised, ill informed to the people of the province, ill developed, ill implemented. I find there's nothing calming about this project, Mr. Speaker.

When the Member opposite rises in his seat and says to the people of the province that it is calming, Mr. Speaker, I will say that I find that he would want to be calming today. I would think that all of us should be outraged at what we're hearing coming from the Muskrat Falls inquiry.

I will say this though, Mr. Speaker, I do welcome, finally, the Progressive Conservative's involvement in this discussion today. I do welcome the Progressive Conservative discussion in this. It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that they started the Muskrat Falls project, but we are where we are today.

I will say that this government, the Liberal government, has done an awful lot to get the project under control, first and foremost, and that, I think, was a herculean effort, and I think the people of the province recognize same. I think the people of the province understand what we had to do during 2016 and 2017.

I find when the Member opposite talks about having to address – and I wrote his words down – profound concern by the people of this province, I couldn't agree with him more. He has to address the profound concern rising from this project.

Mr. Speaker, let me begin by telling the people of the province what we've done, first and foremost, to get the project under control. And I do want to take a few moments to say this, because I think it's very important that people understand the project in 2016 was in peril.

There was a growing cost almost every other month. There was cost being told to the people of the province, rising cost. The schedule was completely lost, Mr. Speaker. We still had to clean up an awful lot of mess. Subcontractors and contractors were not performing where they needed to perform, and it was due to some of the mismanagement, I would say, Mr. Speaker – and that's not from me. That's not from me. That's coming out of the inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, what we did, first and foremost, is we brought in a utility expert. We brought in a utility expert, and the utility expert said we have to make some changes within the project. He made some changes in terms of how the project was organized. He got the project under control, Mr. Speaker. And I thank Mr. Stan Marshall for that. He came out of retirement. He's a world-class, world renowned utility expert. He came out of retirement to help this province, to help the people of this province, and I thank him for doing that.

We put in place an expanded, knowledgeable, credible board of directors. And you're hearing some of what's coming out of the inquiry now that I have some empathy for some of the previous board members, Mr. Speaker, because they didn't have the numbers that were required to manage this project well.

We expanded the Oversight Committee, Mr. Speaker. The Oversight Committee was expanded. We put some independence on that Oversight Committee.

So we've done all those things to get the project under control. We made sure that we negotiated better terms and arrangements with some of the subcontractors to finish the project.

In June of 2017, almost two years ago, Mr. Speaker, we said how much this project was going to cost the people of the province, and so far we haven't had to change that. It's still an atrocious sum of money.

We had to get the project under control, and then we turned our attention to: How are the people of the province going to pay for this project? How are the people of the province going to pay for this?

We know what the Progressive Conservative government did, Mr. Speaker. They said ratepayers will pay for 100 per cent of it. That's what they said, and they made a law to make sure that would happen. They made a law that said 100 per cent of this was going to be on the backs of the ratepayers.

Now, Mr. Speaker, since we've come into government we've gotten the project under control. We started back, I would say in late '16,

early '17, of saying: How are we going to pay for this project? We started a taskforce, internal to government, with Members of Finance and Natural Resources, members of Hydro, members of Nalcor, and back in 2017 we got a taskforce together. We started down the path of finding ways to pay for the project.

In *Budget 2017*, just one short year after we were working so diligently to get the project under control, we also recognized in *Budget 2017* that we needed to put some money in that budget in the later years to make sure we can pay for Muskrat Falls. Then, again, in *Budget 2018*, reiterated and reemphasized that requirement.

Mr. Speaker, you have to remember, back when the project was sanctioned by the Progressive Conservatives they thought it was okay for the people of the province to pay 15.12 cents per kilowatt hour, plus HST. That would be about 17.5 cents, roughly – 17.5 cents. They were okay with that number, Mr. Speaker. That's what they sanctioned Muskrat Falls. We have to remember that. We have to remember what they thought was acceptable to the people of this province. Well, I can tell you, it's not acceptable.

In the last two years, this concern, this issue has been raised by the Premier. It's been raised by me, as Minister of Natural Resources. It's been raised almost by every single person on this side of the House as being a big concern. And as part of our government's consideration, we also made a reference to the Public Utilities Board, Mr. Speaker, and I want to tell you what that reference is.

The reference we put to the Public Utilities Board is very, very important. We did say at the time, Mr. Speaker, that we wanted their involvement and their knowledge, their guidance on a couple of key issues; like options to reduce the impacts on Muskrat Falls, including both cost savings and revenue opportunities. We wanted to look at what guidance they can give them. But I want to remind everybody in the province, that back in 2012 – 2011, 2012 – when this was being reviewed by the former administration, they didn't want the Public Utilities Board's involvement. They didn't want the Public Utilities Board.

I'm going to quote – I looked at an article from CBC, and it says, the headline is: Muskrat project to be exempt from the Public Utilities Board. Now, remember, I just said how important we feel it is that the Public Utilities Board is reviewing how we can address some of the rates.

Back in the day, Natural Resources Minister Shawn Skinner, and I'm quoting here: "Governments have the power under the acts that are available to us to be able to exempt projects."

The article says: the Public Utilities Board "will not be able to conduct the sort of costs-benefits analysis that has been conducted on previous hydroelectric projects, nor will it have the authority to order Nalcor and the government to look at lower-cost options that could meet the province's electrical needs."

Here's a quote from Mr. Skinner: "So, it's not just about the rates ... It's also about things like economic development and government policy." He talked about why he was being exempt. It's not just about rates, it's about things like economic development and government policy.

Well, I could tell you, and I could say to the people of the province, we think it is a concern, the rates that we will have to pay for Muskrat Falls. That's why we've been working so diligently – so, so diligently. And I've said repeatedly to the people of this province how we're going to do that.

I'd put it in three buckets, if I could, Mr. Speaker. We want to grow revenue, and I talk a lot about how we're going to grow revenue; things like electrification of buildings, things like electrification of cars. We haven't had an opportunity to really to go into those types of things. I'm happy to do that at another time. We can increase our rates that we charge externally. When I talk about that, I'm talking about export rates by firming up power. So let's drive some revenue so we can offset the cost.

The second big thing I talk about is reducing costs. Now, the Public Utilities Board talks about those two issues as well. I know that the Crosbie HEAP plan, that has now been tabled in this House –

MR. SPEAKER: No, it hasn't, I'm sorry.

MS. COADY: Pardon me?

MR. SPEAKER: It has not been tabled yet.

MS. COADY: Well, he said he was tabling it. My apologies –

MR. SPEAKER: It has not been tabled yet.

MS. COADY: – to the House. He said he was tabling it.

So I will say the plan that the Member opposite – and he referred to it as that plan. I will say that, Mr. Speaker, in that plan it doesn't deal with some of the opportunities that I've been talking about.

So, the second big thing is how we're lowering costs. Now, there is lots of duplication that we feel that there is between Nalcor and between Hydro. We think we can decrease the amount that we might spend on operations and maintenance, Mr. Speaker. Public Utilities Board talks about that as well.

The third big bucket is managing the mortgage. All of us, or those that have mortgages in this House, know that you can pay biweekly or monthly, for example, on your home mortgage and it can save you money. But the same kinds of things, similar things, are available to us under the Muskrat Falls mortgage. And we're looking at doing all of those things. We're looking into all of those.

But the one thing I will say, the Member opposite didn't do all of the diligence I think that was required of him in his plan. You could see that in some of his plan, Mr. Speaker, which was hastily provided, I think, and prepared – and I respect the fact that he has done something. I'm really glad that they are finally owning up that they have to address the concerns of the Muskrat Falls project. But a lot of public discourse has been around about how some of the plan, maybe some of the math doesn't work out. I could point to some of the issues that say some of the math – and you've seen that on some of the social media sites and on public sites where people are talking about some of the math doesn't work out.

Well, I'll leave that as it is, Mr. Speaker. I understand he might have hastily put it together. But I can assure the people of this province that the due diligence, the methodical work that we have been doing to get the Muskrat Falls project on a better track, on the right track, I would say, we will do with the way we're going to pay for Muskrat Falls.

Now, Mr. Speaker, today's motion talks about without delay. That can be interpreted as a technical term "without delay," that talks about this very instant. In some ways, the law does interpret that as being immediately.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will say that we will be putting forward to the people of this province a way for us to pay for Muskrat Falls so that it's not borne on the backs of the ratepayers, unlike when it was sanctioned – I'll just say that. That was what the plan was. Every ratepayer in this province was going to have to pay for Muskrat Falls. What we're saying is we're going to find a way to pay for Muskrat Falls that does not have that burden.

Now, is there opportunity cost? Absolutely. It means that if we generate more revenue from our export sales, that can't go somewhere else, it has to go to pay for Muskrat Falls. So there is opportunity cost loss, but you can rest assured that there won't be any additional costs coming out of the people's pockets, Mr. Speaker, to pay for Muskrat Falls.

The plan will be forthcoming. I have said repeatedly that I think it's very important that the plan come before the election. Mr. Speaker, I am going to make an amendment to this motion. I move, seconded by the Member for – I am going to look and make sure – Placentia West - Bellevue. It's a changed name. I move, seconded by the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue that the private Member's resolution currently before the House be amended by removing the words "without delay," and I've already addressed why we're saying "without delay" and by inserting instead "as soon as possible."

Mr. Speaker, for two reasons –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. COADY: – “without delay” would mean immediately, today –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. COADY: – by legal interpretation. “As soon as possible” will be as soon as we can possibly avail of this. We’ve told the people of the province what we’re doing and we certainly respect them. I move the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to release its electricity mitigation plan as soon as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

This House will recess to consider the proposed amendment and will be back as soon as possible.

Recess

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The amendment to the motion is deemed to be in order.

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

While it is disappointing that the amendment was ruled in order, it’s certainly not surprising, Mr. Speaker, that the Liberals would move to do that, because perhaps their master plan is really not to give us a plan at all, but to delay it past the election.

I’ll bring you back in time to 2015, Mr. Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The volume has gone up in here a bit.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: But, in 2015, when the people of Newfoundland and Labrador were asked to go to the polls –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS. PERRY: It’s very loud here, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

That’s enough.

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Back in 2015, the voters of Newfoundland and Labrador were going to the polls and the Liberals said to them we have a plan and you’re going to like it. Mr. Speaker, 3½ years later, we’re still waiting for that plan. We have not seen that plan.

My grave fear, Mr. Speaker, is that the same thing is going to happen with rate mitigation. The Liberals are going to tell us oh, we’re working on it – we’re working on it. We’re going to find a way but we’re not going to hear anything about it until after the election. Heaven forbid that they get re-elected, because I truly hope that the people who hold them accountable for the promises that they made and failed to deliver on.

Mr. Speaker, is there plan to sell it off to Quebec or to sell it off to Newfoundland Power? Is that really what the master plan is and they are trying to hide it from us until after the election? Because if that is their master plan, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador need to know their intent before the election and not after the election, unless we have recall legislation to go with it.

I have to tell you that what we’re debating here today – and it’s very bothersome that there’s so much heckling happening. This is a very, very

serious topic, Mr. Speaker. Since our new leader, the Member for Windsor Lake, has been elected, time after time after time again during Question Period in this hon. House, when it is the Leader of the Opposition's role and his right to ask questions, and he asked the Liberals what their plans are, all he gets is a challenge from Members opposite saying: When are you going to admit that the project was a mistake? They're playing games, Mr. Speaker – playing games with something so serious as Muskrat Falls and the future prosperity of Newfoundland and Labrador.

It's a fallacy, too, I would say in terms of how bad Muskrat Falls is. It's a fallacy that the Liberals are propagating. Rates will not double. I have said to the electorate and people I've known for years, you're going to hear a miraculous thing come out of the Liberals just before the next election: No need for the rates to double. But it was never true, Mr. Speaker. It was never true that the rates needed to hit 23 cents per hour. They are always methods of mitigation, and our leader, the Member for Windsor Lake, has outlined some of those methods of mitigation.

I was truly hoping that when the Liberals stood to speak to this today, they would give us some insight into methods of mitigation that they feel exist because we've identified a number of them, Mr. Speaker. But we didn't get any of that. We didn't get one iota of a specific concrete, tangible action. We got three buckets of ways to increase revenue but not one concrete, actionable item to mitigate rates, Mr. Speaker, when they do exist and our leader has shown a way to get them below 15 cents. It can go lower.

We talked about it as a caucus, but there has to be a balance and responsibility here. We need to have dollars in the public purse for things like roads, like schools, like hospitals. So it's a balance all across the board, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Windsor Lake has put forward something far more concrete than anybody else has to date and he certainly won't be selling the shop to Quebec or to good Liberal friends. That's one thing for certain, Mr. Speaker. He will keep the people of Newfoundland and Labrador first and foremost.

I want to talk a little bit now about the role of politics in destroying our economy because if there was ever a project in Newfoundland and Labrador that fell prey to politics, it was Muskrat Falls. I remember Winston the Water Drop, back in the election of 2011. At that time, Mr. Speaker, our then premier, Premier Dunderdale, ran on a campaign of new energy and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador supported the concept at that time.

It's politically, I guess, the right thing for the Members opposite to do to challenge and oppose. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, there's a whole lot of resentment back from 2002 and the failure of Gull Island. Do you know what? I was thinking this weekend as I was putting together a few notes for today. If the Liberals were truly genuine and, in fact, all of us – I'm just going to throw this out there as an idea. But if all of us were truly genuine about our concerns for the environment, all of us were truly genuine about wanting to do what's best for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, we would make Muskrat Falls work. We would avail of the power of Muskrat Falls for Newfoundland and Labrador residents and to attract investors to Newfoundland and Labrador. Maybe we'd do it so well we would never need to develop Gull Island.

Gull Island can stay in its pristine state. Muskrat Falls and Churchill Falls, now that's an idea I put out there on my own and it's something though that the Labrador Land Protectors might be interested in talking about. If we can make Muskrat work and we can make Churchill Falls work, why would we need to develop Gull Island? I just throw it out there, Mr. Speaker. That's something that the Liberals can think about.

Mr. Speaker, Muskrat Falls, all we hear the Liberals talk about is how bad it was and how terrible it was. But was it really an entire failure? Ask the people who worked there, Mr. Speaker

–

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: Ask the people who earned a very good living from that project, Mr. Speaker, for years and years and years in this province.

There has often been times too where the Liberals have been so intent on saying Muskrat Falls is a failure, how much effort have they put into making that a self-fulfilling prophecy, crosses my mind, Mr. Speaker. But the true leaders of this province want to see the project be of benefit for all of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Liberals, once again, led people to believe going into 2015 election they were going to stop the project. Of course, lo and behold, when they got elected, they realized that that couldn't be done. So, again, I caution the voters of Newfoundland and Labrador, if they haven't produced a rate mitigation plan prior to the election we're in big trouble, because the plan is to sell us out.

Mr. Speaker, I was reading, as well, last week an article in the *Atlantic Business Magazine*, and like the Minister of Natural Resources, I too would like to commend Mr. Marshall for coming out of retirement to work on this project. I also want to commend Ed Martin and everyone else who worked on it prior to that, because I genuinely believe people have the best interests of doing what was best for the long-term prosperity of Newfoundland and Labrador at heart with this project.

I quote, Mr. Speaker, from that *Atlantic Business Magazine* on page 11, a quote from Mr. Marshall, who states: "The greatest benefit coming out of Muskrat Falls is we have another generation of bright people, not only engineers, but technicians and accountants, that know their stuff now. They have gone through this project and they will be among the best in the world here."

Mr. Speaker, that is another significant benefit. We have produced in Newfoundland and Labrador, from our own stock, from our own population, people with global expertise that can stand toe to toe with any person, I would say, around the world for the expertise that they have acquired because of this project.

We often hear in this House about the oil revenue, and what's going to happen when the oil money is gone. Well, Muskrat Falls, Mr. Speaker, is a clean, renewable energy project, and Muskrat Falls will generate revenue for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador as long

as it remains a company of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, as long as the water flows.

I would also venture to say, if the Liberals some day try and plan to convince us that it's best to sell the transmission lines or it's best to sell off to Quebec, when they try to tell us that, Mr. Speaker, my counter-argument to that is Quebec or a private-sector company wouldn't want to buy any of that if there wasn't any money to be made. They would not want it if there wasn't money to be made. So keep that in mind when they try to convince us that that's the right thing to do.

So I do see, and I did support, Muskrat Falls, Mr. Speaker, and I still do today. I do see it as a way of using the non-renewable oil money. And, by the way, the Liberals, when they campaigned prior to 2015, weren't going to build an economy on oil, but now it's all about 2030 and the oil – how times do change. But when the oil is gone, this is a renewable project that will continue to generate money for all our people, for all time.

Mr. Speaker, not only does Muskrat Falls provide us with a reliable source of power for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to heat their homes, it also provides us with the opportunity to attract new businesses in mining, because we have the access to the power.

I'm quickly running out of time. I definitely don't have enough minutes here today to speak about the things I'd like to, but let's talk about accountability from 2015 to 2019, because we are now in the fourth year of the Liberal administration, and the Liberals must take responsibility for, and explain, what has gone wrong with the project since 2015. Because when the PCs left office, Mr. Speaker, the project was due for completion in 2017 and the project was due to come in under \$10 billion. But since the Liberals have come in, there was a project delay –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Order, please!

MS. PERRY: There was a project delay. I believe people were out of the country.

Anyway, from October to June, there was equipment that could not travel because of the way the Liberals handled a situation, creating an eight-month delay in the project. What was the cost on that; a hundred million a month? Was it \$10 million a month? The Liberals haven't told us, but did that cost the project an extra half-a-billion dollars?

We saw that the inquiry may cost the project an extra half-a-billion dollars, from legal fees ranging anywhere from \$33 million to \$80 million, to legal fees that will come as a consequence of lawsuits that they expect to occur. So the Liberals wear, in my mind, at least a billion, if not more, of the additional cost, and it's up to them to explain to us how they've mismanaged the project and how they are resulting in delays.

I noticed today, Mr. Speaker, that the minister said the total project cost so far, we haven't had to adjust that, but I saw a tweet from Ashley Fitzpatrick this morning, who is down at the inquiry, and she's tweeting that Cahill-Ganotec is expressing concerns about seeing their schedule slip later this year than was previously expected. If that happens, what does that do to the total project cost? When are the Liberals going to come clean and tell us the truth about what that does to the total project cost?

I'm quickly running out of time. So I will say how disappointing it was that not one word from the Liberals yet today in terms of how they will mitigate rates. Lots of flowery language but no specifics, Mr. Speaker. I am among the 25 per cent of the population, according to that last study, who still support the longer-term merits of this project. I am a person who believes this is the people's company, it is the people's money and I would strongly, strongly oppose selling any portion of it to any private sector entity or any other province, because the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have suffered the project so far, they should avail of all of the benefits it has to bring.

So, I want to close, Mr. Speaker, by saying that I'd like to thank the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Windsor Lake for being

willing to enter politics, for being willing to take this all on, for being willing to give up the opportunity to have a relaxing life and come here and stand up for the people of the Newfoundland and Labrador.

I do believe that there is something that we, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, can all do together to fix the Muskrat Falls project, and that is, Mr. Speaker, to hire the Member for Windsor Lake for the job of premier in 2019. He will be the one to reduce the rates and mitigate this project so that it is truly in the best interest of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians only.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Back in 2012, I sat in this House of Assembly – I've been here now for over 7 years, and I just heard a speech that I heard – I went back in time, Mr. Speaker, back to 2012, and they dusted off their Muskrat Falls speeches and brought them to the floor of the House of Assembly in an unedited version in 2019. That's the speech that I just heard, continuing to defend the Muskrat Falls project.

If you listen to bond rating agencies, if you listen to the people in this province today, it's the biggest, single impact that we are having on the future of Newfoundland and Labrador; yet, Members opposite of the PC Party – let's be very clear – are defending this today.

This private Member's resolution does nothing else today. It really, once again, smoked out the real advocates for the Muskrat Falls project. They went everywhere they could, except calling the former CEO, the premier of the province, Mr. Speaker, but I want to really get back to the plan that we're actually having this private Member's resolution about, which is supposed to be a rate mitigation plan that's put in place by the PC administration.

I will assure you, as I go around this province, the number one concern that we're hearing from people in Newfoundland and Labrador is they are worried. People in Newfoundland and Labrador are worried about electricity rates. People who are looking at investing in this province are worried about where electricity rates could go in this province, but I will assure you, Mr. Speaker, the people in this province need not worry, this Liberal government will have a plan in place. It will have a credible plan in place. It will be somewhat different than this because the math will add up. Let's be very clear, the math is not adding up on this Hydro Energy Action Plan that has been tabled here, or that has been talked about publicly.

I want to get into where we are today. I think the Leader of the Opposition talks about the plan as the CHEAP, and that is exactly where we see this, Mr. Speaker, but I will assure you this it is not cheap electricity rates. The plan itself might've been cheap, as a group got together on a Sunday afternoon, I understand, in their offices, and they put together a very rushed plan.

When you look at what we have done as a government, back in 2016, in recognition that rates, based on everybody's assessment except those of the Member that just spoke, saying that it was a fallacy that rates would go up. We just heard an MHA representing the PC Party, supported by Members across this House, saying that it's a fallacy, that it's a myth, that rates would not double. Well, I will tell you, I listened to a former PC minister of Finance say that math was not their forte. Well, I will guarantee you, math is not the forte of the PC Party today either.

I saw large calculators here by the PC Party when I sat in Opposition. They need to bring back that calculator because the math for this plan that I see here doesn't add up. What I'm talking about is one of the line items that we see there speaks about \$150 million.

Mr. Speaker, you've heard me talk publicly and say that it's copy and paste from the PUB, which, by the way, this government brought the PUB back into Muskrat Falls last fall. The reason why, Mr. Speaker, people will ask questions: Why wait till last fall? It was important that we get near the end of the project

so you'd get a good understanding, a good grasp on where the costs were. This project, as it currently exists right now, will be finished in 2021, the first mortgage payment due in 2021.

So when you look at the pressure that was put on the PC Opposition right now to put together a plan, they rushed it through. They went through the PUB reports, the very crowd, the PUB that the Opposition had kicked out, condescending, made negative comments about, they didn't have any value in the PUB at all, the Public Utilities Board. They had no value in them providing oversight in Muskrat Falls back in 2012. That is the reason why they kicked them out and made those negative comments.

Mr. Speaker, we brought them back in. They committed to putting an interim report out in February of this year. The interim report comes in, and guess what happened? The CHEAP, it surfaced. Guess where the information for the CHEAP came from? It came from the group that they would not listen to back in 2012. They would not listen to the Public Utilities Board back in 2012, they kicked them out, but yet when they designed this CHEAP, it was all from the PUB. Not only did they take stuff from the PUB, in some cases they took too much from the PUB report because they double counted to the tune of \$150 million – \$150 million double counted.

This plan that we're seeing here today is not a rate mitigation plan. This plan is a rate escalation plan, Mr. Speaker. The rates from this plan right here would be higher than when the project was sanctioned in 2012. That's the reason why facts matter, that's the reason why math matters. This plan right here means rates will go up.

So, if you're listening, people who are paying attention to this broadcast today, if you're a senior citizen, if you're a young family or you're a young person in this province, this will not mitigate your rates. This will put your rates up higher than when it was forecasted in 2012.

That is the plan that the Leader of the Opposition, that is the plan that MHAs on the other side of the House are supporting today. We will not support it. We will not let the burden of Muskrat Falls be on –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER BALL: – taxpayers or ratepayers in this province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER BALL: I sat over there and they will not shut me up, Mr. Speaker, they will not shut me up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: I spoke against this project in 2012, led the longest filibuster in the history of this province and I will continue to speak up. I will continue to let people in this province know when I see a false plan, I will raise it. This is a false plan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: So, Mr. Speaker, they talked about mitigating rates to nearly 14 cents, just over 14 cents. This plan will put rates up to about 17 cents. They double counted \$150 million. The Leader of the Opposition, when he announced his plan, said: Well, if we got to take a modest amount from the Atlantic Accord, we will take a modest amount from the Atlantic Accord.

Mr. Speaker, \$150 million in my world is not a modest amount; \$150 million is not a modest amount. It might be a modest amount and it might be a rounding error, which is what we were told by the PC Party, but it matters to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians; \$150 million is not a modest amount at all.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER BALL: Right now, Mr. Speaker, we are seeing this is not a rate mitigation plan. You can't make this stuff up, what we've seen here today.

I've got a few minutes left here and there's a lot that I would say. We will not rush a plan. We put in place, since 2016, \$200 million from Nalcor that we would direct to rate mitigation. Since that, as been mentioned by the minister already, making sure that we stabilize this project, making sure that we keep the cost of this project – the inquiry is putting all kinds of information out there publicly right now of where these costs were not considered in the early days.

The former government was actually notified, and they were warned and suggested that they should put this project on hold for one to two years so that they can do an assessment. They could do an assessment on the Muskrat Falls project, because, at the time, they were telling everybody in this province that this was the lowest-cost option. Remember that? The lowest-cost option, those are the words that were being said, Mr. Speaker. We heard it quite often.

Mr. Speaker, they ignored all of that. They put in two pieces of legislation: one, Bill 60 and one, Bill 61. They stood in this Legislature, defended it for hours and hours and hours, we pushed back. I did not support this project and I would not support it today.

I see people pointing fingers; the project today is a \$12.7 billion project. It is not the least-cost option for people of this province, and I will tell you, this plan will not mitigate rates. This plan will make rates go up.

I will tell you, over time here, we have already set aside \$200 million. We've brought the PUB back in. Synapse and Liberty produced reports near the end of December of last year. Now they are copying and pasting information from that and pretending that it's their plan. This is not their plan. This is information that they took right from the website of the PUB, the same group that they did not want to review this project. It's the same group that they are taking information from today.

So, this rate mitigation plan hits the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This rate mitigation plan that the PC Party has put in place, that the Opposition Party is now defending, will increase rates in this province by nearly 40 per cent, Mr. Speaker, nearly 40 per

cent. That's the impact of rate mitigation, and it is not fair for them to stand up here today and defend this plan. It is not fair for them today to stand up and say that this is not a fallacy, that Muskrat Falls is not a fallacy.

People in this province are watching daily with the information that is coming from this inquiry, information that was kept, even from the government that they were part of. Even today, they're still defending, they are saying that it was okay for the leaders of the day that were making decisions on this project to keep information from them. How can you defend that today, realizing that this has the biggest single impact on ratepayers and taxpayers in this province?

It's not us saying that. Bond rating agencies are saying that, people that are concerned and worried about their electricity rates are saying that. I've seen PC leader after PC leader after PC leader, as I've been the Leader of the Liberal Party in this province, defend this project, and we had a Leader again today, with his MHAs out around him, once again, defending this project. When everyone else in this province right now considers this project to be a mistake, we have at least eight people over there right now that are saying, no, it is good. They're saying that this will generate money for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

It will only generate money for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians if it takes it from their pocket; that is what we're talking about here. I thought about it for seven years, and I'll continue to fight for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: This decision on rate mitigation should not be rushed. You have to do the right thing.

I will tell you, when I look at this plan here, and history tells us that I am not allowed to use the name –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER BALL: – on this plan. People tell us that we're not allowed to put the name – I'm not allowed to use what this C word stands for; not allowed to say that, apparently, in this House.

What I will say, Mr. Speaker, what it doesn't stand for is credible. This is not a credible plan. It is not a comprehensive plan. The numbers aren't correct and there is no confidence in this plan.

I will assure you, and assure the people in this province, 2019 is an election year; it is an election year. We will put in place a credible plan so that people in this province can have the confidence that their rates will not double.

As I listen to the Members opposite continue to support the Muskrat Falls project, continue to say that rates would not double. Imagine, 22.89 cents, from currently around just over 12 cents today, and they're saying that it's not going to double. They're saying it's a fallacy. They're saying people shouldn't be worried. Well, people should be worried if that's the way you're thinking, I would say. We will put in place a creditable plan. We will take this to the people of the province right now.

When I hear them saying today that after six months you should accept the responsibility, Mr. Speaker. Well, I would say after 3½ half years, you should accept the responsibility of the mess that you've created in this province. We will fix it. We will put in place a creditable plan.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to table this today because I understand I can table it, so I can call it for what it is, Mr. Speaker. It is not a cheap plan, but just look at it, it will tell you what it is, Mr. Speaker.

In the future, we can refer to this as exactly what it is, this is not reducing rates in our province, Mr. Speaker. This will put rates up in our province. We will use the time that's necessary to put in place a good plan, keeping rates affordable for people in this province. This government will do that and it will be done before the election.

People have a right to know, Mr. Speaker. Just like they had a right to know in 2012 when you hid the real information from them. We will put

the information out there so that they can make a decision, Mr. Speaker, and we will not hide it from the people of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I have intentions of sitting in Chair today and not stifling debate, nor do I want to stifle debate. There are Members here, you know who you are, you are out of order, and I will put up with it no more.

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

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

What a sorry mess we have. What a sorry mess we're in. We don't know how this is going to be resolved. Government talks about, the Minister of Natural Resources talks about some sort of vague ideas about electrification of public buildings. We've asked about how much that will cost, what's the cost benefit analysis of that. The issue of electric cars, what will that cost us to the infrastructure? We're such a tiny population, an aging population, electric cars are very, very expensive. I'm looking forward to the day when all of us are moving towards electric cars.

But we have a mess. One of the things that we are dealing with is people's fears. We know that we had a really cold winter this year and people's heat bills went up, they increased, and that's before we even see what the cost of electricity would be as a result of Muskrat Falls before mitigation.

We do have to have mitigation, but, Mr. Speaker, sitting in this House today, just hearing the Conservatives bash the Liberals, the Liberals bash the Conservatives. Really – really, is that how we're going to get to the best possible solution for all of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? Is that how we're going to achieve this? I think not, but I tell you, I'm tired of it. I'm tired of it. This is not the way to move forward. It really and truly is not the way to move forward.

We know that the Conservatives, one of the reasons we are in this mess is when the Conservatives had power, when they were in government, they would not listen to anyone. They wouldn't listen to anybody who raised questions. They wouldn't listen to anyone who raised objections. In fact, what happened, Mr. Speaker, people who did raise questions, people who were really experienced in these areas, people who did raise questions were ignored, they were vilified, they were labelled as traitors and they were just pushed to the side.

When we see that the Minister of Finance, who was formerly with the Conservatives, he left. He left as a result of Muskrat Falls, and my colleague here for Mount Pearl - Southlands, he was with the Conservatives and had a really hard time believing that Muskrat Falls was gonna be good for the people.

MR. K. PARSONS: And spoke on it more than any other Member.

MS. ROGERS: And he supported it for quite a long time.

So, the problem we have is because people would not listen to one another. The problem we have is because officials in Nalcor would not listen to the objections or the cautions or the risks that were raised by those who had them. They would not listen.

Was it arrogance? Was it inexperience? Was it hubris? Was it stupidity? Was it fear? I don't know. It could've been a combination of a number of things, and that's what we see every day that the inquiry on Muskrat Falls continues, we hear more and more and more.

We are not going to get to the best solution by yelling at one another across this aisle. We're not. I'm sick of it and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are sick of it. They're absolutely sick of it. They want to see substantial solutions, solutions that work for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of rate mitigation is not just about reducing the cost to the consumer. Let's stop using the words the consumers and the taxpayers. It's the people. It's the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is seniors who

are already on the brink of poverty; many, many seniors. Some seniors are financially fine and safe and secure, but a lot of ours aren't.

So it is seniors. It is young working families. It is single parent families. It's people who work minimum wage jobs, who work really, really hard. It is people who have degrees and are paying for their student loans and their car payments and their mortgage payments and their child care – which is at least almost a thousand bucks a month per child. It's all of those people who are worried about not only what their rates are going to be, but what a loaf of bread is going to cost because of the increase in costs of electricity to our bakers. What all of our groceries are going to cost because of the increase of the cost of electricity to grocery stores for coolers, for freezers, for lighting, for heat. The spinoff is going to be incredible, and we know that.

Now, only a few weeks ago our party proposed an all-party committee on rate mitigation and the future of Muskrat Falls. Again, it's not just about the mitigation of the rates, but it's also about the future of Muskrat Falls. How can we turn some of the aspects of Muskrat Falls into economic benefit for the province? Because we know what was going to happen was that we would sell surplus energy, and we would sell it at a fraction of the cost to produce it. So maybe that's not in our best interest. Maybe when we look at some of the innovative industries that are electric intensive, power intensive, maybe that's something we can do – maybe.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't work for us just to go off into our own corners and only speak to ourselves and then come out fighting – we're not going to get anywhere. And I tell you, I'm angry about what's happening here today. I really, really am. I believe the opportunity for us to work together on this still exists.

Anybody who was clear thinking and who was really focused on what we would do, would have a select all-party committee, because what a damn mess we have. What a mess we have, Mr. Speaker, and we have to find solutions. Solutions will involve the federal government, it will involve municipal governments, it will involve provincial governments, it will involve industry, it'll involve academia, and it will

involve the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I believe we can come up with – I truly believe we can come up with innovative solutions. The challenges are huge, but they are not insurmountable if we work together.

Imagine where we would've been had – when this Liberal government took power, if they had said, hang on a sec now, we're going to do a complete review before we move any further, but they didn't do that. Imagine, if they had struck a select all-party committee three years ago to look at this. But here we are, maybe only two months away from a provincial election – some of the signs are leading to that. Maybe it's going to be in the fall, we don't know.

Maybe this government will honour our fixed election date, or at least a month later. We have a fixed election date for a reason – or maybe they will use and abuse their power and call it earlier, which would be an abuse of our democratic process because there is no real pushing matter, no benefit to the people. It only would be a benefit to their own party and their own goals and objectives, but we don't know.

Mr. Speaker, our private Member's motion did not pass. I believe that was a missed opportunity. What clear-thinking person, when they have such an incredible challenge ahead of them, would not engage every possible measure to come up with the best possible solution? Because it is tangly. It is really tangly.

The other thing we are dealing with is that people have lost confidence in our democratic process. They have lost confidence in the governance over the past few years. With the Conservatives, we see what happened in the last provincial election. And people are angry, and people are afraid, and people are confused.

We've all heard this; we've heard it from people in our own district saying, I don't know if I'm going to stay. How many people have we heard say, I have encouraged my children to leave. Then, it's more so our younger people who are leaving, but now we have people who are grandparents who are saying, you know what, I'm going to Calgary too, because not only are my kids there, my grandkids are there – saying, I don't know what the future is going to be like

here in our province because of the high cost of electricity.

So we have to instill a confidence in the people of the province. We're 520,000 people shrinking with an aging population. Those who can afford to go, many of those have gone. Those who can least afford to go and can least afford the high cost of living here, cannot afford to leave. How do we re-instill a sense of confidence in our governing process for our people? How do we instill a sense of hope for our people? How do we instill a sense of optimism for business?

I'm sure government has spoken to a lot of business interests, telling them that this is going to be okay, that they're going to have a solution. But to not work on it together – all of us here are getting paid pretty decent salaries, particularly if you're a Cabinet minister or hold another post. They're not bad salaries. None of us here in this House have to worry about how we're going to pay our electricity. Also, the fact that we are being paid, the people of the province do want us to work together. They're not interested in this back-and-forthing that we've seen today. They want to see solutions. Young people want to see solutions.

I don't know how many people in this House were out on the steps of Confederation Building last Friday when a number of young folks, hundreds of them, joined in a global strike for climate change. I was there, and it was very interesting.

We talk about in this House that young people are our future. They had asked me to speak, and I said, you know, young people are not our future; they are not our future. Young people are our present, and they will help lead us into the future. But we can't think about them just as the future. They are present, and they have some pretty clear things to say. They know how important it is how we handle the future, and they know how important the whole issue of climate change is, the whole issue of how we are going to deal with Muskrat Falls, because they know it's going to affect them and their children.

We've heard many Members here in this House talk about that, that we don't want to put the burden on to our children. Well, it's there. That

burden is there, and everybody is sharing in that burden.

We do have to come up with real, solid solutions. Again, not just for what the people of the province are going to be paying for electricity rates, but also what are we going to do? What are we going to do with all that power? How are we going to make sure that we use it to our best advantage, and how are we going to work with the federal government?

We haven't heard anything from the federal government at all in their budget, anything that would help us out of this situation. We haven't heard a peep from government about any way that their counterparts in Canada, the federal counterparts – we haven't heard a peep from anybody in government about what the federal government, their counterparts, how they're going to help us, because they're part of this. They even gave it a second loan guarantee. So they're holding the guarantee for this.

We've seen the federal government bail out the auto industry. We see the incredible amount of money they've spent to bail out Alberta to buy a pipeline. So, what are they going to do? They have to work with us. They have to be part of the solution, and so far we have heard nothing from government about what that role might be or what that direction might be. So, Mr. Speaker, we need to work together.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Excuse me, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Sorry, my apologies.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We'll certainly await the comments from my colleague on the other side after I speak. I'm looking forward to it.

Mr. Speaker, thank you. It's certainly a pleasure to rise today to speak to this motion. I thank my colleague from St. John's East who put some perspective in this, and some of the previous – St. John's Centre, sorry.

This is about looking forward. It's about collectively looking at solutions and sharing those ideas as we move towards some policy decisions that are required. I think that's what this is about, and I think that's what this private Member's resolution is about, looking at those policy decisions that need to be made and how collectively we can make those.

This is led by the Leader of the Opposition who put this resolution forward, to look at specifically rate mitigation. What was put forward by the Leader of the Opposition and certainly our party in regard to rate mitigation and what's required to look at in regard to Muskrat Falls and the overruns and where we find ourselves in regard to that, and how we would give some assurances to the people of the province that there is a means and ways here to deal with this, and that's what was laid out in the rate mitigation plan by the Leader of the Opposition some time ago.

Now, that was done in the backdrop to 3½ years of the current administration often talking about various aspects of Muskrat Falls, but not dealing specifically with rate mitigation. There has been reference to the fact of doubling of electrical rates in the province. We had over 3½ years, we've had no definitive structure or identify or mitigation plans or specifically direction on how that would be handled and what means would be used to handle it.

So I know personally, as Natural Resources critic, over the past number of years in the House here my colleagues have asked questions to the Minister of Natural Resources and the Premier in regard to options that have been available, and some of those have been recently identified by the PUB. Now, before the PUB started the work some months ago – I know in 2016 we asked here in regard to Muskrat Falls, the various elements of it. When you look at something like excess energy and the excess energy that would be available that wouldn't be used here domestically, that wouldn't be involved with the – made with Emera, and

transporting it out of the Island and into Nova Scotia, there would be surplus energy.

We asked back then: Why wouldn't this be used, or why wouldn't any revenue be generated from that? Whether it was sold on the spot market, or at some point there were firm agreements made with some other purchaser. Why would that not be used to offset and mitigate rates?

Even back then in 2016, I wrote the current Minister of Natural Resources, I wrote Nalcor, and we received actual information – and that came after the new CEO of Nalcor came in. I think it was in the summer of 2016, and those projections of excess energy and what the cost or what the return would be on that were reduced by the new CEO and by Nalcor, I guess, from what was originally signed with the sanctioning of Muskrat Falls.

With that information that was released at that point in time, from the year roughly 2020, when Muskrat Falls was deemed to become operational and start generating electricity for domestic use and for export sale, from 2020 to possibly 2040, 2041, there was over \$3 billion – I think it was \$3.2 billion that was identified. Now, that was identified in 2016. Again, \$3.2 billion was identified by the new CEO of Nalcor, by the new board of directors. That would be available – at a very conservative level that would be available to offset electricity rates.

I heard the Premier speak earlier, and he talked about just copy and pasting what the PUB has said. Well, actually, what the PUB has said has validated a lot of the information that we've asked about over the past two years, and that has been provided, and some of it coming from Nalcor. The excess energy is one of those. In the two consultant's reports that were done leading into the interim report for the PUB, as well identified excess energy as one of those areas that can be used and should be used and is available to offset electricity rates for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

That, as well, was identified as one of the components when the Leader of the Opposition released the rate mitigation plan to put information in the public domain, based on the best information that was available, based on information that was provided by Nalcor. As

well, based on information that was in the public domain, based on the Public Utilities Board work, two consultants they had hired and the interim report they had released.

All of that collectively, and other research we had done and people we had spoken to, formulated what the Leader of the Opposition had released as a very legitimate plan to let the people of the province know, here are actual legitimate ways and means of how rates can be mitigated, and here's where they are.

So that was all released and provided in the context that here is the best information we have. We're not government of the day, that's the folks who sit on the other side, but here is the information that's available. And based on this information, here's what can be used and should be used in regard to mitigation of rates.

Now, excess energy was one of those. Another one that, as well, the PUB has talked about and referenced in recent reports they have done and consultants they have hired, and, as well, the interim report they have done – and we've asked about this as well. We have the records and the letters that were written to the Minister of Natural Resources and to Nalcor in 2016 and 2017, talking and suggesting about, tell us the return on equity.

Based on the investment that the people of the province have done, through significant investment in Nalcor and in Muskrat Falls, there's a rate of return on that investment, which is 8.2 per cent, I believe, similar to what a private utility would be. What if we used that? Because that rate of return is coming back at some point to the province. So what if that were used?

That was information, again, that was in the public domain prior to any work was done by the PUB, that this is an option that can be used and should be used to mitigate rates and give the public of the province some assurances that some of the things we're hearing about where rates are going to go could be an avenue as well to deal with that. Again, I think based on some of the information, if I remember correctly of the PUB; that is a significant amount of money, in the billions of dollars that could be used if the return on equity to the province was reduced,

and some of that, or all of it was taken and used to mitigate rates.

Now I understand some of that, as well, is used to pay for the financing – of the financing with the financial institutions that Nalcor used to raise that money. So some of that – maybe all couldn't be used, but some of it would be used to finance the debt and the payback of that particular money, but some of it still exists. That was available in 2016-2017, that information as well.

So, my point being, the PUB has also identified that as an area today. Two of those areas I've mentioned. The excess sale of energy and, as well, a return on equity that we have in Muskrat Falls. That information has been available. The PUB has referenced it again, and obviously legitimized these items as ones that we have talked about over the past couple of years leading up to today.

No doubt the PUB, as I said, has validated some of those. Again, I refer back to comments made by the Premier when he talked about the plan released by the Leader of the Opposition was copying and pasting what the PUB has said. In fact, a lot of what the PUB – while, no doubt, there has been a lot of detail, a lot of work, a lot of excellent work done, a lot of those items were being spoken to and talked about in the previous year. After this government came to power and talked about – and we all know because of the overruns, there would be an increase in rates, and how those rates would be assisted, and how we could use the returns from non-renewable resources from places like our oil and gas sector, could be used to assist with the renewable resources, something like hydroelectric power which we have here in Muskrat Falls.

It'll be a significant asset when it's built. It'll last (inaudible) 80 to a hundred years. As long as the water flows, that will continue to generate electricity and continue to generate and provide the domestic needs for the province, certainly on the Island with the link to the Island.

Also, one of the even more important parts of it, based on when we look at industrial development, and you look at all the resources, certainly the minerals that are available in Labrador, the success we've had to date, when

we look at the commodity markets, they've fallen over the past number of years, but you look at where they're coming today and where they're moving forward, now we have long term – we have an energy source in Labrador that can drive that economic activity, mineral activity to drive all kinds of opportunities for Labrador, which is significant when you look at that power availability. So that factors into the plan of that asset and what it will mean in the long term.

Now, based on the assessment of what the PUB has done and some of their work in terms of projections and covering cost, originally, today's cost of electricity rates in the province are just under 13 cents, I believe. And it's important, too, that when you're talking about electricity rates and the projections for 2020 – and it's going to be 22.86 cents, just under 23 cents, I think, is the area – that in that rate calculation is a vast amount of cost related to electricity service, electricity cost base to other infrastructure outside of Muskrat Falls.

So leading up to 2020, any cost that is incurred in electricity rates or any increase is not related to Muskrat Falls. Muskrat Falls' rates begin in 2020, and those rates at that point in time will reflect the cost of Muskrat Falls. To that point, those rates are reflective of normal utility infrastructure builds and returns that are required to people like Newfoundland Power, Fortis. Certainly, the returns for any builds they have done, and they would go to the PUB as an application and ask to have that approved with a return on their investment, as well as a return on equity. So that's important to remember. That's within that overall rate at the end of the day that we talked about.

There was a line built from Bay d'Espoir in to Soldiers Pond to allow to have some redundancy and to have an availability of electricity. That's an example of work that has been done domestically in the utility industry in the province that requires to be factored into rates, and the customer would pay for that. So that's an example of that.

When you look at Muskrat Falls and what the PUB has said where we're going to be in 2020, rates are going to be – not based on Muskrat Falls – based on expenditures to date on the current utility system and what's required to

operate and maintain that. I think we're going to be just under 15 cents – I think 14.4 cents. So that's where we're going to be.

So the question becomes from there out to – what the actual rate is going to be for Muskrat Falls becomes what you're going to mitigate and how you're going to mitigate it. Then we look at those items I talked about, that we've identified over the last couple of years. The information has been available over the last couple of years, and what the PUB basically has talked about in its recent report.

Now, in the rate mitigation plan that the Leader of the Opposition announced a few weeks back, there were also other options available. When you look at the agreement on the Upper Churchill and what that would mean when we had the automatic renewal in 2016 for an automatic 25 years, there's a provision there that exempted taxation on the transmission of electricity. What's allowed now, which the Premier never spoke to earlier, is another option that we can pursue in regard to the transmission of energy and the ability now to be able to tax that. That taxation would generate tremendous wealth.

When you look at the amount of energy that's generated in the Upper Churchill, I think it's somewhere around 2,300 megawatts of power, an enormous amount of power that's being generated, but that exemption was put in place when the agreement was set up originally in the operations of the Upper Churchill, I believe around '71 or '72, and was put in place until 2016, when an automatic renewal kicked in for 25 years to 2041. So what that allows is for taxation on the transmission, and a huge generation of wealth from that.

So those are just three elements I've talked about in regard to a mitigation plan, and those are three, and others, that the Leader of the Opposition has outlined in the plan that he laid out. Now, does it have all the answers? Is all the information available? Probably not, but that was never the intent.

The intent was to recognize that the government of today, after 3½ years, has laid out no plan, has given no assurance to the people of the province of why and how we would handle this,

and let them know that there are opportunities here to deal with this. It's time to lay it out.

This motion today, while it's being amended, talks about as soon as possible. Well, as soon as possible is never going to come. It's about laying that rate mitigation plan out there. The government of today, lay it out now. Let's have a discussion, and let's assure the people of the province that there is a way forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly appreciate the opportunity to stand and speak to this debate. Before I do that, I do want to join the Speaker earlier in congratulating our Page, Alden Spencer, on her accomplishment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BROWNE: A former Page of the House of Commons, one of 40 selected for that honour, Mr. Speaker. Fully bilingual and now a recipient of the Lord Beaverbrook Scholarship; soon going to be going to law school, and a native of Marystown.

I certainly join my colleagues in congratulating Alden. So, congratulations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, I've listened with great interest here today, and did you hear the Leader of the Official Opposition's opening remarks that this Muskrat Falls gamut was an unfortunate misadventure? It's truly unfortunate, actually, that we haven't got to a place where the Leader of the Official Opposition feels comfortable in calling this the grotesque mistake that it was and the impacts that it will have on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

It's truly sad that we sit through this entire afternoon and they can't even bring themselves to not only acknowledge the pain and suffering that they would cause to the people of this province by the rates increases, Mr. Speaker, they can't even call it a mistake, Mr. Speaker.

We heard earlier today the Leader of the Opposition wants governments, Mr. Speaker, six months into their mandate, to accept responsibility for all things gone by in the past, but he himself is not willing to take responsibility for the PC Party. He is the Leader of the PC Party. He's gone to great lengths to try and distance himself from his colleagues, Mr. Speaker, but I say it is not possible to do. We also hear Members of his caucus standing today defending, vigorously, Mr. Speaker, vigorously defending the Muskrat Falls project.

I take issue with my good friend from Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune and some of the comments that she would have made. In 2012, Mr. Speaker, as an example, on December 4, 2012, the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune said – and I quote – if we don't get Muskrat Falls our rates will double. Mr. Speaker, well, they're doubling with it I can guarantee you that.

Now, today, she says that's a fallacy. She says it's a fallacy that there will be impacts from Muskrat Falls; said it in this debate, Mr. Speaker, said it here in this debate that there is no impact to Muskrat Falls.

So, on the one hand, Mr. Speaker, the Member is saying that there's no impact. Then on the other hand, she's asking for a plan to address the impacts from this government. Does anyone else see the irony? Does my hon. colleagues see the irony in saying on the one hand there are no impacts but then standing and pontificating and demanding that there be a plan tabled in the Legislature by the government to address the impacts of the plan, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. PERRY: A point of order, Mr. Speaker, number 49.

What I was saying, Mr. Speaker, is that the Liberals are fear mongering trying to make

people believe the rates have to be 23 cents, and here today they still refuse to produce a plan.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's not a point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: I'm the Speaker here.

I don't see that as a point of order.

Thank you.

I ask the Member to please continue.

MR. BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, they needed the CHEAP to fix the most expensive public project in the history of this province. So I'm not going to be deterred, nor detracted from saying what I have to say and represent the people of Placentia West - Bellevue.

I can tell you, I heard what was said earlier, Mr. Speaker, and it was said that it was a fallacy, that Muskrat Falls will have an impact on rates in this province, Mr. Speaker. That was said in this Chamber, just like it was said that the Seniors' Advocate was a luxury. I've heard it all. I've taken notes, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure *Hansard* tomorrow, *Hansard* will back me up on what I'm saying here.

It is shameful that we're hearing Members of the Opposition saying that there's no impact to Muskrat Falls; there's no impact. Well, why do you have a CHEAP? Why are you bringing forward a plan, I say to the Members opposite?

Then we hear Members opposite defending the project saying they still support it. So, they still support putting the seniors of Parker's Cove and Rushoon and Terrenceville and Grand Le Pierre and Come By Chance in near bankruptcy because they can't afford their power bills. They accept having people on fixed and low income, Mr. Speaker. They accept people on low income having to choose between paying their rent and paying their light bill. That is the choice. These are the real choices that we have to face.

I heard the Member for St. John's Centre as well chiming into the debate, and I agree with most of what the Member had to say, but the Member for St. John's Centre was, through her entire speech, acting as if she had all the answers and

has all the support. I remind the Member, she wouldn't support the Grieg project for the people of the Burin Peninsula – I haven't forgot that, either, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you, this government supports jobs in a stainable way and we all work together. So that's what I say to the Member opposite.

This whole project has been marred with a lack of accountability, Mr. Speaker. From day one, the PUB was kicked out. There was no independent oversight. Nalcor was like a runaway train, we're finding out through the inquiry, but they still support it and they're saying there's no impact, yet, they're demanding that we produce a plan.

I can guarantee Members opposite, we'll produce a plan, and it won't be the CHEAP. They're admitting – they have admitted in the past, the PC Finance minister said they were bad with math. Well, Mr. Speaker, my math is this on CHEAP. CHEAP minus C is HEAP, which is a heap of rubble is where this should go. That's exactly where this ought to go because there is no substance in this plan.

The Leader of the Official Opposition has said, well, it could shift if the numbers shift from the PUB, Mr. Speaker. We've heard all that today. So it's not a plan. At best, it is an outline, but then we have Members of his caucus saying that there's no impact.

So, why would you have a plan if there's going to be no impact? These are the ironies that we're dealing with. It would be laughable if it wasn't so serious for the seniors of this province and the people who are on low income of this province didn't have to suffer the consequences of the Muskrat Falls fiasco. Make no wonder there's an inquiry.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do want to take my remaining time to address the CHEAP. I was listening to an interview on *On the Go* by an esteemed expert, Mr. Tom Adams, an energy consultant, who was a critic of the Muskrat Falls project when you kicked the PUB out in 2012. He was a critic then, Mr. Speaker. He has addressed certain matters and if you look at the plan, Mr. Speaker, there is quite a bit in there about savings from Holyrood – \$150 million. This is what Mr. Adams said: So, one of the large items that the

Opposition is counting on is fuel savings from Holyrood. These are savings that are already baked into the official plan about how Muskrat is going to operate. So, they're already factored in, Mr. Speaker, you can't count on those.

He goes on to talk about the \$41 million that the CHEAP estimated it's going to generate in revenue from export sales and he says – and I quote – the notion of the lucrative New England power market reoccurs over and over again. It's been used to justify all kinds of fanatical plans – is what he called it – that have not materialized. It is practically ridiculous. That's what he says about the \$41 million from export power, Mr. Speaker.

I will continue. Mr. Speaker, he talks about the Muskrat Falls dividends, which is estimated to be at \$123 million in the Leader of the Official Opposition's plan. And he says – and this is what I quote – the notion that Muskrat is going to be generating dividends, like, oh my Goodness, he says. He says: There's no magic for this.

So we have an expert, Mr. Speaker, already putting holes into the plan that is known as the CHEAP. It was done on the cheap, Mr. Speaker, I believe, because there's obviously no foresight, no planning gone into this, which was the same type of lack of control gone into the Muskrat Falls project.

If you look at part (e) of the CHEAP – which is Nalcor oil revenue – it quotes the 2007 Energy Plan where it says: Oil and gas, once produced and consumed, are depleted forever. Therefore, will maximize and effectively invest the value received from these resources to ensure current and future generations benefit.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what happened to that in 2017? Where did it all go? Where did the money go? Why did this government inherit a nearly \$2.7 billion deficit? Why were there ferries built in Romania that could have been built in Marystown, Mr. Speaker, where they forgot the wharf, they forgot there would be tariffs because there was a ferry that sunk out in BC.

This is the type of lack of planning that became a hallmark of the former administration, which is why the largest project in the history of this

province, paid for out of the public purse, was rammed through, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BROWNE: Rammed through after the PUB was kicked out and now they're back in and they're citing every number that they find from the PUB.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, it is quite a story. It is quite an analysis, I tell you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired

Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I now call on the Member for Windsor Lake, please, to conclude the debate.

Thank you.

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, thank you.

I would also thank the Members who participated in the debate: The Member for St. John's West, Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, the hon. Premier, St. John's Centre, Ferryland, Placentia West - Bellevue, who just resumed his seat. Thank you all.

To finish up, Mr. Speaker, my leadership – I stake my leadership on this and my reputation – is based on the premise that honesty counts. It's based on honest leadership.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: There are two things I want to comment on by way of my final remarks on this motion. One of them has to do with an incorrect statement of facts, or a misleading characterization of facts about the plan that we put forward, namely on the part of the Premier. He puts forward that our plan would actually result in increasing rates. This is based on confusion, which he might've corrected had he ran the explanatory notes on the table which

shows where the money is coming from, in the document that he himself tabled not so long ago this afternoon, our energy action plan.

The other thing I want to address is revisionist history, in which people decide to forget inconvenient facts and characterize history as something other than what the facts show it to be. In other words, you would think from listening to Members opposite, including the Premier, that Muskrat Falls – they knew to be a curse on Newfoundland and Labrador today. It always was a curse on Newfoundland and Labrador. They knew it to be so at the time, and it always will be a curse on Newfoundland and Labrador in the future.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROSBIE: Revisionist history, Mr. Speaker. I'll address the first point first, and that is that the average amount per year that we found necessary to mitigate rates was based on 14.67 cents per kilowatt hour. That is an increase from where rates currently are, as the Minister of Natural Resources would be very well aware. That is an increase that is happening because it is already in the pipeline. It's baked into things; cost of service, improvements and maintenance that our utilities already had to perform independently of Muskrat Falls, and which have nothing to do with the Muskrat Falls project.

It is Nalcor itself which has projected average domestic rate for 2020, the baseline year before Muskrat Falls is producing power in 2021, as 14.67 cents per kilowatt hour. The source for that is PUB-Nalcor-029, page 1. My plan at page 9 gives the link, for anyone opposite who wants to check up on that.

So, this plan is based on a base rate which will already exist at the time of Muskrat Falls coming into service, of 14.67 cents. That rate will exist entirely independently of Muskrat Falls and has nothing to do with this rate mitigation plan. It is the baseline rate when Muskrat comes in service.

Furthermore, revisionist history; the hon. Premier claims he had insight into the perils of

Muskrat Falls from the very beginning. Not true. The truth is that the hon. Premier enthusiastically told the world in December 2012 that he, quote, could always support the principles of Muskrat Falls.

I read from *Hansard* in the debate that took place in December 2012 – I'll get the exact date. *Hansard*, December 20, 2012. And I quote the hon. Premier – not premier at that time, but a Member of the House: “I can remember in November, 2010 being in Central Newfoundland and there was a media release that came out and said there was going to be an announcement on the development of the Lower Churchill. I pulled over and listened intently to the media release and the discussion about the term sheet.

“I will say I was quite happy to hear what I was hearing. Like many of us, we grew up looking for and wanting to see the Lower Churchill developed.” I was quite happy, he said.

“I know within the last year or so I've asked a number of questions in this House. I can assure you the principles of the development of Lower Churchill are always something I could support. The economic benefits that the development could create I think is a good thing. The opportunities we will have in Labrador as a result of this will be a good thing. Closing down Holyrood, as I said earlier tonight, will be a good thing. The fact that we have taken a different corridor around Quebec will be a good thing. That is the message they need to hear and it gives confidence to the people here in the province. We need that.”

To cap it off, the hon. Premier at that point, and in December 2012, tweeted as follows:
@Dwight Ball, MHA –

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the –

MR. CROSBIE: – MF has dominated my life since election 2011; could always support the principles of Muskrat Falls. Revisionist history.

Mr. Speaker, so to return to the resolution at hand.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROSBIE: The people of the province deserve –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: I said order. There are a few minutes left but we're going to go through it quietly and listen to one person at a time.

MR. CROSBIE: We are in a crisis of confidence in the future. The people of the province deserve their government to pay attention to their crisis of confidence in the future of this province and come forward, not eventually, not at an election trick, but right now with their own rate mitigation plan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

First of all, on the question of the amendment.

All those in favour of the amendment please say 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against the amendment?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

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

AN HON. MEMBER: Division, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Division has been called.

I ask the House Leaders and Whips to please call in your Members.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: Are the House Leaders ready?

First of all, on the question of the amendment, is it the pleasure of the House to adopt that amendment?

All those please signify by standing.

Thank you.

CLERK (Barnes): Ms. Coady, Mr. Haggie, Ms. Dempster, Mr. Crocker, Mr. Osborne, Mr. Mitchelmore, Ms. Gambin-Walsh, Mr. Warr, Mr. Edmunds, Ms. Haley, Mr. Browne, Mr. Bragg, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Finn, Mr. Holloway, Mr. King, Ms. Pam Parsons, Mr. Reid, Mr. Joyce.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against the amendment, please rise.

CLERK: Mr. Crosbie, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Brazil, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Ms. Perry, Mr. Dinn, Mr. Petten, Mr. Lester, Ms. Rogers, Mr. Lane.

Mr. Speaker, the ayes 19, and the nays 10.

MR. SPEAKER: The amendment has been carried.

Now, for the main question.

All those in favour of the amended motion please signify by saying, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against the amended motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

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

The motion, as amended, has been carried.

Given it is Wednesday, and in accordance with Standing Order 9, this House does now stand adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 o'clock.

Thank you.