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Statements by Members

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

Order, please!

I would like to welcome all the Members back for another week in the House of Assembly.

Unfortunately, I'd like to pass on some very sad news to my colleagues in this room. You may have heard through the news that the Speaker of Nunavut, the hon. Joe Enook, died Friday night, early Saturday morning, and for those of you who've had the chance to work with him – I know I certainly have enjoyed that opportunity. Many of my colleagues on the floor here have also, at various parliamentary meetings. He recently participated with us in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. I tell you, Nunavut has lost a great son, our province has lost a great friend.

So, on behalf of the Legislature, I do extend condolences to his family, his friends and all the people of Nunavut, and, frankly, all those who've worked with him.

In the Speaker's gallery today – and, I'm sorry, the hon. the Deputy Speaker and the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay will also be speaking about Mr. Enook in his statement.

On a happier occasion, I would like to recognize some great friends and some special guests in the Speaker's gallery today. We have with us the World Special Olympics Bronze Medallist, Mr. Peter Hynes of Placentia.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Joining Mr. Hynes are his parents, Jayne and Rod Hynes, his aunt, Susan Murray. They are also joined by the Executive Director of the Special Olympics Newfoundland and Labrador, Trish Williams, and Program Director, Mike Daly.

Welcome to all of you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today, we will hear from the hon. Members for the Districts of Exploits, Topsail - Paradise, Placentia West - Bellevue, Terra Nova, and Baie Verte - Green Bay.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

MR. DEAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Rodger Rowsell of Leading Ticks.

In 2016, Rodger was certified 25 years with the Government of Canada. In 2018, he was recognized for 20 years of public safety with the Canadian Coast Guard Exemplary Service Medal, sailing 10 years in dangerous waters. He will have 29 years of service on July 4. A Canadian Ranger for five years, Rodger receives his 35 year service pin on April 14 at the upcoming Firefighters Ball in Leading Ticks.

Service aside, Rodger has been a performer, releasing three CDs, including: *It's a New Day*, *Captive to the Sea* and *Songs of Inspiration and Christmas Joy* featuring "Leading Ticks my heart can be found."

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join with me in wishing safe anchorage for a native son of Leading Ticks, the District of Exploits, and our province, with a mannerism that makes one feel at ease in his company, as well as the offering up of a helping hand whenever needed, our Rodger Rowsell.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. DINN: Mr. Speaker, this year's winter carnival, Snow and Ice in Paradise, was an opportunity for residents to come out and celebrate the community with 10 fun filled days of winter events, activities and entertainment.

From Feb 1 to 10, the Town of Paradise came together and celebrated the splendor of winter

which featured fun activities for adults and children alike. I, along with my colleague from Conception Bay East - Bell Island, attended many of these events. These successful events, such as family sliding day, retirement centre visits, pre-teen dance, skating, Winterlude triathlon and more, would not be possible without the numerous dedicated volunteers, corporate sponsors, the councillors and staff who, through their tireless support, commitment and hard work, made this winter festival a great success and a time of enjoyment for the community as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, I extend congratulations to all those who contributed to the success of Snow and Ice in Paradise and I ask everyone to join me in congratulating the Town of Paradise on another successful winter carnival, adding to the quality of life in their community.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate a lifetime of work, skill and talent by a hard-working woman of Swift Current, locally known as Betty the baker. Whether it's one of the heaviest and fullest pies you will find, or a moist tray of banana bread, or one of her signature loaves of bread, Betty Eddy has been producing her work to customers at the Goobies Irving for 39 years.

She takes great pride in her work, and has a devoted and loyal following. Everyone stops for a loaf of Goobies bread along their travels, and Betty is far too modest to share this story herself. She has passed on her talented kitchen skills to her daughters Leslie and Jacqueline, who co-operate LJ's Pitstop, also known locally as the Swift Current chip truck. So you can pick up Betty's bread in Goobies or get her daughters' chips along your way down the Burin Peninsula highway. So come and visit.

Just this winter, Mr. Speaker, the owner of Irving shut down the restaurant to hold a surprise birthday party, as Betty turned 80 years of age. And she vows she will continue working this spring for another season.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all hon. Members, as they return to their districts after this week's sitting, to drop in to the Goobies Irving and get a loaf by Betty the baker, your families will thank you when you get home.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HOLLOWAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Mr. Byron Collins who has been inducted into the Atlantic Canada Marine Industries Hall of Fame.

Nearly 30 years ago, while operating out of a two-bay garage in Eastport, Byron, along with his brother-in-law, started the Collins Aluminum and Repairs limited. Quickly seeing the results from their strong work ethic, as well as an emerging opportunity in producing seafood and aquaculture processing equipment, the Collins' expanded their business and constructed a new facility in nearby Glovertown.

Boatbuilding would be the focus for the business, and the first Silver Dolphin aluminum pleasure boat was manufactured a year later in 1981. Despite the onset of the cod moratorium in the 1990s, Bryon's focus kept constant. Through the establishment of Fab-Tech Industries, an expanded line of marine boats provided greater market opportunities throughout the province and internationally, producing 150 boats annually.

Byron is very proud of his family-run business and says that the key to survival is diversity, perseverance and innovation.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Bryon Collins for his

contributions to the marine industry and his induction into the Atlantic Canada Marine Industries Hall of Fame.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize and pay tribute to the hon. Joe Enook, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, who passed away suddenly on Friday, March 29, 2019 while hospitalized in Ottawa.

Mr. Enook was acclaimed as Speaker during the November 17, 2017 proceedings of the Nunavut Leadership Forum. Speaker Joe was first elected to represent the District of Tununig in the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut in a by-election in 2011 and was re-elected in 2013 and 2017.

During his tenure as a Member of the Legislative Assembly and as Speaker, he rarely addressed the Legislature in English, as he preferred to promote the use of Inuktitut.

I, along with my colleague from Torngat Mountains, shared a wonderful friendship with Speaker Joe and I so enjoyed the wisdom that he shared with us. He spoke often about his homeland and community of Pond Inlet, for which he was most proud.

Recently, Mr. Speaker, Joe travelled to Goose Bay, Labrador to join us at the National Presiding Officers Conference held January 31 to February 2, 2019.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Mary, his family, friends and the entire community of Pond Inlet.

I ask my hon. colleagues to join me in sending sincere condolences to the Enook family.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, today I recognize an amazing athlete from our province who recently competed with Team Canada at the World Summer Games in Abu Dhabi.

Peter Hynes from Placentia proudly brought home a bronze medal in the mini javelin event, and was one of 19 podium finishes for Canada at the Games. Peter also competed in the 100-metre run event, where he finished fifth.

Peter was the only Newfoundland and Labrador athlete to compete in the Games, and on March 24, a celebration event was held in Placentia to welcome Peter home.

With over 7,000 athletes from 170 countries competing at this multi-sport event, it is a major achievement to represent your country, and it is an outstanding accomplishment to come away with a medal.

Getting to represent Canada on the world stage takes an incredible amount of determination, skill and perseverance, and our government commends Peter for his hard work.

I would also like to extend a special thank you to all of the volunteers, coaches, parents and family members, who, as a group, are an essential part of the success of all Special Olympians in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As well, thank you to Special Olympics Newfoundland and Labrador which continues to provide opportunities for sport participation and competition in our province.

I invite all Members of this House to please join me in congratulating Peter for his many achievements and most importantly being an inspiration to all of us.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his remarks. We join with the minister in congratulating Placentia's own Peter Hynes on his bronze medal performance at the World Summer Games. Congratulations also to his coaches, family and supporters for giving him all the encouragement he needed to reach the podium.

Thanks to the great work of organizations like Special Olympics Newfoundland and Labrador, athletes like Peter are able to get the training and support they need to succeed.

We're sure that at the next World Summer Games there won't be only one Newfoundland and Labrador athlete doing us proud on the world stage as Peter has.

Congratulations, Peter.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister and bravo to Peter Hynes on his win at the Special Olympics World Summer Games. With over 7,000 athletes from 170 countries, Peter won a medal. How wonderful is that? What an achievement? We can all be proud of, and be proud for Peter.

This was also made possible by the incredible team of volunteers, coaches, parents and family members of our Special Olympics. Bravo as well!

This government has cut back significantly on funds for sports and it is time to step it up again. We all benefit with a healthier and more inclusive society.

Once again, bravo Peter Hynes!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Office of the Chief Information Officer.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to highlight the MyGovNL pilot project for Motor Registration Division that the Minister of Service NL and I launched last week in Gander. The pilot is a key part of the Digital Way Forward, which is our five-year plan to better deliver services online to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Government, like all organizations, faces increased service delivery expectations. Traditional methods of service delivery are becoming outdated, and in some cases are unresponsive to the needs of consumers.

The vision of the Digital Way Forward is to introduce a new approach to service delivery: "One client. One GovNL. One relationship." And that is what MyGovNL does.

This pilot project with the Motor Registration Division is the first publicly available digital service under the Digital Way Forward five-year plan that was announced in April of 2018. This particular enhancement allows residents to manage their licence and vehicle renewals in one convenient online platform, replacing several separate online functions. Those who participate will be able to renew their licences and vehicles from the comfort of their own home.

Mr. Speaker, better online platforms like this pilot project will improve the overall experience that residents and businesses have when interacting with government. Last week marked a significant step forward, with more services expected to be delivered through this portal over the next four years.

At the end of this five-year plan, the public will see government as one organization, regardless of the individual or department with whom they interact.

The Digital Way Forward Plan is another example of how our government is committed to operating smarter and more efficiently for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for a copy of his statement. Government must always ensure we are moving to make services and information more available and user-friendly to residents. This is a good first step, but the administration's has had three-plus-years to make tangible progress, and today we're just announcing a pilot project.

Some residents, we have heard, fear it will lead to further erosion of service centres, that face-to-face interaction, in areas with little Internet coverage and coupled with geographic isolation. This issue certainly needs to be attended to and to receive consideration in any service delivery.

Progress is indeed important, and we all recognize the value; however, government must ensure, and make sure, that it benefits all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I'm pleased to see the release of the online digital platform for dealing with licence and vehicle renewals. It's certainly going to be a convenience for those with access to high-speed computers, and for those who, geographically, are not close to the offices where one can go in personally, if, of course, they have access to high-speed computers. I do remind the minister that there are many people who cannot access online services.

I also remind him that basic services must be provided to all the people of the province, and regular counter service, or its equivalent, must be made available to those who need to use it.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Premier guarantee to Members of the House of Assembly an opportunity to ask questions about the heralded Atlantic Accord announcement, which is pending this evening, and when will that be?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Right now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: You don't know, Mr. Speaker, how glad that makes us on this side that we will at last be provided with full and fair information about this heretofore secret negotiation.

Will the Premier commit to making public all analysis leading up to this agreement immediately after the announcement tonight?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, first of all, let me say this is the 70th anniversary of Confederation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Indeed today, Mr. Speaker, this is a good day for Newfoundland and Labrador. I want to send congratulations and thank the great staff that we've had working from many departments over the recent weeks in preparing for what we've reached today with the agreement, which we will announce the details at 6 tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the staff for the work that they've done. They put in an awful lot of hours. They spent time away from their family and today is indeed a good day for Newfoundland and Labrador. We will be sharing the details at 6 tonight.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: We, on the Opposition side, echo the Premier's sentiments and his gratitude for Confederation and for the efforts of hard-working public servants. However, the question was: Will the Premier commit to making the analysis behind this agreement public immediately after the announcement?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, it's our intentions, of course, to release the details that we'll be signing, what the agreement would be, on the agreement that we've reached.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the Atlantic Accord, first of all, I want to say it lays upon the foundation of the Accord that was put in place way back into the '80s and the considerable amount of work that was done even leading into the official signing in '85 and '86.

Previous governments and administrations have done reviews and we've seen agreements and new arrangements that were put in place. Mr. Speaker, today's announcement and this agreement that we've reached with the Government of Canada builds on all of the great work that has been done. We'll be putting the details of that announcement out there today, the agreement that we'll be signing with the Government of Canada today, Mr. Speaker.

But I also want to say this really builds on the successes that we've seen in many other negotiations, Mr. Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: – be it with labour, be it with industry, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to building on the answers to this question from the Leader of the Opposition with his next question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: We have no quarrel with the content of the hon. Premier's answer to my question, except for the fact that it did not answer the question, which is: Will you be making the analysis behind what money is owing to Newfoundland and Labrador public after the announcement?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, the work that goes into a negotiation feeds into what happens at the negotiating table. There has been a tremendous amount of work that the staff has been able to do. The details of whatever we use to get to an agreement will be released tonight. We will put in place an agreement, the details with the agreement that we will be signing.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that when you get into a negotiation, no different that we would have seen within our labour groups, within our industry groups, with our communities, we've seen it with other provinces – we've had a lot of success. It is one of the reasons why I want to remind the people and the Leader of the Opposition that we will be leading as a province. We will be leading this country in economic activity, GDP, in Canada next year, Mr. Speaker.

This is much different province, a much better province today in 2019 than it was in 2015.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: These are admirable sentiments but, Mr. Speaker, without the background materials and analysis, scholars, economists, members of the public and, indeed, Members of this House of Assembly whose constitutional responsibility it is to question the government's actions will not be able –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROSBIE: – to ask intelligent questions about the outcome.

So, will the Premier commit to releasing the analysis?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, today the people of the province will see the great job that has been done and the agreement that has been signed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: That information will be made public, Mr. Speaker. I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that this province is better off as a result of the efforts of this agreement than they were of the agreement that was signed by the previous administration related to the Muskrat Falls project.

So, I am not going to take negotiation advice by a PC Leader of the Opposition or any Member of the PC Party in this province, Mr. Speaker. I just will not do it. We have a good agreement. This province is in better shape. We will put the details of this agreement out there tonight at 6. I will assure you there are benefits for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We will put money in their pockets, not take it out.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, a well-known president of the United States of America said, trust but verify.

How does the Premier expect us to do the verification without the background documentation?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, the agreement will speak for itself.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Money will go into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, not take money out.

Mr. Speaker, there is an inquiry that's going on in this province. You, the Leader of the Opposition, has failed to stand up to the people of this province and even apologize for the work that his party has done. I say to the Leader of the Opposition will you please stand up, say that Muskrat Falls was a mistake, apologize to the people of this province.

The information that is coming out today, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the actions and the decisions that you have made, I can assure you the details of this agreement will support Newfoundland and Labrador just like the previous negotiations that we have done with industry, we've done with communities and we've done with our labour groups. We are supporting Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: By this time it's plain, Mr. Speaker, that the answer of the hon. Premier is that we on this side should trust him and don't bother with verification.

I have another question on this series of negotiations. In the letter from the Premier to the prime minister in February of last year, the Premier raised the issue of equalization

arrangements and, coincidentally, equalization is rolling over today.

My question for the Premier is: Has equalization arrangements been addressed in the course of these talks and will we hear about this tonight?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, this is really politics right now. The Leader of the Opposition is not interested in the future of this province – not at all. The Leader of the Opposition knows full well that the equalization –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER BALL: – whether we like it or not, is a federal program. The Leader of the Oppositions knows that quite well.

As a matter of fact, it was the prime minister, I think, Stephen Harper who the Leader of the Opposition wanted to run for, went begging to put his name on Stephen Harper's ballot, Mr. Speaker. That is what the Leader of the Opposition wanted to do who said that he would fix it, Mr. Speaker. He didn't deliver. As a matter of fact, not only did he say no to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, he said no to you as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, on the occasion of such an important announcement having to do with relations between the federal government and this province, and the welfare and benefits of this province, the Premier indulges himself in irrelevant answers. Let's try this one.

The letter that the Premier sent to the prime minister raised the question of undeveloped petroleum discoveries and mentioned the lingering uncertainty around the federal government's new environmental assessment process.

Within the framework of this review, has this uncertainty been resolved?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, a few weeks ago the Minister of Natural Resources and I made a very public announcement, and we spent time in Ottawa making a submission on Bill C-69.

I can assure you that this government has spoken loud and clear about the position, standing with industry in our province, Mr. Speaker, on Bill C-69. As a matter of fact, the submission is all publicly available. I certainly hope that the Leader of the Opposition has read all of this. As a matter of fact, I think the Senate Committee hearing will be in St. John's to look for people to present on April 23.

I can assure you, we will continue to support industry, the oil and gas industry, and the mining industry, by the way. We talk a lot about the oil and gas industry, but the mining industry is included in this as well, Mr. Speaker.

We are standing with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians against and what should be in Bill C-69.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: This is all a matter of public information and knowledge.

My question was: Has the uncertainty been resolved in the context of these negotiations we're going to hear about?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, I know the eagerness of the Leader of the Opposition. All I'm saying is at 6 o'clock tonight the details will be made to the people that are waiting; these are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I would ask the Leader of the Opposition tonight, as we put money into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, Mr. Speaker, that they would celebrate this like Newfoundlanders and Labradorians should tonight.

There are many components of what will be released tonight at 6 o'clock. I can assure you this province is a better place as a result of the efforts of this government and the negotiations that we've been able to do, not just on the Atlantic Accord, but with labour, with industry, attracting nearly \$18 billion of economic activity to this province, that is creating jobs. Eight consecutive months, Mr. Speaker, we have increased the employment in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The record speaks for itself, Mr. Speaker, we are turning this province around.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Order, please!

MR. CROSBIE: Will the agreement confirm the exclusive jurisdiction of C-NLOPB over environmental assessment on the offshore?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, what I will say is that at 6 o'clock tonight we will be sharing the details with the people of our province.

C-NLOPB is an important regulator in our offshore resources, and tonight we will share the details. I can tell you the province is indeed a better place. It is indeed a better place tonight once the announcement has been made, and I look forward to sharing the information, the details of what will come out of this successful agreement that we have reached on the 70th day, a celebration of Confederation with Canada.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Order, please!

MR. CROSBIE: Question Period, Mr. Speaker, began on a note of optimism, that questions would be answered for a change.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROSBIE: This determination has gone steadily downhill.

The federal government's Hibernia equity share may be one item which has been considered in the course of these negotiations.

Will the Premier disclose, should there be any deal on the transfer of that share, the value of the equity share?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I will be very pleased to share with the people of the province the details around tonight's announcement, which will create a lot of benefits to the people of our province.

The people of our province will have even more reason to celebrate once we get together and share the information that we've been able to put together as a result of the work of the officials, the engagement that we've had with the federal government. Quite a bit of work.

There are not a lot of hours left between now and 6 o'clock, and I think it's very fair to actually share the information – I know the Leader of the Opposition is very eager, very eager, but I can assure you, he will probably be one person –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER BALL: Is it okay now, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: You're out of time, Sir.

PREMIER BALL: All right.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I'm constantly amazed at how much time it takes to give a non-answer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROSBIE: I guess we won't hear about the value of the Hibernia equity stake.

To be principal beneficiary, and I'm glad the hon. Premier brought up this term, benefits, we have to enjoy local benefits from work generated by our offshore.

Will the Premier ensure that the new agreement recognizes the need for local employment benefits and the local supply industry?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things about having local benefits is having the environment for people to invest within our province. I mentioned earlier, with *Advance 2030* we now, within the mining industry and the oil and gas industry, have attracted some \$18 billion of economic activity.

So, Mr. Speaker, and for the first time since 1991, I say to the Leader of the Opposition – I know he's not going to like this – but for the first time since 1991, Exxon will be doing an exploration well offshore Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: I know that's not good news for the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker. Just a few months ago we were looking at not having an exploration program offshore Newfoundland and Labrador. In 2019, we will have a very aggressive offshore exploration program.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Glad as we are to hear about offshore exploration, we would be gladder to hear about attention being given to the maximization of benefits in the supply chain and also some attention being given to global supply agreements which have cut off and cut down local supply business.

Can the Premier comment on the attention he's given to this problem?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to stand and talk about the attention that this government has been giving to the oil and gas industry, as well as the mining industry, the aquaculture industry, the technology industry within our province. But he asked a question about the oil and gas industry.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things we've done with the work coming out of the partnership that we've had with those industry leaders is set aside an oil and gas company with a focus expanding the mandate. So what we are doing as a government, just attracting that investment – as I've mentioned already, we are creating the environment to work with those local industries, Mr. Speaker. That is one of the reasons why we are having a very aggressive and robust exploration drilling program off our shore.

Just concluding – and I know we had the minister and some other Members of this government in Bull Arm just this week to see Seadrill is getting the West Aquarius ready to go back to work off Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, things are moving in this province as a result of this government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Despite the optimistic note with which the Premier began Question Period, the Opposition finds that the answers given are less than required for it to do its job of holding the government to account.

Would the Premier commit now to tabling answers to all the questions I have asked, tomorrow in this House?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, I will tell you that I mentioned, I think, just on Friday of last week, that some time before now and when the schools close that we will have an election – we will have an election.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: I will go in front of the people of this province – and I'm guessing the Leader of the Opposition is prepared to do the same thing – and we will put our platform, Mr. Speaker, up against any platform that we've seen from the PC Party. It will be credible, Mr. Speaker, and it will not be missing the boat on electricity rates by nearly three or four cents a kilowatt, double counting \$150 million on your electricity rate mitigation.

Mr. Speaker, I am more prepared, not only to answer the questions to the Leader of the Opposition, but to people in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, today the carbon tax begins in provinces that stood up to Trudeau and refused to impose his carbon tax plan. Here in this province, consumers have been paying the carbon tax since January 1.

Can the minister provide an update on how much has been collected from consumers in carbon tax over the past three months?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

They're obviously not interested in answers.

Mr. Speaker, I don't have those numbers at my fingertips right now, but I'll have it for you by the end of the day.

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are interested in answers, but this government has a lot of trouble trying to answer our questions. So I guess we'll wait.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: The minister promised he'll get it for us; I guess we will wait.

The carbon tax is set to increase from the current \$20 a ton to \$50 a ton by 2022. Based on \$20 a ton, consumers in this province are now paying an additional 4.42 cents per litre on gas and 5.37 cents per litre on diesel.

How much more a litre will people be paying for your carbon tax next year, and how much will they be paying in 2022?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things we negotiated with the federal government, Mr. Speaker, on the Made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador plan, was that we would not exceed Atlantic parity.

Mr. Speaker, the plan that we put in place for carbon pricing in this province – we've heard from other provinces after we released the plan, wondering how we got such a good deal. It was

a plan that the opposite side had argued against. It's a plan, Mr. Speaker, they said they'd fight the federal government on.

If we had followed their advice, Mr. Speaker, we'd have the federal backstop today, the same as the other provinces who have the federal backstop, and the people of this province would be paying more.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I remind the minister, our plan is to stand up for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who are already overtaxed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: Carbon tax is being passed on to everyone through the price of food and other goods.

Will the minister admit that the carbon tax is a tax grab which is negatively impacting the people of this province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: Mr. Speaker, I can tell the hon. Member, that if we were part of the federal backstop today, like they are in four other provinces on April 1, 2019, we'd be paying a lot more than we are. Because we negotiated a Made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador plan, that protects the people of this province, that protects the industry in this province and works for this province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: And I'm very proud of the plan that we have negotiated.

As the Minister of Finance has said, people are looking to us: how did we do it? Well, you can tell that to the people in the provinces that are

being hit today on April 1, 2019 with the federal plan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I remind the minister, people are still paying, people are overtaxed and people are fed up with this taxation. Any extra tax is too much. The minister doesn't get it. This government doesn't get that, we do.

The Liberal government has still been collecting carbon tax from the consumers in this province for three months now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: Can the minister tell us how this has reduced emissions, and by what percentage?

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

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have released a climate change plan that works for this province, that reduces emissions and protects the environment and the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Just this year, the Premier, along with his federal counterparts, announced an \$89 million low carbon economy fund, Mr. Speaker, of which the province is responsible for \$47 million. That's a program that will help the people of this province, whether it's in climate change, whether it's in reducing carbon emissions, whether it's in improving the houses in which they live in. But, Mr. Speaker, the four cents that we charge on gasoline as part of our carbon plan falls well short of the \$47 million that we've invested in that program, which is a good program for the province.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to receive calls from a family whose 10-year-old child has been denied access to a life-saving insulin pump, pending the outcome of a review. We have tried to get answers on behalf of this family but, to date, nothing.

Minister, can you advise if there has been a change in policy for insulin pump replacement and why this child is not getting access to this life-saving device?

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

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

The insulin pump program has not undergone any change recently. We have actually had some very productive meetings with medical students and others to encourage us to look in other directions as to how we can broaden the program, and certainly we are looking at those quite seriously.

The program, for anyone under the age of 25, is universal, and their access is determined slowly but solely by clinical appropriateness and no other criteria at all.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for that statement, but at the end of the day, it's a program that we brought in as the former administration. It's a 10-year-old child who is trying to get the pump replaced that they need for life-saving insulin. We're baffled to understand why they're not getting the answers they need to have this done.

Mr. Speaker, our party just recently announced that it would remove the age cap that currently prevents people with type 1 diabetes from having their insulin pumps covered by Medicare when they turn 25.

Will the Liberal government commit to the same program?

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

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

As I say, we've been in discussions recently with a variety of folk, but some time late last year we started to realize that the insulin pump program was in need of redrafting. We have done that from both a clinical and an administrative point of view, and we have a working group looking at options about eligibility criteria of which age is one – watch this space.

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.

Recently, Equinor's head of international projects told a Norwegian oil conference his company is cool on the Bay du Nord project, noting concerns about cost, the relatively small proven reservoir and the challenges of working in a hostile environment 500 kilometres from shore. He notes Equinor is far from sanctioning the project.

I ask the Premier: What happens to his new, stand-alone oil and gas company if Bay du Nord is not sanctioned?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you very much for the question.

I can tell you that we meet regularly with Equinor. We work closely with them to help them move towards advancing the Bay du Nord project. Like any business, they're looking to improve their cost structure and making sure that it's as economically viable as possible, but we are inching toward sanction, Mr. Speaker.

As we continue to approach that milestone, I'll continue to update the House as to how things are improving, but I do know that things are progressing. I will be having further discussions with Equinor as we move forward, Mr. Speaker.

So just for clarity, there's been no change in the project. We have not been advised of any change in the project.

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.

Inching along for 500 kilometres, that takes a heck of a long time, Mr. Speaker, I would say.

I'm asking the minister: Do not the comments of Equinor's head of international projects cause her any concern whatsoever? He made these comments publicly.

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

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

I'm aware of the comments made publicly. I'm sure that if there was a concern that we should be more aware of, the project team would have advised us. It is still on track. Mr. Speaker, there's been no change and no communication of change to the sanctioning proposal.

This is a smaller project in deeper water so, of course, they're going to want to make sure it is done as economically as possible. We've always

said that, but I'll advise this House again that I have not been made aware of any change. It is progressing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Government is creating the new oil and gas company just by shuffling money around, without any proof that the new corporation is needed, and now we don't have proof there's going to be income for the new corporation.

It looks like government is just playing a game of smoke and mirrors. So I ask the Premier: Isn't the creation of a not-so-new energy company just another feeble attempt on the part of this government to make it look like they're doing something that makes a difference to our economy?

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

MS. COADY: I can say, Mr. Speaker, that there has been a tremendous amount of work in our economy. I can say, in the Department of Natural Resources alone, we have signed up \$18 billion – \$18 billion – in the last couple of years alone in economic activity. How is that not progressing in this province?

We're creating jobs, we're creating opportunity, it's circulating throughout the economy, Mr. Speaker, and this is just one department. Fisheries and Land Resources is another department that's doing an awful lot of work in aquaculture and agriculture. I can look to TCII and talk about what's happening in technology, Mr. Speaker.

This government has made incredible improvements to our economic opportunity.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Let's try another question here. In two days of questioning the Minister of Natural Resources, she refused to answer our questions on Nalcor's ability to supply reliable power to the Avalon Peninsula in the wake of a failure of the Labrador-Island link.

I ask the minister: Yes or no – after spending \$14 billion on Muskrat Falls, will the province face extended rolling blackouts in the event of a break in the Labrador-Island link?

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I have not refused to answer this question. I have been very consistent in my answer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. COADY: The Member opposite may not like my answer, in that Public Utilities Board who we brought back into this project, the Public Utilities Board is reviewing the reliability of the report and they will make a determination if more work needs to be done.

I can say this, the standards and designs of the Labrador-Island link was done back in 2011, 2012, pre-sanction, Mr. Speaker. All that work was done then. The design phase of that was done at that point in time. And that was under a different government. Now we're looking at how do we ensure that the Public Utilities Board uses their expertise to ensure that we have reliable power.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The time for Oral Questions has ended.

Thank you.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to section 26(5)(a) of the *Financial Administration Act*, I am tabling one order-in-council relating to a funding pre-commitment for the fiscal years 2019-20 through to 2022-23.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further tabling of documents?

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

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm tabling the reports for 2017-18 annual report from Memorial University. I wish to re-table the 2017 and '18 annual report from Memorial University containing the audited financial statements.

I have another one –

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, further tabling of documents, Sir?

MR. DAVIS: I wish to re-table the 2017-18 annual report for Memorial University's pension plan containing the audited financial statements.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. KING: I have a PMR, myself, seconded by the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

WHEREAS The Premier's Task Force On Improving Educational Outcomes and Education Action Plan both recommended developing a phased-in implementation plan for junior kindergarten; and

WHEREAS Ontario, the Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia have implemented and are in the process of implementing province-wide junior kindergarten;

WHEREAS play-based learning promotes children's natural sense of curiosity and discovery through hands-on exploration of the world around them;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador taking necessary steps towards establishing a junior kindergarten program.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the lowest minimum wages in Canada and minimum wage workers earn poverty incomes; and

WHEREAS proposals to index the minimum wage to inflation will not address poverty if the wage is too low to start with; and

WHEREAS women and youth and service sector employees are particularly hurt by the low minimum wage; and

WHEREAS the minimum wage only rose only 5 per cent between 2010 and 2016, while many food items rose more than 20 per cent; and

WHEREAS other Canadian jurisdictions are implementing or considering a \$15 minimum wage as a step towards a living wage;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to legislate a gradual increase in the minimum wage to \$15 by 2021 with an annual adjustment thereafter to reflect provincial inflation.

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

Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that the minimum wage today – it's April 1 – rose to \$11.40, among the lowest in Canada. What this government has decided to do is to simply raise the minimum wage according to the rate every year of inflation. There is no way we are going to catch up to the rest of the country.

I am not sure why this government feels it is okay for our working people, people who work so hard, often in the service industry, often women, often youth, deserve any less payment for their labour than do the rest of workers in the rest of the country. I don't understand how they can justify that.

What happens is that they let a lot of the larger corporations off the hook, places like Walmart, places like McDonald's, places like A&W who pay minimum wage, who pay no benefits to their workers. Do you know who foots the bill for that, Mr. Speaker? The people of Newfoundland and Labrador foot the bill for that. We foot the bill for drugs, for medications, for pharmaceuticals because they don't have health care plans. We foot the bill for subsidized housing, so organizations, businesses like Walmart, can make their huge profits where those huge profits are sucked right out of the province.

Mr. Speaker, it makes no sense any longer to not do better with minimum wage.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour for a response, please.

MR. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much to the hon. Member for bringing forward the petition again today.

I just want to let the people of the province know that we have increased the minimum wage to \$11.40. It increased by 25 cents as of today. But this is a consultative approach. It's very important that we take into account the balancing between the business interests and the employees' interests; and, in turn, making sure we make a decision based with the stakeholders that are at play in this industry.

I'd like to correct some of the inaccuracies the Member across the way brought forward. To stand up in this House and to mention employers in this province, saying they provide no benefits – that's not true. There are some of these employers – that you've mentioned here today – that supply benefits to their employees. Many of them do. I take offence to that.

Many of the interests we have here today were based on stakeholder intervention. Obviously, we're working at this legislation every day to look at if there are ways to improve it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further petitions?

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

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

I think it's significant that on the day that minimum wage has gone up, giving a pittance to the workers, that I have another minimum wage petition in my hand.

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament

assembled, the petition of the undersigned residents humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the lowest minimum wages in Canada and minimum wage workers earn poverty incomes; and

WHEREAS proposals to index the minimum wage to inflation will not address poverty if the wage is too low to start with; and

WHEREAS women and youth and service sector employees are particularly hurt by the low minimum wage; and

WHEREAS the minimum wage only rose 5 per cent between 2010 and 2016, while many food items rose more than 20 per cent; and

WHEREAS other Canadian jurisdictions are implementing or considering a \$15 minimum wage as a step towards a living wage;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to legislate a gradual increase in the minimum wage to \$15 by 2021, with an annual adjustment thereafter to reflect provincial inflation.

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

The petitioners have signed a petition that names things as they really are, Mr. Speaker. When they talk about the indexing of the minimum wage to inflation, it doesn't address the level of poverty. It does not. Because when the indexing started, the level was so low that they're never going to get to \$15 at the rate things are going.

The fact is the increase is not done according to the real indexing in this province. The national average does not give us what is real in this province. This government says they care. They've had the opportunity now since 2015 to make changes to what was in place. They had the opportunity to bring the minimum wage up to –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Just a little order, please. It's becoming difficult to hear the Member.

Thank you.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm having difficulty myself. I notice I've been shouting because of it.

They've had the opportunity to bring the minimum wage up much more quickly so that by 2021 it would be \$15. They chose to remain with a system that is not going to bring people up out of the poverty level of wages that they are earning, and this is what this government is not recognizing but the people of the province recognize the need for that to happen.

When we talk about the way in which food items in this province have gone up, the cost by 20 per cent; yet, minimum wage has only gone up by 5 per cent. It doesn't take a genius to figure out that mathematics. Any child in elementary school can figure out that math and tell us that people are going to continue living in poverty for many years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour for a response, please.

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad I have the opportunity to get up and finish what I was talking about. One of the things we did with this process is a transparent and open process so that all parties know exactly what they will be faced with when those increases come. Instead of an increase coming, blind siding one party versus the other, it would be much better to have an open and transparent – everyone knows what process is going to be in place.

Do I agree that we have to look at legislation all the time? Absolutely, and we're looking at that. We're past the two year point in this review. We're in the process of developing a plan forward on that. So we're going to have all options on the table for that.

I would like to highlight some of the other programs we have identified here as well as; the Jobs NL wage subsidy program that allows for wage subsidies in two different categories for businesses to utilize to allow employees to benefit from those subsidizations that the provincial government is providing, whether that be a 42-week program or a 28-week program, the employers can chose with working with the employees to allow them to develop what they're going to do from there. And I would just like to say –

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. DAVIS: Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Your time has expired.

Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

To urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to instate legislation which will include the mandatory establishment of an adequate ratio of one staff to three residents in long-term care and all other applicable regional health care 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, petitions today are from Centreville and Wareham. I've raised this now – I don't know how many times – petitions almost every day the House has been open on behalf of Advocates for Senior Citizen's Rights. As the prayer of the petition says, the concern they have is for seniors who are in long-term care facilities, seniors with Alzheimer's disease, dementia and so on, and the concern is that there is not always enough staff in place to provide the appropriate care for those seniors. That is the issue.

Each time when I've raised it in the past, the minister will talk about the great job that staff are doing, and nobody is disputing the fact that the people working at these facilities aren't doing the best they can with what they have. The issue is: Are there enough staff? And are there always enough staff?

As I've raised in the past; we've been told, within Eastern Health, of situations where the first sick call is not replaced, as an example. I think that was done as a punitive measure to staff in these facilities, in the sense that if there are supposed to be four – if you call in, now you're leaving your colleagues short. So now they're going to be upset with you, and maybe you won't do it again. But the people who are really being penalized in those situations are the patients.

If the patients are being penalized, if they don't have enough staff on at all times to take care of them, we feel, and certainly the people here feel, that it's unacceptable. They want to see legislation in place which would guarantee certain staffing levels, to set a minimum standard and to ensure that it must be in place at all times.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further petitions?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call Orders of the Day.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day, Sir.

Orders of the Day

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1, and I will read it out for the record.

That the composition of the Resource Committee, the Government Services Committee and the Social Services Committee will be as follows:

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

The Resource Committee will consist of the Members for the following districts: the Member for Exploit's; the Member for Bonavista; the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune; the Member for Harbour Main; the Member for St. George's - Humber; the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi; the Member for Terra Nova; and the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

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

I would move that resolution, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. A. PARSONS: So, Mr. Speaker, today this is basically a resolution that is put forward on behalf of one of the lesser known committees of this House, which is the Striking Committee, which is essentially a committee that is struck to help strike committees, to help put committees in place. It's a Striking Committee.

Again, I won't belabour this too long, Mr. Speaker, but these committees here – and you'll see here there's three: Government Services, Resource, and Social Services. They've been around for some time. Generally the term that would be referred to by Members when we talk about these committees, we often refer to them as Estimate Committees because that is often the time when these committees are used or implemented.

They are made up of committees of Members of all sides of the House and, generally, our experience with these committees is that they will be put in place during the budget process so they will sit when the Estimates will happen.

For instance, just to provide an example, when the Department of Justice comes to the House with the Estimates Committee, usually on this side of the House you have officials from the Department of Justice and Public Safety; on this side, you'll have Members of the Social Services Committee. In many cases, it's the Opposition who are asking questions but you have to have a committee there to have quorum in order to have these sessions which form part of the budget debate, and then to vote on the line by line, the line items that go into it.

Again, a lot of times – it's funny, I saw this debate on twitter the other day where people talked about committees of the House and how they aren't used, et cetera. Sometimes people talk about – and there's some truth to that; although I would say that one of the committees that we're actually going to refer to next, the Standing Orders Committee, has been quite busy for some time. I'll also note that the Privileges and Elections Committee has been quite busy as well.

One of the reasons why this, I think, especially the composition of these committees is

important is that – so we talk about what the Standing Orders Committee has done. Again, I won't get into that much. We've talked about it on a number of occasions in this House when we've brought forward changes but one of the things that the Standing Orders Committee has had on their agenda for some time is to look at the possibility of legislative committees. A legislative committee, the mindset was that we should have legislation brought before committees to allow for question and answer, to have witnesses, and for basically a more thorough investigation of a piece of legislation, similar to what we see in Ottawa.

So, in doing this – this one's a bit more substantive, and I'll talk about why it's a bit more substantive because it's not just formulating these committees, but it does, essentially, change in many ways how the bureaucracy operate, especially when it comes to the formulation, the drafting and then the presentation of bills into this House.

Going through the last three years, basically, of talking about this, and just more recently we've had some more substantive conversations, our Standing Orders allow for legislative committees right now. In fact, these committees that I've just listed can examine legislation. The process is there and it can be used; it's just that it has not been used. For roughly just under two decades, now, it has not been used for various reasons, but that's one of the things we've talked about. When I was a Member of the Opposition we talked about it, since we've been over here we've talked about it and, in fact, Members of all sides have asked about the possibility of bringing it back, and that's what we're hoping to do.

So, how will we allow for this to happen? What we've decided, in consultation with House staff, is that the procedure is there to allow this to happen, but let's try it on a pilot basis to see, okay, how is this going to work. So, what we've in fact identified is that we will put these committees in place – not just will they need to be put in place and have changes to allow for new membership; in fact, we've had new Members come to the House that need to be put on committees, we've had changes on both sides to allow for membership of these committees for the usual purpose which is Estimates. But now,

the goal is to bring a piece of legislation to one of these committees, depending on which department it will come from, and that Standing Committee here, depending on which one it falls under – so for instance, if it was a bill that came from the Natural Resources Department, it would fall under Resource; if it's a bill from Service NL, it will fall under Government Services. We're going to allow that process to play out, and our goal is to allow that to happen this session of the House.

Now, there are two ways that this can happen. One is if – normally what we do in our Legislature is, if anybody knows the legislative process, we give notice of a bill, and that's essentially reading out I give notice of said bill that we will bring forward tomorrow. So then we call first reading on a second day, and only one stage can happen per day, except for, as you move to the next stage, second reading, which is the most substantive part of the debate where Members get an opportunity to stand up and speak for 20 minutes. Unless you're the mover of the bill, then you get an hour. Then we move into the Committee stage which is a Committee of the Whole of the House where everybody can stand up, ask questions, answer.

That's one way in which this can be done. I have seen, albeit rarely, where we've had opportunities for Members to ask questions, for changes to be given and I have seen bills, on rare occasion, be modified in the House based on the debate that comes back and forth. And, finally, there's a third reading.

I guess, practically speaking, a bill could take four days is the normal process for how long it will take to move through a House – that's if there is not as much in terms of the questioning, in terms of the substantive debate. We've seen here, even in this session, we have a number of bills that go through that are very housekeeping in nature. It's a more perfunctory debate, not a huge philosophical, opinion-based debate on both sides of the question and answer. Those can go fairly quickly.

So one thing we've talked about is the possibility for after a bill to come through, and after it gets to second reading, to refer to the bill to the Law Clerk, to the House, and then for that committee for which falls under whatever

department it is falls under, whatever committee, then we can debate that.

The other option is to refer a bill prior to notice being given. There are two very different reasons why you want to do that. Once you establish second reading of a bill, the fact is that for all intents and purposes its substance has been set. There can be changes, but there will be no substantial changes that will modify the intent or purpose or the real substance of that bill; that's not going to happen. You can allow for changes, but you wouldn't substantially change that bill. Whereas a bill that were to go forward prior to that, prior to the notice being given, can possibly be allowed to change it substantially from what its original intent was. So that's some of the things that we grapple with.

The other thing is that when we look at debates – and I've seen this especially, I think one of the last times that a legislative committee was allowed to look at bill was back when companies were looking at the tobacco. It might have been the Department of Health, I can't exactly remember, but it was dealing with tobacco legislation, talking about recovering costs for legislation and litigation against tobacco companies.

In that case, what happened – generally speaking, very rarely do you see a bill come in through one session of the House – and for purposes of this, because there are different meetings, when I say a session, I mean a spring session or a fall session. Very rarely do you see a bill start in one session and end up being debated in another session and its substance has a significant period of time in between. Now, I've seen opportunities where you can do a notice or a first reading and then get down to the meat of the debate at another session, but very rarely do you start a second reading or a committee stage on a bill and then finish it during another session.

When you put a bill to committee, the fact is that it delays that process, which leads to the next part of my conversation here and my talking about the main purpose of what we're hopefully going to see these committees doing is that when we look at bills, the purpose of bills, generally, as I've ever seen in the eight years I've been

here, is that you have them entered into the House, debated in the House and come out and then hopefully get proclaimed and then Royal Assent and then proclamation at some point during that one session.

Not very often do they get delayed to allow for a substantive change or for a committee to look at them to amend them, to hear from witnesses. We haven't seen that. And in terms of departments doing the work that leads up to that, it's funny, people see what happens in here, people do not see what happens in allowing the bills to come to the floor of the House, all the work that happens.

There are departments submitting papers, they go to Cabinet secretariat and they often come back for questions. They can go to other departments, whether it's Women's Policy or Justice or you name it, to allow for comment and for review, and it's going back and forth it takes some time. Then it will go to a committee, whether it's social policy or economic. In some cases, it can go to Treasury Board. Then it has to go to the Cabinet table. In many cases, it can go back, depending on how substantial that bill is. This can take some time.

In many cases, there are times when bills come forward when time is of the essence and you want that. We've seen cases where you need to have a bill during that session in order, for various reasons – financial reasons, time reasons, you name it.

One time I looked at – just in the last year when we had cannabis legislation, where we were under the gun there because we're following the feds. Their House sits at different times than ours, we had to look and see what the feds came up with, and then we had to allow for ours to happen. These had to happen on a timely basis or else we would be in, perhaps, contravention or not have legislation in place.

But I digress. I come back to the fact that there's a substantial process behind the scenes to allow for these bills to come to the House. Now we're going to have a change here where, depending on what comes out of this committee stage, that can delay the implementation or a debate of a bill. But that's fine.

So that's what we need. Some of these bills will not need committee review. When we look at the bill I did just the last couple of weeks, the anomalies and errors in the statute law, the commas, we talked about just, really, an almost purely housekeeping bill where we talked about because bill A changed, we must change bill B to reflect the changes in bill a. Those are not going to go to committee.

But when you look at some of the bills we've dealt with here in the House where – and again, a prime example would have been Bills 60 and 61 in this House which were related to Muskrat Falls. Those are bills that should have gone to a committee, and I think we all would have wanted to see that.

When I think about Bill 29 – and I'm sure that there are bills that we've done and want to do. For instance, there's one bill that I wanted to bring, hopefully will be giving notice this session. The short term, the popular term, is Clare's Law. It's the interpersonal information disclosure act and I've talked about that. That's a good bill where everybody talks about it's a positive intent, but it carries with it significant implications, not just in terms of access to information and the release of information but also the practical application of a bill where we're talking about the release of a person's information so it allows a partner in a relationship to know their prior domestic violence history.

Now, I can stand up all day and talk about how great it is and how wonderful it is, and I don't think for a second, for instance, that my colleagues on the other side would disagree with the intent but they may have questions as to how's this going to work. In that case, I don't think it's as much a philosophical debate as it is a practical debate and it's a good opportunity.

There are some bills where government wants to set their agenda and the fact is that it's an opportunity where you just may not have an agreement but still – and again I'll give you a prime, prime, prime example of when that should happen. Before many of us sat in this House, I know there are at least three people who sat in this House when Abitibi was expropriated.

I mean that was one that was literally rushed through this House, take our word for it, we mean well and look what happened. Now again, that's not about embarrassing anybody. That's been done. But I'm talking about the purpose of the lack of that sober second opportunity that look at a piece of legislation, led to serious financial implications for the people of this province. Nobody was trying to pull a fast one; I'm not saying that at all. I think everybody meant for the same thing to happen. We were all looking for the best interests, but the fact that that debate did not happen, there were not an opportunity to look at what did this actually mean, what were we actually doing, what were the practical consequences, led to a case where, oh, we thought we were doing this, but this is what we actually did and this cost hundreds of millions of dollars.

Maybe those things won't be caught, but I'm saying that we're trying to get back to a process, to take the word that I often hear some of my colleagues say, wholesome, robust discussion. Two words that I really detest using in debate because they're overused sometimes but that's what we're allowing.

My colleague from the NDP agrees. Those are the best words I can come up with right now to say that's what this purpose is. It's to allow for a more thorough debate on a bill. Now, will there be hiccups with this? You better believe it. Will there be disagreements on how it's done? Of course there will, but I think what we're showing is a willingness to make things different, a willingness to try to do things better.

Mr. Speaker, it's funny, because everything I just said, which is a lot of substance, one would not ascertain that from just reading the resolution that was entered in here, but the fact is that the Members' names that were just here are going to be the Members that get to sit on a legislative committee at some point – hopefully this session, hopefully on a bill we've been working on, and I think we may have one identified – will work with the House staff, because I think there may only be one person on our House staff that actually has some actual practical history and experience of actually dealing with this.

So we're going to try it here and we're going to work through it and see how it goes. I think everybody agrees with the need to do this; now it's the figuring out the practical implications. On that note, I look forward to our support for the Striking Committee resolution and for these Members and I look forward to their comments on this resolution.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's indeed an honour and a privilege here to stand as we talk about a unique –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: – approach to debate in the House and discussing legislation, and bringing what we feel to the House of Assembly the best piece of legislation that represents the inclusive views of all parties and all engaged, and hopefully there's a way to also look at how our independent Members can be engaged in this process. I think we need to be open for that discussion, because the structure and the compilation of the House of Assembly is evolving on a daily basis and may change 10 times more over the next number of years.

So, it's important that we be cognizant and open to a more inclusive way of having open debate, a much more efficient way of ensuring the legislation meets the needs that it was originally established to do, and find a way that we entrust the general public that their views are going to be heard, and that an open discussion is put in play to make sure the legislation reflects what their particular needs are.

To get to that point, and as the minister so eloquently outlined, we've always had a democratic process in play here. You know, we're not outdated here when it comes to our structure. We may be outdated in implementing the operations of those, or using what we had at

our disposal, because we were so entrenched in traditional ways that we've done things, and saying this has always been the compilation of this particular process or committee, or this is the only responsibility that they've ever taken on, or we don't want to overburden them with particular other challenges or responsibilities, or we haven't allocated particular staffing resources to meet the needs that they would need to actually achieve and take on what could be outlined as additional responsibilities.

So, over the last number of years, with the Standing Orders Committee, we've had discussions around, how do we do three key things. How do we make it more inclusive in the debate process that we have here to ensure the best piece of legislation that is possible is put forward to this House to be voted on and debated to the general public so they understand exactly what the intent of the piece of legislation is?

The second was, at the end of the day, to ensure that we've modernized the operations of the House of Assembly and the debate process and using what mechanisms we have.

The third would be to assess our existing structure and to either change it, modify it where necessary, to improve what we're doing; but, more importantly, and particularly what we started to do, look at the existing structure. These are structures that have been evolving for the last hundreds of years in democratic parliaments, and they have been upgraded in certain areas. Some of them, when they were established, were workable. They just haven't been implemented in the process. Some were very useful years ago but haven't been used in a modern day. Other ones have just gone on to the wayside and have not been taken advantage of. Other ones need to be entrenched in a new approach.

So what we've taken and the discussion we've had over the last number of years is about identifying the particular better pieces of structure we have in our Legislature in how we operate to ensure we make them more effective.

What the minister outlined when he noted who would be Members of particular committees, and he did outline that we have three Select

Committees here which have a key representation from the three particular parties. And we need to have a further discussion about independent Members, what role they play in the composition, what role they play in the debate process, because everybody is elected to this House of Assembly, regardless of what their political stripe is or if they are independent. They all have a role, a responsibility and a right to be part of the debate process. So we need to work some of the nuances out around how we make that more inclusive.

As the committees have been announced here, they span three different particular areas within government when it comes to programs, policies and spending. That becomes the reality. When you talk about programs, policy and spending, you normally think around your budget line, because your budget line is the dollars that will dictate the programs you're going to be able to offer, the policies related to who can access those programs, and what policies are to be implemented.

When you look at that, the tradition has been these committees are only active outside of the other legislative committees. That we have to have other things, like the Standing Orders Committee, the Management Committee, and a number of other committees that we may have there.

These committees have traditionally been used for a short period of time, normally in the spring of the year when the budget lines are down, and becomes a very encompassing period of time where there's debate on particular finance related issues to the budget, which then would, obviously, incur the programs that are going to be implemented for that fiscal year. In some cases, even though in debate in Estimates, policy is not supposed to be at the forefront, but most are open to say you can't spend money and you can't develop programs if they're not reflective of the policies that you're trying to implement.

So there's been, in most cases, a fairly open dialogue between the minister and their staff, and the Chair who will be chairing these particular meetings, and the Opposition parties who've been asking the questions.

Just so people are aware, the way these committees work in Estimates, there would be a Chair who would then Chair the proceedings and give equal time back and forth to ensure that there's continuity and there's an even flow, and that people are given an opportunity to ask particular questions. And, in return, the minister and their staff are given an opportunity to respond and share information that's relevant to that particular budget line, or the particular program they're going to be implementing, and clarify exactly how they would be implemented, the time frames, the impacts it may have. So, the process we have there is fairly fluent.

The issue has become in the last couple of years, is: Why couldn't that same process – maybe modified a little different, maybe you don't need a Chair that stands in that formal process, but you do have these committees that could take on particular issues or pieces of legislation and have an open debate and an open dialogue around what it is that the piece of legislation is trying to achieve. Is it a brand new piece of legislation? Then, obviously, there has to be – in my opinion – a bigger discussion with the stakeholders, those who are directly going to be affected, and then the general population.

If it's the modification of an existing piece of legislation, how do we get to this point? What was the driver behind the change that was necessary? Was it identified at the grassroots level? Was it a particular interest group that identified a flaw? Was there a loophole that was identified because of something that was taken advantage of or something that was discovered at the end of the day?

Is it just around modernizing, because other jurisdictions have taken a proactive approach and moved things a little bit quicker and it's time that we caught up? Is it just we're going through normal cycles where we review legislation and say, you know what, there are particular – in some cases, they're housekeeping changes that need to be done so that it outlines specifically what are the roles and responsibilities of this piece of legislation. So there are a number of things there that would drive why you would have an open debate and a full-fledged discussion on a piece of legislation.

We did have discussions over the last, probably the last five, six months, particularly around are we at a good point now to take a piece of legislation and test the process that we've already had in play for years but have very seldom done; or, in this case, never in this normal process. We've done it with all-party committees in another process but, obviously, it tells you about the, I guess, at the time, the traditional way of doing things. Because to have to ask to set up an all-party committee to address a particular issue tells us that traditionally people never understood the legislation stands, that we have the ability to do that.

So that says, again, about having to educate ourselves about what's acceptable, what the understanding would be and what the roles and responsibilities and the flexibility in a particular committee and a particular piece of legislation that we have here that drives the House of Assembly.

We've gone the route, and we've done a couple over the years. We've done them on, particularly in the fisheries. We've done it on mental health and have seen the successes and benefits of engaging a variety of stakeholders, engaging all parties to be fluent with the process, to ensure that if they have a mechanism to be able to reach out to particular disenfranchised individuals who may have a stake in this piece of legislation, or who can share valuable information to ensure the legislation is the best it can be, then that only opens up the door for this to be more effective. We've had that process.

Having standing committees where you have members who come from various backgrounds, various geographic backgrounds, their own social backgrounds, their educational backgrounds, and their employment backgrounds to challenges in their particular districts, but also that they represent various parties. There may be a philosophy, there may be a standing policy within a party, or they may have taken on a particular issue that they themselves have been fostering forward. So they may have more information that now can be shared with the whole of the committee as you start to review the piece of legislation that you're about to debate.

What we decided to do was, could we find a moderate piece of legislation. We didn't want to go something that was housekeeping, a little too fluffy, that really wouldn't get us into a real debate and a real understanding of how we could – I can't even say challenge our present structure, but to better use our present structure. Because our present structure is designed in a manner that we can, through full inclusion, through proper representation, with the exception of figuring out what we'd do from an independent point of view – and that's something that we'll have that debate. One thing about it, it wasn't dismissed that it wasn't important. It's about now figuring out how we encompass that into the existing structure we have.

So then we looked at do we take a very complicated piece of legislation – and probably not a smart move, because while we're trying something new, we're not quite sure what the particular challenges may be. Are there going to be nuances that we didn't anticipate, which has a negative impact on the piece of legislation? And again, we want to show that this process can work, can achieve the ultimate goal, can get a full inclusive process here, and then could bring back a piece of legislation that can be debated and adopted based on the merits of the information that had been previously reviewed and put into play.

It may mean modifying the existing piece of the legislation that was put forward for change. It may now change 10 times over. It may revert back. But at least at this process, you have an open ability to have a more influential exchange of information, views, and particularly any other types of related legislation.

The one good thing I like about this too is when you start talking of a piece of legislation here, sometimes because it's in the quickness of the House, it's being delivered, you don't get an opportunity to say this piece of legislation here that's relevant to one line department, if you really dig down by changing this, it may have an impact on another piece of legislation that's relevant to another department, or the same department. And we don't get that ability to do that.

I think when we get into committee, because of the representation there, there may be something that would trigger a particular thing if there is something that has an influence on another piece of legislation, that would be important. We may be able to save us future time lost and extra work, or we may be able to say, you know what, the continuum here that would make sense, this has a relationship to another piece of legislation, let's plan that the next piece of legislation that's important to be changed and notify a particular department or that same department, here is what needs to happen. For this piece of legislation to be as effective as we want it to be, something else has to change in another piece of existing legislation. So we have that ability to have that open dialogue and exchange that information.

So what we have agreed to, that we would pick a moderate piece of legislation that we can sink our teeth into that will take us through the committee process and it will fit under one of these existing committees, obviously, for those Members who are put there based on their roles within government, their roles within the Opposition, the critic's role, or their speciality, for example. It depends on their previous background before they came into government. Or a particular other committee they may be on here in government itself or here in the House of Assembly.

This will give us that opportunity to test the waters. I'm looking forward to the piece of legislation coming down and seeing how it evolves. It's going to be a living entity. I'm convinced it can be done. I'm convinced it can be done for a number of reasons. We did it efficiently on the mental health committee, we did it on the fisheries committee a number of years ago, so there's nothing stopping us from being able to do it using the existing format we have; but, at the same time, being cognizant that this is an open process that needs to be modified as we identify challenges or particular add-ons that should be part of it to make it a little bit more successful and a little bit more inclusive as we go forward.

The composition here is a normal, standard thing. How we use that composition, now, is entirely up to this House of Assembly, and because the Standing Orders Committee have

adopted a process that we're going to move this to the next level, this is going to be, I think, a landmark test to see if we can make the Legislature in Newfoundland and Labrador, and particularly as we move into an election that'll happen soon, the next sitting, the next Assembly, what that would mean for the operations in this House, and maybe we change the whole inclusive process, maybe we get legislation that is either changed more often because it reflects the changing needs of society, or we get it right the first time and we get a longer period of time with legislation that doesn't have loopholes in it and doesn't add challenges to the general public who may have to avail of that legislation, or to the government that has to implement and monitor that piece of legislation.

So, I just want to note that I'm looking forward to how this evolves, and I know us on the Official Opposition side are looking forward to the first piece of legislation, getting our teeth into that, working with the committee and finding a way to ensure we get the best piece of legislation out there, and then probably start an ongoing process that changes the normal standard of how we operate with committees in the House of Assembly.

So, I'm looking forward to this as we move forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): Thank you.

Further speakers?

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

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

I'm glad to have a few moments to speak to the motion that's been brought forward by the Government House Leader. This is something that happens every year. It's an important piece of work because it relates specifically to the Estimates process which follows government's release of its budget. The House Leader did a good job of explaining how the three committees, the Government Services

Committee, the Resource Committee and the Social Services Committee are what are called Standing Committees of the House of Assembly, and that means they are committees that are always in place. So having Members named to the committees is extremely important because these committees can be called upon to do a variety of work.

Now, as has been explained by the Government House Leader and by the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island, even though there's a variety of work that these committees could do, traditionally, they've only been assigned in modern times, or in recent years, the job of Estimates of budget. That means the committees and the Members on the committee get the opportunity to question departments about their budgets.

I'd like to say that in recent times, since we've had – right now we have three independent Members and I remember when there was just the one independent Member at various times, especially the Member for Mount Pearl Southlands. Even though the independent Members are not a member of the committee, they do come to the Estimates and are given time to ask questions. I think it's important that that be recognized. I don't think it's necessary – it would be rather difficult, say if all of a sudden you had five independents, to have independent Members on committees. Would you say all five would serve on every committee? So that could become tricky. But the recognition of the right of the independent MHA to be part of Estimates, I think, is really important and I see that as something that we should formalize.

In other words, it just shouldn't be will the Members of the committee permit the independent Member present to ask questions. It should be that there is time recognized that should be allowed for independent Members to be part of the questioning of the department. The minister really is who they're questioning and the minister is responsible for the answers.

What's really interesting about Estimates, I think it's one of the most interesting times of the year, of the legislative year, is the budget discussions and the Estimates. Because, in actual fact, when we sit and discuss with the minister, the minister, generally speaking, will use his or her

officials who are there with them at Estimates, and will use them to really explain what's in the budget in this given year, for example, what happened with the budget last year. You get to look at what was estimated for last year. You get to look at what was really spent, if there's a big disparity between those two numbers, whether it's spending more than expected or spending less than expected, you get an explanation from the department, through the minister, to those questions. Very often, very, very good information comes out; good information in the sense that you're getting the information. You may not like the information sometimes that you get, but it's very important.

I remember one time, I won't mention departments, but a department revealing that it had spent quite an amount of money – hundreds of thousands of dollars they sort of had in their budget, and they used it to buy a building. That was very interesting.

Another time we found out, because a certain amount of money wasn't expended in an area, that in actual fact an important service for Aboriginal women and the justice system was gone; that something wasn't being built what should be built. So very important information can come out during Estimates. It really is a very good time in the legislative year, I find, as an MHA.

Putting these Standing Committees in place is essential for the process of discussing the budget. Of course, we have an expectation that soon there will be a budget brought here on to the floor of the House and these Committees will begin their work.

I'd like to speak to the broader picture, which I think both the Government House Leader and the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island spoke to, and that is the fact that we can actually use the Standing Committees, these three Standing Committees in particular and others, to be involved in the process of discussions of suggested legislation, of bills. Using the Standing Committees to actually have a full discussion of bills, a discussion that could involve bringing in specialists to meet with the committee, bringing in professionals who are involved with the issue that the bill is covering, this is something the committee can do.

It's very interesting, and I think the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island made reference to this. If you take our Standing Orders book and you read our Standing Orders on Committees, it's fascinating to see how we really do have the structure in place. We have an excellent structure, actually, in place for using our Standing Committees when it comes to legislation.

I'm delighted that the minister, the Government House Leader, did talk about the fact that there is going to be a step forward in doing that here in the House. I think it's in this Assembly that he has it planned. As a Member of the Standing Orders Committee, I'm quite pleased we came to a decision to move forward, that a piece of legislation will actually be passed over to a committee to work on, to see are there questions that need to be answered. Not doing that kind of thing here on the floor of the House, but actually in committee. And if the committee needs to call in witnesses, if the committee needs to speak to people who in the past maybe people in the department have spoken to, the committee will be able to do that.

I think it's a step forward in terms of making the House of Assembly a more democratic place to be, and not just here in the Legislature but also in terms of our interaction with the community. The recognition that it's not just the government who has responsibility for putting legislation together, it's not just the department that has the responsibility for the legislation for that department, but all Members of the House have responsibility, and the community needs to be part of that; the community has ideas.

When you use a Standing Committee to discuss a piece of legislation, it allows for the community to be brought in and to have that discussion together with the committee. So it would lead to a greater sense of democracy of involvement in the development of our legislation, and that's what I'm excited about. That's what I'm pleased about.

I'm happy in the context of approving this year's three committees, the membership of this year's committees, that in this context I'm able to talk about that need for a broader democracy in how we run our Legislature itself and how we interact with the people who vote for us and put

us in this Legislature, that we're not just here to talk to each other. Sometimes we don't do that well, but we're not just here to talk to each other in the Legislature. We're here not just to represent the people who elect us, but we should also be here to involve them in the discussions we have here on the floor of the House.

Yes, I'm pleased the motion is on the floor with regard to putting our three committees in place. As I said, I'm very glad to have had the opportunity to speak a bit more directly to the issue of the use of our standing committees and the fact that we also can set up special committees as well. There've been times here in the House when special committees have been set up to deal with an issue.

For example, some years ago – I think it was around 2006, 2005-2006 – a special committee was set up to look at the whole issue of Newfoundland Hydro. Privatization was the issue at that time of Newfoundland Hydro. It didn't happen – thank goodness, I have to say, but committees were used. The auto insurance, if I'm not mistaken, I think that was a special committee as well, which looked at auto insurance some years ago also.

There have been times when we've had a high use of special committees, for example. The last 15 years, not so much so, but prior to that we had a high use of the standing committees as well as special committees. So I'm glad to see we're looking at moving back into that direction. I've been pleased to be on the Standing Orders Committee where we've been having these discussions, and I'm glad the minister brought that information to the floor of the House today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further speakers?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak to this motion. First of all, I will be, obviously, supporting the motion. On its face, it's basically

routine business relating to the budgetary process and the setting up of committees for the purposes of Estimates.

I, like other Members have said – certainly, the Member who just spoke before me said – I think that Estimates is a tremendous process. It's one of the better processes we have, that I've experienced, at least, in my seven-plus years here in the House of Assembly, where you really get to get down into the weeds, if you will, of the budget and have an opportunity to be able to ask the ministers of all the departments, with staff present, line-by-line questions about the budget. It's a very important exercise, it can be a very educational exercise. I think it's a very worthwhile exercise.

I would say in my experience, though, that the process can vary from time to time, depending on the minister. And the minister has a tremendous role to play in the whole Estimates process. I've seen it in two different administrations where, depending on who the minister was on any given night when Estimates were taking place, you could have a very educational and engaging experience, or you could have an experience where the particular minister decided that he or she didn't want to share any information and basically just read the answer that was provided in their little booklet to any changes in budget lines and simply say, yeah, we spent more on furniture, next question. As opposed to – and not being open to answering any questions beyond the actual budget line in sort of a specific sense.

And there have been other ministers, as I said, who have been very open to discussing things. Not just discussing the budget line itself and the change in the line, but the philosophy, if you will, behind why the change was made, discuss the change in policy that led to a budget line changing, to discuss a change, perhaps, in direction that led to budget lines changing and so on.

We've had ministers – I give credit, one that comes to mind is the Government House Leader. I found he was very engaging when we were doing it with the Department of Justice in terms of answering questions, answering policy questions, giving his views and opinions on different matters that weren't necessarily a

specific budget line. And that's what we want to see, but we've also seen other ministers in the past who, as I said, weren't so forthcoming with information. They didn't want to talk about policy at all and simply said, yeah, here's the variance from this amount to this amount, next question. And that was the end of it.

That wasn't a very good process, I would say, Mr. Speaker, and it did nothing for the exchange of information. It did nothing in terms of the spirit of co-operation and getting the information out there to the public. So I certainly encourage all ministers, this time around, to be engaging. Let's all ask good questions, get good answers, because at the end of the day, we are working for the public.

If you talk to a lot of people out there, generally, that's one of the things you hear from people. Why can't you all get along? Why can't you all co-operate to the benefit of the people, instead of fighting with each other all the time and having this adversarial approach. People want to see us all working together.

This is one avenue, if it's done properly with the best of intentions and the spirit of co-operation, where we actually get to share information for the benefit of everyone in this House, and certainly the benefit of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. So I'm glad to see that process continue. Obviously, what we have here is just the Members who have been selected to be on these committees for the purposes of voting for Estimates.

I do want to also acknowledge my colleagues from Conception Bay East - Bell Island, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, and thank them for recognizing the fact that we do have – well, now we have three independent Members in the House of Assembly, and we were all duly elected. We all represent approximately 15,000 people or so. So it's important that we have an opportunity to have some input.

Traditionally, I have to say, I've received great co-operation from the Official Opposition and from the NDP caucus in providing me with leave, if I attended an Estimates session, to be able to ask a few questions. Generally, a lot of times you don't have a whole load of questions because, primarily, the questioning is going back

and forth between the Official Opposition and the NDP. So a lot of the questions – if the Member asking the question on behalf of the Official Opposition has already asked a question about a particular budget line and got no answer, well, then there's no need for the Member for the NDP or from myself, as an independent, to ask the same question all over again.

So a lot of times as you're listening to the questions being asked and the answers being given, you're making notes and you're getting those answers. In a lot of cases, in my case, I wouldn't necessarily need to ask a lot of questions because they were already asked and answered in a lot of cases anyway. But having that opportunity to ask questions, to seek clarification on answers that may have been given, I think it's important. As someone who represents a district, duly elected, I think I should have that opportunity.

I'm glad and I appreciate in the past being given leave to do that, but as the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi said, I think it would be a positive step if there was some formal recognition of that in the policy to recognize that in a formal way as opposed to, in theory, showing up and wanting to ask a couple of questions and not receive leave. Again, that's never happened. I have no reason to believe it would, but, still, I think having it there, that there would be some recognition in allotting a little bit of time, a proportionate time to do that, I think it's important. So I certainly encourage the minister and the committee, as you're formulating this process that something be put in there to specifically address that issue.

Now, I also wanted to speak to what the minister spoke to when he introduced the bill, which I didn't realize it was going there. I'm very pleased to hear it is; albeit, it's something that I have been asking for, for the last three years. I know the NDP in particular have been really asking for use of all-party committees for as long as I've been in the House for sure – probably before then, but certainly since I've been in the House – and the use of all-party legislative committees.

So I'm glad to see that we're finally going to make some movement in that direction; albeit, it's too bad we're sort of on the eve of an

election now when we're doing it. It would have been nice if we had started that process, say, three years ago, but better late than never. I will certainly support that concept. I'm glad to see we're doing it.

I would once again say that in the same way that independent Members attend the Estimates process, I would ask the committee for consideration to put some sort of a similar process in place for the legislative review as well and, at the very least, if Members who are on these committees are going to receive notification that there's going to be a meeting to discuss whatever, then at least copy the independent Members on that. To let the independent Members know there is a going to be a review of a piece of legislation, provide the independent Member with that legislation so that Member can either attend the meeting – not saying to vote on it, but at least attend that meeting as he or she would do in Estimates and have the ability to provide a little bit of input and feedback.

It doesn't mean they're voting on it, because I understand the challenges around that and the numbers game and so on, but at least the opportunity to attend, to give some feedback if he or she wishes to, or if the Member is not available to go to that meeting or whatever, at least be notified of the bills so that the Member could submit a written submission or an email or something to the committee saying I understand you're going to be meeting on this bill and this is a point here that I think you should consider. That information would actually be provided to the committee, documented in the committee minutes and so on, that a Member had a bit of input or a concern or a question or whatever and some feedback into that process.

Again, if we're going to be truly democratic, than I think that's really what we need to do. So I encourage the Government House Leader, the committee and so on, as you discuss these matters to – again, just to repeat and to clarify (a) for the Estimates process to basically recognize formally what we've been doing informally in terms of giving independent Members an opportunity to attend and participate; also, to recognize formally a process whereby if you're going to be reviewing the legislation, likewise, independent Members

would be made aware of the fact that this is happening, when it's happening, and given the opportunity to either, (a), attend, or, (b), make a submission in writing through a letter, an email or something to have feedback and input into that particular piece of legislation. I think that would make for a much better process. It would be much more democratic, and at the end of the day what we're looking to do is we're looking to bring forth the best possible legislation.

As the minister indicated himself when he spoke originally to this, we have seen bills where things have happened that perhaps had it gone through this process, they wouldn't have happened. I think that it's a very valuable exercise for sure, and the more we can do to work together, be more inclusive of all Members, more input, it's good for democracy, it's good for legislation and, ultimately, it's good for the people who all elected us to be here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Any further speakers to the motion?

Is the House ready for the question on Motion 1?

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 2, and I'll read it as follows:

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.

I would move that, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources.

Mr. Speaker, this is a chance to speak very briefly to another amendment being brought to this House from the Standing Orders Committee, which we have talked about on a number of occasions. So the funny thing is, reading this one, if you were just to read it itself, it doesn't look like much. You're taking "new session," scratching it out and inserting the words "General Assembly" and it will start from the 49th General Assembly.

So I'm going to try to give some context as to what exactly that means, what will happen and when it will happen. So I hold here in my hand, Mr. Speaker, and I'm not using a prop, but the reality is that this is the Standing Orders of this House. When you look at Standing Order 63 that deals with Private Members' Day, the layman's, or my version, if I were to explain to somebody that is not familiar with the House, Standing Order 63 is the rule of the House that deals with the day, every week when the House is open, whereby a private Member is able to enter a resolution into this House to be debated by all sides.

Now, some caveats to that, obviously, is that it is not binding. So again, it's not like in Ottawa where – and again, this is a conversation we've had many times. But the reality is that it's not binding, and they're not actually, as we see in Ottawa where we've seen the backbenchers, as they're referred to, or private Members actually bring forward bills that are debated and passed. And I give a prime example of one: It was done by former MP Scott Andrews, and I can't tell you what the name – it was C whatever; I can't remember the number – but it came from –

AN HON. MEMBER: Zachary's Bill.

MR. A. PARSONS: Zachary's Bill.

And that's a case where legislation was actually made in the House, brought forward by a private Member, a Member who is not a Member of Cabinet. It was again something that saw debate, saw questioning, saw Committee.

What we're saying here, okay, so that's today and everybody sees it, the Member stands up,

reads it in and we figure out who's going to debate it. This week it would've been, say, government, for example; next week is Opposition. Generally, since I've been in here, which is going on just about eight years, you see it, it starts every year, at the start of a new session, or the start of a General Assembly, it starts off government one week, then Opposition, then government, then Opposition, it goes to the NDP, the Third Party, comes back, and it goes back and forth like that.

What we've changed here, so the Standing Order 63(2) says: "At the beginning of a new session the Speaker shall follow the custom of recognizing a Private Member's motion from the Opposition side of the House on the first Private Members' Day." The Opposition can start off. So what we're doing is we're taking out, at the beginning of a new session, we're scratching out new session. At the beginning of a new General Assembly, so when the House is first convened, after an election, and right now we're in the 48th General Assembly, so after there is a general election and people come back to this House representing their districts, it will be the 49th General Assembly. So this resolution is to amend this Standing Order starting the next session.

What are the practical effects of this wording change? The practical effect is that, in reality, the House at any time – we know it has 40 Members. It previously had 48. At times before that, it had 52. But right now we have 40, and the reality is that during this time, we see private Members' resolutions from government Members, from Members of the Official Opposition and Members of the Third Party.

The composition changes all the time. Government numbers go up, government numbers go down. Official Opposition numbers go up and go down, the same with the Third Party. In particular sessions, sometimes there are zero independent Members. Sometimes, as there are now, there are three – probably one of the greatest numbers of independent Members that I've seen.

The reality is that the Standing Order, as applied now, in reality when the fact is that the order is basically at the beginning of any new session, so when the House comes back after – so not every

four years but basically when the House reopens again. So, we close down the House, there are spring sessions and fall sessions, the actual reality is that independent Members often do not get an opportunity to raise a private Member's resolution. It just doesn't happen and it's a number's game. They just don't get that opportunity, once you go back and forth. In order for them to get that opportunity, the session would have to go on for an extended period of time.

One of the things that's been brought up and that we've agreed to is that this Member – all 40 of us represent our districts and especially when I look at the private Member's resolution. Now, I have an opportunity sitting in a department where I can bring forward resolutions and pieces of legislation to do with my department.

I liked the fact when I was in Opposition that I could bring up a resolution about an important issue to me, or my district, or our caucus, or any particular group. I enjoyed that. I still remember the first one I ever brought forward was for a defined schedule for the House of Assembly, which did not go well. It did not go well. The Government House Leader at the time was not supportive of that. It's funny because I will constantly point this out when people talk about decorum in this House, I can tell you now I have not seen one day since the beginning of 2016, before we ever sat here, any of these Members in this new session, I have not seen one day where this House was as animated as perhaps the 10th most animated day in the session previous.

I think I could look at Members opposite and I don't know if they'll be able to disagree, because the fact is it could pretty heated, pretty animated, heckling was allowed. Again, I'm not here to have that argument because at the same time I'm all for a good joke going back and forth. Sometimes that lightens the mood of a very serious place, but that's not what I'm talking about.

What I'm saying is that – I'll just talk about this current session. Members on both sides, I think the fact is that we exercise passion and we exercise the ability to debate and to disagree and to agree; but, I tell you what, anybody who says that this session is not the most respectful has

never watched the Legislature in their life. I'll just say that. That's just an aside. And I'd also suggest that they've never been to Ottawa, because that place is a whole different ball game altogether, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I come back to this. What's going to happen? When we vote on this resolution, the fact is that private Members' resolutions will start at the beginning of the next Assembly, the 49th General Assembly, and that decision was made by the Standing Orders Committee just for the sake of ease, so we wouldn't confuse matters. But the next session we'll start it, and that will continue on for the length of that General Assembly.

So the reality is that private Members will get an opportunity to enter a private Member's resolution in this House regardless of stripe, independent, you name it, everybody will get that opportunity. I'll also say that I think as a Cabinet Member, sometimes what – not irritates me, but just because I'm in the Department of Justice I have the ability to bring in Justice bills, but I have district issues that are under Health or under Service NL. So the fact is, I could stand up as a Member and bring a resolution when I want to talk about something like that. We all have that right to bring that up.

But, going back to the purpose of this, we're changing the Standing Orders yet again to, I think, improve our Members' ability to bring forward resolutions in this House. Now, is every resolution successful? No, they're not. Can we still improve that debate? Possibly. Should we make it so that Members can stand up and bring forward the opportunity to actually debate a bill or bring forward a piece of legislation? I think we can work towards that. I think that is something to aspire to and to strive to, but I think this is a step in the right direction.

On that note, I think I've tried my best to explain it. Like I say, I think it's a positive change to our Standing Orders that will affect how private Members' resolutions are handled in terms of the distribution. I think it's going to be hard to disagree with this, but that being said – again, the reason it's going to be hard to disagree is that this resolution, even though I'm the one to enter it, was brought forward by consent, by unanimity amongst my Members of the Standing

Orders Committee, and that is Members of all sides.

Even though he is not a Member of the Committee, I'm going to make an assumption that the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands – who I will give credit to, I'll give credit to, he speaks to these resolutions. He talks about some of the things he'd like to see. Some I agree with, some I disagree with, that's neither here nor there. What I will say is I have a feeling he's going to support this, and I think this goes to some of the points that he has made in the past about his ability to contribute in a meaningful fashion in this House.

On that note, I'll take my seat and look forward to the commentary from Members opposite.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I take this opportunity to speak to this piece of legislation and this changing of Order 63(2), deleting of the words “new session” and inserting instead the words “General Assembly.”

Mr. Speaker, as we noted, this flows well with what we talked about earlier in the committee structure. While this is not directly related to that, it does speak very closely to the whole process of modernizing the Legislature here and particularly making it more inclusive.

As the minister outlined here, we're talking about, particularly, private Members' resolutions with – while he outlined they're not binding by any way, shape or form, but they do set a good template and they do get people thinking about what pieces of legislation may need to be enacted or what policy should be adopted by government to ensure that the needs of the electorate and the needs of the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador are met. They can range from something in health care, they can range from something around our culture. They

can range to getting an education, and it could be something around our structure. It could be around a philosophical view.

It does give an opportunity for private Members who may not get to speak to legislation, for various reasons, or a particular piece of legislation, or be able to bring a particular sequence or a particular angle to a piece of legislation or a policy, or even a program in some cases, that would be relevant to either their own particular understanding, their constituents' understanding, or the understanding of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador on something that needs to be addressed. So we've had these discussions in the Standing Orders Committee about how do we make it more inclusive for everybody.

While the legislation, standing as it does, doesn't exclude an independent Member from having access to it, the calendar structure unfortunately, restricts that. The odds that it would ever happen with the number of people we have in the House of Assembly and the rotation that goes back and forth between government and the Opposition would dictate – in a normal sitting, you'd never get the opportunity for an independent Member to be able to stand and present a private Member's resolution.

So as we move forward – and as I mentioned earlier on the Standing Orders Committees and how we're going to use those, and the committees of the Legislature, this is another piece of reforming our operations. Again, it just happened to be a particular nuance.

I don't think somebody set out 30 years ago, or whenever this piece of legislation was last updated, to say we want to ensure that if there are independent Members, they're not going to be able to get an opportunity to speak. I think when it was put in play it was that every Member of the House of Assembly, from a private Member's resolution point of view, would have that opportunity through the sequence. It just may take a period of time.

Unfortunately, because of the other parts of the policy itself, the Standing Order, when we rotate back and forth between parties, the independents would never get an opportunity during that sitting period. So what we talked about was,

how do we do that? And I give credit to the House of Assembly staff who did some research, did a jurisdictional scan and came back with some areas have it open for that General Assembly, that period of time. So in a four-year cycle, even with 40 Members and using the process back and forth, eventually you would get back to independent Members having an opportunity to be given that chance to present a private Member's resolution.

As the minister talked about here, we've made great strides in the last three years in moving things forward around modernizing the House of Assembly and making it more inclusive. We've made great strides in reinterpreting policies or Standing Orders that were put there, that now may reflect a different structure within the House of Assembly. As we talk here now, having a number of sitting independents and their opportunity to be able to be fully engaged, as anybody else in this House, within the process of debate, and in this particular case, a private Member's resolution.

So we've had that discussion and we've come to a consensus. We've come to a consensus based on what's fair for one should be fair for all. While we do realize, obviously, a majority in numbers in particular parties have an influence on the number of times you get to do it, that shouldn't disregard the fact that every Member here should have an opportunity within a sitting. We've managed to find that with the help of the staff, a way that this can be done without disrupting the normal process in the House of Assembly to ensure everybody has that opportunity.

I could speak more to it, but it's something that there was never any debate about doing it. It was just about finding the right mechanism that would make it inclusive to be able to do and wouldn't jeopardize something else within a Standing Order. So we found something that's very workable, and, in this case, it just means changing the wording. And the wording then is very easily interpreted to the General Assembly.

In any normal period of time you would have close to four years, which would give you roughly seven – eight in some cases – sittings of the House of Assembly. So you would hope in that period of time, Members who may sit as

independents will have that opportunity to also present a private Member's resolution.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to note that, and say again that we would wholeheartedly support that. This is another move forward in modernizing how we operate and making this whole House of Assembly inclusive for all Members.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further speakers?

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly a pleasure to speak to this motion as well. Obviously, I'll be supporting it, and I say I'll be supporting it because I actually wrote a letter to the actual Speaker approximately two years ago and I recommended this exact resolution. I recommended that it be done because of the issue that has been described, that I encountered personally. So I'm very pleased that the government and the Committee are going to be implementing this. As has been said, by making at the Assembly as opposed to a particular sitting of the House, it'll give every Member, in four years, every single Member would have the opportunity at least once to bring forth a private Member's resolution and that's what it's supposed to be all about; about ensuring that all Members are able to fully participate in the democratic process. So, I am very pleased to see this come forward.

Another thing that I did write the Speaker about to have referred to the Standing Orders Committee, related to this, actually, as well, and I just throw it out there just for the information of the House and so on, is that I think that in addition to this, personally I would like to see the inflammatory language associated sometimes to these resolutions, that that would be removed.

Because quite often I've seen in the past where if it's the Opposition bringing in a resolution, private Members sometimes: WHEREAS the government is doing a terrible job with this, where they failed miserably with that, and blah, blah, blah; therefore be it resolved On the same token, sometimes you'll see government resolutions in the past that have sort of been praising government: WHEREAS the government has done a great job with this and a great job with that; therefore be it resolved they continue the great work they're doing, whatever.

I think if you got rid of all those WHEREASes on both sides of that equation, it would make for a better debate and we wouldn't be starting off in a position where we're already sort of at odds or taking sides in a particular resolution. That would be good to see. Also, I think this whole notion of another thing that happens, which I think, personally, would be good to see if that was gone, and this whole idea of amending private Members' motions. Like if you don't like the private Member's motion, vote it down. If you support it, vote for it; if you don't support it, vote it down. But quite often we've seen private Members' motions come forward where there was a motion made and then the other side would make an amendment to it that really changed the whole intent of the motion to begin with, and I'm not sure that does anything for the process, either. I think that the motion should be made, and then you either support it or you don't support it, one or the other.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I just threw that in there because it is related to private Members' motions, but certainly this is a very welcomed change. I'm very pleased to see once again the Committee, the government, obviously, supporting it – they have the majority, which is important – and certainly all parties supporting this and again doing something which is only going to improve the democratic process in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further speakers?

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

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

We also support this, and anything that can be done to improve the democratic deficit that we do experience in our province is a welcomed addition. These changes – the motion before this – are also very welcomed. And the more we can be collaborative and inclusive in the work that we do in this House, in the work that we do in committee rooms, in the work that we do in caucuses, the better it is for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the better it is for the ways that we make our laws and our laws that govern how we work together, how we live together, and how we plan our future. So anything in this line, Mr. Speaker, is definitely a step in the right direction.

And I know, I don't just believe, Mr. Speaker, I know that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador want us to work together, they need us to work together and we all need to do that. As a number of my colleagues have said before me, we've all been elected. We've all been elected to represent the people who voted for us, but not just the people who voted for us, we've all been elected to represent the people in our districts.

I can remember at times when I was first elected and when there was much more animosity, a lot more heckling, I would think what is the point, and then the thing that would sort of ground me here in this House was to remember and to imagine that all the people whose doors we've all knocked on, whose stories we've heard, that's why we're here in this House. We're here in this House to do the work of the people. I welcome any changes again that address the democratic deficits that we do experience here in the province. So this motion has our full support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further speakers?

Is the House ready for the question on Motion 2?

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would call from the Order Paper, Order 4, second reading of Bill 59.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources that Bill 59, An Act To Amend The Interpretation Act, be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 59 entitled, An Act To Amend The Interpretation Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Interpretation Act." (Bill 59)

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

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

I'm happy to stand here and speak to this piece of legislation, which does emanate from the Department of Justice and Public Safety. It's funny because similar to the other resolutions that we've talked to today, this piece of legislation, to me, it's just my take on it, when you look at the bill's name on the Order Paper and you look at the *Interpretation Act*, it's sort of ambiguous as to, well, what is an *Interpretation Act*. What does that mean? What does it do?

It's funny because we have the act and then we have these amendments that are being made to the act, which are actually very specific in my mind as it relates to we're trying to correct an issue that we experienced with access to information. I'll go through the genesis of how this ended up here today and who should we thank for it, and why I think it's obviously a

good thing. But I just wanted to give that sort of preamble, similar to what we've done here today, we talked about one resolution that seemed to mean something about something else, and this is very similar.

So we have here today an amendment to the *Interpretation Act* which is Bill 59. Again, it's not a huge amendment. Basically paragraph 27(1)(l) of the *Interpretation Act* will be repealed and the following substituted. What's happening is it's defining the word "holiday." So holiday means every Sunday, New Year's Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Memorial Day or Canada Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Day, Remembrance Day, Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Now before people think that I'm just going to go through and just read off this piece of legislation, that's not the plan. I'm just explaining what a holiday means here. It means the birthday or the day fixed by proclamation for the celebration of the birth of the reigning sovereign. A day appointed by an act of the Parliament of Canada or a proclamation of the Governor General or of the LG for a day of general prayer or mourning, or day of public rejoicing or thanksgiving. In a particular municipality, other than the City of St. John's and the Town of Harbour Grace, one day in each year, which the council of that municipality may fix as a public holiday.

In the City of St. John's, the day in each year ultimately determined, in the manner prescribed by custom, for the St. John's Annual Regatta. In the Town of Harbour Grace, the day in each year ultimately determined, in the manner prescribed by custom, for the Harbour Grace Annual Regatta;

Section 27 of the act is amended by adding immediately after subsection: Notwithstanding paragraph (1)(l), where a holiday, other than a holiday referenced in subparagraph falls on a Sunday, the term "holiday" includes the following day.

So, somebody who were just to take this bill and read it without having any idea what it means will say okay, you're talking about a holiday; how does that apply? Somebody could look at well, what is the *Interpretation Act* – and I'm

going to give some credit here because I get to stand up and talk about the bill but, as I've said on numerous occasions, it's the people up the department that are not often seen that do all the heavy lifting. And in this particular case, I want to thank Kendra Wright, one of our ADMs, because she gave me a great line to explain the *Interpretation Act*. Her line was the *Interpretation Act* is a code for interpreting all provincial legislation.

This is a code to be used when looking at other legislation. When she put that down in writing and I read it, I said that makes sense because I was trying to figure out how do I explain what it means without getting too convoluted and perhaps confusing even myself.

While most provincial statutes have a definition section, it's obviously impossible to define everything. That is impossible. So a lot of times you'll take a particular term or word that's found in multiple pieces of legislation and that is found in the *Interpretation Act*. So, this act will apply to various pieces of legislation.

For instance, holiday is something that you could see in different pieces of legislation, especially when you talk about holiday, if something were to fall on a business day, if something were to fall on the House Sitting day, there's a whole different range. Again, there are multiple definitions that can be used like that.

In this particular case, holiday is especially important when it comes to one of the main reasons we are redoing this today, which is when it comes to our ATIPPA coordinators who, when it comes to getting ATIPP requests in, getting the information and putting it back out, they fall within very strict schedules and it has to be defined how those schedules work.

Bill 59, this bill that we're debating today, proposes to clean up the definition of holiday and to include those holidays that are set out in what's called the *Shops' Closing Act*. Now, this is interesting stuff that I never realized and I do think it's genuinely interesting. The definition of holiday in this House has been without an amendment since 1970. So, we haven't amended that since some time ago. In fact, I would go back to that would actually be Premier Smallwood would have been in office, I think,

back in 1970 if I recall my history correctly. That's quite a time ago. We're on the 13th premier; this was amended back during the time of the first.

It recognizes Easter Monday, which is no longer defined as a holiday, so that's not there. It does not recognize three holidays observed in the province. So, as I just read off, Canada Day, Thanksgiving Day and Boxing Day, not recognized previously, will be recognized now, and it references Armistice Day, which is now obviously referred to, or recognized as, Remembrance Day.

So those are, I think, pretty substantial changes where there's sometimes some confusion over what is a holiday, what is not, what falls under Shops' Closing. Now, we're going to change this definition, and going forward we'll have an updated reference, and I'll tell you why that's important when it comes to the ATIPP Act 2015. So, under that act, a request comes in for information, and we all know the history behind that particular act and what was before that and before that, and we've even had questions during Question Period on access to information requests and the provision of information.

ATIPP coordinators have 20 business days to process a request for public bodies. So somebody puts the request in, they have 20 business days in which to get it done, and to get it processed. I got to tell you, people think that this information is just snap the fingers and it's done; it's not. It is not. It requires onerous, onerous work to be completed by these individuals, and usually each department has an ATIPP coordinator. So an ATIPP coordinator will reach out, say this is the request that's in, this is the information I'm looking for, that involves checking through databases and checking through people's emails, texts, you name it.

And some requests are very specific; I'm looking for (a), and what does (a) mean? But some people come and say I'm looking for (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g) everything – some of these requests can be a piece of paper, some can be tens of thousands of pieces of paper, which then must be gone through to see if exclusions apply, because there is some information that should not be released for various reasons. They

should be excluded. Does it infringe on somebody's privacy? Does it fall under one of the certain exclusions, which are encapsulated in ATIPPA 2015?

So, ATIPPA 2015 defines a business day as a day that is not a Saturday, Sunday or a holiday. Okay, so we get that. Saturday, Sunday or holiday is not a business day But holiday, as you could tell there, was not completely defined. There were things that had changed. So, we always would go back to the *Interpretation Act*. What does the *Interpretation Act* say that a holiday is?

So we were looking at an act that was listing a holiday, and what were the holidays back in 1970? The outdated definition, and obviously quite outdated – almost 50 years – can have a consequence for an ATIPP coordinator, because we already know that they are facing perhaps greater pressure than they've faced in history in terms of when you look at the sheer number of requests, the sheer volume of data that's put back out. It's higher now than it's ever been. Higher requests and, again, the turnaround are very well documented. And if they don't meet that turnaround, that has implications and it has consequences – one of them being that they can often be called out or the department called out by the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

This amendment will assist ATIPP coordinators to process requests per the legislative timelines. It will also apply to staff in the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner who are also subject to short legislated timelines. So you can think about it, you look at some of these days, you look at the act might be ambiguous, you look at the *Interpretation Act* there might be something different, and we might only be talking about a day or two, but that's enough for somebody to contravene the ATIPP Act and that's enough to set off a chain of events that nobody wants to see. They're already under enough pressure, and they don't need to deal with the grief that comes with the misinterpretation of a clause, which is in no fault of their own.

The question becomes: How did we end up here talking about this? Well, the fact is that I also happen to be the minister responsible for ATIPPA, and after taking that over – which

again, that changed some time in, I think, 2017 – I sat down with the ATIPPA coordinators from all across government, wanting to have a general chat. Why don't you guys tell me some of the pressures you face? What are some of the things that we can do? What are some of the things that we can change? We tabulated the list. We compiled a list. Some things require substantive change; some require significant financial investment and some were simply a legislative change.

We're still working on that. So the credit for this change goes right to those ATIPP coordinators who said this is something that can help everybody, that can help clarify the act, can clarify our job, can make the lives easier of everybody that's dealing with this. And it's a simple change that requires a legislative amendment, which we're here doing now.

So what I would suggest is, again, this is a positive move. I don't think anybody's going to have a disagreement. In fact, one could say that this is housekeeping in nature, and that's fine and dandy. But again, I wanted to give an opportunity to provide some context as to why we're changing this, to why we're here. I can say that the Information and Privacy Commissioner was consulted on this change and is supportive of this change.

Now, I will say that, depending on where this goes, I don't think this will be a wide-ranging debate on ATIPPA 2015. I think I've stayed within the realm of the amendment that's been proposed. An ATIPPA debate could take days, as we've all seen in the past.

What I'll say is this was an issue that was identified by the coordinators within the department who do tremendous work, and I'd like to thank them for what they do because they do a lot of work under pretty tight timelines. A lot of pressure, a lot of information, reaching out, relying on other people to help them do their job, which can be difficult. So I want to thank them.

I also want to thank the staff that made this happen. The Legislative Counsel, my ADM – again, coming back to this, providing me a great line. I want to thank Kendra Wright, the ADM, because really this is code to help determine

what legislation says and means, and that's something that I think is good for us all to know.

On that note, I will take my seat and look forward to the debate by my colleagues.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm pleased today to speak to Bill 59, the *Interpretation Act*. The Minister of Justice went through in some detail in regard to the particular bill, Bill 59, An Act to Amend the Interpretation Act, and highlighted some of the necessity in the particular bill and what's represented in that.

So what we're looking at here with this particular bill is to amend the definition of holiday in the *Interpretation Act*. The purpose of that is to look at bringing the definition in the *Interpretation Act* closer in line with the definition in the *Shops' Closing Act*, which is another piece of legislation, and provide clarity when other pieces of legislation reference the term holiday. Now, the minister in his discussion, too, went through and talked about ATIPPA and a particular necessity to have some continuity in referencing it and have some general guidelines set in regard to how it's referenced.

In the actual *Interpretation Act*, there are a number of definitions for terms that are found frequently throughout the legislation within the province. If a specific act often does not define a term, then the definition contained within the *Interpretation Act* will apply. With this piece of legislation with the bill, it's almost like a reference piece of legislation where a definition is required that you can go back and find it under the *Interpretation Act*. So this particular bill is going to deal with that.

Often the definition of holiday within the *Interpretation Act*, as the minister has referenced when he had discussion here in second reading, is used in a context of the ATIPPA and legislation which governs civil and criminal law.

And the definition of holiday in that context that's continued in the *Interpretation Act* governs when court orders or documents can be served.

It's certainly relevant in regard to the civil and criminal law, and execution of that and how it's governed. So what we're doing here today is updating the definition of holiday to make it easier to read, for clarity – we talked about – and also to bring it more in line, as we said, with the *Shops' Closing Act*.

The minister went through in some detail in specifics in regard to the actual statutory holidays and how it relates back to a holiday, as referenced as a statutory holiday, and how that is defined in the *Interpretation Act*. The definition of holiday will be amended, or what's being proposed here in the actual bill through specific sections of it. Sundays, this is referenced as a holiday and contained in the current act. We'll look at New Year's Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Memorial Day or Canada Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Day, Remembrance Day, Christmas Day and Boxing Day, and these holidays, as well, will be updated to reflect in the *Shops' Closing Act*.

Subsections 3 and 4, the birthday of a sovereign and a day of mourning or of public rejoicing, Thanksgiving, of that nature. These clauses are enabling legislation that are in line with similar acts, both federally and in other provinces. Oftentimes, our particular legislation could be related to employment legislation, labour standards and those types of things.

So when there's reference to statutory holidays, they could infringe on other acts, both of a federal and provincial nature. That's why when we look at the *Interpretation Act* and what we're doing here today, that definition of a statutory holiday could be linked to other pieces of legislation. Once again, the issue of refining that, providing the clarity and also to bring it in line with the *Shops' Closing Act*.

Sections 5, 6 and 7 look at municipal and civic holidays. These clauses allow for things like Regatta Day in St. John's, Harbour Grace regatta day, and allow for one day each year in other municipalities for recognition of a particular civic holiday. This is a new addition or a new

add-on to the *Interpretation Act* and, again, as I said before, to bring it in line with the *Shops' Closing Act*.

I think the minister referenced this as well in regard to some of us often refer to as floating holidays. The four being St. George's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Discovery Day and Orangeman's Day are not considered holidays in the current legislation or the *Shops' Closing Act*. These holidays are defined as, or referenced as provincial government holidays for employees and are created through the collective agreements with the unions.

So that's another issue in regard to – you're talking about statutory holidays or floating days or those types of things. They could be relevant to provincial legislation, provincial employment legislation and collective agreements, either of a provincial or federal nature. So, once again, these would be defined outside of the *Shops' Closing Act* and would be floating holidays and would be referenced, as I said, with collective agreements and how they're defined.

The general intent as defined in the act is to, as I said before, amend the *Interpretation Act* and ensuring the definition of holiday includes the holidays set out in the *Shops' Closing Act*. It brings clarity and continuity to the definitions and how it is subsequently defined in provincial legislation. Again, as I referenced, there could be a connection at times based on the piece of legislation with federal legislation, but also provides clarity on that issue as well.

Bill 59 is a needed piece of legislation for that purpose, and we'll certainly support the legislation as it's moved through debate and through Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further speakers?

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

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

I am happy to stand and to speak to Bill 59, the *Interpretation Act*. The Minister of Justice and my colleague, the Member for Ferryland, have very clearly outlined what some of the issues are in this act. It's a bit of a housekeeping act in some ways.

What this bill will do is it will amend the *Interpretation Act* to ensure that the definition of holiday includes the holidays set out in the *Shops' Closing Act*. Sometimes people get a little bit confused about really what is *Shops' Closing Act* and what are holidays. What it is doing is, among other things, it lists the definitions of commonly used words and terms in legislations and regulations.

The *Shops' Closing Act* was found to be out of sync with the definition in the *Interpretation Act*. The *Shops' Closing Act* includes these holidays: Easter Sunday, Labour Day – and the *Shops' Closing Act* means that all retail offices and offices of business, the offices here within government, they're all closed. It is a holiday. So, Easter Sunday, Labour Day, Thanksgiving, Remembrance Day – which is November 11, or Armistice Day – Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Memorial Day or Canada Day, July 1 – which is very interesting, Mr. Speaker. Today is the 70th anniversary of Confederation where Canada joined Newfoundland and Labrador – let's get that straight.

For us, in Newfoundland and Labrador, it's a very difficult day because it's the anniversary of Beaumont-Hamel, where so many of our, mostly, young men were killed. It's also a day where people across Canada celebrate the fact of Canada as a country.

It's a very difficult day for us because in the morning we remember Beaumont-Hamel. We mourn. We have a parade. We go to the War Memorial. Many of us go to the Legions in our district and also go to the Field of Honour. It's an odd thing that happened, Mr. Speaker, because it didn't have to be that way. We were already part of Confederation before Canada Day was established. One would've hoped that, in fact, Canada would have recognized that. They could've picked any day, and they chose July 1. It's still very much a sore spot for many of us.

The *Interpretation Act* is defining holiday as every Sunday, New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Victoria Day, the birthday or the day appointed for the celebration of the birth of the reigning sovereign, Labour Day, Remembrance Day, Armistice Day, Christmas Day and a day appointed by an act of the Parliament of Canada or by proclamation of the Governor General or the Lieutenant-Governor for a day of a general prayer or day of mourning or day of public rejoicing or thanksgiving or a public holiday, and whenever a holiday falls on a Sunday, the expression holiday, includes the following day. So we see that, for instance, if November 11 was a holiday and it falls on a day other than a holiday, or on a Sunday, then the next day is a holiday, so we get both those days.

Under this new amendment we're losing a few holidays: Armistice Day and Easter Monday. That falls in line with a lot of other provinces in the country, but it adds the civic holidays for municipalities, and municipalities really find those holidays very important. In particular, a municipality, other than the City of St. John's and the Town of Harbour Grace, one day in each year which the council of that municipality may fix as a public holiday.

It's great that the municipalities have the authority, then, to designate what that day will be, making it more appropriate for the conditions of their own municipality. It makes a lot of sense. For St. John's it's Regatta Day and for Harbour Grace it's the annual regatta in Harbour Grace.

There were also four floating holidays. Many of us are really happy to get them, but not everybody gets them. They are St. George's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Discovery Day and Orangeman's Day, and most people in the private sector don't get those holidays so they're not included in the act.

One of the interesting points is that under the *Judicature Act*, a person cannot be served; not be served in a restaurant, but cannot be served through the *Judicature Act* because it's a holiday.

One of the things that is kind of important is when we look at what happened on the federal level, Bill C-369 was a private Member's

motion by an NDP MP asking to honour the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The intention of that bill was to create a statutory holiday on September 30 each year, starting this year, and this delivers a call to action 80 that was issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The title of the report: *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, conveys the depth of the tragedy and the need for action. So this came about as one of the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we may be up for another national holiday, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. That was first introduced in the House of Parliament, federally, March 20, 2018 by the federal Member for Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River, Saskatchewan, and it passed on February 28, 2019. The bill, as presented by the Member, said: "My bill proposes that June 21 be designated a day to honour and recognize the unique culture and views of first nations, Inuit, and Métis status and non-status peoples and the contributions they have made to our collective society." It said that the commission itself for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called "upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital" issue in our country. So, Mr. Speaker, we will see that it remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.

That private Member's motion was about furthering and honouring the reconciliation process. There was multi-party support for this bill and the bill passed. So we will see how that will roll out as a national holiday, and one, I believe, that is well warranted and needed.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further speakers?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm only going to take a moment to speak to Bill 59, An Act to Amend the Interpretation Act.

Obviously, I'll be supporting this bill. There's certainly nothing here that is really out of the ordinary. It's very much a housekeeping bill bringing in line the definition of a holiday in line with the *Shops' Closing Act*. As the minister has said, the impetus for this relates to the ATIPPA legislation, but I guess it could relate to other pieces of legislation because really we're defining what holiday means in any piece of provincial legislation. So it provides clarity in that regard.

In terms of the ATIPPA piece, I can see why that would be an issue, because when it comes to the ATIPPA legislation there are some pretty strict guidelines in terms of timing and so on for applications to be submitted and for answers to be received, and the different stages in the process are very time sensitive. So it's important that, in doing so, we ensure that the legislation reflects quite clearly what happens in the event of a holiday and understanding what exactly a holiday means.

Other Members have read out the holidays and so on, so I'm not going to take time to do that. We all know what they are now, but there was one thing that I noticed just out of pure, I suppose, curiosity from my part, something maybe I didn't realize. It says that one of the holidays, the third definition: "the birthday or the day fixed by proclamation for the celebration of the birth of the reigning Sovereign."

Right now, the 24th of May weekend is known as Victoria Day. I'm guessing, maybe I'm wrong, that the sovereign would be Queen Victoria, I'm assuming. We have Queen Elizabeth now, at some point in time we're going to have maybe King Charles or whatever. It talks about the reigning sovereign, so I find that definition a little bit confusing, although I think we all know what it means. It means the 24th of May weekend, but I wonder if there was a new sovereign, a new King, perhaps, and his birthday fell in some other time of the year, would we lose the 24th of May weekend? I don't know if a lot of people would be happy about that happening.

That being said, as a little side note, I will be supporting the bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

I appreciate the commentary and support from Members opposite. I have to tell the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands that I also read that when I was going through. I think what it is, is that day has not changed, obviously. We have gone to a different sovereign from the one that we current recognize. I think it's the ability to change that that is there. The choice has not been made to change that. It has stayed the same. It's stayed on that particular time, that particular sovereign. That's my assumption on that.

It allows for it to be changed depending on whether that decision came from orders from up above, we'll say. I answer that now so I won't have to do it during the Committee stage.

What I will do is I will take my seat, thank my colleagues for their time and look forward to the Committee stage of this bill.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 59 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill “An Act To Amend The Interpretation Act,” read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 59)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 59.

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

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (P. Parsons): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 59, An Act To Amend The Interpretation Act.

A bill, “An Act To Amend The Interpretation Act.” (Bill 59)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The minister mentioned in his discussion in second reading about the ATIPP legislation and using the definition of holiday as per the *Interpretation Act*. This means that the timelines do not follow a government business day.

So I’m just wondering is there any impact in relation to the definition with something like the ATIPPA coordinators in regard to using the definition that we’re now going to use. Is there any delay with ATIPP in regard to the change in definition?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

MR. A. PARSONS: No, I appreciate the question; it’s a good question. My understanding is that there’s no delay here. It’s about alleviating some concern over ambiguity caused by the difference in some of the days as previously listed. So it’s not a delay thing, it’s about trying to make sure that we’re not getting 19 days, 20 days, 21 days in that situation.

And I would suggest that when I talked to the coordinators about it, this is one of the first things that they brought up because I think it had been causing an issue for some time.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Seeing no further speakers, shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Interpretation Act.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, I move, Madam Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bill 59.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 59.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

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

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

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

The Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 59 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report Bill 59 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

As I referenced earlier in debate when we talked about the proceedings, normally we would have to wait a full day but with leave we can have consent to do a third reading of a bill once we've passed the substantive stage. So, at this point, I would ask my colleagues if they would have any issue with leave to do third reading of Bill 59.

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

MR. SPEAKER: I believe you have leave, Sir. Please proceed.

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

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

MR. A. PARSONS: I thank you and I thank the sunny day out that seems to have lifted everybody's spirits here in this House which is a nice thing.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to my colleagues I would call from the Order Paper third reading of Bill 59.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 59, An Act to Amend the Interpretation Act be now read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

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

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Interpretation Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 59)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, given the hour of the day and the weather outside I would move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House do now adjourn.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 o'clock.

Thank you.

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