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*Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA*

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The House met at 10 a.m.

**MR. SPEAKER (Reid):** Admit strangers.

Order, please!

**Orders of the Day**

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

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

Good morning, everyone.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to call Order 2, third reading of Bill 6.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker; I was waiting the call of the Chair.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Works, that a bill, An Act Respecting Disclosure Of Information Under An Interpersonal Violence Disclosure Protocol, Bill 6, be now read a third time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 6 be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Passed.

**CLERK (Barnes):** A bill, An Act Respecting Disclosure Of Information Under An Interpersonal Violence Disclosure Protocol. (Bill 6)

**MR. SPEAKER:** Sorry for the wait there.

The bill has now been read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting Disclosure Of Information Under An Interpersonal Violence Disclosure Protocol," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 6)

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

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

Order 4, second reading of Bill 8.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Service NL, that Bill 8, An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act, be now read a second time.

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

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act." (Bill 8)

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

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

I wanted to personally extend my congratulations to you in your new role as Speaker, and welcome everybody back to the House of Assembly. It's my first time as Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour –

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** – to be able to bring legislation before this House to be debated, and I'm very pleased to be able to discuss a proposed amendment to the *Labour Standards Act* as it pertains to parental leave.

Although it is largely a housekeeping item that we'll be debating here this morning, it's necessary to make provincial legislation consistent with recent changes to the federal government's parental leave benefits, effective in March. Mr. Speaker, while the Government of Canada is responsible for parental benefits through the Employment Insurance program, the provincial government provides the job-protected leave through the *Labour Standards Act*, and that's really important.

First, though, I would like to talk a bit about EI parental benefits for context. The EI parental benefits are offered to parents who are caring for a newborn or a newly adopted child or children. There are two options available for parental benefits. There are the standard benefits and then there are extended benefits.

Standard parental benefits can be paid for a maximum of 35 weeks and must be claimed within a 52-week period, 12 months after the week the child was born or placed, for the purpose of adoption. The benefits are available to biological, adoptive or legally recognized parents at a weekly benefit rate of 55 per cent of the claimant's average weekly insurable earnings up to a maximum amount. The two parents can share these 35 weeks of standard parental benefits.

Extended parental benefits can be paid for a maximum of 61 weeks and must be claimed within a 78-week period, that's over 18 months, after the week the child was born or placed, for the purpose of adoption. The benefits are available to biological, adoptive or legally recognized parents at a weekly benefit rate of 33 per cent of the claimant's average weekly insurable earnings up to a maximum amount. The two parents can share these 61 weeks of extended parental benefits.

As hon. Members may recall, the federal government announced in its 2018 budget changes to its Employment Insurance parental leave benefit. As a result of these changes, effective March 2019, a new EI Parental Sharing Benefit was implemented when both parents agree to share in parental leave. The benefit provides an additional five or eight weeks of benefits to families when the parents of a

newborn or newly adoptive child share parental benefits.

The Sharing Benefit is available to birth parents or adoptive parents, including both opposite-sex and same-sex parents. Parental benefits can be accessed at the same time or separately. Once parental benefits start being paid on a claim, parents cannot change their duration option, but may change how they share the weeks of benefits.

The new benefit increases the duration of the EI parental leave benefit by five or eight weeks, depending on the parental leave option that will be used. In cases where the second parent agrees to take the minimum of five weeks using the standard parental leave, 55 per cent to a maximum of \$562 a week of earnings, there is 52 weeks of leave. Alternatively, families can opt for extended parental leave at 33 per cent of earnings for 78 weeks.

As women comprise 85 per cent of all parental claims and take longer leaves from the workplace, the parental sharing measure is intended to promote greater gender equality by creating an incentive for all parents to take some leave when welcoming a new child and share the work of raising their children more equally. At the time of implementation of these benefits in March, the federal government said this type of benefit has been proven to encourage a more balanced sharing of child care responsibilities that goes well beyond the five-week period.

As I said earlier, while the Government of Canada is responsible for parental benefits through the Employment Insurance program, the provincial government provides the job-protected leave through the *Labour Standards Act*, which we're debating here today. An amendment to the *Labour Standards Act* is required to allow workers in Newfoundland and Labrador full access to the leave and greater flexibility for parents who wish to share in the federal parental leave benefit.

Honourable Members may recall last year when the *Labour Standards Act* was amended for another change the federal government made to its Employment Insurance parental leave. As a result of those changes, the *Labour Standards Act* was amended to provide job protection for

employees for up to 61 weeks of parental leave, to a maximum combined duration of pregnancy or adoption and parental leave of 78 weeks in total.

Prior to the 2018 amendment, Mr. Speaker, the benefit was split as pregnancy leave, 17 weeks and parental leave, 35 weeks, for a total of 52 weeks. So this amendment allowed for the extended-leave option, which stretched the EI benefit to 78 weeks, where the recipient would still receive the same monetary benefit but divided over an additional 26-week period. So it is the same benefit, when that previous amendment was made, but it would allow it to be divided over an additional six-month period.

The amendment being suggested today is, though, to allow for an additional five weeks for those parents who decide to share in a 12-month option. If parents decide to share in the 12-month option, there's an additional five weeks of benefits that would be paid through the EI system. There is an additional eight weeks for those who wish to share in an 18-month option.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that the federal government is responsible for the Employment Insurance benefits. Our legislation provides protection for when employees take parental leave. Such changes ensure that there is job protection for workers and represent family-friendly policy decisions.

Section 43.3(2) of the *Labour Standards Act* currently states: "Parental leave may begin no more than 35 weeks after the day the child is born or comes into the care and custody of a parent for the 1st time."

The existing time frame, Mr. Speaker, does not ensure job protection for the maximum possible duration of the extended leave. The current framework would also limit the flexibility of when a partner could use their leave. So this is why we're here today and why it's so important that, in amending the legislation, it is our goal here today to ensure that any employee can use their leave at the time it is most convenient for their situation without reducing the leave entitlement under our legislation.

The suggested amendment would remove the legislative reference to parental leave beginning

at 35 weeks after the birth of a child and would instead allow the leave to occur within the first 96 weeks of when a child is born. I think it's important to repeat that: The amendment here today would remove the legislative reference to parental leave beginning 35 weeks after the birth of a child and would allow that flexibility to allow the leave to occur within the first 96 weeks after when a child is born. I want to reiterate and make very clear for the House that the maximum amount of leave that is attainable by any one employee remains at 61 weeks. That is the maximum amount of time that can be taken: 61 weeks.

What is being proposed here today is the following. We want to repeal section 43.3(2) of the *Labour Standards Act* where "Parental leave may begin no more than 35 weeks after the day the child is born or comes into the care and custody of a parent for the 1st time." We want to repeal and replace section 43.5: "Parental leave ends 61 weeks after it began or on an earlier day if the employee gives the employer at least four weeks' written notice of that day."

Mr. Speaker, it is also recommended that section 43.5 be replaced with: "(1) Parental leave ends on the earlier of (a) 61 weeks after it began; or (b) 96 weeks after the day the child is born or comes into the care and custody of the parent for the first time."

Then, "(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), parental leave may end on an earlier day if the employee gives the employer at least 4 weeks' written notice of that day." There's a call for action there based on the employer.

Mr. Speaker, rather than limit the family's flexibility or reduce the leave possible under the act, this amendment, what we're debating here today, increases the maximum time frame in which leave can be taken to 96 weeks so that 61 weeks of leave can be taken at the parents' choice. This is really all about additional flexibility.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment takes nothing away but simply increases the flexibility for when parents choose to take parental leave. It also provides assurances for employers in identifying when leave must end. This is

important to ensure job security for employees, while ensuring that work continues.

There are a number of benefits as a result of this amendment here today. This will provide the greater flexibility, as I've mentioned a few times in my speech, for parents so they can better accommodate their child care and family planning needs, and amending our provinces leave provisions will allow for a more equitable sharing of parental responsibility. It affords new parents in our province the opportunity to avail of the maximum parental leave benefits under a federal program while being assured their job here is protected while they take time off to care for their child in Newfoundland and Labrador. It makes consistent with the federal changes to the parental leave benefit.

I also understand that a number of Members here in the House of Assembly would have received a briefing from staff at the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour. I want to thank staff at the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour for the work they have done on the legislation, especially those that work in the Labour Standards Division of the department. They have been working diligently on these matters.

I'm here as well to answer any particular questions that anyone may have on this particular amendment. You can pose your questions in debate if you wish, but I'd be more than happy to answer them when the debate reaches the Committee stage.

I encourage all Members to actively participate in this debate. This is good for families. This is good for people here in Newfoundland and Labrador, to be able to comply with a federal benefit that they would be able to share in parental leave, receiving five or eight additional weeks, but also ensure that their job is protected here at home in Newfoundland and Labrador.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat and allow other Members to contribute to the debate here this morning.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I congratulate the minister across for inheriting such a wonderful department. Advanced Education and Skills, I've been with for a while, 30 years or so, and they're a fabulous staff.

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

**MR. P. DINN:** Yeah, that's a while, yeah.

It's a great staff there and, certainly, they do great work. I had the opportunity to go over and do the briefing with them. So I congratulate the minister on getting that portfolio.

You joke across the way about a while, but I can go back a little while. I think when I first started with Advanced Education, I was actually a Labour Standards officer, so I had some exposure to the act. I know, at that point in time, there were two main acts in the labour area that the department looks over. It's the *Labour Standards Act* and the *Labour Relations Act*, and sometimes they tend to get confused.

Just for confirmation, the *Labour Standards Act* looks after the minimum terms and conditions for employment in the province, whereas the *Labour Relations Act* looks more at the collective bargaining process. I know people out there, you get many calls that would be a Labour Relations issue and you're calling Labour Standards and vice versa. Again, the *Labour Standards Act* sets the minimum terms and conditions for employment in the province.

This act, as the minister stated, it's mainly housekeeping, but it's an important piece of legislation. This bill would amend the *Labour Standards Act* to ensure the provincial legislation pertaining to parental leave is updated and aligns with the changes that the federal government made to the EI program. The amendment would require and allow workers in Newfoundland and Labrador to fully access parental leave and to have greater flexibility for parents who wish to share in the federal benefits.

The suggested amendment would remove the legislative reference to parental leave, beginning

35 weeks after the birth of a child, and would instead allow leave to incur within the first 96 weeks after the child is born. The maximum amount of leave available to any one employee remains at the 61 weeks.

I'll quote what the minister has said or paraphrase just to re-emphasize what we're doing here. Section 43.3(2) of the *Labour Standards Act* currently states "Parental leave may begin no more than 35 weeks after the day the child is born or comes into the care and custody of a parent for the 1st time."

The existing time frame does not ensure the protection for the maximum possible duration of extended leave. The current framework would allow the flexibility when a partner could use their leave. Basically, it is being replaced by section 43.5 which basically will say that parental leave ends on or earlier than 61 weeks after it began; or 96 weeks after the day the child is born or comes into the care and custody of a parent for the first time. Notwithstanding subsection (1), parental leave may end on an earlier day if the employee gives the employer at least four weeks' written notice of that day.

Some of the benefits – and this was again noted at our briefing with staff of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour. This amendment is providing greater flexibility for parents so they can better accommodate child care and family planning needs. It affords new parents in our province the opportunity to avail of the maximum parental leave benefits under the federal program, while being assured that their job here is protected while they take the time to care for their child. Also, as I noted earlier and the minister noted, it makes it consistent with the federal changes to parental leave benefit.

As an example if your child was born or placed with you for the purpose of adoption on or after March 17, 2019 and you share Employment Insurance benefits, parental benefits with another partner, you may be eligible for five extra weeks of standard parental benefits or eight extra weeks of extended parental benefits.

Employment Insurance maternity and parental benefits provide financial assistance to people who are away from work because they're pregnant or have recently given birth, parents

who are away from work to care for a newborn or newly adopted child. You could receive up to 55 per cent of your earnings to a maximum of \$562 a week. Maternity benefits, of course, are only available to the person who is away from work because they're pregnant or have recently given birth. They cannot be shared between parents. The person receiving maternity benefits may also be entitled to parental benefits.

With regard to parental benefits, parental benefits are available to parents of a newborn or a newly adopted child. You must choose between two options: standard parental benefits or extended parental benefits. Your choice determines the number of weeks and the weekly amount you'll receive. If sharing, each parent must choose the same option and submit their own applications. Parents can receive their weeks of benefits at the same time or one after another; however, once you start receiving parental benefits, you cannot change options.

I go back to – and I agree with the minister on this – this is certainly a housekeeping amendment. It's keeping us consistent with the EI regulations when it comes to parental leave and benefits and maternity leave. I do go back to comments that were made with regard to allowing parents to be home and caring for their children. We know that in this province affordable child care is ridiculous. We have individuals out there who make decisions on whether to have another child or whether to take leave based on affordability. We have many women out there who have careers, who want to maintain those careers and also know that time away from work can be a deterrent for advancement in their jobs. That happens. It's not right but it happens.

When I look at this from a perspective of our province, an opportunity for this to help our province and help our residents, I look at it as an opportunity lost here. This is routine housekeeping. As the minister stated, it takes nothing away but it increases flexibility. I agree with that, but there's more that can be done here. There's more that can be done. We have a declining population. Our fertility rates are perhaps the lowest in the country. We have a declining labour force. And the women of this province make up a huge, important part of that labour force. Giving them the opportunity to

have a family and remain in the labour force and advance in the labour force is key to having this province as a place to stay, live, work and raise a family.

As the minister stated, 85 per cent of those who take advantage of the parental leave are women – 85 per cent. And this allows, as the minister stated, women to stay longer from their job, take more time away to spend with their child. I think that's no better time spent than spending it with your child.

However, we look at the options here. You receive 55 per cent of your salary. If you extend it out, I think it reduces down to 33 per cent. This is a key issue for women who want to decide whether to work, whether to take extended leave or not, because it goes back to affordability. There are not many out there who in this day and age in this economy, with our tax burden, there's not many out there who can take the time off and take 55 per cent of their salary.

Now, we've talked about different things in this House in terms of other provinces, what they do. We talked about equalization in terms of what Quebec gets. We talk about the child care program that Quebec has. If you go in online to the federal government website on EI on parental benefits, on maternity benefits, it applies to all provinces except Quebec.

When I met with the staff of AESL and they went through this with us, one question I asked – and I can appreciate getting them off guard on it – but one question was around the benefit. They get 55 per cent up to a point. If they want to extend a little further, it drops to 33 per cent. I said, what about shortening the time and giving them more? What about giving them an option to take less time but be reimbursed more? Never thought of it.

Again, women out there, and it is primarily women, who are in a job and want to continue to work in that job – and even offering it to the other partner, let them take that shorter period of time off at a greater reimbursement.

I know this is a federal government program, but I mention Quebec – and I'll tell you why I mention Quebec – because it applies to everyone but Quebec. Quebec has, what I would think, in

many programs very progressive. They offer allowance for – in the earlier parts of maternity leave, in their basic plan, individuals can receive 70 per cent to 75 per cent of their average weekly earnings.

If the federal government is coming in with these changes, and these have been enacted back in March, we should be on board. We should be on top of this. We should be feeding into this. We should be suggesting to the federal government that here in our province where our unemployment rate has skyrocketed, our population is declining, our fertility rates are down, we had an opportunity to speak to our federal counterparts and say: Can we tailor something or can you come up with a third option here that fits in with our province in ensuring our residents have all the opportunities to have a family, to keep their careers and to stay employed in this province?

Again, this is a housekeeping piece of legislation. It does increase flexibility in terms of length of duration of time off to care for your child – which, again, I say is no better time spent – but we also have to take into consideration the fiscal and economy constraints on family units. We have to take that into consideration, and I think we have to be proactive. We have to keep our eyes open for any opportunity.

I don't care what government is up there, if it's a Liberal minority, a Conservative, an NDP, but if we're working with federal programs and we have an opportunity here to make it better and tailor it better for our residents in our province – and we can't say it can't be done because, as I say, Quebec seems to march to a different drum. I applaud that. I applaud that, if they can do that and work for their constituents and for their residents.

This is a good bill, there's nothing wrong with it, but I just wanted to take the opportunity to highlight missed opportunity. As we go forward, I think we have to be more intent on looking at the finer details of what's coming forward, because we can certainly look at it initially and say it's housekeeping, which I myself would look at it and say. I think if we're looking at it, we have to look a little deeper at some of these changes that come forward. We have to be able to realize, what are the ramifications of this –

and this is pretty positive – but what are the other opportunities here when you’re talking about options.

Like you said, the very first one that hit me was we’re extending at a certain percentage, why can’t we just reduce it as an option and give women, families and parents an opportunity to take that lesser time off and receive more pay, because that may fit into their situation. Not everyone can take – some can’t take any time off. We know the cost of child care. Most people take it off because they say if I work, I’ll just be working to pay child care, but they take the time and they spend time – and time that they won’t get back with their child. I totally applaud that.

In the future, if we could start looking at this and saying, what would work for our residents, what can we do to ensure that they have all the options available to them, to a mother or a father or parents who can take – well, I can take three months off. Three months is a good time to be off. I’m going to take it off and not lose much in the way of my wages. That’s an option.

Again, I thank the minister for his comments over there. I applaud him for bringing this forward. He has wonderful staff and I’m sure he’ll do well over there. I’m not criticizing here but I’m just looking at options. We need to have a greater lens on this. I know when we do Cabinet papers and such, you have to have a gender lens on this. I think we need to start putting that on a lot of this, look at a family lens on this and how it works best for our province.

I’ll take my seat, thank you.

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

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

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

I’ll say good morning to everyone, Wednesday morning here in the House, and we’re back at the people’s business. It’s a pleasure for me to stand and speak to Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Labour Standards Act – a very important topic.

When I looked at this bill, it took me back, Mr. Speaker, to my own experiences as a young

mother with my two children. I’m sure I may weave a little bit of that in as I speak, but just for the purposes of anybody who may be watching. Sometimes my colleagues say, who’s watching the House Wednesday morning at 10 o’clock or 11 o’clock? But I do often get mail sometimes, Mr. Speaker, seniors that are out in various homes and they write me, and I really appreciate it. Sometimes they send me pictures and they ask me to send their pictures back and things like that. So you never know who’s watching on a Wednesday morning.

Bill 8 would amend the *Labour Standards Act* to “remove the requirement for parental leave to begin no later than 35 weeks ....” At present, Mr. Speaker, you would have to take that leave within 35 weeks after the child is born or comes into the custody or care of a parent.

The bill would also amend the *Labour Standards Act* to “require that parental leave come to an end on the earlier of 61 weeks from the day it began or 96 weeks after a child is born or comes into the custody or care of a parent.”

Mr. Speaker, I once read somewhere there’s only one thing more precious than our time, and that’s what we spend it on. I think that’s relevant to the conversation. What we’re talking about here today is a very refreshing topic.

I was at my hairdressers a few days ago and there was a new baby there, three weeks old, and my colleague would have also met that little guy is my understanding – just so precious. They come into the world and those first weeks and those first months require so much attention. Just meeting the infant’s very basic needs is really a full-time job, Mr. Speaker.

When I was having my second child, I had people that would say to me: now you have to focus on the toddler because they need the attention – but just providing the basic needs of bathing and feeding, and then you’re exhausted. So if we can provide flexibility to allow for the other parent to come into the picture at the time that’s most needed, there’s so much value in that, Mr. Speaker.

We’re talking about, today, supporting parents with new children, and I can tell you also, as the Minister of Seniors, we have aging



demographics in this province. We have a population pyramid that looks like this and we don't have as many people having children as we had years ago. I grew up in a home where there was 12 of us, and my colleague behind me, I believe it was 16 or 18 in his home – big families, Mr. Speaker. People aren't doing that anymore. We are finding that both parents are out working. There are a lot of things to consider when you're having a child. So if we're able to provide flexibility and to make amendments, there's so much value in that.

As a parent, and as the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, I'm very pleased to stand in this hon. House to speak to Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Labour Standards Act, and to offer my support. I throw a bouquet to my Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour for bringing this amendment in today. We might say it's a housekeeping measure, but the intent is to ensure that provincial labour legislation pertaining to parental leave is updated to align with recently introduced changes to the Government of Canada's Employment Insurance Parental Sharing Benefit.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to support this bill because the proposed amendments provide greater flexibility for parents so that they can better accommodate their child care and their family planning needs. That's another change we see, Mr. Speaker. I grew up in rural; I grew up in a small community where if a parent needed to go somewhere, you didn't have to look too far to find someone to watch your child for a few minutes or an hour, if you were going to an event. In more urban areas, people move around for work; they may not have that family support, so the only supports that the child may have, the newborn, may be the parents. With this proposed change, both parents have the option to more equally share in child care by sharing the available parental leave.

While the parental benefit is the responsibility of the federal government, it is our responsibility as the provincial government to provide the job-protected leave through labour standards. Mr. Speaker, there is a great expense to having a child, and there's a much greater expense today to having a child than it was back in the days of larger families when the kids wore hand-me-

downs from the older siblings and there was diapers, and now there's Pampers. There are lots of things that have changed.

Parents want to provide the best they can for their children today and they see what other children have and things like that. The last thing you need to be worrying about at a time in your life when you're changing from a couple into a family, you're bringing this new child into your home, is about your job because you're actually going to be spending more money, Mr. Speaker.

We're talking about protecting people's jobs, but I'm so happy to see this flexibility being interwoven. The most important job in this world – I know for me, I always look to my children. Your greatest accomplishment is your children, our greatest possession. I think everything that we do in society, Mr. Speaker, should be to ensure that our children get the best support, to ensure they have the care and the nurturing of their parents at home and for their parents to be able to spend as much time as possible with them in those early formative years.

By implementing this proposed amendment we are giving parents the choice to avail of the maximum parental leave benefits under the new federal Parental Sharing Benefit program without having to worry about whether or not their job will be protected while they are taking time off to care for their child. The proposed amendment to the *Labour Standards Act*, Mr. Speaker, is such a positive step towards us as a government to further support family-friendly policies.

Mr. Speaker, I'm in a department where we often talk about – the whole continuum across the lifespan is pretty much housed in CSSD. We start with breastfeeding consultants that are housed under my shop and we go right down to seniors and aging in the department. We've made some really great strides, I believe, around the province. Is there more work to do? Absolutely, there's lots more work to do but, in particular, around baby-friendly feeding spaces.

Just a few months ago I was up in Goose Bay. I was really pleased to spend some time with Mayor Andersen. I applaud his forward thinking in saying: How does our municipality come on

board and be more baby friendly? How do we go out in our community?

Mr. Speaker, when we look back to 10, 20 years ago – well, much further than that, maybe – that was not always supported either. Even by our elderly parents and grandparents, that was something that you – many people didn't breastfeed. We know that breastfed is best fed. All this ties together. We're bringing in more flexibility around parental leave and we need to do everything we can to support these new parents as they go down this road in their lives.

What's being proposed and debated today is both cognizant and respectful of not only the importance of family bonding, but also the wonderful variety that exists within families. It's already been talked about this morning here in this hon. House that birth parents, adoptive parents, same-sex and opposite-sex parents, as well as birth surrogates, are all recognized in this amendment, Mr. Speaker.

As I was getting ready to speak, I was thinking about myself taking maternity leave back in the early '90s with both of my children and it was six months, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you, the first three or four I barely know anything about it because you're so sleep deprived. Even though I was 26 years old, I didn't have much experience with babysitting and things, so it was a big adjustment in my life. Right at the time I started to enjoy and appreciate my children, it was time to go back to work.

I was very, very fortunate in that my husband, all of these years, worked seasonal. He would work for six months of the year and six months of the year he would get to spend with the children. So, we were very, very fortunate that way because there is so much emphasis and importance that needs to be placed on that attachment and that bonding in those early formative years.

With this flexibility I was thinking about a lot of folks, constituents of mine, who commute for work. Maybe the dad commutes for work. We have a lot of that, I think, especially in our rural parts, Mr. Speaker. So what happens now is the dad will be home on a turnaround, maybe in the first 35 weeks so will be able to be with the child and now will be able to take some time off,

further out, up to the first 61 weeks. I think it's going to work very positively for those families as well, where you have one parent that may be commuting for work and it'll just add that flexibility.

In addition, the proposed amendment can assist with enhancing well-being and resiliency with children and family. There is a lot of interesting research around parents and their children. According to a growing body of scientific evidence, the foundations of a person's life-long health – think about this now, Mr. Speaker, the foundations of a person's life-long health are largely set during a child's initial first 1,000 days of their life. Just think about that.

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

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

**MS. DEMPSTER:** If you live to be 70 or 80 years old, the health largely sits with those first 1,000 days. That's what we're talking about here today, Mr. Speaker. We want these children to have a fantastic start in life. We want them to grow up and be educated and contribute to our province in a very meaningful way and thrive here in Newfoundland and Labrador – this place that we are all so proud to call home. I'm a little bit biased, like many of us, but I just think we live in the best province among provinces and territories in this country.

We want to give our children that good start, Mr. Speaker. So the more supports that we can provide, the more flexibility that we can provide to children at the beginning, we're all certainly going to benefit from that. By investing in our children and our families we're setting the stage for better things to come later in life.

Mr. Speaker, I've been in the Department of CSSD since 2017, and housed in that social department is also child welfare. There are some heavy things that we deal with in child welfare, very heavy things. I go home sometimes at the end of the day and I think how fortunate we are compared to some children and the roads they've gone down. And you do have to wonder what happened in their life, what happened in their parents' life. We have a huge focus right now, a new piece of legislation that we brought into the House in May 2018, proclaimed in June

of this year, around preservation of the family unit. We're talking about those early days.

I'm digressing for a moment, but one of the things that really struck me, since I've been in the department, when we're working with vulnerable families, vulnerable parents – it's always the last resort – but sometimes when we've had to remove children, when you reunify them with their parent, it doesn't matter what their parent has done, if they struggled with alcohol and addictions there's that bond there. It's so strong. It's just driven home for me as the minister that we need to do all we can to keep the children in the home, to provide wraparound supports to vulnerable families, because it's best for the parent and it's absolutely best for the child, Mr. Speaker. I can't think of a better investment that we can make going forward than into our families.

Always a really wonderful topic – it touches close to home for me – that I love to talk about. Because I was very, very fortunate, while I was raised by grandparents in a very large family, had a wonderful start in life, and I owe so much to them. I respect that not everybody has been that blessed, Mr. Speaker.

Back to Bill 8, the changes proposed will be helpful for families that also may have other young children in the home. And I briefly alluded to that in my opening: managing life with a newborn and a toddler. Then I was thinking, we live in this province where winters are long and you throw in a few snowstorms into that, it's pretty challenging. You maybe have to get out for an appointment with your newborn and then you're trying to get this toddler out the door as well. I know, in my case, I had a toddler and then I had a baby that would cry until about 4 in the morning and I'd fall asleep and then you would have to get up at 8:30, but we get through. These are the very practical things about parenting. These are the things that we all go through in those first weeks of being a parent, which is why we need to bring in these flexibility options, Mr. Speaker.

Then think about parents that welcome the arrival of twins or triplets. I know a young lady in my district now that has twins, beautiful twins, and she's pretty busy with them. I spoke with a gentleman last night, and his triplets are

now three years old, but they were pretty busy and both of them were working outside the home – two little girls and a boy, Mr. Speaker. Then you think about those who have difficult pregnancies, some who have to have Caesarean sections, major things, and you just need that extra flexibility. Then I think about the children born with disabilities. Extra parental leave would assist with alleviating some of the stress, the added burden of having a child born with various, maybe additional needs that require additional attention, Mr. Speaker.

Overall, I'm very pleased to be able to support this amendment to the *Labour Standards Act* under Bill 8, Mr. Speaker. Very happy to see that this amendment is intended to provide greater flexibility for parents so they can better accommodate their child care and planning needs, the amendment which affords new parents in our province the opportunity to avail of the maximum parental leave benefits under the federal program, Mr. Speaker.

A couple more points here and then I'll take my place. Somebody asked earlier, why are you changing the leave to 96 weeks? I want to say, Mr. Speaker, we are not changing the leave. We need to be clear; it's important to be clear. We are not changing the leave to 96 weeks; we are changing the time frame in which an employee could take their 61 weeks of job-protected parental leave. The change to parental leave ending within 96 weeks allows for the maximum 61 weeks of leave to be maintained. That's just allowing the leave to be taken at any time during the time frame that is already established in legislation.

Mr. Speaker, something that I noted here, it is interesting that while we're talking about supporting new parents and giving them the flexibility to find their way through the first weeks and months of having a child, in the majority of cases, this amendment we're bringing in means little to employers. Just think about that. We're doing something here that's going to help parents with young children and it means little to employers, so it only makes absolute sense that we would do it.

It got me thinking about how we give so much to our work life. We get up every day and we give and give and give, and sometimes that

comes with a price. It's interesting because often you could say, at the end of your working career, you're replaced – we get up, we come into work and we think if this isn't done, if this isn't done, things are going to fall apart; but then when we finish our career, we're replaced in a heartbeat and who even remembers our name, Mr. Speaker. It's your family – sometimes when there's loss among family, that can't be replaced. That's why it's so important for us to do whatever we can, Mr. Speaker, to support families, to help preserve the family unit. It's so insignificant really to the employer.

I am very happy to support Bill 8. I want to thank the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour for bringing in this amendment today.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I'd like to thank the minister for his very detailed presentation of the bill, my colleague from Topsail - Paradise and my colleague across the way, the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development. I have to comment and say that I thoroughly enjoyed her presentation there. Not only was it very factual in detail but I love when people can draw real-life experiences to a particular bill, a piece of legislation and apply it to real life. I, myself, and my constituents sincerely appreciate that.

When the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development spoke to the most important job, I couldn't agree with her more. Parenting is definitely the most important job or occupation you could partake in, in all of life. While the definition of a parent has evolved and continues to evolve from what we had been most familiar with in decades past, parenting is more of an activity than an actual occupation. It can be done by grandparents, extended family, newly adoptive parents, and it's very important that we support that kind of activity because whether we like to really see it or not, without the care and production of children, there is no future.

Children are our future. That's why we stand here today in the Legislature to make amendments to legislation, to introduce new legislation to make it better for those aspects of the future. When you look at children, that is the reason why we have a future because there are going to be people who will mature, become adults and fill our roles that we do today.

I'm always a big proponent of syncing provincial legislation to reflect federal legislation. It just removes a lot of convolutedness when it comes to applications for employment assistance. The employer has more of a clear vision of how the absence of a particular employee is going to affect their business.

While it may not be considered a concern for employers because, technically, it's a program funded by the Employment Insurance aspect, it is a concern for employers. I know myself, as an employer, obviously, we support maternity and parental benefits, because, as I said, it's necessary for our future, but we do have to take into consideration how the absence of an employee will affect the running and, possibly, success of a business.

I remember as a young parent 20-odd-years ago, back then my wife took the maternity and parental benefits, but both of us had to go back to work at a certain point. At the time, we were working on my father's farm – and I'd like to think it was because I was a valuable employee, not because I was my father's son – but I was able to take my son to work. How I did it was I put a backpack on, my son went around and I did my duties, be it working physically in the fields or in the office. I think his most favourite thing to do was drive the tractor.

In the middle of the night sometimes, if I couldn't get him to go to sleep, well, I'd figure out something to do and go out on the tractor. I had this little seat fashioned in the tractor and away we went. He'd fall asleep and I'd get all sorts of work done. So that was a benefit of being my parents' employee, and I'd like to think a great employee, too.

That's something that has evolved. Obviously, it's not acceptable this day and age to put your son in a rigged up car seat in a tractor, but there

are – we even see it in the modern tractors that we use in our fields today, there is what we call a buddy seat. It does have a car seat provision there, which is obviously very important.

So I think that employers, and businesses in general, we're 100 per cent supportive of this type of extension and flexibility. To say it doesn't affect business would not be, I don't think, a true reflection of the actual situation. Because when you have a valuable employee that does leave, sometimes that puts projects in the throes. You do have to go through the hiring process. You have to go through the training process of a new employee – which, of course, does have some side benefits. Now all of a sudden you have opportunity, when the other individual returns, to possibly expand your business, because now you have two people trained in that role. But there has to be consideration given to employers and businesses. It does affect them.

What we have to really also look at too, and consider, is how important – that beyond the federally-funded portion of parental and maternal leave, we do have to look in this province at affordable child care. We are desperate to increase or even maintain – not even increase our population at this time. We're desperate to maintain our population at this time.

As the previous Members have said, our fertility rates – well, our birth rates have gone down. Once upon a time our province had the highest birth rates. We had the highest number of people in families, but over the past, say, three, four decades that has drastically fallen by the wayside, and largely due to financial restraints on having a large family.

I didn't come from a real large family, but by today's standards it would be. There were four of us. We often shared clothes from one – as you grew out of something, well, you passed it on to your brother or sister, or whatever it may be. Those kind of things are efficiencies that you can realize in big numbers. Also, back 20 years ago that was a bit more of a socially accepted practice. Now I'd like to see everybody giving clothes and whatever type and furniture a reuse, a second purpose. I think not only is it economically viable but it's also a great savings on our environment.

Back to the affordability of parenthood, it's essential that we encourage people to have families, however means it happens, be it through surrogacy, adoption or the good old-fashioned way, whatever way that would be. We have those financial pillars in places such as giving parents the flexibility to fill the roles in their child's development.

As the minister has said, the most important days of a child's life have been almost proven to be the first three years of their life. That is when, of course, they do need the most care. Often, when people do decide to have families – I always tell everybody when I see somebody with their first child, I'll always encourage them. I say the first one is a lot of work but the second one is only half as much. So you do see advantages to having children closer together. If a parent is able to spend time with a newborn or a new entry into the family, it will also afford the ability to spend more time with that toddler and create that family bond and family unit.

One thing I did notice, and I wasn't really clear on, and maybe the next speaker could speak to it, is I wasn't quite sure on the clarity of if an individual or a parent-to-be adopted an older child in their teens or in their – not in their toddler stage but in an older stage, would they also be eligible for this type of parental support from government? The reality is there are many children in our system and throughout the world that are not babies, that are not toddlers, that do need a loving home and would surely appreciate parents and the support of a family. I do hope – and I apologize if that is clarified there, but I didn't see it right away whether the parents of an older child, through adoption, is also taken into consideration.

Back to affordable child care, that has to be an extension of this type of legislation. It's been proven time and time again, affordable child care, while it is an expense to government and it is an expense to the jurisdiction in which it's administered, it pays back 10 times over. It enables people to have children, it enables people to get back to work. It enables people to consider working, consider starting businesses. That's a huge aspect that is lacking in the entrepreneurial world.

Yes, there are supports there for employees, but employers also need similar type supports. Employers also need affordable child care. The reality is when there are jobs created, people see a future; therefore, they see a future in becoming a parent and raising a family. We also have to look at providing the same type of support for employers.

Again, back to affordable child care. I don't think we can talk about it – well, I think we've talked about it enough. We actually need to do something about it now. I know our party's platform included an affordable child care program. I think there are not many people who could raise an argument against such an endeavour and such a social initiative. Affordable child care is a benefit to all. It's a benefit to the children, it's a benefit to their parents, it's a benefit to the community. Hopefully, it would result in some people who would not be able to become parents, due to financial constraints, enable them to do it.

This type of legislation, I think this is a great step to advancing ourselves towards affordable child care. It also is a great step to sync it with federal standards. As I said, the more that we can align ourselves with federal legislation the easier the programs are to administer which also result in cost savings. It provides a clarity to not only the recipients of the support system, but also provides huge clarity to the employer which is very, very important. Because without stability within business and clarity within businesses, businesses will not be as successful; therefore, not be able to maintain those jobs that enable the funding of the Employment Insurance program and the funding, of course, of people's livelihoods.

With that, I'm going to conclude my speech to this. I personally support this amendment. I think it's the first part of many steps to get to that affordable child care legislation.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I am delighted to be able to speak to this legislation. I'd like to thank the minister for doing an excellent job of relating the federal regulations and sharing with us how our provincial regulations will accommodate those federal regulations.

I would like to point out that this is simply an exercise in enabling access to federal government programming. We are simply changing the provincial legislation to enable individuals living here in Newfoundland and Labrador access to these extended parental benefits. This is a very simple procedure and I'm delighted we're able to do this now so people can start availing of this program sooner rather than later; however, I would like to take some time to address a number of nuances within this regulation. Certainly, I can tell by some of the noise level here, the many other conversations, people are also quite excited about this topic and are engaged in it.

Some things I would like to bring up that this legislation will have significant implications for – I know many of us here, almost all of us, perhaps myself excluded, can relate personal stories of parenting. It is not easy. There are late nights, there are lots of frustrations, there's enormous extra cost associated with that. I do not need to tell you what you already know. Instead, I would like to talk about some of the details of legislation and some of the implications of that. I'm going to offer a different perspective on this, like New Democrats tend to do.

In my previous life, I was the executive officer of the Faculty Association at Memorial University. One of my roles there was to prepare for collective bargaining. In our collective agreement we have accommodations for parental and maternity leave. One of the implications of this provincial legislation is going to be how we accommodate that in our collective agreement. Some of those changes there are quite significant.

One of the things we're going to talk about under those collective agreements is the number of benefits that individuals receive, top-up, access to child care; all of these are key issues. Before I get into that, I would like to give credit to the Member for Topsail - Paradise for

pointing out that, yes, there is potentially another option. He suggested instead of having standard or extended benefits, why don't we have compressed benefits with a greater benefit associated with that. Excellent idea.

How about we go a little step further? Why don't we talk about topping up EI? We can do that locally. If we were to look at changing the federal regulations, that is a much more onerous and difficult task. It requires discussing with the federal government, making sure we have agreement all across Canada. That's a much more difficult process. If we want to make this easier for parents to have children, and in the face of a declining population and an aging population, we need more babies born here.

If we want to encourage that, let's make it easier for people to have children. It's pretty easy to have a baby; we all know it's much more difficult to raise that child. So in raising that child –

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

**MS. COFFIN:** In raising that child, we have extra costs associated with that. When we're looking at having a baby, having your second baby, having your third baby, if you're looking at the extra costs associated with that and you're facing a year at a salary that is at 55 per cent of what you are currently earning, not only are you caring for a baby and it's a totally foreign situation to you, you're doing it with almost half of the income you had previously.

You're buying car seats and you're buying Pampers and you're buying formula. These things are not things you're sharing with anyone else. We all know two people can often live a little more comfortably, a little more frugally, but when we add a child into that, we're not using diapers, we're not using baby food, we're not using breast pumps. I'm certainly hoping we're not sharing that across the parents. So there are extra costs associated with that, but we have less money to do that. So a very reasonable way of encouraging individuals to have babies and take time off to care for those children properly is by offering top-ups.

Here's another thing I'd like to do. I'd like to thank the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au

Clair who has stated: We need to do everything we can to help parents; more supports we can provide to families the better; the best investments we can make is in families. These are excellent. So here are some suggestions.

Let's encourage the accommodation of new legislation in our collective agreements. We all know many of the public sector bargaining units are heading into collective bargaining right away. We've seen this in the news on multiple times. So when we're going into this, how about government go into this with proposals ready to help accommodate parents have more children and make that process easy for them.

Let's talk about going into the collective bargaining process and adding employers continuing to pay the share of employment benefits because your health benefits and your life insurance benefits are often not covered when you're on EI or, if you take extended EI, you lose your employer's share being paid on your benefits. So if you take the extended benefits where you get 33 per cent of your income for a year and a half, so you get less income for a longer time, at the end of that you lose your benefits on top of it. So when your child gets a cold, you can't take them to the doctor and expect your medication to be paid for, or you pay extra with the 33 per cent of your salary that you have to have your benefits covered. That's really incongruent now, isn't it?

So why don't we go into our collective bargaining with a mindset of we're going to make it easier for families to live and raise children here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Let's go in with employers having a proposal to top up employers' share of extended health and life insurance benefits. I think that would be a true benefit to families in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Let's talk about some other things that we can have. One of the things I would like to encourage is say kudos to government to encourage and enabling both parents to take parental leave. We have ample evidence that suggests that both parents and children do better when both parents take parental leave.

One of the things that we're seeing in this legislation is not only are we accessing extended

parental leaves, albeit at much more reduced rates, but we do have an additional benefit if the second parent takes some of that parental leave, then they can get extra weeks – excellent, excellent, excellent idea. Let's make sure it's easier for them and let's start topping that stuff up.

Here's another piece: Not only do we want to cover off the employers' share of benefits, how about we take that extra step and start talk about topping up our EI benefits? So instead of saying I'm going to take a year off and care for my child because that's the very best thing I can do for my child, but I have to do that at 45 per cent of my salary, why doesn't government make this brilliant move to say we will top up your EI benefits, so you don't have to go out with 55 per cent of your benefits and attempt to care for someone else but you can go out with full benefits. Or maybe full benefits is a little too much. Maybe we can start gentle and maybe we can say you take 55 per cent of your salary on EI and government will top you up an extra 25 per cent this year and, as we move into the future, it can top up a little bit more and a little bit more, with a vision for 100 per cent top-up.

This doesn't have to be instantaneous because I understand the fiscal situation that we're in, but investing in families, as I quote the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, is our best investment. So let's start talking about truly investing in families.

Again, thanks to the Member for Mount Pearl North in pointing out that we need more affordable daycare. I would be remiss if I did not point out that a hallmark of our platform in our NDP caucus is that we have \$25-a-day child care. This is doable, this is reasonable and I think that this will help provide the supports for families who want to have more than two children.

I have heard too many stories of people who love children, want to have more children, but cannot fathom the prohibitive cost of putting a third – let alone a fourth or a fifth child – into child care. Let's make it easier for people to be able to raise their children so that they are not stressed because we know the more stress we have, the more difficult our home life is, the more difficult our work life is, the more difficult

everything is. By reducing that stress we make life better for everyone. We also become productive as a result of that because if we're not worrying, we can focus on the work that we actually have to do. Let's think about some of the other things that fit into this puzzle. Yes, we're investing in families, but there is so much more that we can do to invest in families.

I have one other point to make. This is a reasonable start. It is good to have families that are doing well, who are able to avail of these EI programs and services; however, this does nothing to address the number of children that we are seeing on the maternity ward that are suffering from drug withdrawal and fetal alcohol syndrome.

I have had too many people come to me and say: Do you have some time to come to the maternity ward to comfort these infants who are unable to be comforted, because their parents are not physically or mentally able to comfort them? These infants simply need us to hold them, give them a sense of security and give them a sense of bonding. We have not addressed this anywhere and this is one of the hallmarks of our current recession.

As we saw our boom and bust happen, we saw a greater prevalence of drugs, we saw a greater prevalence of addictions and a whole host of other social ailments. If we do not do anything to help mitigate this now, this problem is only going to get worse. I know I'm veering off just a little bit but our key thing here is our families are, again, our best investment that we can make. If we continue to make decisions that leave us with families broken or children crying in maternity wards because their families have been ravaged by addiction, that is not appropriate.

I do look forward to the opportunity to have a more detailed discussion about how we can craft better collective agreements, how the provincial government can initiate better programs and services to help invest in families; but, for now, I would like to say that this legislation or this bill has the full support of myself and my caucus and I would like to see us get moving on this as soon as possible.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.



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

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

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

I'll make some remarks on this particular legislation that we're putting forward today. As many people have said, it is very much housekeeping. It allows us to bring our legislation in line with federal legislation. Mr. Speaker, I will say that the reason we're making these changes is important. We talked about collective agreements and getting ready for this type of thing in collective agreements.

In this year's budget, Members may not remember, we announced changes, proactively, long before this legislation today for our public servants. I'll get into that in a little more detail, what we've done for our public servants, but we did that as part of this year's budget.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government announced the new Parental Sharing Benefit, and I don't need to go into all the details because it's been talked about by several Members what it entails in terms of what the federal government is doing and how we are mirroring that in our legislation here today. Suffice it to say, Mr. Speaker, that these changes are important for a variety of reasons.

They're important for individuals who are thinking about having a child but concerned about employment or the length of time they can spend with a child. I know that my colleague who sits next to me talked about that to some degree.

I'll speak from some personal experience. My mother, who sat as a Member of this Legislature and some of the Members opposite remembers sitting with her, she was known, very well recognized in this province as somebody with a lot of compassion, with a lot of empathy for the needs of others. That was displayed in how she conducted herself as a Member of this Legislature.

Some of that may be as a result of the fact that she raised six children, but she had her children in an era where it was more common for women

to stay home and raise children and men go to work and provide a living. So, she stayed home. She was a homemaker, Mr. Speaker, and raised us – stayed home to do that.

We are seeing a very different world today where women are working as much as men, and rightfully so. This legislation allows for men to stay home and care for children as much as women, and rightfully so. I think the children will benefit from that. I think the workforce will benefit from that.

As I said, my mother was a Member of this Legislature, and I would say a very fine Member of this Legislature. She came from a –

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, we still have work to do, but gone are the days, I hope, where a woman has to choose between work and raising a family. And that's part of what this legislation is about, and that's part of what we announced in this year's budget.

As I said, there's still work to be done in that regard, but we now allow both parents, whether it's a man and a woman or same-sex parents, it doesn't make any difference. We allow both parents, Mr. Speaker, to make a decision as to who stays home, or whether or not they share that responsibility, and who goes to work or whether or not they share that responsibility.

So it's a huge part of what we're doing here today, Mr. Speaker. It's important that parents are able to contribute to both raising a family and participating in the workforce. There are a number of aspects that I'll talk about in terms of the importance, in terms of population retention, our aging population in this province. I don't need to speak to Members about how important that is, that we encourage population growth and population retention.

One of those ways, Mr. Speaker, is to encourage young families to have children and to relieve some of the stress of those families in having children. One of the ways is by attracting immigration to this province. One of the biggest factors in that is diversifying the economy and creating opportunities so that people feel better about having children; so that people feel better

about moving to this province; people feel better about staying in this province. So, as a government, we've worked hard in that regard as well, because we need to be able to diversify the economy and create the opportunities in order to grow the population.

Mr. Speaker, AESL focused very much on immigration and the Immigration Strategy in this province, and it is showing signs of success. We still have work to do in that regard. We'll continue to do that work.

I know as Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker, a shrinking population and an aging population causes concern in terms of a tax base and whether or not we're able to spread the responsibility for the tax base over more or fewer people. These types of initiatives – all of the things we do – add and contribute to trying to grow the economy, whether it is through births, natural population growth, or whether it's through immigration.

Mr. Speaker, if we want to increase our population, I've talked about some of the things we need to do. We need to help support young families in putting down their roots in this province, and I've talked about some of the ways we need to do that. People need to know their job is safe when they take the necessary time to care for their children, especially in the crucial first year. The legislation that's being put forward today provides that extra bit of security so that people know their job is safe.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to my responsibility as Minister of Finance, I also hold the responsibility for the Human Resource Secretariat. Being responsible for HRS in this province, the responsibilities that come with that – and many of the Members here in the Legislature, many people in the province, look at the Minister of Finance as the Minister of Finance and minister responsible for Treasury Board, but HRS is also a very important factor, a very important division in my department.

As the Minister Responsible for the Human Resource Secretariat, I represent government as the employer of the public service. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud in our most recent budget – and I talked about that a little bit earlier – we introduced measures to support members of our

public service when they make a decision to start a family. We did that proactively, and, in fact, we did it in consultation with our unions. It is inserted into the teachers' collective agreement, it's inserted into the Nurses' Union collective agreement, and because we were looking at doing this in the budget, we proactively included it for our other unions as well.

The idea for this came through the collective agreement process. I will give some credit to NAPE and the leadership of NAPE because they talked to me about this particular issue when we were in collective bargaining. I gave the leadership of NAPE my word that we would investigate it, and while we weren't ready to do it as part of their collective agreement because we needed to investigate it further, that I would focus on doing it in our next budget.

He took my word on that, Mr. Speaker, and my word is my bond, as many of the union leaders in this province know. We went to work on that. We did the necessary homework to ensure it could happen, Mr. Speaker. We included it in subsequent collective agreements but we weren't going to make NAPE or other unions wait for that, so we proactively included it in this year's budget.

Mr. Speaker, we extended maternity, adoption and parental leave and selected benefits from 52 weeks to 78 weeks for public service employees in this province. We also ensured that those who take extended leave for these reasons are not disadvantaged in their careers as they continue to accrue service towards step progression, and their service will be recognized to include the time they are away.

Employees will also maintain the option of purchasing pensionable service, and government will match those contributions. Mr. Speaker, employees can also maintain their group insurance coverage during their leave, provided they make their premium payments.

These changes represent our commitment to the people we employ through our public service, Mr. Speaker. They represent our commitment to the people we employ, and as an employer we also work with employees who need flexibility with work arrangements. We have a deferred

salary leave program where permanent employees with at least 12 months of continuous service may avail of a deferred salary leave plan designed to help the plan and finance a leave of absence for periods of six to 12 months.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to economic diversification and trying to create jobs in this province, we're also looking at other ways, such as those that I've just outlined. We understand the value of supporting our employees. The legislation we have here today speaks to that to some degree. What we've done in *Budget 2019* speaks to that as well.

As a government, Mr. Speaker, we provide support in other ways to our families. The Department of Finance administers the Newfoundland and Labrador Child Benefit, which is a provincial tax credit paid monthly to help low-income families with the cost of raising children under the age of 18. In *Budget 2019*, we also included \$376,000 in funding for the Single Parent Association of Newfoundland and Labrador to provide programs and services to single families such as the Single Parent Employment Support Program.

Mr. Speaker, while this legislation today is considered by many to be just housekeeping, it is housekeeping to allow an important social program to work as it is intended, so I'm proud to support the legislation that is on the floor today.

Thank you.

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

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

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

It's a pleasure to stand in the House again today, this time to speak to Bill 8. Of course, this is an amendment to the *Labour Standards Act* as has already been said. Mr. Speaker, when we think about labour standards here in this province, primarily most workers are governed by the *Labour Standards Act*. Of course, there's also the *Labour Relations Act* which governs unionized employees in the province.

When we think about labour standards or labour relations, I think there are a number of outstanding issues that do need to be addressed in this province. While this is a good bill, which I certainly support, I say to the minister responsible for Labour, the Minister of AESL, that there is much work to be done throughout the province to deal with some of the issues that we do see raising its head from time to time throughout the province.

I think about some of the strikes and lockouts that have occurred in the province over the years that went on for extended periods of time; I believe D-J Composites is one that comes to mind. I really think in terms of looking at legislation, we need to find ways to bring those situations to an end much quicker than they do, whether that be some form of binding arbitration or whatever the case might be.

We see situations in this province as an example where we've seen employees holding the bag when a company declared insolvency or went into creditor protection. There's absolutely a need to have legislation. I think that may require some federal changes that we absolutely should be lobbying for to ensure that employees are the very first to collect. Not the banks or the other creditors but the employees who have worked and paid into pension plans and everything else, to ensure they are the very first to collect when a company declares insolvency.

We look at here in our *Labour Standards Act* the issue of overtime, as an example. I've had constituents come to me with concerns they have about the fact that overtime under our *Labour Standards Act* is time and a half the minimum wage, not time and a half your wage, time and a half the minimum wage.

So someone making \$14 an hour and then they have to work overtime and they are expecting to get \$21 an hour, when they look at their cheque they're saying what's happening? They got \$15 an hour because the *Labour Standards Act* doesn't say time and a half your pay. It says time and a half the minimum wage. So you're working overtime for \$1 extra an hour, as an example. That's something that definitely needs to be looked at for sure.

Then there's the issue, of course, of the minimum wage, which my colleagues here from the NDP have raised, and her predecessor before them, about that. Even if you're not on board with the minimum wage issue, which I understand the challenges around that, perhaps we should be looking at other mechanisms, whether it be through some sort of tax credits or other assistance for people who actually get up every day and work to support their families but they're making a low income, what I call the working poor. Some people who are working two and three jobs to support their families, there has to be something that we can be doing to better support them. If not through increased minimum wage, through other mechanisms, as I said, that can assist them.

Of course, another issue which came to me a while back involved a restaurant that we would all know, that I won't name, even though I could, where it was issues around tips, believe it or not, where the waitresses had to pay 5 per cent of the bill. So, somebody gives you the bill, 5 per cent of the bill had to go to the kitchen, but that's even if the person never left you a tip.

If you get a bill and it was \$20, for argument sake, the waitress had to pay 5 per cent out of her pocket to tip the kitchen. That's the system that they had. They're saying, overall, if it works out and you're getting your tips, it'll work out, you'll get some tips, the kitchen will get some tips. But if you didn't get a tip – so if you had a bunch of teenagers come in for lunch and they all ordered drinks and everything else to drive the bill up and, of course, they give you no tip, 5 per cent of that bill, you had to take it out of your tips, out of your pocket, to actually pay the kitchen their tips, which is absolutely ridiculous.

I brought it to the agency responsible. They investigated and they came back after and say, well, our *Labour Standards Act* doesn't quite address that so there's really nothing we can do. They threw their hands up in the air. So that's another one that comes to mind, something that needs to be addressed. There are lots of things that need to be addressed as it comes to labour. I certainly encourage the minister now as he takes on this new responsibility to look into some of these things, and I'm sure he will.

But that's not what we're here to talk about today. We're here to talk about amendments which are being made to address parental leave and to address maternity leave. Of course, we've had federal changes made in terms of the EI and extensions of time and what we need to do is make amendments here so that employees in this province can avail of it.

Just because EI offers a program that allows you to take extended leave, if it's not covered in the *Labour Standards Act*, your employer can say I'm sorry, I don't care what the federal government is offering, here's all you're entitled to, so you can't avail of that leave. That's basically closing the gap and saying to all employers in this province you have to accommodate these new federal changes. If the employee decides they want to avail of this extended leave, you have to, by law, accommodate. You can't let the employee go, fire them or so on. You can't do it.

That's a good thing and I think it does encourage people to have children and more children. Although I will say there has been some very valid points made around the amount of money that's being received by somebody on EI, maternity leave and even less money on the extended program, and most people simply can't afford to avail of that. That's a reality.

It depends on their situation. It depends on how much money the spouse is making, for example. If the spouse is making a higher income, perhaps they can suck that up, so to speak, and take the lesser amount and make it work. But again when we're talking families that are making on the lower end, lower-middle income, a lot of these families can't avail of it. I think we have to be more creative in coming up with ways to enhance these programs.

The Leader of the NDP made some suggestions. On first blush, all sounds great. Now, I know there's a cost to it – absolutely there's a cost to it, but then again, there's a cost to not doing it too. Because we are spending money in other areas. We are spending money in immigration and other strategies to increase the population, so this is another way that we could be trying to deal with our population issues that we have here in the province by encouraging more

families here to have more children and to make it something that they're able to do.

Overall, it's a start. It's something that needed to be done. I'm glad it's being done. I support it 100 per cent, but it is only one very, very small step in a much larger picture that we have to address here in this province if we want to encourage our people to have more children and to encourage our people to stay here, because, of course, we're still seeing the brain drain. We're still continuing to see young people leave the province.

I know, regardless of what we do, we can do whatever we want in this province – there's going to be a lot of young people – I have young people in my family; thank goodness my daughters are here, but in terms of nieces, nephews and so on – that are absolutely getting out of Newfoundland, getting out of Dodge. There's nothing we can do that's going to change that because from their perspective, they want to see the world. They want to be able to go and live in warmer climates. They want to be able to hop aboard the car and just drive on down to the States or whatever and take in the sights. They want to be able to go to a lot of the recreational activities and so on that exist in the bigger centres. That's the lifestyle they want. It's not conducive here to Newfoundland and Labrador.

That's fine, but there are a lot of people who do want to stay here, and there are a lot of young people who do want to stay here, but they don't stay here because they don't feel –

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Speaker asks that you stay relevant to the bill, please.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** You're drifting off.

I gave you a little leeway.

**MR. LANE:** I appreciate the leeway because it seems like we've been all over the place. I felt there was lots of leeway, and I do appreciate you giving me leeway as well.

Mr. Speaker, to clue it up, because I know everybody is looking at the clock here, it's a

good bill. I'll support it. Much more work to be done.

Thank you.

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

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

**MS. P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and congratulations on your new position.

Welcome back to our fall sitting. It's certainly an honour to always stand and represent the constituents, of course, that elected us here to this great House of Assembly. I represent the strong, beautiful, historic District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

We've heard a lot of great points today about this bill, Bill 8, so I simply won't belabour the point. There is a lot of great support in here for this bill. It makes complete sense to debate Bill 8 here, An Act to Amend the Labour Standards Act.

I'd like to thank my colleague, the minister, for being the lead on this bill in his role as the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour. It's more of a procedural matter that involves making necessary amendments to respond to the creation, by the federal government, of a new Parental Sharing Benefit introduced in Budget 2018.

The amendment contained in this bill will provide greater flexibility for parents so they can better accommodate their child care for their family planning needs. And that's what I like about this bill, Mr. Speaker, is the flexibility. Parents can choose to split their parental leave right down the middle. Parents can take 20 weeks of parental leave each, if they choose. Another option would be for a parent to take 30 weeks and the other to take the 10. So I like the flexibility in it. Parents will be able to share the leave in many ways, and that's the beautiful part of this bill. They can decide whatever best suits their lifestyle.

Again, what we're doing provincially is protecting jobs while workers take parental

leave. I've had many conversations with people who are fearful that taking the leave will have a negative consequence on their careers. And for women in general – in particular, Mr. Speaker, rather. Women have long been discriminated against when it comes to parental leave, and we know that, and statistics show that, and my colleagues also demonstrated this and spoke about this earlier in this debate.

This discrimination has taken many forms. From employers simply refusing to continue employing pregnant or new mothers, to opinions in certain professions that once a woman becomes a mother that she immediately has less earning potential and is therefore less valued to a firm. So this is a shame, and we need to do what we can to get more women involved in the industry.

Even in politics, you look here in our House of Assembly, we have 40 seats representing our great districts, only nine of those seats are occupied by women and the rest are men here, Mr. Speaker. A lot of great men, of course, but we need more women. It provides a healthy balance and a different perspective.

I'm glad to say the women who are here in our Legislature are all strong women. Of course, my colleague across the way there, the Leader of the Third Party, had a great, delightful, animated debate in her part and raising good points, but we need to do more of what we can to support and to encourage women to be involved in the workforce in any profession they choose. No one should be discriminated against for taking parental leave to build a strong and healthy family. What we are doing with this bill is indeed protecting that right to take leave without having to worry about losing your job while doing so.

Just to add in a little personal story here. I'm imagining back years prior, as the Minister of Finance said, it was typical and it was more traditional for a woman to stay home and raise children – and to raise a lot of kids back then. My grandmother, for example, had 13, raised 13 children; nine girls and four boys. All of those women, with the exception of two, had careers and went into the workforce. It's a great job, what they did, of course. My grandmother was the homemaker and she raised a great family,

but it would be interesting to see what we're doing today if we could've done back then.

So, I digress on that. I won't belabour this point. I think it's a great bill; it's great legislation. It's always an honour to stand in my place to represent my district, and, of course, to support this good legislation brought forth by government. I look forward to the support of all Members in the House for this one.

Again, thank you to the minister. That concludes my remarks, and I look forward now to taking this bill into Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER (Reid):** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, if he speaks now he will close the debate.

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

I appreciate everybody's contribution in today's debate in the House of Assembly. It was a very productive debate back and forth. Ideas were shared, experiences and suggestions on how we can make further improvements. It appeared there was support, by all Members of the House that contributed, to providing greater flexibility for parents so they can better accommodate their child care and family planning needs so that they can not only avail of the federal benefit of sharing the additional five or eight weeks if they choose to, but also to ensure that their jobs are being protected.

I want to thank the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, the MHA for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, the Leader of the Third Party, the Member for Mount Pearl North, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands and the Member for Topsail - Paradise, especially him for recognizing the good work of the staff at Advanced Education, Skills and Labour. We do have an incredible team. I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the former minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour who worked on this legislation to get it this far.

I do want to say that any ideas that were presented, including that of the Leader of the Third Party, it's something that I can take back under advisement to my staff to review, because we all need to look at how we can present better policy options to improve laws and legislation in the House of Assembly. The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands presented some ideas as well, so I want to thank everybody for that.

For the matters that were presented, including the Member for Topsail - Paradise and the Leader of the Third Party around compressing the amount and increasing earnings, I would also encourage them to reach out to their federal MPs on that particular matter because that will require federal change to the Employment Insurance system. With that, I'll take my seat and it will allow the opportunity for questions in Committee.

Thank you.

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

The motion is that Bill 8 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Passed.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act. (Bill 8)

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

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

**MS. COADY:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

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

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 8.

**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 said bill.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Passed.

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

### Committee of the Whole

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

We are now considering Bill 8, An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act." (Bill 8)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

I recognize the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

A couple of questions here: Given the difference in timing of when the federal legislation came into effect and, of course, we're moving forward with this bill, will this bill be retroactive to cover any parents who may have a complaint under the *Labour Standards Act* between the time that the EI regulations changed and the time that we proclaim this bill?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Chair, the employees have been afforded the 61 weeks of job protection under the existing act, so there's no risk of any employee not being covered since March when these amendments came forward previously.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

What protections are in place, if any, that protect the parents during that interceding time?

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** The protections exist that the job is protected during that period of time for any of the individuals, or both parents, if they opt to share in the paternity or maternity leave over this time period up to 96 weeks, pending on when it is taken.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Does the bill fully comply with the changes made to the *Canada Labour Code* which came into effect September 1, 2019; and will the minister need to make further changes in the future as a result?

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** I can say to the Member opposite that the changes that we have made is so that the additional five to eight weeks

can be obtained, but also that the flexibility is available so that both parents can share up to the maximum amount of weeks. Depending on if they're going to take it over a 12 month or an 18 month, they would get five or eight weeks of additional benefits, as was outlined when the federal announcement was in place.

This is a federal program. What we are amending here in the *Labour Standards Act* is the flexibility of when people can take it, up to 96 weeks, as to when they choose to take the benefit. What we are doing here in the province and what's in our control is to protect the employee and their position during the time they are off on maternity or paternity leave.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

So just to confirm, there has been no efforts to comply with *Canada Labour Code* changes with regard to what came into effect on September 1, 2019?

**CHAIR:** Any other questions?

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you very much.

I just want to elaborate on the question from my colleague in Topsail - Paradise. When the minister said that the act would enable the 96 weeks, I'm not quite sure if he clarified whether or not anyone who has chosen to take extended benefits or assume that they could not avail of extended benefits because they went on maternity or parental leave prior to this legislation being passed.

Essentially what I'm saying is anyone who was eligible and took parental leave before this legislation is passed, would they have been limited to only receiving protection under the standard benefits and not the extended benefits? Because I note in the legislation, it says once you've made your choice on standard or extended, one cannot change one's choice.



I think that's what the hon. Member for Topsail - Paradise is saying is if our legislation has not been changed in a timely manner or retroactively, do we have a number of individuals that could potentially only availed of standard benefits and not extended benefits?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** To the Member opposite's question, under the current legislation, leave must start within 35 weeks after a child comes, either into custody of the parent or into care. We're removing that decision of having to make the point of up to 35 weeks. We're expanding that up to 96 weeks as to when you make that decision, so there's greater flexibility. The current rules cap the benefits, whether it's shared by one or both parents, to 61 weeks as a maximum.

People are already receiving the benefit; just that what we're doing in today's legislation is removing the barrier of the 35 week decision-making to expand up to 96 weeks. All people who would have applied for a benefit, even though people previously would have had a more restrictive time frame because they would have had to choose up to 35 weeks, now they have up to 96 weeks, when they choose, and about sharing that benefit. Once they make the choice, they have to stay within either the 12-month or the 18-month benefit. If they choose the 12 month, they're getting an additional five weeks of benefit that can be obtained in that particular benefit.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to go back to my last question because I don't think I received an answer for it. There were changes made to the *Canada Labour Code* in September 1, 2019, that apply to employers in terms of granting them greater flexibility with regard to hours of work, location of work and work schedule.

My question is: Does the current bill fully comply with those changes, and if not, will it?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

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

I answered the Member's question that this is a very specific amendment that we're doing today that's dealing with the parental benefits for five to eight additional weeks to allow greater flexibility, and that is what we've been debating here today, to comply with the federal benefit, but to offer greater flexibility and to ensure that jobs are protected. That is what this specific amendment is to the *Labour Standards Act* today.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I certainly do understand what the amendment is dealing with, but when we're talking about changes to the *Canada Labour Code* and it deals with flexibility and it deals with work and that, which this deals with, the simple question is – and it's just a yes or no – have we considered changes as a result of the *Canada Labour Code*? That's the question.

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

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

As I said when I was closing debate in second reading, we're always looking for new ideas, looking to remain relevant with legislation and we do regular reviews of different information as to how we can make changes so that we do have great policy in place for the employers and employees throughout this province. This is why we're here today making change that's going to improve families here in this province and give them greater flexibility. This is an additional benefit, but it's also providing job protection. So

this is a very important piece as to why we're here today in the House of Assembly.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** No other questions?

Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

**CLERK:** Clause 2.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, clause 2 carried.

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

**CHAIR:** Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

**CLERK:** An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act.

**CHAIR:** Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

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

I move, Mr. Chair, the Committee rise and report Bill 8.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 8 carried without amendment.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

The hon. Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

**MR. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to

them referred and have directed me to report Bill 8 without amendment.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of the Whole has reported that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 8 carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

**MS. COADY:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

**MS. COADY:** Tomorrow.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

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

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

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

Considering the hour, I suggest we adjourn until 2 p.m.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Recess.

**MS. COADY:** Recess.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The House is now in recess until 2 o'clock today.

### Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

**MR. SPEAKER (Reid):** Admit strangers.

Order, please!

Today in the public gallery, I'd like to welcome Ms. O'Brien's grade eight class from Amalgamated Academy in Bay Roberts.

Welcome.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The House would also like to welcome students participating in Take Our Kids to Work Day, an annual event where students step into the future for a day and get a glimpse into the work world.

The day involves students in grade nine spending the day in the workplace of a parent, relative, friend or volunteer host where they experience and learn about the world of work. 2019 marks the 25th anniversary of Take Our Kids to Work Day. The Human Resource Secretariat's Student Employment Bureau was the lead coordinator and facilitator of the event with employees of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Also in the gallery, I'd like to welcome two grade nine international exchange students who are job shadows with the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands today. Welcome Santiago Martinez from Spain, and Felipe Lemos from Brazil. They are both presently attending St. Peter's Junior High in Mount Pearl.

The Mayor of Red Bay, Mayor Stone, and one of the councillors, is also here with us today. Lastly, I would like to recognize Florian Villaume, Director of the Memorial Centre for Entrepreneurship, here today for a Ministerial Statement.

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

### Statements by Members

**MR. SPEAKER:** Today we have Members' statements from the hon. Members for the Districts of Exploits, Humber - Bay of Islands, Mount Pearl - Southlands, Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans and Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

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

I stand today to recognize Mr. Lloyd Seaward of Bishop's Falls, now residing in a retirement home in Grand Falls-Windsor. Mr. Seaward celebrated his 102nd birthday on October 3 of this year.

Mr. Seaward was born in Clarenville in 1917. At the age of 22, he quit his job with Newfoundland

Railway to join the Navy and served overseas. In 2018, he and his son, Gerald, travelled to England to take part in the *HMS Exeter* reunion. Mr. Seaward survived the sinking of *HMS Exeter* in 1942 during the Battle of the Java Sea.

The outdoors is another passion of Mr. Seaward's: snowmobiling the countryside, camping in the woods and travelling the rivers in birch bark canoes, which he spent many hours building himself.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like for all Members in this House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Mr. Lloyd Seaward on his 102nd birthday and thanking him, and all veterans, for their service.

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

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

**MR. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize 11-year-old Brygette Park of Gillams.

During Brygette's first two years of her life, she faced many medical challenges and was hospitalized more than 40 times at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto with severe health issues. She was treated for inflammatory bowel disease, infections, meningitis, developed rheumatoid arthritis in her knees, hips and wrists, Crohn's and colitis.

Countless testing was done, including genetic testing, to try and determine what was causing her sickness. Just before her second birthday, doctors discovered a rare gene mutation that causes inflammatory bowel disease. Brygette was missing a section of her DNA – one of the first cases in the world. The solution offered involved eight days of chemotherapy and a bone marrow transplant with a 50-50 chance it would work at all.

Brygette is an inspiration to her friends and family and became the first in Canada to be cured of a rare disease by a bone marrow transplant.

Today, Brygette is happy and healthy. She just started junior high school, loves singing and acting and being with her friends. Her story was recently aired on the CBC series: *This Is My*

*Story*. Brygette is an inspiration to all who know her.

I ask all Members to join me in offering the best wishes to Brygette in her future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

This past spring, community leaders and volunteers gathered at the Reid Community Centre to witness the selection of Mount Pearl Citizen of the Year. As usual, this year's nominees were tremendous community volunteers who all share a love for Mount Pearl and an unwavering commitment to community service.

The judges had a very difficult task in making this selection and, at the end, they decided to choose a very deserving gentleman who is the true definition of volunteer. Robert Hayes was simultaneously involved in five different community-based organizations over the past year, had a perfect attendance record and made a significant contribution to each and every endeavour.

This included his roles as both vice-president and later president of the Mount Pearl Soccer Association, member of the organizing committee for the Mount Pearl Sport Alliance's very successful Chase the Ace fundraiser, co-chair of the O'Donel High School Safe Grad Committee, co-chair of the Mount Pearl Frosty Festival Committee and community rep on the Mary Queen of the World School Council.

Mount Pearl is such a great to live, to work and to raise a family because of the contributions of people like Robert Hayes. Mr. Speaker, to go off script, I just want to add that Robert's daughter Keely is actually one of our Pages so I'm so glad that she could be here. Although I wish she was actually here to hear this, but she was here this morning.

I, therefore, ask all hon. Members of this House to join me in congratulating this outstanding individual on receiving this honour and thank him for his unwavering commitment to the community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

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

I rise in this hon. House today to commemorate the life and career of Captain Dan Devine. Captain Devine was born in Grand Falls-Windsor on April 25, 1945. He attended Memorial University where he received bachelor's degrees in education and special education. He went on to teach in many schools across the Island, eventually teaching special education students.

After 30 years of teaching, Captain Devine retired. While teaching, in 1977 he joined the Royal Newfoundland Regiment B Company as an officer and became Captain Devine as the commanding officer in 1985. Captain Devine retired from B Company after 32 years of service. His military career has seen him serve in CFB Aldershot, CFB Gagetown and CFB Cornwallis, as well as a peacekeeping tour in Bosnia. In his later years, he went on to become the junior Canadian ranger officer where he was responsible for 400 youth and 90 staff across the province.

Today, Captain Devine serves as the president of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 12 in Grand Falls-Windsor.

Please join me today as we honour Captain Dan Devine for a lifetime of service to Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

**MR. LOVELESS:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Chesley and Ada Loveless of Seal

Cove, Fortune Bay, who celebrated their 71st wedding anniversary on October 20, 2019.

I grew up in Seal Cove, and attending church was a very important part of our lives. I always remember them attending, never missing an opportunity to share a warm handshake, a hug and many words of encouragement. Those cherished memories will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Chesley is now 92 years old, residing in Seal Cove. Ada is 88 and a patient at the Twomey Centre in Botwood, but the family ensures they see each other to continue their lifelong devotion for one another. If you are looking for an example of unconditional love, then look no further than Chesley and Ada Loveless.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Chesley and Ada Loveless on 71 wonderful years of marriage together.

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

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

#### Statements by Ministers

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

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize November as Financial Literacy Month. This year's theme is "Take charge of your finances!" The provincial government recognizes the importance of investment education information and encourages Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to take charge of their finances by making a budget, having a savings and debt-reduction plan and understanding their financial rights and responsibilities.

The Financial Consumer Agency of Canada also provides valuable information on relatively new investment areas. For example, investing in cryptocurrency requires attention to guidelines and taxation so investors are aware of how to meet their tax obligations. Investors must also use caution to avoid unreliable currencies where fraudulent activity may be more common.

Mr. Speaker, financial literacy is important for the financial well-being of individuals, but also for the economy as a whole. The provincial government remains committed to helping consumers make informed and educated decisions in the field of investment.

I encourage residents to visit Service NL's Twitter page during the month of November for a series of posts to help educate and inform Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on investments and financial literacy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to recognize Financial Literacy Month.

We all recognize the value and importance of encouraging individuals to take charge of their finances. A person's level of financial knowledge directly affects their financial well being. Understanding how money works and how to manage personal finances is something that can benefit people of all ages.

I would hope at some point in time, from being a former salesperson, that they would encourage that, they'd have a day or two in school to teach the kids in 11 or 12 just some general ideas of finance. It would be great for their knowledge and wealth going forward. I'd love to see that at some point in time.

Mr. Speaker, knowledge is power and we support any initiative that aims to raise awareness and strengthen financial literacy for the people of the province.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**MR. BROWN:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. I join all hon. Members in recognizing Financial Literacy Month.

This year's theme, Take charge of your finances!, is an important theme for everyone and their families and individuals. The need to expand financial literacy education in our high school curriculum is vitally important so Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can better manage their household finances and avoid costly mistakes and debt.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

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

This week I have the honour of addressing participants at Mineral Resources Review – Eastern Canada's largest mineral industry conference and trade show.

This event is a partnership between our government and the provincial branch of the Canadian Institute of Mining, Metallurgy and Petroleum. It provides the opportunity for industry to come together as we plan for further mineral development in our province.

The conference will include technical sessions, networking opportunities, a discussion on updates to our quarry legislation and the Geological Survey's annual public lecture. Also featured this year, for the very first time, is a Women in Mining workshop – an opportunity for women pursuing post-secondary education to learn about career opportunities in mining from women who are working in the industry.

Mining is one of the province's most important industries and is creating significant employment, generating new opportunities for local businesses and improving government's ability to invest in programs, roads, education and health care, to name a few. Our plan, *Mining the Future 2030*, will continue momentum as we

achieve our vision of being a globally competitive, top-tier jurisdiction for mineral exploration and development. We look forward to continue working with our partners and embracing the tremendous potential that exists in our mining industry.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. I agree with the minister when she notes that mining is an industry with great potential and benefits to this province.

I look forward to speaking with the participants at the Mineral Resources Review, and I especially am pleased to hear about the Women in Mining workshop; however, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage the minister and the Department of Natural Resources to continue investing in the geoscience geological survey and other exploration type work which is critically needed to continue developing our mining industry in this province.

Every mining operation starts with geoscience. I look forward to talking to the participants.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**MR. BROWN:** I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. I represent the district with the largest mining footprint in the province. I know the importance of mining. These events are a good way to share knowledge and promote this vital industry. My district has some of the most skilled tradeswomen in the province, and it's continuing to grow.

This new women's workshop will be the most important aspect of this conference. I look forward to listening to the miners, prospectors

and women in trades on all their takes of the future of this vital industry.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I rise today to recognize an incredible achievement by Memorial University's Centre for Entrepreneurship.

I am proud to say the Centre, or MCE, was acknowledged by the Global Consortium of Entrepreneurship Centres, as one of the top five emerging entrepreneurship centres in the world. In fact, MCE was the only Canadian post-secondary institution recognized.

From an initial intake of 20 students, MCE now provides programming for over 300 students interested in entrepreneurship. In just over three years, the centre has secured \$4.7 million in funding from local businesses, donors, and the provincial and federal governments.

MCE has been instrumental in the emergence of several impactful local start-ups including Mysa, CoLab Software and BreatheSuite. Mysa is one of only 10 Canadian companies to be accepted to the Lazaridis Institute's ScaleUp Program; CoLab Software is the first company from Atlantic Canada to be accepted into the prestigious Y-Combinator accelerator; and, BreatheSuite recently secured over a half million dollars in venture capital. Combined, these three local companies have attracted \$5.5 million in investment.

Mr. Speaker, fostering a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation is important to our government, as we work to help create an environment that captures the full potential of our province's many riches.

Congratulations to Florian and his team, and to Memorial Centre for Entrepreneurship for their global recognition and for playing a key role in supporting entrepreneurs and innovators in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask all hon. Members in the House to join me in recognizing this incredible achievement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. PARROTT:** I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Official Opposition, I join with the minister in congratulating Memorial University's Centre for Entrepreneurship. The growth and success of the MCE is a testament to the bright future that this province can have when resources, information-sharing and mentoring is provided to our young business leaders and innovators. Creating a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship is important to the future of this province. A strong culture will help us attract new business and help grow our population.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to take the opportunity to congratulate Mysa, CoLab Software and BreatheSuite and wish them every success as they grow their future businesses. The success of these three start-ups is inspirational, and I hope they motivate other young professionals to seek their dreams and develop their products within this province.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. We would like to extend congratulations to Memorial Centre for Entrepreneurship for this important acknowledgement from the Global Consortium. The centre has fostered many innovative start-ups and I wish it continuing success.

University centres such as these play a vital role in our province. We must continue to adequately invest in the underpinnings that make this role

possible, such as decent infrastructure, quality research and affordable education.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

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

We had a tragic death overnight of a young man in downtown St. John's on the steps of a for-profit emergency centre, which highlights the connection between our broken system for dealing with homelessness and crime in the city.

In view of the fact that the Statistics Canada Crime Severity Index ranks St. John's as worse for crime than Toronto, what plan does the government have to address the root causes?

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

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

First of all, I want to say that we were sorry to hear of the tragic passing of a young man last night. That's always very sad for the family and for the people involved. I have reached out to my staff at Housing and I can confirm that it wasn't one of our clients that we were dealing with who was outside that particular shelter.

The hon. Member asked the question: What are we doing? Many would know that in June of '18, Mr. Speaker, emergency shelters and transition houses were moved in under the responsibility of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. That's all a part of our government's housing-first approach.

It was felt that with the expertise in Housing, moving emergency shelters under Housing would put us in a better vantage place to move those individuals with complex needs struggling



to find housing – move them better along the continuum, Mr. Speaker, with a view to get them into long-term, stable housing. It's only been 16 months but we're showing signs of success with that program.

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Mr. Speaker, we all express our condolences for the friends and family of the young man. However, last fiscal year's budget for emergency shelter ballooned from \$3.6 million to \$5.1 million, causing a for-profit shelter owner, who says he loves making money and whose revenues soared to \$1.1 million last year, to speak out against government waste.

The minister responsible has indicated that she's too busy to speak to the media, so I ask the Premier: How could this loss of control occur over government spending aimed at helping the vulnerable?

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

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

I thank the Member for the question. I just talked about moving emergency shelters in under Housing with an effort to improve linkages. Our efforts, Mr. Speaker, is going to be moving people from private into non-profit because they are wraparound supports. We know we're dealing with people in society with more complex issues.

I am happy to say that since the emergency shelter program moved in under Housing, we have 38 per cent fewer people in private shelters. I won't speak to that private individual, but it's in the media quite a bit of certain private shelter owners making maybe over a million dollars from people staying in shelter stays overnight. I'm happy to say that some of those folks, Mr. Speaker, so far this year are only around \$200,000. I believe that means we're making progress in that area, plus we're putting a tremendous effort into reducing the overall number of shelter stays for people in this province.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** The hon. minister mentions linkages and also the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation has now assumed all responsibility for emergency shelters under a housing-first approach, but with costs ballooning in the way that they have, 40 per cent of all housing in emergency situations is still under the for-profit sector.

What does the minister plan to do to fix this?

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

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Mr. Speaker, when the program transferred to Housing, there was a \$3.5 million budget that came with it. I can't speak to the expenditures of the program, as the hon. Member might appreciate, before it came in under Housing and before it came under my responsibility.

We work with a number of partners, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about a very vulnerable group with very complex issues, so we work with our partners. We have non-profit groups that are out there, some that are block funded. That's agreements that were put in place prior to the program coming under Housing.

We work with non-profit groups that are on a per diem basis, Mr. Speaker. There are no contracts. Sometimes we place clients there as an option. Then we use private for some that would be showing maybe aggressive behaviours and things like that and then maybe sometimes that's the only option is to place them in a private shelter, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Mr. Speaker, the facts suggest that it is government's incompetence, which is one of the root causes of a situation, which has the mentally ill, the vulnerable and the violent warehoused together in for-profit shelters with no wraparound supports to enable them to find housing on their own.

What is the plan to fix a broken bureaucracy and address this intolerable situation and its connection with violent crime?

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

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Mr. Speaker, it's easy to get up in the House and come strong like that with a question, but I guarantee you, I value the staff who are working in these tremendously challenging conditions every single day.

There's not one simple answer to this. We're working across departments. My colleague in Health, we launched *Towards Recovery*. A big focus for this government, under the Premier's leadership, has been improving access to mental health and reducing wait times, which we have done by 68 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. DEMPSTER:** The reason we are focusing on working with our non-profits is because they do provide wraparound supports, and I would take exception to that. We have some very valuable partners out there providing supports.

When we took this, 44 per cent was with non-profit. We've increased it to 57 per cent, Mr. Speaker, in the last 16 months. So that's certainly the direction we're moving in.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Could the minister give the House a precise answer: Just why is it that the budget has ballooned the way it has?

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

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member, I'm very surprised that he doesn't know that in society we're dealing increasingly with very complex issues. Child welfare is housed in my department, and I can tell you we're dealing with some very challenging issues. Just like we are with people needing shelter stays.

What I can tell the hon. Member, is since this program came under Housing with a view to find efficiencies, with a view to provide better wraparound support for individuals, we have had people that were in shelter stays up to 300 nights, Mr. Speaker, in a shelter. Our longest stay has been 149. We are down half and we are only 16 months in, and we'll continue to work to find efficiencies.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** A question for the minister, or perhaps the Premier.

End Homelessness will soon release a five-year plan.

Will the Premier commit to implementing this five-year plan to end homelessness in St. John's?

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

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Mr. Speaker, what I can say is whether it's Housing, whether it's CSSD, whether it's across our government, we value the work of our partners. The Premier and a number of my colleagues participated in the Community Sector Summit and we got to see through fresh eyes again the valuable work that our partners are doing out there on the ground.

Mr. Speaker, we signed the housing agreement; we're moving toward a three-year action plan with housing. We're going to be releasing a provincial housing and homelessness plan, and we're always interested in seeing what partners are willing to bring in and propose. We're always open to finding the best way to provide a service in particular to what we're talking about, the most vulnerable population, but in the most fiscally, prudent manner possible, being responsible with the taxpayer dollar on behalf of the people of this province.

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

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

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

In the last 24 hours, we are aware of four people who had kidney surgery on the same day and were discharged from the hospital, but wound up back in the emergency room with complications from the same surgery.

Minister: Are you aware of any health quality issues at Eastern Health relating to kidney surgery?

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

**MR. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much for the question.

Obviously, since we've put the *Patient Safety Act* in place, safety of our patients and quality of service is of prime interest to us. The issue around that will be one we are talking to Eastern Health about. I have no concerns brought to me from Eastern Health on this particular topic as yet, and I will await that further investigation, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, we are hearing that patients are getting discharged from the hospital following surgery because there are no beds available in the four cases we just spoke of. Complications are arising because they were sent home too soon. Even the nursing staff are explaining this happens on a daily basis.

Minister, what are you doing to ensure that the people of this province are getting quality health care?

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

**MR. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much for the question.

Wearing a hat I used to wear, the decision to perform a surgery is based on whether or not the surgeon is comfortable that he or she has the resources available to do the procedure and care

for the patient afterwards. If there is an issue with a surgeon not following that rule or not following that recommendation then, obviously, that is a quality issue for the department of surgery in the institution.

The issue of timely discharge from hospital is a matter of clinical decision only. That is the only thing that matters, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, in another case, we are aware of a person who was admitted to hospital but spent four days laying in a bed in an emergency room and eventually left without getting care.

Minister, what do you say to a person who obviously had health concerns that required hospitalization but could not get the care that was needed and felt the only option was to return home? How is this quality health care?

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

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

I would argue with the premise behind it. The fact the person was in hospital, whether they were on a gurney or in a bed or in a chair, implies and states that they would have been receiving care. There is no evidence from the question, as phrased, that that didn't happen.

If the gentleman opposite has a specific issue around quality of care with one of his constituents and he's concerned about it, please come and see me. That's his job as an MHA.

With the issue of access to in-patient beds, we have a challenge with community support services which produces variations and alternate level of care. We have seen overcapacity recently in some hospitals and are working on our protocols to bring that down.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, I respectfully disagree with the minister. Lying on a gurney in a corridor for four days and then getting up and discharging yourself because there was no intervention is not quality health care in Newfoundland and Labrador by my standards.

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** The person that I just referenced ended up getting treatment back in the community by her family physician. We all agree that avoiding hospitalization whenever possible is essential. In this case, a doctor felt the best care for the patient was to be provided in the hospital. The person left early because of the inappropriate conditions. This person was lucky because they had a family physician.

What about the almost 100,000 people in this province who are not lucky and do not have a family physician? What is the minister doing to address the shortage of family physicians?

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

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

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

The premise on which it is based is false. According to the Harris Centre, Vital Signs today, 88 per cent of people in this province have a primary health care provider. We have never had as many family physicians in this province as we have at the moment. The challenge is not the number, the challenge is access. The challenge is moving physicians from an outdated business model of care to a team-based collaborative care.

Indeed, the Harris Centre report – and I'm quite happy to table it. You can download it, if you wish, off the Internet, but I'll save you the trouble, it's here. The details here show quite clearly that we are moving in the right direction. We are not there yet and I'd like us to move faster, but we're getting there.

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

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

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

I encourage the minister to set up a 1-800 number and reach out to anybody who doesn't have a family physician. I would tell you, you'll get pretty close to a hundred-thousand people in Newfoundland and Labrador that doesn't have access to a family physician.

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** According to the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association, about 30 or more medical students who graduate enter family medicine, but only eight or nine of those went on to practice family medicine in this province. That's only 30 per cent that go into the practice of family medicine.

What is the minister doing to boost the retention rate for family practice physicians?

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

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

According to Memorial University's faculty of medicine figures, our retention rate is 65 per cent. It is in the pack. Could it be better? Of course it could.

One of the challenges is that a significant number of family medicine residents are now choosing to do a three-year course and specialize in emergency room work or in focused areas of care and are therefore not available around the true pool of family medicine. This is an issue of access and lifestyle of physicians and the patterns of work they choose, not the numbers.

I'm happy to chat, happy to answer any further questions on that subject, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

No doubt, there will be a lot of chatting going on with the Medical Association, the Nurses' Union and the school of medicine at MUN, because this is a critical issue that hasn't been addressed.

Mr. Speaker, breast cancer survivors in this province are reeling from the news that tamoxifen, a critical drug in this treatment, has dwindling supplies. Eastern Health has been unable to give any indication to patients as to when they will receive the drug. One local patient, after exhausting all local sources, finally secured the drug at a pharmacy in Toronto.

What is the minister doing to address this life-and-death situation?

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

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

This is a national issue. One I have been bringing to the attention of the only group that can deal with this, which is Health Canada, since at least 2009. And various shades of federal government have not pulled the levers that they have access to.

There is, through the Cancer Care Program in Eastern Health, a toll-free number, and anyone who has difficulty securing their regular supply can contact that. There are 400 patients, roughly, affected in this province, and Eastern Health is reaching out to each of them through the cancer care navigators. They will be looked after, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

We are hearing story after story of people who cannot get the care they need from our health system, whether it's in the hospital or in the community. The minister has had over four years to address what's needs to be done, but clearly, problems continue.

Will the minister admit that we have a health care system that is in crisis and needs a new action plan?

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

**MR. HAGGIE:** That is such a vague question, Mr. Speaker. I think you immediately have to go to some tangibles. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

We have instituted *Towards Recovery*. We have 36 out of 54 recommendations complete. We have reduced the number of people waiting for counselling in this province by 68 per cent. We have gone from 292 people waiting in Corner Brook for counselling to 19 in the space of a year.

We have opened or are going to open a series of long-term care beds. We have 120 on the West Coast. We have 60 in Grand Falls. We have 20 protective care beds coming in Botwood. We have another 60 coming in Grand Falls-Windsor in long-term care. We have a new Corner Brook acute-care hospital – long promised, and finally delivered.

I could go on, but I've run out of time.

Thank you very much.

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

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

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Mr. Speaker, a few moments ago we heard from the minister recognizing Financial Literacy Month. This morning, our caucus met with Advocis, the financial advisors of Canada, to discuss the importance of protecting consumers by raising the bar for financial advisors. We understand that the Premier has also met with this group.

I ask the Premier: Will his government be moving forward with legislation to recognize the provision of financial advice as a true profession with the objective to protect consumers? If so, when will this legislation be brought forward?

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

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

My understanding is the Premier hasn't met with them yet. I don't believe I've received a request to meet with them. I'd be happy to meet with them and look at what they're offering, though.

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

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

**MR. WAKEHAM:** According to the group we met with, the meeting occurred in May. Maybe the Premier doesn't remember that particular time frame.

I ask the Minister of Finance if he can provide an update to the House on when he will deliver a fall fiscal update.

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would be delighted to. We will have a fall fiscal update before the end of the calendar year.

As all Members know, there was an election in May. We had a budget, which was in June. So, the officials in the Department of Finance have been working on the numbers. I know that the work is progressing. I commend them for the work they're doing, and I will say that it will be within the coming weeks.

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

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

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

In September, the government signed a lucrative \$37 million production and supply deal with Auxly Cannabis, another business with strong Liberal ties. Auxly were hand-picked without competition or a request for proposals.

I ask the minister: When did the individuals behind Auxly first reach out to the department

looking for a deal? Were you negotiating during the last campaign?

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

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

Anytime we have a question on the successful cannabis industry that we have going in our province, I'm happy to stand up and talk about it because I want to talk about the hundreds of jobs that are –

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

**MR. DAVIS:** If the Member would give me the opportunity to speak, that would be nice.

Mr. Speaker, after being so rudely interrupted, it's been a successful industry that's been created. There are three operations that in process of development, hundreds of jobs going to be created, 4,400 kilograms of cannabis is going to be there –

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

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

**MR. DAVIS:** – created and it's also going to be an exporting process for us.

I look forward to the follow-up question on the matter.

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

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

**MR. PARROTT:** Mr. Speaker, among the individuals behind Auxly are well-known Liberals Christopher Hickman of Marco Group, former CFO of the federal Liberal Party and the wife of the current president of the provincial Liberal Party.

I ask the minister: Did either of those companies donate to the Liberal Party or its candidates during the last election?

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

**MR. DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question.

I didn't get the opportunity to talk about the three processes that we have in place right now. There are construction jobs created. We have an excellent opportunity for employment in this province based on those. We've created industry.

You rewind 1½ years ago, this industry didn't exist. We're leading the country in a lot of ways in this process. I look forward to the day that we have jobs created for this, and there is more opportunity coming in the pipeline. I look forward to those agreements being put in place to create wealth in the province for individuals to get employment in this province, in various regions across our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. PARROTT:** I'm glad the minister brought up construction. We all know how Canopy was built with people from outside the province, and the word is now that construction on Kenmount Road will be happening from a company in PEI.

Are we okay with giving money and having companies from outside the province build these facilities?

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

**MR. DAVIS:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, I don't know where to start with the inaccuracies in that statement. It's amazing to me. There's no money from the provincial Treasury going until there's product sold. It's based on a remittance basis, so from our standpoint –

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

**MR. DAVIS:** If the Member for Cape St. Francis could keep quiet long enough for me to answer a question, he may listen.

Now, from my standpoint, Mr. Speaker, it's important that we have an industry created here for the betterment of the people in our province. We want to create employment, which is what we started here with this. Four hundred jobs will be created from those three agreements that are put in place at this point, with 44,000 kilograms of cannabis being created and produced here in this province. Would the Member sooner us import the product rather than create the exporting jobs for people in this province to create wealth, long term, for people in this province?

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, APEC reports that despite growth in the oil industry, our province is struggling. Homelessness, addictions, cost of living, bankruptcies, gangs, unemployment, electricity rates and out-migration are all on the rise.

I ask the Premier: Will *Advance 2030* address these pressing issues, or will we continue to stumble forward?

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

**PREMIER BALL:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, *Advance 2030* is really a direct approach that we grow the oil and gas industry, which is really contradictory of the statement that was made by the Leader of the Third Party yesterday because in her policy position, there's no reason to have *Advance 2030* because it was them that want to shut down the oil industry. That was just yesterday and, I believe, the day before.

To address the needs that the Leader of Third Party just asked is what we call *The Way Forward*, Mr. Speaker. Last night I spoke at length about some of the great achievements that we've made, creating jobs all around this province, Mr. Speaker.

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

**PREMIER BALL:** Yes, in aquaculture. I know you want to shut that down, too, but there are

quite a few people employed in aquaculture and agriculture, Mr. Speaker. Mining, as your Member for Labrador West – it was this government that got Tacora Resources opened up for the residents of Labrador West and worked with Voisey's to go underground as well.

Thank you.

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

**MR. J. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Northern Harvest and the Minister of Fisheries have somehow claimed or suggested that the fish die-off at Northern Harvest was related to unexpected warm-water event somehow connected with climate change. Some have even gone on to compare it to the death of so many cabbages due to unexpected frost, but in their licence application approved by the minister's department the company is required to have a plan to mitigate against high water temperatures and low oxygen conditions.

How can the minister suggest that the event was unexpected if the high temperature issue was supposed to be in the company's plan?

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

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, I have quoted what has been said to me by professionals in the veterinarian services, doctors of veterinarian medicine. I have also quoted those who have a direct Indigenous traditional knowledge of this area. The Mi'kmaw of Miawpukek have said to me that climate change has a direct role in this, amongst other things, that they currently are investigating.

Now, I take the words and the traditional knowledge of our Mi'kmaw very seriously. I would challenge this hon. Member if he takes the role of our Indigenous, the role of Indigenous First Nations seriously when it comes to the management of our natural resources.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands.

**MR. J. DINN:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for answering the question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I have recognized the Member for Bay of Islands.

**MR. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier made a commitment that every Member, independent or not, will be treated the same. I was disheartened yesterday when it was confirmed by Minister Crocker that \$9 million was spent in his district for paving and the PC Member received more. I'm not disputing the need for that district, but in January 2018 major flooding occurred on the West Coast during a major rainstorm. The Premier, the minister and myself visited the area to see the devastation that occurred.

I have tried working with the minister, and I have worked with the minister on numerous occasions. I have met with the minister's staff. I produced pictures. I have sent numerous letters and documentation outlining the work that needs to be done immediately, but all this work has not been completed.

Frenchman's Cove hill and John's Beach has just been completed. Cammies Brook Bridge, the tender is not called. It took 20 months to temporarily get the Copper Mine Brook area levelled off, even though there are 11 warning signs and the kilometres are down to 80 and 20.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I ask the hon. Member to conclude his question.

**MR. JOYCE:** I will, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

John's Beach area, a tender hasn't been called.

I ask the minister – the gabion baskets, the rocks are going on the road: Will the minister please come out and visit Humber, Bay of Islands, Route 450, so he can see the work first-hand to get this work done, please?

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



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

First of all, I take some exception to the preamble, Mr. Speaker. The reality is since we formed government in 2015 to 2019 there's approximately, to the end of that construction season, '18-'19, \$14 million invested in the district that I represent, Mr. Speaker, as well as \$14 million invested in the district represented by the Member opposite.

Mr. Speaker, just to go back on the Member's memory, the application that went forward to the federal government under disaster mitigation was one signed off by the Department of Municipal Affairs and Environment. That work is ongoing. I visited Route 450 this year. We made another substantial investment over, I think, somewhere close to \$6 million in a part of Route 450 this year. We just had a business case approved under northern and rural for that section of road.

We understand if there are safety challenges. We will certainly reach out to the Member and we can certainly chat later about reaching out to the depot to address the immediate concerns, Mr. Speaker, but we're committed to further improvements on Route 450 in the next construction season.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. LANE:** Mr. Speaker, the Muskrat Falls inquiry has concluded and the project itself is winding down. Despite the lowballing of project costs, hiding of risk reports and all of the misleading information that has led us to a final project cost that is double what was committed to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, the former CEO of Nalcor was permitted by this administration to sail off into the sunset with \$6 million in taxpayers' money.

I ask the Premier: What is your plan to deal with the other players involved in this mess, those that had an active role in deceiving the public and Members of this hon. House? Will we

finally see some accountability or will the public have to break out their chequebooks once again and pay them to just go away?

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

**PREMIER BALL:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, keep in mind that it was me and this government that actually called the inquiry into the Muskrat Falls Project. It wasn't me that voted for it, although the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands was one of those people that did vote for this project –

**MR. LANE:** (Inaudible.)

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

**PREMIER BALL:** – and spoke quite often in this House in support of that project.

The questions that we've asked through the inquiry, first of all, we'll let it finish. We don't have the recommendations. That will come out, that will be done now within the next few months, Mr. Speaker. If there's anyone there that would be seen as breaking the law, I'm sure that will be dealt with in the appropriate way.

Mr. Speaker, I don't take any great pride when I stand here today. Just the fact that we had to do the inquiry, the hardship that it's putting on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, the impact; nearly 30 per cent of the debt of this province attributed to the project that the very Member that just asked the question supported and voted for it.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

The hon. Member for Lake Melville.

**MR. TRIMPER:** A point of order, Sir.

The Member for Terra Nova referenced two names of people who are not part of this House. They do not have the ability to protect

themselves and he should withdraw those names.

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, my understanding is, depending on the context, you can mention former Members of this House.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

**MR. TRIMPER:** The gentlemen that were referenced are not Members of this House, never have been, but they were cast in a disparaging way, so they do not have a defence in this room.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I've heard enough discussion on this. I will take this matter under advisement and report back to the House at a later date.

Further reports by standing and select committees?

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

#### Notices of Motion

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

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting The Regulation Of Real Estate Trading In The Province, Bill 13.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

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

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

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000, Bill 14.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

#### Orders of the Day

#### Private Members' Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** We're close to the 3 o'clock time, so we're going to proceed to the private Member's resolution.

The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

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

**MS. STOODLEY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your new role.

I'm honoured to present this private Member's resolution today, my first private Member's resolution in this House. I'm honoured to be here to represent the hardworking people in the economic powerhouse District of Mount Scio.

WHEREAS community organizations across the province make significant contributions in various aspects of community life, such as mental health supports, the arts, and school meal programs; and

WHEREAS the community sector is a major contributor to the province's economy; and

WHEREAS the community sector directly employs 16,000 people across the province; and

WHEREAS the Community Sector Work Plan was developed in collaboration with representatives from 17 various community sector groups in order to advance their social and economic contributions to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador; and

WHEREAS the Community Sector Council Summit stressed the importance of strengthened co-operation between government and the community sector;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House continue to work together with the Community Sector Council and its members to advance the role of the community sector groups across the province.

Mr. Speaker, before my election I wasn't very familiar with the community sector. What is the community sector in Newfoundland and

Labrador? Essentially, the community sector is made up of all the voluntary and not-for-profit organizations –

**MR. SPEAKER:** I remind the Member that she needs to move and have someone second the motion as well.

**MS. STOODLEY:** I move, seconded by the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

What is the community sector? The community sector is made up of all the voluntary and not-for-profit organizations, social organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador, 3,700 legally incorporated organizations and hundreds of informal groups that are not incorporated.

Close to 200,000 volunteers and board leaders in Newfoundland and Labrador form the community sector. It employs 16,000 people in the province. That's more people than in any of our districts. The provincial government makes a major investment in the community sector totalling more than \$115 million per year. It is a huge sector in this province and incredibly important to our future economic and social success.

My background is in the private sector. I never thought about this sector as a sector in the province, but my eyes have been opened. When I think about it, Mr. Speaker, I've been involved in the community sector; I was a volunteer with Big Brothers Big Sisters. In my district there are many organizations involved in the community sector, such as the Rabbittown Community Centre. They do amazing work for the people of Mount Scio and surrounding districts. Rainbow Riders is another amazing community sector organization in Mount Scio and the O'Brien Farm Foundation, a social enterprise trying to help people in the province learn more about farming, agriculture and also education.

Many other social enterprise organizations support other objectives that our provincial government is putting forward, such as immigration. The Association for New Canadians is a critical organization in the province and part of this sector. Just an example of some of their amazing work: The Global Eats food truck, enabling people who come from other parts of the world with expertise in cuisine,

they can come and cook that and help raise money for the organization.

Recently, I had the privilege of speaking on a panel at the Community Sector Summit. I was on the panel with my colleagues, the Premier, Minister Dempster and then three community leaders: the executive director of the Kids Eat Smart Foundation; the executive director of the Craft Council of Newfoundland & Labrador; and the chief of the Flat Bay Band, Inc. – and she called herself a CEO – very modern.

It was amazing to learn from the leaders of these community sector organizations. We heard a lot about how they overcome challenges and how they're seizing opportunities. So it's a very challenging environment, Mr. Speaker, that they're operating in in our province.

I also had the opportunity to attend some of the other sessions at the Community Sector Summit. Some of the keynote speakers were very inspiring to me. There was a speech from the CEO of Imagine Canada, and the CEO of Avalon Employment Inc.

One thing I was very pleasantly surprised about, the CEO from Imagine Canada who's stationed in Ottawa, who travels across the country, he was telling the group that nowhere else in Canada would the provincial government work with the sector in this way. So nowhere else is there a joint Community Sector Work Plan, only in Newfoundland and Labrador. In no other province in Canada is there such co-operation between the sectors of the community sector and the provincial government. He commended our government on this Sector Work Plan that we've jointly come up with. He was saying we should be very proud of that, and in no other province do we have such collaboration.

The keynote speakers also discussed key issues that were kind of true to my heart. My background is in the tech sector, and a lot of the challenges that the community sector faces, I realized, were very similar to some of the challenges that the local tech sector are facing.

The sector, obviously, they need to do more with less. The needs of their clients are changing. They have to be creative in how they solve problems, as do all of us. The community sector

and the province, they need to innovate. So they need to look at strategic doing – so that’s focusing on what you have and maximizing that, as opposed to being strict with your focus.

The community sector organizations in our province need to rethink how they operate – and across Canada, not just in our province. With changing support models, aging demographics, they need to look at how they deliver services to their clients and how they get funding from the provincial government, from their donors, from any other organizations.

So another challenge of the community sector organizations, they can’t just do the same thing over and over again that they’ve tried. The speaker gave the example of if they tried something 10 years ago and it doesn’t work, they need to rethink that. They need to bring in new, fresh blood and try those things again, try them in a new way.

It’s very important for the community sector in the province to be able to fail fast. They need to be able to try something. If it doesn’t work, pivot and try something else. That’s kind of a big culture change that is common across this sector across Canada.

I’ve been thinking about how we can close the gaps in the tech sector and how that applies to the community sector as well. Change management is another key skill gap that we have in the province around the community sector that is also similar to the tech sector.

These community sector organizations, who are often run by volunteers, now have to have skills in financial analysis and being agile in change management. These are sophisticated skill sets that traditionally volunteers, especially in community sector organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador, wouldn’t need to have. We do see a changing skill set required for our community organizations across Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as across Canada.

One of the major themes of the summit was how do you assign a value to the community sector in a province or in a region or in the country and how do you calculate return on investment for that. I know this is the challenge that a lot of organizations face. Again, back to the nature of

the changing skill set required in the industry. When the community sector organizations are applying for federal government funding, they now have to self-calculate a social return on investment.

They, themselves, the skills within their organization – they need to be able to calculate a social return on investment as part of their funding applications. That’s a very different and new skill set that community organizations need to have within their volunteer pools. Our government, we support the community sector in prioritizing support for financial stability and sustainability; support for identifying opportunities for innovation and efficiency – very important; support for skill development in reporting and evaluation, so how those organizations tell their story, the value to the province, their value to the general public and how they do things like quantify return on investment, how they quantify social return on investment.

When I think back to the fact that the president of Imagine Canada said that we were the only province in Canada who had such an agreement, a collaborative document, such as *The Way Forward with Community* and in speaking with people at the conference, the local community sector leaders, they were very pleased that the recommendations in *The Way Forward with Community* are very tangible and pragmatic. That was one of the things casually they mentioned to me. They are very proud of that.

In terms of the pragmatic and tangible examples, *The Way Forward with Community* notes some examples, “a single-window website with” examples “on provincial government programs and services relevant to the community sector” so that community members or people involved, the 200,000 volunteers that we have in the province for the community sector, they can easily find the information they’re looking for.

We are also going to review the program application design to make sure it’s really easy and simple and aligns with what the skill sets of the members and their time and how the community are structuring their programs. So we’re going to re-look at the application design.

We also have the multi-year funding pilots. There are 22 organizations that are in a pilot program to look at multi-year funding. We know this is very important to the community sector, and they were very excited that this was a pilot. So we look forward to seeing the result of that. As it changes and pivots or expands, the community sector are very excited about being part of that partnership and the decision-making process.

We are also looking for opportunities to enhance financial sustainability over the organizations. They need different skill sets, so how can we support them doing that? We need to help the community sector improve their access to information and training. Many community sector organizations might be almost fully volunteer run, and how can they do things like report on social return on investment? Very sophisticated things. We can support them in training and also providing information.

We're also going to develop a guidebook for non-profit organizations that includes an annual checklist of legal and fiduciary requirements. Again, things you wouldn't necessarily know without special advice.

Other areas where we're going to help in *The Way Forward with Community*, we are going to help community organizations fill very specific skill gaps. As the skill needs are changing – I talked about change management, agile financial analysis – we are going to support the organizations with the skill gaps they have.

We're also going to help them with awareness and public appreciation. We're going to help quantify their important role in the province. We are going to maintain an online directory of charitable non-profit organizations so that organizations can work with each other, along with the respective programs and services offered by each organization.

We're also going to partner with the Community Sector Council for Newfoundland and Labrador to identify training partnership opportunities, because training is a significant gap for this group. We're also going to organize regular stakeholder summits and regional workshops to review progress of the Community Sector Work Plan, and we're going to hold annual round-table

discussions on collaboration between community and private sectors, and the sharing of experiences and partnership opportunities.

So, in addition, and to support *The Way Forward with Community*, we also have two documents or strategic plans that fall under that: the Cultural Action Plan and the Social Enterprise Action Plan, which the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, will elaborate on further, shortly.

Specifically, the Cultural Action Plan, this is very important to our government, specific recommendations or actions that are put in place to support the unique needs of cultural organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador. Because these are distinct community sector organizations with very specific needs. One thing we're very proud of is our increased funding to the arts organizations in the province.

Seven of those actions we're going to commence immediately, which we're aiming to have complete by March 2020 and the remaining actions will be completed by March 2024. So we're very proud of that.

Overall, *The Way Forward with Community*, we want to help the sector achieve its full potential; it's very important. It's a huge sector. There is a lot of value. Specifically, this includes growth targets as we look towards 2024.

We want to increase the number of people employed in the community sector and we want to create high-profile partnerships between community, public and the private sectors. Through the Community Sector Work Plan, we need to look at creative and innovative approaches to strengthening the sector.

In conclusion, at the conference, the CEO of Avalon Employment said that in terms of the community sector, we are the stitching that holds society together. I thought that was a very poignant statement.

I'd like to thank all of the community organizations and all the volunteers for their hard work. I would respectfully ask my colleagues and fellow Members to support this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER (Bennett):** The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**MR. P. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I commend the Member opposite on a great job in her first PMR. Well done.

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

**MR. P. DINN:** And, of course, the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune for jumping in and seconding the motion.

I'm pleased to speak on today's resolution in support of the province's community sector and community sector council. As we've heard, the community sector represents more than 3,700 organizations. It would be impossible today to outline what each one of these groups do to make our communities better and make the lives of our residents of the province better. They all deserve to be in the spotlight.

These groups channel the energy and enthusiasm of their members in ways that make real differences in the lives of those who avail of them. At the same time, they help people make connections with one another, relax, unwind and feel a part of a caring community. It's not unusual to see members of such groups fundraising and collecting food to donate to those in need. It's not unusual to see a fundraising effort to provide a mobility device to someone in the community who is disabled. It is not unusual to see members support refugee families, trying to build new lives away from conflict zones from which they have fled. It's not unusual to see these groups invest in new parks and environment and rehabilitation and beautification, and I can go on and on what these groups do.

All of us, in every district, could list off examples of groups and individuals that make a difference in some segment of our community sector. The Member opposite mentioned one near and dear to my heart, the Association for New Canadians. I had the pleasure of working with them on a number of files. Bridget Foster,

of course, was the champion of that organization for many, many years. I believe she's retired, but I wouldn't call it retirement by definition if anyone knows Bridget. I applaud the many groups.

If you look at our own districts and you look at our own communities and our towns and our municipalities, we all have Lions Clubs. We're very familiar with the work that such groups do within our community. There are Kin and Kinette clubs, they do an outstanding job in our communities.

We have our church groups, they're there doing what they can. Of course, at this time of year the Salvation Army is an example, are front and centre. Not only do they run thrift stores, food banks, but, of course, their Red Kettle drive for Christmas will be starting soon.

We talked earlier today about child care and children and parenting. Think about your community groups, the non-profits, the volunteer groups, think about those that provide recreational activities to our kids, and our adults in a lot of cases. Think about the effort that goes into running a hockey league, running a baseball league, running a soccer league. For a lot of us we just drop our children off and we run to Costco or wherever, but where would we be without these groups? It's not just sports, we have many groups out there that assist communities in the arts, in dance and drawing. These offer a lot to our communities. They're a big part of our communities.

I know up in my district, the CBS food bank – and I'm sure there are food banks around. We know what happened last year when the main food bank burned down. The work that our groups do there is outstanding. Many of us – I would say all of us in this House – have never thought about where our next meal is coming from. Think about what the community groups do for those people. I can't even imagine going home and wondering what will we eat tonight and where will we get it.

I know this is not a community group – well, it is a community group, it's not part of the community sector as such – but look at our businesses within our communities. They do a lot for our communities as well. Many of our

donations, many of our fundraisers are run at the front doors of these businesses. Community groups themselves are set up at the front doors of these businesses raising funds and raising awareness for those who are in need. Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, all these groups, they're all part of a community and they all fill a need.

Take a moment and just think about it. Think about your community if it did not have one volunteer group, one community sector group; it was totally zero in your community. Think about it because I think sometimes we take it for granted what they do. They do a tremendous amount.

Outside of providing employment and providing the people an opportunity to better themselves, to give people hope, these groups fill a void in a community. If a municipal council or a provincial government or a federal government had to pay for the true value that they add to our communities, let me tell you, it would –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Frightening.

**MR. P. DINN:** Yes, it would be frightening. We have to applaud what they do on a daily basis and how they help our communities grow and help our communities be what they are. We are fortunate in this province because Newfoundlanders are so giving. We may have a nickel in our pocket and that's it, but we'll try and give someone a dime. That's the way we are. Every nook and cranny of this province is affected by our community sector – every nook and cranny. Whether it's bingo night to a potluck to a church party, we're all affected by it and always in a positive way.

Not only for the people who avail of it, but for the people who are part of these organizations. Many of them are older individuals in some of these groups and, of course, we have a growing, aging demographic. It gives them an opportunity to get out in the community, to be a part of the community, to feel valued in their community.

This private Member's resolution is a no-brainer, as far as I'm concerned. It's funny we call it debate, but I don't think there's much to debate here on this.

The Community Sector Council in Newfoundland and Labrador, and you'll see it on their website, they are committed to strengthening and promoting the essential roles that voluntary and non-profit and community organizations play in building healthy and prosperous communities. No one can argue against that.

Some of the benefits are: social and economic well-being. People get to participate in their communities. People have somewhere to go. It creates jobs. It also works to help with an inclusive society. It gives those who do not feel fully accepted by society an opportunity to feel that inclusion and participate. It supports communities, individuals, families. It also promotes integration, social and economic development.

Again, I go back to my example and the Member's example of the Association for New Canadians. Imagine someone coming from a war-torn country, usually some country where it's probably 90 to 100 degrees every day, and they land out in Torbay. They're in alien land. They don't know but they're on the moon with the ice and snow and sleet and the rain, which we got no problem with, or at least I don't. Think about it: Where would they be? We depend on immigration as part of our population control.

Of course, the big part of what the community sector does for us, they have their hand on the pulse of the community, on what's happening in these different areas of the province. They are a huge benefit to government. When we are developing and shaping public policy, they are there. They are the individuals we need to go talk to. They can tell us what's happening in every nook and cranny of the province.

So I won't belabour this. As I've said, I think this is a very positive resolution. We applaud the Community Sector Council for drawing many groups together. Of course, they have a website and they have a group and they have lists and lists. I'm not sure – I checked it today – they might have 360-odd members on site. But that's those who are registered. That doesn't take into account other groups out there who are just – the women's club down here, the men's club over here who are doing things for their community

because they love their community and because they're adding value to it.

They pull together people and groups celebrating the value of what they do. They encourage others to get involved. And they encourage governments and others to serve as sponsors and maximize the value of the sector's work. Because again, I think of the commercial on the credit card. You can do this, you can this, but to do this, priceless. I think the community sector in this province, the value, what they do for us, you cannot put a price on it. You cannot.

I just think of Topsail - Paradise, and I think of my district. We all go to events; everyone in this House are attending events in their community on a regular basis. In fact, we can't attend all of them, unless we can clone ourselves. Imagine two of me, just imagine. Imagine just one of me.

But think about it. Most of those events you go to on a regular basis is a community group or a volunteer group. To go in and see what they bring to a community and different types of people in one setting having a good time, that's what we really need to applaud.

So, on this side of the House, I can speak for us and say we are very pleased to vote in support of this resolution, and to encourage all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to continue to make their own contributions to the community. The people of our province, the volunteers, the community groups of our province are, without a doubt, the heart and soul of this province. We will certainly be supporting this.

I thank you for your time.

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

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

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

I'm so excited to stand up about this and I'm so very excited that the hon. Member for Topsail - Paradise is supporting this as well. Hopefully that leads through to the rest of his caucus as well.

**MR. P. DINN:** I'm a good guy.

**MR. DAVIS:** I know.

I am very excited to stand up and discuss the community sector in our province. I had the pleasure of working within the community sector for 13 years as an executive director, and fully understand the huge benefits that the sector has both socially, which is massive, culturally, which is far reaching, but also economically, which carries direct employment of 16,000 people and significantly more indirect and induced employment.

We must also not forget, Mr. Speaker, what our province receives from all the volunteers who give freely of their time and talent in these 3,700 organizations, benefiting the entire community. The value is significant. I would fully agree with the hon. Member for Mount Scio when she talked about the impact that this is making in our communities.

I had the pleasure of serving on the Community Services Council at the time – it's Sector Council now – for the provincial Volunteer Week Committee for over 10 years. Most of those years I was the working chair. This committee was responsible for helping organizations thank their volunteers and encouraging them and supporting them to coordinate events and celebrations in honour of the contributions that the volunteers make to their organizations each and every day.

I just ask the hon. Members to think for one minute what your home communities would look like if the volunteers didn't exist in those communities. Virtually, communities would grind to a halt. Not just in St. John's, not just in any other community, rural or not, urban, it doesn't matter; every community would have a real issue with maintaining services to individuals in our province. The community outreach that happens with these volunteer organizations is huge.

During my time with the CSC, I worked with many executive directors for many different organizations, for many different sectors within the volunteer sector. I'm very happy that government has seen the value and the impact that this sector is having on every single



community and every single person in our province.

*The Way Forward with Community*, a sector plan to advance the social and economic contribution in the community organizations of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's a fantastic plan led by the community stakeholders. This is an important piece, led by the community stakeholders for the betterment of this sector, addressing some of the long-standing challenges facing this sector through meaningful recommendations.

I will not repeat the information that the hon. Member for Mount Scio so eloquently told this House of Assembly, but I just want to identify a couple of the recommendations that I think are very important for the sustainability of the sector. Preparing profiles of the sector for key labour force indicators is really, really important; employment benchmarks, including challenges, that of finding and filling positions, salaries and benefit levels.

The skills gap that are related to organizations are key pieces that are addressed in this plan, or at least the recommendations to address those. Creating a single-window website for information that the provincial government can share with these organizations will be a significant increase for them. Reviewing application design and turnaround times in order to simplify and streamline the process and to minimize duplication of information and to reduce the decision-making time.

As the hon. Member previous to me mentioned as well, the evaluation of the multi-year funding which is an important piece. It's one thing that executive directors used to always talk to me about when we were in our meetings, when I was in that sector, and it's very important we evaluate actively the 22 volunteer organizations that we have for multi-year funding already approved and how we're going to move forward to expand on that list in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to discuss the community sector in relation to the Department of TCII, or Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation. As I mentioned earlier, the social, cultural and economic impact of the community sector cannot be understated. The

importance and the value of community-led organizations run deep.

Our close working relationship with the community sector and the work plan that was jointly created, it is a platform for a mutual understanding of what's working, what's not working, and how the government and the sector can better work to achieve its full potential.

Together, we have set the stage to help the sector overcome challenges, strengthening the sector's reach and celebrate the sector's successes. Together, we will undertake important work, including making the application process to government for programs easier, reducing times within departments for the decision-making process.

Community organizations are at the front lines of creating accessibility, inclusivity, age-friendly communities, supporting healthier, more active communities, and the helping hand for individuals in need. We all know organizations in our district that do fantastic work and we should support them in every way we can. I know every hon. Member here has their own causes that are near and dear to their hearts. Just think for a moment about how important that cause is to you and to your family and to the community that you represent.

Many other organizations are delivering significant economic benefits by attracting new investments to build things like telecommunications and transportation infrastructure. I'll be on the West Coast later this week to announce some telecommunication advances there in broadband, and I'm looking forward to that. I know every MHA works so hard for their district to try to expand reach into those areas – building clusters of economic activity that are leading new business and employment opportunities in turn. In some cases, filling gaps in service delivery where the private sector and/or government do not have the ability to do it.

As a government, we are very committed to the long-term development and diversification of regions of our province and sectors. We are working to ensure these activities are designed to support community sector and broad range of community stakeholders. We have demonstrated

this through the support of the community sector stakeholders, investing in development initiatives; partnership agreements, such as the MOU with the NL Federation of Co-operatives; and the *Social Enterprise Action Plan*.

Through our various programs and services, we continue to support infrastructure development, marketing initiatives, capacity-building and research projects, Mr. Speaker. Investments, along with strong relationships built by staff in all regions of our province, we envision a strong and growing community sector in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

The level of conversation is getting a little too high.

Thank you.

**MR. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the protection.

We are committed to exploring new and innovative approaches to support the community sector. In collaboration with our partners, our government's priority is building strong, resilient regions and sectors.

We are working in partnership with the key organizations and stakeholders, collaboratively, to enhance social enterprise development in our province. The Social Enterprise Action Plan represents an opportunity for our government to focus our work on key areas of development while complementing our partners' work.

We recognize the innovative efforts of existing social enterprises and we are committed to promoting and creating new social enterprises, further supporting existing social enterprises and ensuring the province gains social and economic benefits as a result.

The importance of a blended economy with consideration for social and economic return on investment is gaining global attention. Social enterprises play a very important role in our economy. The actions outlined in the plan support existing enterprises and encourage the

development of new enterprises we haven't even thought of yet.

At the sector council summit that we had last week, it was great to hear organizations stand up and talk about the successes they have in their organizations. The social entrepreneurship we're trying to create here is making sure those organizations have the ability to take their strengths and monetize them so they can make that organization more successful long term, from a financial perspective, to be able to grow, hire more staff and get involved in the community more. That's the important piece that social enterprise allows volunteer organizations or not-for-profit organizations to capitalize on, focusing on the strengths of those organizations is so very important.

In our Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, we've increased the awareness of existing financing availability for social enterprise activities and are supporting various initiatives. For example, Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation invested in a number of social enterprise activities such as the O'Brien Farm Foundation which is in Mount Scio District – the economic powerhouse of Mount Scio. I know the impact that made.

That project started when I happened to be a city councillor representing that same region of the city and I know the impact that's going to have on the education system, but also food security. I know our friend over on the other side here, he may not agree in every aspect of this, but I think he will agree that food security is an important piece for our province. I know because I was out to his farm and he does some good work there.

SmartICE, the Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador – I'm going to go into a little bit more detail about these opportunities that we've invested in through our department – Smallwood Crescent Community Centre and the St. John's Farmers' Market. I know how important that has been to the region I represent, the Farmers' Market, and how strong it's been for the entire Avalon region.

Through regional development funds, we've helped fund SmartICE to the tune of about \$235,000. This is a northern social enterprise focused on providing communities with near

real-time information on sea ice conditions, taking a local problem that people see every day and trying to address it and fix it. The project involves integrating on-ice technology, remote sensing and traditional Inuit knowledge to generate data for use on a number of fronts, from tourism to Arctic shipping and exploration, to search and rescue adaptations.

I'd be remiss if I didn't take the opportunity to say in my first day on the job as the minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, all those months ago, I had the ability to go Choices for Youth which was one of the starters of this SmartICE program. I had the opportunity to meet a young girl, Sam; I'll never forget her name. I'll never forget her story, probably more important than that.

She told a story of how she wasn't working at the time; she didn't have her education at the time. She went to a social enterprise through Choices for Youth, got her education, got meaningful work and she was so excited to tell her story to the room full of investors and supporters. It was so nice to see. That was because of investments that governments made – not just ours, other governments as well – in supporting projects such as that. I think that's a testament to what we can do as legislators and what we can do as governments, right across our country.

The supports for Smallwood Crescent Community Centre was – it sounds small – \$1,300 to help a marketing campaign. The Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador: \$50,000 to help them to design and build a year-round greenhouse. Again, food security.

My time is running short, Mr. Speaker, so I'm going to try to clue up. My department is very pleased to be supporting the Centre for Social Enterprise at Memorial University which has recently launched a new initiative MBA program in social enterprise, the first of its kind offered in any Canadian university. The goal of this social enterprise plan is to increase the number of social enterprises in Newfoundland and Labrador and enhance the ones that we currently have.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to encourage all the hon. Members in this House to

support this private Member's resolution, and I encourage them to get out and support their charities and never forget to say thank you to those volunteers who give so freely of their time and talent to the many, many organizations that represent our community. There's no better time to do that than the Community Sector Council's Volunteer Week, which happens in March and April.

Thank you very much for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I'm just going to stand to support the motion, the private Member's resolution that was put forward. I just want to congratulate all the volunteers throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We all can stand up and just look in our own districts and think about all the volunteers and the community-based groups that are in our areas without government support.

The prime one that I always use is people who put their lives on the line on many occasions who come upon many tragedies, who support us as volunteers, and with the support of government are able to continue on. That's the firefighters across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

That's one group that we know as volunteers – complete volunteers. They're trained professionally, but they are just volunteers. They get called up 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning. Some of us know some of the tragedies that they have to face. Just to Duane Antle and the Newfoundland and Labrador firefighters' association, to all the groups, we just thank you because you do a tremendous job.

I always said before that 3 o'clock in the morning when there's a storm on, while we're sleeping, hauling the blanket up, it's a bit cold, they're out saving someone's life. So to all the firefighters across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**MR. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to, in my own district that I live in and been part of so many years, talk about just some of the groups. Part of this here is about mental health. A lot of the groups also that we don't realize – we do, but we sometimes just put it on the sideline for mental health, is recreation groups across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I know the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, we played for many years. And if you ever want to run into that guy on the court and you want to know how hard it is to try to get around him on the court, yet we always found a way, Mr. Speaker, that we always remained active. I know the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port remembers how many people we coached in basketball over the years. If you look at the trend when you keep kids in sports and recreation, there's a good chance that they're going to move on and continue on, because they always have something to do.

So the recreational groups all across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, even though out our way – a lot are great but the one that has great achievement is in Meadows just recently. If people want to see how a community-based group – the recreation group in Meadows – has prospered in a small rural area, go to Meadows. They just built an outdoor rink.

They bummed, borrowed, stole, put up their own money and raised money for the recreation group every way possible. They put up the boards and had Plexiglas. They came up. Jamie Brake, who's the mayor and head of the recreation, had this idea, let's put a little outstanding roof on it. The job they have done is unbelievable. There are even groups now from Corner Brook that can't get time on the ice in Corner Brook that comes over to Meadows to rent the ice. That's the recreation groups.

This year now alone, this summer, 75 kids in the ball hockey program alone in that area. Just on the other side of that, they have a walking trail. In the walking trail itself, they just named it after Minnie Vallis who was the mayor, a big community-based supporter, a great person for women's rights all across Newfoundland.

We all remember Minnie Vallis; she was awarded the Newfoundland medal. They named the trail after her for the work she did in the community for all community-based groups across Newfoundland and Labrador, especially in the Corner Brook, Bay of Islands area. That will always be remembered, Minnie, because of her great work and tireless work. That's just an example of how mental health can help through recreation and sports. That was a great private Member's motion because it does help all the community-based groups in the area.

If you look at also – and I give you a good example – Eric Bourgeois. Eric is a young fellow who lives out in Curling. Now they just started up a tourism group. It is community based, no money from government. They started it up and they had a meeting with the minister's staff about three weeks ago. They had a meeting, a big round table; 40 people at the round table to start up tourism, walking trails, hiking trails.

Back years ago, the Lewis Hill Serpentine River was going to be put in as a national park; the highest mountains in the province and the greatest mineral reserve. Different mineral types are up on the Lewis Hills. Now they want to revise that. It's a great area. That's the type of tourism, that's the great community partnership that we need with the government.

I know the minister had his staff out to meet with all the groups and they had a great round table for about seven hours, actually, sitting around getting all ideas. There's another follow-up meeting, and the minister is going to be meeting with the group this Friday, actually, to help and support them and listen to their ideas. That's very encouraging also.

I don't know how many people in this area have been out to Lark Harbour and York Harbour. This is part of the motion itself. This is part of the promotion, is the hiking trails that are in Lark Harbour and York Harbour. It's something that, of course, has to go through all the Bay of Islands, the promotion part of it, but the Outer Bay of Islands group, they did such tremendous work.

It all started off, I'm going back years ago – you want to talk about community sectors, a guy by the name of Austin Sheppard, I'm going back 22

or 23 years ago, if you want to see how that started off, how one person could make a difference. I walked along with Austin, 22 or 23 years ago, he used to go in with an axe and actually cut the trail to give tourists the walking trails. Now, they have some of the biggest trails in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

If anybody wants to walk up Murray Mountain, 3½ hours to get up and back and see all the moose, just the natural beauty. If people want to go up to Copper Mine brook and walk all along Blow Me Down Mountain, it's just tremendous the amount the Outer Bay of Islands recreation committee did.

Also, when you want to look at the other groups, there's another group with mental health and helps a lot with help for seniors, is the seniors' groups across the province. I don't know if there's a Member here who don't have a very vibrant seniors' group in their district.

Those seniors get together for a game of card, but just imagine how much they get out and they converse with each other. It's a night out; bingo is a night out, the cards, the socialization. I think it's great that the government supports those types of activities all throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador because I can assure you one thing, it does keep seniors out of long-term care beds, it does keep them out of hospitals, just the socialization and the movement and the communities groups themselves.

So, government does support a lot. Of course, with the fiscal realities you have a restraint, and I understand that. I think government does what they can to help out most all the groups around. I know in the Humber - Bay of Islands, sure, you could always say we want more. Everybody wants more, but I think when you look at the priorities and you look at the fair share, a bit for everybody, you can definitely see that it has made improvements over the years.

I look at some of the people in my area, just smaller things that you don't see through the minister. When you get the Community Enhancement program; just some of the work that the volunteer groups do. The Lions Clubs when they help do some repairs that they couldn't afford on their own and help people do

the work. That's the kind of thing that keeps these groups alive, that's the kind of initiative that the government puts in there. It's always a great feeling when government can step in and say, okay, we do a lot but there are some things we can't do. Well, let's find a way, and we always find a way to do it.

So, it's a positive for everybody when government is helping out on all these community-based organizations. When you're going through your district, we don't even realize it – and it's not just me. We all go through it; we don't even realize it. When you sit down, just think about how many community-based organizations you have in your district. Just try to think about it.

The Member for Topsail mentioned about all the places that he gets invited to and he can't make it; he needs to clone himself. Well, they try, but they got a better person. He's sitting there today in front of me.

**MR. P. DINN:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. JOYCE:** Your mother would be proud of that.

No, and I agree with you. When a Member isn't active in his district – and I'm sure the Member for Topsail is, and I'm sure we all are, everybody in this House.

I remember the Member for Baie Verte - White Bay was one day telling me he had eight, 10 functions in one day. He just jumped, jumped. But even when you're jumping and jumping, you show up and show respect. When you show up and show respect to them that gives everybody the encouragement to do it. So, when we all got groups in our districts and we show up, we respect them. That gives them encouragement that we know they're there.

When all Members of this House of Assembly – I always said this, I don't think there's one Member here in this district that is not involved in their district. They support the community-based groups. They do what they can for them, they meet with them. They secure funding for them whenever they can.

We can't do it all. This is no knock on any government, no knock on any Member in this House. We can't do it all, but as long as you show respect and do what you can, help out along the way – and this is what's going to help our communities. This is what's going to help out seniors. This is what is going to help our youth also, when you get the youth involved with the recreation, when you get the youth involved with different groups around.

Again, I go back to Mount Moriah. I go to Mount Moriah. Mount Moriah has a recreation, and it's unbelievable, actually. Mount Moriah, I know it very well. I grew up down in that area, in Curling, and always down in Mount Moriah. Mount Moriah has a recreation group, and I go to them and say, do you need any funding? Oh, no, we got lots of money. They have their bingo. They have \$18,000 in their bank account, and they have probably the best playground in the province – best playground – because the community wraps around them.

When you go down on Canada Day, when you see the kids fill up all the playgrounds, you see all the equipment, you see all the kids, you see how much community-based – they started out with a grant from the government, a small grant from the government: You just get it started, we'll do the rest, and they did the rest. That's the kind of thing these government initiatives help kick-start and then bring online along the way.

Also, I look at the Town of Humber Arm South. The Town of Humber Arm South now has a facility set up in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador for recreation, for playground, for concerts that would match any outdoor facility in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, if not be much better.

It is what the town did as volunteers; it's the volunteers coming through. Again, that started out: How can we get a little kick-start? Once they got the kick-start, they go off then and say okay, we can do it on our own. This is an idea of this private Member's motion here today to support those groups. I will say that government has supported the groups. I know in the Humber - Bay of Islands that government has supported those groups.

We always put in more applications than we're going to get. We all know that. I mean, that's just reality. But I think if you can, instead of giving everybody \$1,000, give everybody \$700 so we can spread it out, so everybody have a little initiative.

I don't know if there's a Member here in this House of Assembly can go to a group that you helped out \$250, \$500 just to kick-start, that they're not appreciative. Just something to be recognized, something to help out so they can move on a bit more.

I know even in the previous PC government I got funds for the same types of initiatives also. This is not something that anybody can say we can't get enough. This is something that 40 of us in this House of Assembly are more than willing to help out any community-based groups that we can and we always did.

I thank all the Members because I know I deal with some of the Members also and I know I deal with Corner Brook a lot, myself and the Member for Corner Brook attend a lot of events together up there also. A lot of the events up there that is part of Corner Brook is the Humber - Bay of Islands also, the curling, and the (inaudible) that we attend events and they receive money in the Corner Brook area. They don't dispute oh well, that's just part of the district; that's Corner Brook.

That's the way the Corner Brook seniors' group works. You see a lot of the other church groups and seniors' groups around the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. They're open arms to everybody. Come on in; we're open arms.

I'll say to the Member this is a great initiative. This is a good-news story that should be brought up because there's a lot of work being done to a lot of different groups around the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and I'm proud to be a part of it for a number of years. I'm proud to be supporting a lot of those groups.

I know the Member just mentioned about the cellphone coverage that he's going to be talking about around the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I know we've all been working on that and hopefully that's going to be coming to all parts of the province. It takes time. But if you

notice in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, that's a big part of tourism also. When you do a tourism study, they say cellphone coverage for rural Newfoundland, and that's a big part. That's not going to happen overnight.

I just want to say thank you to all the volunteer groups all across province in Newfoundland and Labrador, especially in the Humber - Bay of Islands area that I know very well. I know the hard work and dedication. The Curling Lions Club I think it's November 22 on a Saturday night they're celebrating 40 years of service – the Curling Lions Club. And the amount of money they give out, and the Lions Club over in Summerside, that they give out to all the volunteer groups and the necessary groups is just unbelievable. They always make money.

The Max Simms facility, they always make a contribution to the Corner Brook radiothon. They make contributions all over. I know the eyeglass thing, the dogs that help people without sight. This is the kind of stuff that Lions Clubs all across – and if we can help out the Lions Clubs and all the other community-based groups, this is going to be a benefit for all the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So I will be supporting the motion. I thank the Member for bringing it forward. It is a chance for us to thank them all across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER (Reid):** The hon. the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

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

I'm pleased to stand here today on behalf of the people of the beautiful and scenic District of Lewisporte - Twillingate to express my support for this private Member's resolution. I'd first like to thank my colleague, the Member for the District of Mount Scio, for bringing this motion forward for debate today in the House of Assembly. And I think, as one of my colleagues across the aisle said, it's probably not much of a debate. I think we're all definitely in favour of this motion that's been put forward.

I just want to thank the Member for Topsail – Paradise, the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, the MHA for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville and the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands for their words. I think we all echo what they are saying and the value that we all find in the community service sector.

Before I go any further, I'd like to acknowledge the contribution that the community sector has made to our province. I thank the volunteers and the staff of these organizations and groups who devoted themselves to providing this service to so many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and that depend on it. Mr. Speaker, we truly owe all a debt of gratitude for the commitment of these volunteers that serve.

I'd also like to take a minute to acknowledge the important role women play in the community sector. Data has shown that women comprise 53.9 per cent of boards, and almost 70 per cent of community sector staff. This level of involvement may be traced back to our province's history, which gives us an account of women being the driving force behind community-led and grassroots initiatives. We all have examples we can point to in our lives where women took a lead role in shaping our communities.

I'd just like to acknowledge a couple of people in my district that have done an exceptional job. Three of our communities that I know of at hand, our mayors, are being led by females, and I have to say they've done an exceptional job running their communities and being active members in the communities. I'm sure we all have numbers of examples where women in our communities are serving us well.

For me, I often think about my role model which was my mother, growing up, and hearing the debate this morning on the bill and talking about family size and growing families, if we had a few more families like my mother and father that raised 15 children, I think our population wouldn't be suffering the way it is. I remember when I was growing up, there were always lots of activities, lots of children in the neighbourhood. In my little neighbourhood that I live in now, there's only one child. It goes to show how our population is declining, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to recognize – like I said a large family, I had six sisters that helped to raise me and I thank them for what they done in helping to mould and develop who I am. I've also, during my career with the Town of Lewisporte, worked with some exceptional women who were the driving forces in our community. Recently serving as the departmental secretary to Children, Seniors and Social Development, they have a fantastic group of staff there.

I guess that helps to mould who I am, Mr. Speaker. I'm now a father of two children and a grandfather, and I appreciate all the work that they have done. I'm sure that women in our communities have inspired me and I believe women inspire all of us to be better people and to build a more caring and compassionate society.

The community sector often goes unrecognized for the value of its work, but I stand here today to say that a strong community sector is absolutely essential for communities to thrive in Newfoundland and Labrador. The sector makes our province stronger, healthier, safer, more vibrant, more resilient and more inclusive. It is often at the community sector that people turn to us for help and it's often the bond that communities connected in difficult times.

The sector is comprised both of legally incorporated organizations and hundreds of informal groups engaged, 200,000 board leaders and volunteers across our province. I'm sure we all think, in my communities, and, like yours, that volunteers are essential to our community and build our communities and make them such a vibrant place to live.

These numbers are huge. This means that the community groups engage over 38 per cent of our entire provincial population directly and, often, this engagement is on a daily basis. There are not many sectors in our province that directly touches many lives as the community sector.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to remind people that the sector delivers services and programs not for personal gain, not for profit, but to simply help people who live in our province. The sector represents the best of what Newfoundland and Labrador is known for. The

caring and determined nature of the employees and the volunteers in this sector is something our government applauds.

That is one of the reasons why we brought forward this private Member's resolution here today. Our plan is to continue to support the great work being done so that the sector is able to reach its full potential. If our government can throw our full support behind strengthening this sector, this will mean that the people working and providing services can do even a better job than they're already doing. That is because they know that we are in their corner and we have their backs.

In addition to the benefits of the programs and services the community sector provides to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, the economic benefits given to the sector community is a large employer and operates many social enterprises. I want to talk briefly about the economic contributions of this sector, because critics are often quick to downplay the contribution this sector makes to our provincial economy. These critics will repeat – they hold true – that the sector is not a significant contributor to the economy and use this as a reason to downplay the importance of the sector. This is the old way of thinking and simply not true, Mr. Speaker.

Developed in close collaboration with the members, the Sector Work Plan, also known as *The Way Forward with Community*, which was released in April 2019, includes four ideas that will help dismiss myths that currently exist regarding the sector. Idea one: "The community sector generates economic activity through its operations, purchasing and staffing." It is easy to understand as one can easily visualize organizations and groups needing to spend and, therefore, contributing to our economy.

Idea two: "The community sector seeds economic development by directly generating economic activity." This can be seen in the growing number of social enterprises in our province, enterprises that also return the profit to the communities they serve.

Idea three: "The community sector is a primary employer in many communities." A fact that is clearly on display across our province. Idea four:



“The community sector delivers services that make communities attractive places to live, and therefore it plays a direct role in attracting and retaining workers, particularly in rural areas.”

It is a fact that the communities that provide great services for residents are in high demand. Community organizations in this province operate in many areas, including social housing, sport and recreation, health and well-being, culture and heritage, social enterprise, and they also provide vital supports for a range of disenfranchised and vulnerable populations. In my own District of Lewisporte - Twillingate, Mr. Speaker, there are many, many groups and organizations in this sector that are providing great services. I have a deep respect for this sector in my area, and across the province, because I've worked in this sector for most of my life.

Mr. Speaker, for 25 years, I served as the recreation and tourism director with the Town of Lewisporte, as I probably said so many times in this House, and I've had the opportunity to work with so many great volunteers and organizations. It's always difficult to identify one or two or half a dozen because you always leave so many others out that also do such a great service.

During my role in the field of recreation, some of the groups that do stand in my mind, that I worked closely with, were our festival committee, Mussel Bed Soiree. That has been on the go for 30-plus years now, built a foundation on volunteers and has been very, very successful over the years. That festival would not have seen the success it did without the dedication of so many volunteers.

Dinner theatre in my area, Hann's Point Players – back 12 years ago, I helped to establish that dinner theatre, and it is a type of a social enterprise. Each summer, 12 to 15 students get hired and they perform both musically, skits, et cetera. If it wasn't for an organization like that there, many of these students wouldn't have the opportunity to get summer employment and they wouldn't have the opportunity to learn and to show their skills and showcase their skills to people visiting our communities and our local residents.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to mention a couple of others. The Kinsmen Club of Notre Dame, of which I'm proud to be an honorary member, they've served the community for 40-plus years now, and I have to say it's one of the greatest organizations I've ever been involved with. They have contributed over \$3.4 million back to our community, the Town of Lewisporte, helping people, whether it be a sporting organization, whether it be a family in need or an individual in need, they have come to bat and helped so many people over the years, and I commend them.

The Lions Club in Twillingate is another great example. Just recently, they did some fundraisers to help out residents at the Notre Dame Bay Memorial Health Centre. They are working all the time, fundraising, doing different events and initiatives to raise funds.

The Kids Eat Smart program, which is a program that I knew about before taking the role of parliamentary secretary for Children, Seniors and Social Development, but during my role I had the opportunity to attend a number of events and also had the opportunity to actually learn more about the great work that the Kids Eat Smart program is doing: serving close to 30,000 meals every single day and raising close to \$4 million annually to support that.

They are in almost every single school in our community. I have seven schools in my district and they do serve there. They use approximately 7,000 volunteers to run these programs. So, it goes to show the great work that's being done there.

The Calypso Foundation is a centre of learning for persons with disabilities in Lewisporte but serves a much greater area. That organization, again, totally non-profit, has been operating for a number of years and is giving the opportunity for persons with disabilities to get out in the workforce and to learn in an inclusive setting. They've been providing such a great service, Mr. Speaker.

My time is getting near, but I'd also like to recognize one other group: the CYN in New World Island. That group has been doing some remarkable work. The area is facing a number of challenges, but CYN has been bridging that gap

to get our youth involved, get them out and socialize in the community and to be active members in the community. They provide a number of services whether it be tutoring services, whether it be sport and recreation, whether it be just to mentor a person in troubled times. So, I'd like just to commend them.

Mr. Speaker, before I conclude, I just want to say that I'm very pleased to support this resolution that stresses the importance of strengthened co-operation between government and the community sector.

I do have one more minute, so I will take a bit more time to recognize the work of the Community Sector Council. I did have an opportunity to have a lot of involvement with that council over the years and I'd just like to congratulate them and thank them for the super work they're doing and to assure them that they have our support as a government and we will continue to work with them.

Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat, and I will be supporting this motion.

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

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

**MR. J. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will support this motion wholeheartedly, and I thank the Member for Mount Scio for bringing it forward.

Like my colleague and brother on this side, we've had a long history in our family of volunteering with community-related, or events of getting involved in one way or another. I do remember early on in university with the local church renovating a house for the Vietnamese boat people who were refugees from the Vietnam War at that time.

One of my first events, the Oxfam walkathon, I forget how many times it was around Quidi Vidi Lake, but I think it was something like 23 miles at that time. I think I wore out two pairs of sneakers. Now, my brother probably had the same event. We stuck to it out of pure stubbornness.

During 9/11, when I was a teacher at Holy Heart, Holy Heart became sort of the other Gander in many ways because the school was cleared out and became a hostel for the many people who were stranded here. While it represented a week off from teaching duties, I would say every teacher was back there in full force doing runs, transportation, inviting people to their homes. So that sense of community, I think, pervades many of the people – I would say all of the people in this House, and in Newfoundland and Labrador.

There are challenges to the volunteer organizations, which are actually in some way recognized in *The Way Forward on Community*. One of the things it talks about is "considering the importance of volunteers to the sector alongside a general decline in the number of hours that individuals spend volunteering, it is vital that the Community Sector Work Plan look at creative and innovative approaches to strengthening the sector."

Now, I can tell you – and I would say the Members here can probably relate to this. For volunteer organizations, it's to do with recruitment, finding replacements, aging members. Most of the people you look at in most volunteer organizations, they're grey. They're of a certain age. They get tired more easily.

One of the organizations I'll talk a little bit about, we've tried to adapt to keep people involved, but it's about keeping people. The more duties that they take on, they become tired and they eventually step away.

For a lot of community organizations, depending on if they have a board of directors, then it comes down to the whole point of insurance, whether it's board of directors insurance or a general commercial liability type of insurance for the organizations, which can be very expensive to a volunteer organization trying to provide services within a community.

Specialized resource people is about having the people there that when they're dealing with specific matters, whether it's about financial, about housing, you name it, it's about having access to these people.

Fundraising is probably one of the biggest challenges to most volunteer organizations. Whether it is bake sales, flea markets, cold plates, rockathons, walkathons – you name it – or chase the ace, the fact is you then need volunteers to actually make sure there's funding there for that volunteer organization.

Then there are the mental health issues that many of these organizations are facing, not only within their own membership but also in the people they may serve. A lot of the issues that – I believe in a lot of the organizations I've volunteered with are dealing with. The people they serve do have more complex needs and more mental health issues that they feel inadequate to address.

One thing about *The Way Forward* document, I understand where it's coming from but it's about the opportunity to create jobs. I think for a lot of volunteer organizations, they're not looking at it as an opportunity for creating jobs, they're looking at an opportunity of getting the personnel there to help them.

It's about also, I think, to recognize the pressure that it's taking off government. By having volunteer groups which are dedicated and can focus their attention on specific issues that takes a tremendous pressure off our system. I know in some cases some of the groups I've been with – the food banks – we've had people come to us that have been directed to us by government agencies. It puts pressure on the organization.

I understand why a case worker might recommend them to us. They are hamstrung by and bound by certain policies and spending and budgets, but, obviously, the fact is there's a recognition there that certain groups in the area of distributing food fulfil a very important role.

Some of the organizations I've had the pleasure to be a part of: The Gathering Place, which I sat on the board up until the point I got elected, and then I had to step back from that position. A lot of these organizations have grown from very humble beginnings, and The Gathering Place is one of them. It was basically a soup kitchen. Then it was filling that need, to where, in the end, it has developed into something much more than that. It has grown.

I know it has received very generous and very welcome funding from the government, core funding from the government for, I think it's something like \$1.3 million a year. Which, as a former board member, I can tell you that means an awful lot in sustaining the programming for The Gathering Place. Also, it eases the burden for the fundraising there. So I commend the government for that. I think in many ways that's more essential than you think.

It's made up of hundreds of volunteers. I can tell you that it's a huge operation because now it's breakfast, supper, it's weekend programs. You can see here, and I'll just go through them. A meal program, seven days a week. The provision of doctors, nurses, social workers, laundry services, informal social activities, art classes, craft sessions, access to showers, foot care. Access to computers and computer training sessions, a clothing boutique, home support, sewing services for those in need of minor repairs, a designated area for women guests, legal clinic, dental care, a flu clinic, income tax clinic, and a message centre for guests who have no fixed address.

In many ways, what we realized on the board is that we are capturing a segment of the population that weren't having their needs met by other organizations or government agencies. They weren't at the stage where they would be ready for housing.

We also noticed that the complexity of needs of the guests had increased, and that became a challenge as to how we are going to provide for those needs; hence, you cannot run an organization like this totally on volunteers. You're going to have to have some dedicated paid staff that will basically be there that are going to be the core, and that's where the core funding comes in. So there are paid individuals there who are able to be in charge of the programs, because it's a significant challenge to the organization to provide it. Hiring is important.

Stella Burry is another organization that – one of the other organizations I'll talk a little bit about, basically use this resource to help them with a housing project. The Stella Burry is another organization that grew from very humble beginnings. You look at, it takes in housing and

shelter. The Brian Martin Housing Resource Centre – the Front Step is run by Choices for Youth. Jesse's Place provides supportive, transitional housing for women recovering from addiction.

Naomi Centre is a temporary, supportive shelter for women between age 16 and 30. Emmanuel House does employment and training, social enterprise training programs. If you've eaten at the Hungry Heart Cafe, you'll get an idea of some of the involvement. It's expanded. That's the one thing, given half a chance, a lot of volunteers, a lot of not-for-profit organizations will expand to fill the role. The key thing is about the support in doing it, because they do have an awful lot of volunteers.

Yesterday I paid tribute to Branch 1 of the Royal Canadian Legion. That's another organization within my district that does a tremendous amount of work and I told you a little bit about what they were do yesterday. Again, a lot of volunteers, a lot of love, a lot of commitment.

An international organization I was part of, and still am, but I don't serve on the board or anything like that anymore, is the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Basically, it operated as a food bank. We would do home visits and we would end up in homes and places, rooming houses that were really, to be honest with you, not fit for a dog. I wouldn't put my worst enemy there. That propelled us into saying it is not enough just simply bringing food, we decided to get involved with affordable housing.

We do have a six-unit affordable housing project here in the city on Anderson Avenue, but here's the thing: We were like the dog that chased the bus and then caught it. At that point, what are we going to do with it? We were fortunate enough to have funding from both the federal, provincial and support from the municipal government as well. So it was a real team effort and we had an advisor in the form of Keith O'Neill to help us through the process, but we were also fortunate to have people on the executive who had background in construction and in engineering who were able to help us.

We've taken on the role of having the insurance and we've dealt with the hiring bit by contracting out the management services of that

project to a realty agent that manages the property, because we knew that we just would not be able to manage the property on our own. That's where, I think, when it comes to supports for organizations, it's needed. Yet, we do face the problem with aging population recruitment of new members and so on and so forth.

I'll wind up, I think the key thing here is – and I saw it in *The Way Forward*, I mentioned this to Minister Dempster, and I should say Minister Dempster took the time to meet with representatives of St. Vincent de Paul to hear their concerns, and they'll be following up with that.

I appreciate that time and effort because a group like this is not on the same level as The Gathering Place or as the Stella Burry, but they're at that stage where really they're not ready to hire, they're not at that level, but they could use the support – sometimes like a navigator, a go-to person, what are the resources that they can draw on. Often, I think the best group to bring that would be government; publicly funded public services where the primary goal is probably aligned more with not-for-profits, which is for the public good.

When we're looking at support for the community sector, I think it's about how do we make sure that the volunteers are looked after. How do we help volunteers in these organizations who might be dealing with vulnerable people? Like mental health first aid is one that I would think – if we could find a way that all volunteer members have access to mental health first aid, that would go a long way to helping volunteer organizations with the work they do, that I can tell you.

I came from a teaching background and I dealt with a lot of those issues on a regular basis, but a lot of people have never had to deal with people who might be going through crisis. I think at this point, if you want to look at it, here's how we support organizations. They're not looking to hire someone but they're looking for: Where do we go? How do we help the members help the people around us?

With that, I'll finish up. Again, I thank the Member for Mount Scio for bringing this forward. I hope that when we look at this, we

look at meaningful ways in which we can support the community groups within our province.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I thank the Member for Mount Scio for bringing the PMR forward. This is something that I'm very, very interested in and very interested in the way this will be rolled out and brought forward.

I'd like to say that, right upfront, we support the Community Sector Council for what they do. This is a good sector, Mr. Speaker. For 18 years, I've served in the community sector myself. I was a member of the Lions Club in Bishop's Falls and I know there are lots of groups around the Central area, Bishop's Falls, Exploits, of course: the fire departments, Elks Clubs, Kinsmen Clubs, 50-plus clubs. What those groups and organizations do is phenomenal when it comes to aiding people that need help, especially medical, community sections like building playgrounds.

I know the Lions Club, about six years ago, we raised enough for a \$350,000 playground to be put in the Town of Bishop's Falls, which takes a lot of stress off the government with regard to looking for funding. Another one we did was Search & Rescue wanted a fire and emergency rescue centre. We raised another \$350,000 for Search & Rescue who are a volunteer organization themselves, and you know what they do, from Central Newfoundland right down to the Connaigre Peninsula, right out to the East Coast. They are volunteer, so the truck helped them out; they help in saving lives whenever they're called on. The volunteer sector is there, and the community sector, so being able to aid those sectors is very beneficial.

Being a Lions member, Mr. Speaker, the Lions Max Simms Camp is a camp that's located in Exploits. It's nestled on the Exploits River. Actually, it was named after one of the Speakers in this Legislature. It was named after Max

Simms, which was Len Simms's father, so the camp is very, very significant to us.

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

**MR. FORSEY:** That camp, Mr. Speaker, is funded solely by the Lions Clubs of Newfoundland and Labrador. On an annual basis, the Lions Clubs raise about \$500,000 a year just to support that camp. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, in the past three years, we've raised \$936,000, and it takes just about a million dollars a year to operate that camp. That alone is a great save from government to being able afford to do what that camp does, because that camp is for special needs. Some of the users of that camp are the CNIB, Autism Society, Hard of Hearing, Special Olympics and others. There are lots of people that use it. It's a camp that's used during the summer for those people and it's all funded by the community sector in that area.

That's a great thing to be able to do, because those people that need those facilities, Mr. Speaker, they look – I met many friends through the Lions Club with regard to the CNIB. They're home today and they're sitting down and they're waiting to go back to the camp the end of summer because that's all they do. They even save their money so they can go back to that camp in the summertime and they really appreciate when they get there. It's great to be able to be involved in that sector and see there are monies going to be put aside for that.

All our community sectors, Mr. Speaker, all the groups in the area do aid help. I'm stressing on the Lions Clubs, but I know there have been individuals that needed to come to the Health Sciences Centre, especially being in Central, they needed help. Some of them, especially the seniors and some of the groups, fall through the cracks of the programs that the government has to offer.

They fall through the cracks, so they come through those local service organizations for funding for help. They get the funding and the help they need to get transportation, to get prosthesis probably that they need, or some kind of other health care need that they want. A lot of that is done through the community sector, through the groups and organizations. That takes

away a lot of the funding from government, that doesn't have to pay out that money.

Without those sectors, Mr. Speaker, I think the outlying areas – especially in our area in Central, we rely heavily on the volunteer sectors and community sectors. Even the school groups – and my colleague for St. John's Centre mentioned the breakfast programs. We have the breakfast programs in our area as well there in Exploits. That is another great thing they're doing.

The organizations have raised money for parks, walkways, boardwalks. My colleague in Grand Falls-Windsor can vouch for it; they do the same there, the Elks clubs, the Lions Clubs, the Kiwanis and all those people. That area really relies on the community sector. So it's great to see that happening, and I commend the Member for Mount Scio for bringing it forward.

So we look forward to how that one is going to roll out, Mr. Speaker. For now I'll sit down, but it was great for me to have a chance to talk about the PMR, because it's something that I'm really interested about.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Mount Scio, if she speaks now she will close the debate.

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

I'd like to thank all of my colleagues for their excellent and thoughtful response.

I'd like to thank the Member for Exploits for mentioning search and rescue organizations. Obviously, an incredibly important part of the community sector – I can't think of the word.

**MR. TRIMPER:** Organizations.

**MS. STOODLEY:** Organizations across the province.

Max Simms camp, I went to camp there many times growing up. So a very important part of the District of Exploits.

I'd like to thank the Member for St. John's Centre for his 23 miles, he walked around Quidi Vidi Lake and wore out two pairs of shoes. Also, I just want to highlight, he mentioned how sometimes community sector organizations don't necessarily focus on employment, but just some examples: Choices for Youth, specifically, have programs just to help employment; and Hungry Heart, as the Member mentioned, they help members of their organization gain gainful employment through their café, and then help them transition into the broader community. Then his mention of The Gathering Place as well, and how The Gathering Place has morphed to meet the needs of their members.

I'd like to thank the Member for Lewisporte – Twillingate; his recognition of women driving the community sector organizations. And it's lovely to hear about your mother. So, thank you, my colleague there.

I'd like to thank the Member –

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

**MS. STOODLEY:** I know.

I'd like to thank the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, his good news story. I think it's an excellent point about mental health and the impact that recreation has on mental health in the province, and the Member's mention of the Meadows outdoor rink. If I'm in Meadows in the winter, I'll certainly visit the outdoor rink there.

I'd like to thank the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville for your contributions about the Social Enterprise Action Plan and, particularly, food security, which is very important to the province.

I'd like to thank the Member for Topsail – Paradise; he mentioned it was a no-brainer debate, and excellent contributions around recreation and food banks, and every nook and cranny is impacted. So thank you, I absolutely agree with those – the feedback.

In conclusion, I just want to stress how innovative our community sector organizations are. They do what they can with what they have. I think it's a challenge on us to create an

environment where they can flourish, and we want to help them reach their potential.

I look forward to working with my colleagues and our government departments to drive innovation in Newfoundland and Labrador and working with the community sector on overcoming challenges and helping them solve problems.

Then in conclusion, at the community sector summit, the CEO of Imagine Canada was talking about the community sector and the impact. He said: when the rich get richer, the poor get poorer and then they come to community sector organizations. I think that speaks to how important they are in our society.

I would like to thank all my Members again for their support. I hope all of my future private Member's resolutions are received as warmly. I respectfully ask my colleagues and Members to support this motion.

Thank you very much.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

Before I adjourn, the House just want to remind Members of the Management Commission of our meeting after the House closes.

It being Wednesday, in accordance with Standing Order 9(3), the House stands adjourned until tomorrow, at 1:30 o'clock in the afternoon.