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*Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA*

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

In the Speaker's gallery today, I would like to welcome Julia Evans, who is the subject of a Member's statement this afternoon. Julia is joined by family members Leonard Evans Sr., Len Evans, Michelle Evans, Stephanie Evans and Carol Evans.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Also in the Speaker's gallery, I would like to recognize Mr. Dean Ingram, President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association. He is visiting for a Ministerial Statement today.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** In the public gallery, I would like to welcome students from Mount Pearl Senior High school's consumer studies class 1202. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Jim Locke and Dennis Keaveney.

Also in the public gallery, Jenne Nolan, Policy and Partnership Coordinator of the St. John's Status of Women Council here for a Member's statement today. Also, Deputy Mayor, David Dove, of Crow Head.

Welcome all.

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

### Statements by Members

**MR. SPEAKER:** Today we will hear Members' statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of St. John's Centre, Topsail - Paradise, Placentia West - Bellevue, Torngat Mountains and Mount Scio.

The Member for St. John's Centre.

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

Malala Yousafzai said, "I raise up my voice – not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard."

Since 1972, the St. John's Status of Women Council/Women's Centre has been a strong feminist voice for women in the metro region. More importantly, it empowers women to use their own voices to advocate for themselves.

The Safe Harbour Outreach Project, or SHOP, advocates for the rights, mental health and physical well-being of sex workers. The Right Here, Right Now program offers drop-in counselling for women facing mental health issues, trauma, domestic violence and other marginalizing issues. Marguerite's Place provides safe supportive housing for women unable to live independently and helps them move towards independence. The DV@Work NL project addresses the impact of domestic violence on our workplaces.

Yesterday, we celebrated International Women's Day and the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, which established a progressive roadmap for the empowerment of women and girls everywhere.

I ask Members of this House to join me in recognizing the progressive work of the small but dedicated staff of the Status of Women Council/Women's Centre who speak to the issues facing women and who empower women to raise up their own voices.

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

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

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

Mr. John Lawlor is a lead hand with the Town of Paradise in the wonderful District of Topsail - Paradise. In 2016, while on the job, Mr. Lawlor came across a pothole that posed a danger to motorists. Having no way of fixing the pothole nor any signage, the only thing in his truck were some sandbags normally used to provide weighted bases to temporary signs. He took these bright orange bags from his truck and placed them in the pothole. The bright-coloured sandbags would alert motorists of the pothole and, at the same time, decreasing the chance of an accident or vehicle damage.

This process caught on as a way to manage potholes until they could be repaired properly and, in fact, has been done by other municipalities throughout Canada. Innovation does not have to be technical nor complex. It simply means thinking outside the box to find a solution to a problem.

I ask all Members in this House to recognize the ingenuity of Mr. Lawlor for a very simple solution to a common problem that has saved motorists thousands of dollars in damages and prevented potential accidents.

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

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

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

I rise today to tell the stories of Mr. Max Eddy and Mr. Nelson Rose from our beautiful District of Placentia West - Bellevue.

Max Eddy was clearing snow near Arnold's Pond when he observed somebody fall through the ice. Max ran to the pond, crossed the ice, calling out to the boy, Ethen Mulrooney. Max fell through the ice, but got back on the ice and crawled to pull Ethen onto the ice to safety. Once they reached safety, he got up and put Ethen on his back and carried him to shore.

At Terra Nova Lake, Nelson Rose, our second hero, observed three children playing on a raft which had drifted into the middle of the lake, when the wind freshened. Two children made it shore, but one child, Jenna Phillips, fell into the lake holding the raft. Nelson noticed a Sea-Doo on the beach and owner Gary Briffett launched it and raced to the child. They circled the area twice and saw no sign of Jenna and feared the worst. Circling again, they saw a hand and an arm rise up through the waves and pulled Jenna to safety.

Due to selfless acts of these men, I had the opportunity to present them with their bravery awards. I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating our local heroes, Mr. Eddy and Mr. Rose.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**MS. EVANS:** Thank you.

I rise today to pay tribute to Julia Dicker of Nain. Julia graduated in 2019 from Jens Haven Memorial School of Nain and is currently attending her first year at Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Although Julia is only in her first year of university, she has already demonstrated that she's a tremendous role model to Labrador Inuit of all ages. Her dedication to her Inuit culture and to her people is mirrored by her dedication to her academic studies.

I stand today to recognize this young woman. Her academic accomplishments to date include being awarded the Memorial University 50-year anniversary scholarship, the electoral scholarship for the District of Torngat Mountains, the Vale scholarship for academic achievement, the Nunatsiavut Group of Companies scholarship award, the top level III student award provided by Jens Haven Memorial School and the last award has great emotional significance to the people of Nain: the Jason Webb Pursuit of Excellence award presented to the top graduating student in Nain.

Everyone who knows Julia is very proud of her and we all wish her every success in her future endeavours. Please join me in congratulating this young woman on her accomplishments.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

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

C-O-N-S-I-D-E-R-A-B-L-E, considerable, that is the word that my constituent Julia Evans spelled a few weeks ago and won the provincial 2020 Telegram Spelling Bee.

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

**MS. STOODLEY:** Julia out-spelled 87 other finalist from 45 schools across Newfoundland and Labrador and I'm honoured that Julia and her family are able to join us today in the Speaker's gallery.

As the provincial spelling champion, Julia wins \$2,000 and gets to travel to Washington for the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

Julia is a student at Leary's Brook Junior High, also in Mount Scio. Julia was joined in the finals by a fellow student who were both finalists in their school spelling bee.

Julia prepared for the spelling bee by studying words from the Scripps word list. She was quizzed by her family, as they would say a word to her and she would spell it back to them. Her favourite moment was when she heard the winning word, considerable, and she knew that she had it.

I ask the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Julia and her family on this incredible achievement and thanks to the organizers, volunteers, teachers and families who supported students competing across the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Statements by Ministers**

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

**PREMIER BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, it seems this is a day of champions in the House of Assembly today. Congratulations, Julia.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate another champion, and that's Team Gushue, on an exciting victory yesterday.

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

**PREMIER BALL:** All of Newfoundland and Labrador are beaming with pride today after Brad Gushue, Mark Nichols, Brett Gallant and

Geoff Walker raised the Brier Tankard for the third time in four years.

The final draw yesterday in Kingston, Ontario, was a thrill to watch as Brad and his team threw shot after spectacular shot and showed everyone how it's done.

Mr. Speaker, not only are Team Gushue the 2020 Canadian Men's Curling Champions, they will also wear the proud Maple Leaf as they represent Canada at the World Men's Curling Championships in Scotland later this month.

Brad Gushue holds the record for winning the most games of any skip at the Brier and his team is only the fifth in Brier history to win the Canadian Men's Curling Championship three times.

I'm sure I speak for all of us when I say that the team is an inspiration to all young athletes and has shown us all what it means to stand proud on the world stage as ambassadors for our beautiful province.

On behalf of all Members of this hon. House and all the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, I congratulate them on their tremendous success and we wish them all the best at the world championships.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** I thank the Premier for an advance copy of his statement.

We, in the Official Opposition, would also like to offer our congratulations to Team Gushue on its third Brier championship. I know that many people across the province and the country were following the team's progress last week and were tuned in last night to watch Team Gushue raise the Brier Tankard. It was a proud moment for the family, friends and fans of the team and it was a proud moment for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. To win a Brier championship is a difficult and impressive feat; to win three Briers in four years is incredible.

Mr. Speaker, the members of Team Gushue have proven themselves to be among the sport's absolute finest and we wish them every success at the World Men's Curling Championship later this month. I am certain they will continue to be wonderful representatives for Canada and for Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

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

I thank the Premier for an advance copy of his statement.

Three times in four years, wow, that's some great curling. We all congratulate the mighty Team Gushue in their latest triumph. My hometown hero is Mark Nichols. I grew up watching him play and rise through the ranks, victory after victory.

Labrador West is very proud, not only of Team Gushue's latest victory but for the role of our hometown hero Mark Nichols. I can't wait for their next big win in Scotland.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

**MR. WARR:** I, too, Mr. Speaker, want to join the Premier in congratulating you, Julia, especially on Education Week. It's nice to have you here.

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

**MR. WARR:** Mr. Speaker, today I was pleased to join members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association to proclaim March 8-14 as Education Week in Newfoundland and Labrador.

This year's theme is "20/20 Vision," which encourages teachers to inspire and transform purpose into action. For students, it conveys a time to plan, learn and envision all that they can be.

Our vision for the education system is reflected in the Education Action Plan, through which we are focused on building teaching resources and ensuring students have the supports they need. Mr. Speaker, in total, 350 new teaching resources will be fully implemented by this coming September.

And to date, 65 per cent of the actions of the plan are already completed or substantially underway.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the many dedicated teachers, staff and volunteers in our schools who go above and beyond to inspire our students to do their very best.

I encourage everyone to take part in the many activities happening this week, and I ask all hon. Members to join me in celebrating Education Week.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I would like to thank the hon. minister for an advance of his statement. All my colleagues on this side of the House join the minister in recognizing Education Week in Newfoundland and Labrador. As a former teacher and principal, myself, I know first-hand the tremendous efforts our teachers put into the classroom in shaping and nurturing the growth of students socially, emotionally and academically.

I will note that this year's theme 20/20 Vision will, hopefully, lead the minister to finally take a closer look at the teacher allocation formula, which has not been reviewed in over a decade. We hear daily, stories of the struggles with larger class sizes and the lack of appropriate

student supports and suitable resources for our schools.

Mr. Speaker, last year during Estimates Committee, the minister committed to doing a review of the teacher allocation formula. Now is the time for the minister to review – class size does matter.

Thank you, again, Mr. Speaker, and best wishes to everyone for a successful Education Week.

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

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement and I join him in recognizing Education Week and the important work of teacher, staff and volunteers.

Whatever technological changes or action plans teachers experience, at the heart of our profession at its core is the student. The most valuable resource for a teacher is time – time to provide individual attention to students and to meet their individual needs.

Allocations that reflect the size and composition of classes is essential in providing that time. We need a teacher allocation review to ensure that the necessary human resources are there for our students.

Thank you.

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

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

The hon. Minister of Natural Resources.

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

Yesterday was International Women's Day; a time to celebrate the many achievements that women make each and every day, and, of course, today we're celebrating Julia Evans.

This year's theme, #EachforEqual, called on us all to reflect how we will forge a gender-equal world.

Our government remains strongly committed to advancing the status of women and girls in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We'll continue our collaborative approach to violence prevention, improving the economic and social well-being of women and girls through our women's leadership initiatives and strengthening gender-based analysis across all work of government.

We applaud the efforts of women's equality-seeking and anti-violence organizations who work to advance equality for women and girls in our province. We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with them.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to have designated days such as International Women's Day to focus attention on issues of importance, but women's equality is not a topic for just one day a year. I ask all hon. Members to take the time each day to celebrate women's achievements and accomplishments, raise awareness against biases and take action for equality.

Thank you.

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

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

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I would like to wish all women and girls a very happy International Women's Day. I encourage everyone to continue the fight for true equality within our province, country and world.

In celebration of International Women's Day, there are many events being held this week. I ask all Members of this House to support these initiatives.

This past weekend, I attended an International Women's Day event in my own district in the Town of North River, attended by over 200 individuals. I would like to thank all organizers

and volunteers for their dedication to gender equality.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to see far too much gender-based violence in our communities. It is simply unacceptable that many women continue to live in fear day to day. Women deserve full equality. We have to achieve equal work for equal pay and advocate every day for full equality amongst all genders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

The #EachforEqual theme is commendable as we have equity work to do in this province. Equal pay for work of equal value is a crucial goal. Other provinces are introducing it, and it is time for us as well, too.

Equal access to employment through affordable child care is another key goal in gender equality, and I look forward to gender equity when the MeToo movement will be a thing of the past.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Mr. Speaker, in 2015 – and this is a question for the Minister of Finance – the Liberal government campaigned on the slogan: Oil is not a policy. Panic is not a plan.

With nearly 20 per cent of provincial revenue coming from oil royalties and the price of oil falling by almost a half from what was budgeted, what is the plan?

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

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

Just for clarification, we are about 13 per cent reliant for our revenues on oil royalties in the budget of 2019-20. It's dropped considerably from – in 2015, it was probably closer to what the Member mentioned.

It is obviously very concerning to see oil drop the way it has. I've often used the analogy in the media, I didn't pop the champagne corks when we saw a huge spike in oil. While this is very concerning, we obviously need time to analyze it. We've spoken with the folks that provide oil price projections; they haven't yet changed those projections, Mr. Speaker. They will if this turns out to be a trend as opposed to a blip in oil prices, but we'll continue to monitor.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Mr. Speaker, on the expenditure side, the government has had five years to get spending under control and every indicator says they have failed.

Is this what the minister calls a plan?

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

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

As a government in 2016, when we outlined our plan to return to surplus there were some unknowns, Mr. Speaker. What was unknown was the fact that we'd actually have to borrow \$3 billion to fund the project that was sanctioned by the opposite side when they were government – the fact that we're paying \$100 million in interest on that borrowing annually.

There are a couple of other unknowns, Mr. Speaker, in terms of our return to surplus plan. Our bond rating agencies have very clearly articulated that over the past four years we've met targets, and, in fact, in most cases we've exceeded targets in our return to surplus plan. This year, Mr. Speaker, and with the price of oil as it is now, this is a global crisis. It's not something we created, but we will deal with it.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister needs to pay more attention to what his own Auditor General says about the return to balance plan.

The result of five years with no plan is that the province is in a worse position to weather oil price shocks.

Would the minister please table immediately, all updated information and briefing notes on the impact of the oil price shock which have been given to him over the last week?

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, we'd be happy to provide – I believe there was one briefing note done on this. We've had meetings. We did reach out to the Member opposite to meet with him later this afternoon, as we did the Leader of the Third Party. I haven't yet had a chance to speak to the Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Speaker, this is a global crisis. It is something that every nation in the world is dealing with.

I will address a comment made in the preamble, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the Auditor General said that the return to surplus plan is ambitious; it's in jeopardy.

The other side of the Legislature refuses to acknowledge the position that this government found the province in when we accepted government, Mr. Speaker – when we were elected in December of 2015. We are dealing

with it. We didn't get into the situation overnight; we won't get out of it overnight.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Mr. Speaker, the minister says that every \$1 drop in the price of oil costs the province \$20 million in annual revenues. With an approximately \$35 drop from the budgeted price, this is a potential \$700 million loss for the year.

Has the minister consulted with the province's banking syndicate to assess the availability of emergency borrowing?

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, the Member pointed out that a \$1 drop in the price of a barrel of oil is equivalent to \$20. What he didn't say is that is on a 365-day average.

The spiral started to happen with oil prices with the coronavirus, Mr. Speaker. Then we saw Russia pull out of a deal with the Saudis. We also saw OPEC make changes on Friday and over the weekend, which has caused the downward spiral in oil prices.

We don't know if this is going to change and they're going to change policies or change what they're doing next week or next month. The value of a dollar on – of being \$20 million on a barrel of oil, Mr. Speaker, is based on 365 days.

It is a concern. We are obviously very concerned with what's happening, Mr. Speaker. We're continuing to analyze.

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

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

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Mr. Speaker, last week, I think, the Minister of Finance had a conference call with his federal counterpart and provincial counterparts to talk about the financial impacts of the coronavirus.



I'm wondering if the minister can provide us any details on those talks and what, if any, commitments have been made.

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

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

Yes, we did have a call with Minister Morneau, Mr. Speaker. The basic concept of that call was the coronavirus, the impacts on each jurisdiction. I clearly articulated that commodity prices are having an effect on our finances in this province; in particular, oil, but even fish shipments to China.

We sell about \$800 million worth of product to China annually; we import about \$40 million. One of the few jurisdictions probably globally where we export far more than we actually import from China.

Mr. Speaker, those were the concerns that I raised. The federal government is looking at the concerns of all provinces and will address it in the upcoming budget, maybe before.

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

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

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier committed to deliver compensation for those affected by income losses during January's state of emergency. More than seven full weeks have passed and bills are due. People are looking for details about the financial relief that may be coming as promised.

I ask the Premier: What, if any, assistance will be available to minimum wage earners, shift workers, small businesses and others hard hit by the income loss caused by the state of emergency?

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

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

A very good question. I thank the hon. Member for the question.

One of the things that we've done is the minister responsible for Advanced Education, Skills and Labour has reached out to his counterparts, both ministers in the federal Cabinet. We're awaiting a response back from his letter requesting some support for those individuals.

One of the things we've done in my portfolio, which is Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, is about reaching out to businesses offering them opportunities to expand, get into the marketplace, as the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board did bring up just a second ago about the expansion of investment in other jurisdictions from an international standpoint. So those are some of the things that we can offer for businesses as an opportunity to expand with respect to regional economic development.

I think I ran out of time, Mr. Speaker, sorry.

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

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

**MR. WAKEHAM:** That all sounds great, Mr. Speaker, but I guess to quote Jerry Maguire: The people of this province would like the minister and the government to show me the money. These people are suffering.

Last week, the Minister of Finance tabled the Interim Supply bill. He's asking this House to approve six months of spending without the due diligence of a budget process. However, we now see the potential for significant declines in our provincial revenues.

I ask the minister: In light of the unprecedented economic issues developing, will he amend the Interim Supply bill to three months?

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I will amend the Supply bill to three months if the opposite side will guarantee us that they're not going to try to bring the budget down and put us to an early election.

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

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

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is playing politics with the province's finances. What we are interested in is a three-month Supply bill and a budget. We are in a volatile, uncertain and uncharted situation, and, yes, it maybe beyond the government's control, but the government must take responsibility and action to deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, I ask again – the Interim Supply bill requested by the minister is based on a steady-state spending; the request is obviously overshadowed by the last 48 hours. It is irresponsible to spend based on previous revenue projection without a full budget brought into this House. Will the minister amend the Interim Supply request?

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, we fully intend to bring a budget forward in this Legislature. The opposite side were talking coalition; they were talking about bringing the budget down. In fact, there were two Members opposite who spoke to our Members in the hallways saying that we won't be governing for much longer, prior to recessing for Christmas. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that it is not us who are playing politics; it's the opposite side.

If we only brought in a three-month Supply bill, Mr. Speaker, and they voted the budget down, we'd have public servants in this province that would not be paid. We'd have hospitals that would not be able to operate. We'd have classrooms that would not be able to open. I think it's reasonable to provide that certainty to the people of the province.

If they want to provide certainty that they're not going to vote the budget down, I would be glad to change it to a three-month Supply bill.

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

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

**MR. PARDY:** Mr. Speaker, on the heels of the decision by the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District to cancel two international student trips as a result of the coronavirus, questions are being asked about the preparedness of our schools to deal with the virus. With the heightened awareness, we are getting reports questioning the schools' readiness.

Can the minister update the House on specific plans to prepare Newfoundland and Labrador schools for the coronavirus?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

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

The Member brings up a very serious situation that we have ongoing throughout the world. The Member alluded to students who travel abroad and they participate in various tours. He's correct in his statement that the district has gone out and cancelled tours, Mr. Speaker, in northern Italy where a ban has been on any travel to that particular area. This is a rapidly evolving situation and we are monitoring it closely, along with both the English and francophone school districts.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. PARDY:** Mr. Speaker, we have been contacted by a number of parents of Holy Trinity High School in Torbay with concerns over an upcoming 10-day European EF trip from Juno to Vimy. Parents and administration have expressed unanimous support that the trip should be cancelled, but the district has responded to wait and see the response of the travel company.

This has placed parents who have rightfully erred on the side of caution with respect to the children's health and safety – it left them on the hook for significant cost because insurance won't reimburse unless the trip is officially cancelled.

Will the minister be proactive by cancelling all international trips for students for the remainder of the school year?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

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

I'm not sure if the last suggestion by the Member that in order for parents to receive insurance, that we would have to go out and actively pursue cancelling those trips. I don't know if that's actually correct, Mr. Speaker, but I am aware of the email that the hon. Member brought up with regard to Holy Trinity.

We're having ongoing discussions with this district and working closely with Public Health to ensure the safety of the students and the teachers. Staff who are going on these trips, Mr. Speaker, are of an utmost concern to our department and certainly to the district, and we will be working in close consultation with Public Health as this moves forward.

Thank you.

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

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

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

That is indeed correct that the trip must be cancelled by either the government or the school district in order for full reimbursement to occur to the parents who have invested in such trips.

Back to my initial question when we talked about the readiness of schools, Mr. Speaker. One of the specific plans would be proper hygiene practices, including enhanced cleaning of high-touch surfaces in schools such as handrails and doorknobs, being a key component to fight off the virus.

Will the minister conduct an immediate review to ensure school districts have the necessary procedures and plans now in place, rather than waiting until we have to react?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

**MR. WARR:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the Member missed that, but I certainly did mention the fact that the school district is working with provincial health officials on information to send out to all the schools to make sure that students and staff properly have the right information to be able to deal with this on a daily basis.

Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to send out information as it becomes available, and we will continue to monitor the situation, both in schools and in the daycare centres as well. We will continue to deal with Public Health and we are working with the chief medical officer of health, Dr. Janice Fitzgerald, on the situation as well.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, MNL was recently caught off guard by a new rule from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment that municipalities on a long-term boil-water advisory will get no money from government for any work until they fix their drinking water problems.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Why wasn't an organization as important as MNL consulted about this decision first?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

**MR. BRAGG:** Mr. Speaker, it's too bad I only have a few seconds to answer this question, because boil-water advisories are very important to us in this province and should be important to every Member of this House. Safe, clean drinking water under the United Nations, 2003, has been known as being an international fact of what people are entitled to.

To have safe, clean drinking water comes with a price. To have municipalities ignore that to apply for money for pavement, for new buildings and not address the situation of doing the work in the pumphouse where it's really needed – these are not Cadillac systems, Mr. Speaker, that need to be repaired; these are basic systems for \$100,000 or less. We have the money; we have the funding. You guys in this House all know. We just went through a round of funding. We have a pile of funding available.

We met with the president of MNL this morning, Mr. Speaker. I would hope the Member would ask me another question because I would love to tell him more about how the meeting went this morning.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. TIBBS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and trust me, these people are well aware of how important clean drinking water is, seeing how they don't have it.

MNL has said that this new rule will impact rural communities who are already struggling to deal with a host of issues and with residents already feeling overtaxed.

I remind the minister, there is only one taxpayer. How does he expect municipalities, especially the rural communities, to address their important issues without government support and funding?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

**MR. BRAGG:** I am a little anxious, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I grew up in a municipality with less than 300 people. For 30 years, I operated a water system. I prided myself on keeping off a boil-water advisory. It was an embarrassment to our town when we had a boil-water advisory.

We are tackling the issue that 144 municipalities in this province are on long-term boil-water

advisories and have not addressed those concerns, Mr. Speaker. Safe, clean drinking water is the way to go. It's the way it has been; it's the way it continues to be. We will make it a priority to fund these programs, to work with these municipalities, to help these municipalities.

MNL were caught a little off guard. They didn't even ask us when we made the announcement. It was from an interview from CBC. I stand behind that and I would expect everyone in this House and this province to stand behind me. Mr. Speaker, I met with two other municipalities this morning who supported me 100 per cent.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. minister's time is expired.

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

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

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

The fact of not having money for clean drinking water is shameful, not embarrassing.

Mr. Speaker, the minister is a former municipal administrator himself from a small, rural community. He should understand that many of these towns don't have the infrastructure and even for those that do, the financial burden is a challenge for municipalities with a small tax base.

Does the minister believe holding municipalities hostage with this new rule a realistic approach to address the boil-water advisory issue in the province, or is it not?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

**MR. BRAGG:** Mr. Speaker, I have to ask: Is the hon. Member opposite supporting continuation of boil-water advisories?

This came from a round-table discussion of years ago with MNL. In 2015 there was a report put to the table, tabled by MNL. I was a part of that report as being president of PMA at the time, so nobody can tell me more about the

small water systems in this province than I know myself. I live it. I've been there. I know 99 per cent of municipal operators and clerks in this province. I know the challenge.

If the Member opposite is saying we ignore this and continue the boil-water advisory, I would say the Member opposite would stand alone on that, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the Kelligrews Medical Clinic has been in operation for decades, upwards of 50 years, and provides a vital service to residents of CBS and surrounding areas. Now it's shutting its doors, leaving the local area without critical family doctors.

The president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association has said that we are already woefully short on family doctors. When we see these comments from the NLMA and lack of family doctors in districts like mine, how can the government claim the family doctor shortage is improving?

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

**MR. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I doubt 45 seconds will be sufficient.

Kelligrews clinic is relocating. Three of the practitioners are literally moving down the street because of issues with the lease and their landlord. One of them is retiring; the other two are contemplating where they will relocate.

We will keep an eye on the situation, Mr. Speaker. If there is a shortage of access in that area, Eastern Health will work to address it.

The issue of family physicians in this province, Mr. Speaker, and primary care is one of access, not numbers. We have, again, increased year on year, from figures from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the number of family

physicians in this province and the number of physicians globally with licences. We have never been as blessed.

This issue is about access. We are restructuring primary care across this province through the use of primary health care teams. There are 12 out there at the moment. We're examining nurse practitioners; we're looking at virtual care. There is a list.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. Member's time has expired.

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

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

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

I guess the hundred-thousand people without a family doctor, that's not an issue. So removing the Kelligrews issue, we still have a hundred-thousand people without a family doctor.

I'm aware that's lease issues. I've always publicly stated that. The problem we have is seniors; people with no transportation live in CBS. People have to realize CBS is not Mount Pearl. We have no public transit. Some doctors went to the east end and west end, Airport Heights and St. John's. There are some who actually moved to St. John's. I do know that.

That's the problem, that's the issue: access to service. You're absolutely right, Minister. It's an important issue in my district and throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association have revealed that over one-third available family medicine residency positions in this province remain vacant, all of which are outside the Eastern region.

I ask the minister: What is the contingency plan to ensure we are training the next generation of family doctors in our province?

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

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

The process by which graduates are assigned or allocated to residency programs is a national one, called the Canadian Resident Matching Service. What the Member opposite describes is a result of the first round of those.

Newfoundland and Labrador is in a similar situation to pretty well every other jurisdiction across Canada. This year has seen a dip in the number matched on the first round. There is, however, a second round which offers the opportunity, for example, for Canadians training abroad to enter and compete for residency positions.

We're keeping an eye on it, Mr. Speaker. I met with the dean of the medical school two weeks ago to talk about admissions. This is a priority for us. We do pretty well, as a province, in retaining those people who we do graduate from our family medicine program, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. FORSEY:** Mr. Speaker, the residents of Exploits are still outraged by the 24-hour emergency service cut to the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Centre.

When will the minister listen to their concerns and reinstate the 24-hour emergency service at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Centre?

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

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

As the Member opposite may recall, the decision to alter the hours of the emergency service in Botwood were made around utilization. The Member opposite is also aware that we're investing \$20 million in a new protective care unit wing at the Hugh Twomey centre.

When, at the end of that, the staffing is completed, an assessment will again be made to see if the decision was appropriate and valid. If the workload has changed, we will change.

The final feature is that each of the regional health authorities now is working towards having an advanced care paramedic on every front-line rig. That means that treatment will begin in someone's home or wherever the ambulance is called to, not waiting the arrival at any particular facility, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Exploits, for a quick question and a quick answer.

**MR. FORSEY:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier promised this in the 2019 election. The 2020-2021 budget is coming around now. Mr. Speaker, the people of Exploits want to know if this is going to be in this budget or is the Premier going to leave with an unbroken promise.

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

**PREMIER BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The commitment that we made to the people in Botwood was to actually put in place a new protective care unit, which is exactly what they asked for. Part of that commitment that was made in the 2019 election was about completion of that. The Member knows that, Mr. Speaker. He is playing politics with a huge investment in his own community.

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

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

**MS. COFFIN:** Mr. Speaker, International Women's Day celebrates women, while shining a light on the hardships they face. Domestic violence, human trafficking, income and inequality, unregulated sex work and precarious employment are on the rise, to name a few. Having Canada's own stand-alone minister

responsible for the status of women does not seem to have made a difference.

I ask the Premier: While he is still in charge, will he commit to tangible action to improve women's lives by increasing core funding for women's organizations?

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

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

I listened intently to the Member opposite. There still is a long way for women to go to have true equality in this world; it's sad to hear.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, much has advanced under the leadership of the Premier, especially setting up a stand-alone Status of Women I think is a really important move forward.

I will advise the Member opposite that we've made amendments to the *Family Violence Protection Act* to expand the definition of violence. We've made amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act* to better serve victims of violence. We made changes to the Schools Act to allow for the provision for an alternate way of learning. We made changes to the *Labour Standards Act*, Mr. Speaker, to allow people who are experiencing family violence to have leave.

We've been introducing new changes and amendments to legislation. Is there more to be done? Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The minister's time has expired.

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

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

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

Yet, core funding has not increased.

Mr. Speaker, many women-serving organizations receive multi-year core funding. The Safe Harbour Outreach program helps

women who are most vulnerable and who face unsafe working conditions.

I ask the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, or whoever else is in charge, when will the Safe Harbour Outreach program be treated with the same respect as other women-serving organizations and be granted multi-year core funding?

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

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

As a former minister responsible for the Status of Women, I can say that we have increased funding for organizations that provide service to women. Mr. Speaker, it was very important, even during very difficult financial times for this province, we saw and implemented changes to ensure that they had a little bit of additional money; plus, we also opened NorPen Status of Women in the last year. Even in difficult financial times, Mr. Speaker, this government has been committed to ensuring the services for women are there.

With regard to her question, this government has been working hard to have core funding for a number of organizations, I'm sure this one is under consideration as well.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Most teenage girls involved in sex work experience trauma at an early age and had inadequate mental health supports in school and they often struggle with addiction. School counsellors and educational psychologists are essential in responding to the mental health needs of students, but the allocation of these mental health professionals is woefully inadequate.

I ask the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development: Will he ensure that

schools have the counsellors and educational psychologists they need to stop the cycle of trauma and abuse?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

**MR. WARR:** Mr. Speaker, the Member brings up a very good question and, certainly, it's all part of the *Education Action Plan* that we launched in 2018. We've been adding teacher resources ever since: a new reading specialist and new positions called teacher and learning assistants. We will continue to increase our learning resource teachers.

In September of 2020, it will be the final year of the full implementation of this *Education Action Plan*, Mr. Speaker. We will be doing a review of class sizes and other things that we should be looking at, at that particular time.

Thank you.

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

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

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

After several deaths of Labrador Indigenous women who were forced to sleep outside, what is the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women doing to protect homeless women in Labrador?

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

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member for the very, very important question.

We've been working, Mr. Speaker, certainly since I went in the department, with the Out of the Cold Shelter in Goose Bay and working with a large community group of concerned individuals in that community.

We recognized initially, Mr. Speaker, we were doing year-to-year funding for the Out of the Cold and I recently committed, while I was at Combined Councils actually, that they won't

have to worry about that because we're funding that again. We're doing everything we can to support, recognizing that it's a very complex broader community. We need to work with partners.

We've recently set up an interdepartmental working group, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to have important dialogue with Happy Valley-Goose Bay and, provincially, to talk about this important topic.

Thank you.

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

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

#### Tabling of Documents

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

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

In response to a point of order raised by the Minister of Natural Resources last week in response to a Ministerial Statement, I think the minister was misquoted in the media. I think the point of order came from me misquoting the media about your own misquote.

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

**MS. COFFIN:** So I'm tabling the media.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** I'm not sure if the rules allow for individual Members to table documents.

By leave we can table the document.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** By leave.

**MR. SPEAKER:** There seems to be leave.



Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

**Notices of Motion**

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

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, and I quote: I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Forestry Act. (Bill 28)

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

The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice to introduce a private Member's resolution.

To move the following private Member's resolution:

WHEREAS a province facing the fiscal and economic challenges that Newfoundland and Labrador is now facing must show leadership by producing a solid, fiscal and economic plan for the 2020-21 fiscal year without delay; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador is experiencing significant population decline through out-migration with Statistics Canada reporting the net loss of an estimated 1,430 people in 2017, 2,733 people in 2018 and 4,501 people in 2019; and

WHEREAS Statistics Canada projected last fall that Newfoundland and Labrador is on track to lose 65,000 people or 12.4 per cent of its population within the next 25 years under a medium growth scenario if urgent, corrective action is not taken; and

WHEREAS the government stated in its 2019 budget that it remains on a multi-year plan to return to a sustainable surplus in '22-'23, although the details of this plan have not been publicly disclosed; and

WHEREAS the democratic principles of accountability and transparency demand that

expenditures be subject to scrutiny of the usual budget process;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that this hon. House urge the government to deliver the 2020 budget at the usual time in the spring prior to a general election.

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

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

I give notice that the PMR presented by the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port will be the PMR that will be debated this Wednesday.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill, entitled, An Act To Amend The Personal Property Security Act, Bill 27.

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

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

**Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given**

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

**MR. BRAGG:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to provide information to the Member for St. John's Centre who, in Question Period Thursday, asked about the amount spent in legal fees and other resources to fight court cases related to environmental assessments of aquaculture projects.

I can report to the House of Assembly that these matters were handled by solicitors employed by the Department of Justice and Public Safety. External lawyers were not retained. Costs awarded by the court to the successful applicants have not yet been finalized.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further answers to questions for which notice has been given?

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

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

WHEREAS there are many person who are unable to better themselves and are unable to avail of government funding under the Skills Development Program; and

WHEREAS there is a lack of flexibility to deliver programs because a circumstance does not meet government policies, therefore falling through the cracks;

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to look at the Skills Development Program to recognize that these programs can be restrictive and, as a result, outcomes are limited. Policies should be developed and applied to ensure there are mechanisms to address specific and unique situations. There should be a greater level of flexibility to accommodate a wider range of people seeking assistance.

Mr. Speaker, this has been a long, long, ongoing issue with programming – not just unique to Newfoundland and Labrador, any federal program for that matter. And it's designed to meet a specific clientele. However, there are people that fit every bill except for the last tick box, and they're falling through the cracks. These are people that want to get out of a rut; want to be contributing, effective members of society; and because of a policy are restricted from doing so.

A minister in the past once said to me: Policy should never override common sense. I believe that to be true. When you see individuals that come in, our front-line staff can determine that an individual may not meet all the policy, but it

is a good individual to invest in. Most people that come in want a hand up rather than a handout.

In the past I've spoke with the past minister responsible for Advanced Education and Skills. We've had some good conversations. We've been able to assist some individuals, but I think we need to take a closer look at some of these individuals that come in to look for funding. We need some kind of an appeal mechanism that lets us look more closely at their situation because there are individuals who if they got that little hand up, they would be valuable, contributing members to society, and that's what they want.

Most individuals out there do not want to be on assistance all the time. They do not want to have that handout; they want a hand up and they want to make sure that they can be someone and have the dignity and respect to carry on and be a part of our society and our economy.

I ask the Members responsible to have a closer look at this. Take a close look at individuals who come in and are turned down initially because of policy but they may also have the opportunity, if we take a second look, to be successful.

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

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

I'd just like to take the opportunity to respond to my hon. colleague from across the House. We did have great meetings and I do share some of his concern about making sure we reduce the barriers, make sure we give people the hand up they require, not a handout. We've done that. Three years ago, the federal government came in with over a \$900-million investment over the next six years, at that point. That's going to be well utilized in our province.

We've seen great success in helping transition people to find gainful employment, meaningful employment that's going to be beneficial to them and their families. One of the things I do share his concern with is we want to make sure those programs have that little flexibility that allows us to help individuals each and every

opportunity we can. Not every individual is exactly the same. We understand that and we agree. That's why we're trying to expand that, working with our federal colleagues on lots of files across this government, to find that flexibility to support our made-in-Newfoundland approach on a lot of different areas.

I'd just like to say thank you for the petition. It's a great opportunity for us to work together on these files. We have in the past and we will continue to do so. Where we see opportunities to succeed, we will work as fast as we can to move those initiatives forward, and get those successes that the hon. Member from across the aisle brought up in the beginning of his remarks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

On December 7, 2019, the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District, NLESD, gave notice of a school closure, stating that the final decision would be made on March 28, 2020.

Residents have expressed concerns about the potential closure of Pearce Junior High in Burin. As a result of the projected growth, this is a premature decision to close the school that could have the region without capacity to serve the educational needs of the people.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland to ensure that Pearce Junior High School is to remain open.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is very important, obviously; it comes in Education Week. A couple of things that I'd like to bring to the attention of it is that while this is an autonomous board, I think that the reporting of how they come to the numbers that they come to is flawed in their formulation. I've been told that there are different formulas for different grades, so it's hard to know if the information that's being produced by the NLESD is actually legitimate.

I would think that with the region of this district, it's actually over two districts and the economy is burgeoning. It's probably the only place in the whole province that has a burgeoning economy at this time, but we really don't understand the numbers that have been produced and given to us. We've produced a number of questions to be answered that weren't answered before the public consultation, or we would have probably had some different questions at that time.

On behalf of these people and the students, the parents, grandparents, educators, I would like to present this petition to the House and let the Minister of Education know that – and we have had some consultations on this very topic – there needs to be some other legislation around the autonomy of these boards, just for the simple fact that maybe they're too autonomous and they need to answer to a higher power.

With that being said, I'm going to take my seat, Mr. Speaker. Today, being March 9, I'd like to send a shout-out to my dad, actually. It's his birthday today.

Thank you very much.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development with a response to the petition.

**MR. WARR:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member across the way for his petition.

He is correct, Mr. Speaker, we had a conversation maybe a week or so ago, and he brought his concerns – and I respect that, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member brought his concerns with respect to the people who are in his district or in his hometown. He brings up a good point. It is the elected board who has the authority under the legislation for organizing the schools and services, not government.

Having said that, I realize that schools are important to communities. Regardless of what community you're in, schools are a focal point. The Member did bring his concerns to me.

My understanding from the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District is they had some very good meetings in Marystown whereby the hall was full and the community came out and spoke loudly and clearly and I'm sure they will take all those concerns as part of the consultations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I present this petition and have a few comments.

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

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

I say to the Minister of Transportation and Works, this is working very good, but I spoke to a shop steward just the other day and the same company who had the mechanical for the long-term care has the contract for the hospital. A lot of times they were bringing people in through the back door from outside the province. They were bringing them in and after the union was raising some of the issues, they turned them around, brought them in and got them to do other work.

I just want to highlight that to the minister. I know there are a lot of local people working and did work on the long-term care, and thanks to the people of the whole Western region and the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador that

supported me in presenting the petitions to ensure this.

Also, now that the hospital is going to start – it's three or four years – I just ask the minister to be vigilant. I know the commitment has been made and I know there have been a lot of people who did the groundwork and did the concrete work at the hospital, so I have to recognize that.

I know there are a lot of great ironworkers and union, non-union people in the Cormack area. So I don't know if there's any way to work out something with the union at the same cost, because they are great experienced ironworkers. If they're local people, that's all we can ask for, and to ensure that the project is done on cost and on time.

I recognize the work that has been done, but I just ask the minister, on behalf of the residents that have brought this to my attention, to ask his staff to be vigilant to ensure that wherever there's a possibility to have local people hired to do the work, proper skilled tradespeople or labourers, or other people who can do the work in the area, that wherever possible they hire local people. I know there was a lot of work done on that and I know there was a job fair. The job fair went well and a lot of people have applied.

Coming up now there's going to be a lot of extra work with the hospital in Corner Brook, and I ask the minister to be vigilant on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works with a response to the petition.

**MR. CROCKER:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the petition.

Mr. Speaker, I'll send a thank you to the hon. Member. He was one of the first people to start bringing this up here in this House last year. Subsequently, groups like Trades NL have also picked up on holding our department's feet to the fire on this. Through the efforts, now what you see is as a department we do a monthly monitoring of all the projects in the province to

make sure that we are getting as much work as possible for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, we anticipate strong employment in the new, acute care facility in Corner Brook, and we will certainly watch and monitor that on a monthly basis to make sure that's exactly what's happening. It's important that we do monitor that.

We will continue to work with Trades NL and other groups like the Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Association to make sure that it's not only our workers, but our companies that are doing this work, because if it's Newfoundland and Labrador companies doing the work, it would be Newfoundland and Labrador workers doing those jobs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. FORSEY:** Mr. Speaker, the residents of Exploits District have a great concern from the result of the 24-hour emergency service cut at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Care Centre. All the residents feel that the 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. service does not adequately and efficiently address the emergency requirements of the district affecting both patients and residents to receive adequate care when needed.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to restore the 24-hour emergency service at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Care Centre immediately.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Like it was promised.

**MR. FORSEY:** Like it was promised.

Mr. Speaker, this is still an ongoing issue. They closed it in the 2016 budget. It's been an ongoing issue ever since.

The residents of the Exploits District really need the 24-hour emergency health care service. I'm hearing horror stories of people going there. Just this past Saturday night, actually, there was a

lady who took her husband to the emergency services in a storm, Mr. Speaker, from Botwood, with the hospital right there, and she had to leave and drive right to Grand Falls-Windsor in a storm. I think it was a kidney stone infection; that's what it was at the time. To leave Botwood – I know they say a 20-minute drive at the best of times, but not in a storm like it was on Saturday night, not with a hospital just probably one minute or two minutes away from their own door. I think it's ridiculous.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, the use of the 24-hour emergency service in October 2018 to October 2019, 7,833 people used the service from Botwood at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Care Centre. Another 4,620 at the same period used the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Care Centre. That's a total of 12,453 people in the Exploits District needing 24-hour emergency care in one year.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also hearing wait times at the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Care Centre has increased. People are waiting there eight, 10 hours because of the emergency service that's compiled in one area after the 8 p.m. service. This has to be alleviated and take the stress off the entire system.

I'm also hearing people going into Botwood at 5:30, 6 o'clock, being told to go on to Grand Falls-Windsor for the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Care because the lineups are getting long and they fear they won't be able to serve them by 8 p.m. Mr. Speaker, this is ridiculous. The stories keep going and going and going. I've heard stories of elderly people needing assistance after 8 o'clock. An 82-year-old person from Peterview had to go the Central Newfoundland Health Care Centre until the wee hours in the morning.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and we'll speak on this another time.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further petitions?

Orders of the Day

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Order 3, third reading of Bill 24.

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

**MS. COADY:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 24, An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act be now read a third time.

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

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

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

It's indeed an honour to stand and speak to Bill 24, An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act. It's been nearly two years since the first heavy debate regarding this particular issue came to the forefront, where we would put together some particular type of structure that would address the issues around accountability and integrity in the administration of the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, it was on May 2 that the House debated a private Member's resolution that our caucus put forward at the time that talked about the particular issues. I'll just go through the resolution itself so people are familiar again about how this helped formulate the Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act, Bill 24, that we have put forward now in the House of Assembly, that we all will abide by once it's passed.

It was stated: "BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House support the introduction of a legislature-specific harassment policy, similar in principle to the policy in effect in the Nova Scotia

provincial legislature, where elected representatives and their staff are held responsible for inappropriate conduct;

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this hon. House, through the introduction of a legislature-specific harassment policy, recognize all forms of harassment including bullying, cyber-bullying and intimidation of all forms;

"AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this hon. House develop this legislature-specific harassment policy through the Privileges and Elections Committee of this House in consultation with all Members and employees of the House and with independent groups who have experience and expertise in handling harassment complaints."

Mr. Speaker, that was the process or the resolution that was put forward, and it was unanimously passed and assented to by all in the discussion in this House. There were no descendents to what was being proposed. It was an open discussion around best practices, how we could move that forward. There were discussions around interpretation. There were discussions around, in some cases, did it go far enough. That's why it was being proposed, that the legislation itself would have the mechanisms that would ensure that the principles of what the resolution was put forward to do and what the act itself would do, would be able to be adhered to. That's started the process to move forward.

The motion was assigned and then, in November 2018, the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections issued an interim report to the House of Assembly. So prior to getting to the report, the Committee themselves looked at other jurisdictions, looked at what kind of a process would be put in play, what the act itself would start to look like, the construction of it, the particular principles around how you would meet those needs itself and what would be the legislative responsibility as part of that.

That came into fruition when we came back in the House in November and there was a report. There was a great discussion in this House. The Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections also reported relevant jurisdictional research and there was a full, very comprehensive, nearly 600 pages of text that were gathered to justify the

approach being used here and to validate how we could best address this particular issue and have a process and a policy in play that would work for the betterment for people in the House of Assembly and employees related to our humble House here.

Mr. Speaker, then in April 2019 the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections issued the final report to the House of Assembly on developing a Legislature-Specific Harassment-Free Workplace Policy. Again, there was a very open and honest debate. There were discussions around the findings and the information that had been put forward by the Committee relevant to what the piece of legislation would look like. Then, it was put in play to move to the next level.

On December 2, 2019, the House concurred in the final report, which then opened up the ability for the House then to approve the Harassment-Free Workplace Policy applicable against complaints against MHAs, which is set out to be in effect this April 1, 2020.

So there's a fair bit of work that had been done by the Committee themselves, but particularly the support staff and the Officers of the House doing jurisdictional scans to ensure that our policy was reflective of our particular needs. While it could take into account how other legislatures do it, and other jurisdictions, it had to reflect the makeup of this House of Assembly and the philosophy and inherent understanding of what a harassment-free workplace would be all about, and keeping the integrity and accountability of the House of Assembly and all of those who serve in this House of ours.

By concurring, the House then approved several other recommendations including amendments to the act itself. Bill 24 included amendments to the act that were recommended by the Privileges and Elections Committee and are also concurred in the House of Assembly. These amendments must be passed prior to the new policy coming into effect April 1. That's what we're here to debate now, the final amendment to the act itself. We're in third reading now.

What that says for the people who may be listening here now: We've gone through an open debate. We've had some great discussion. To

this point, it's gotten through Committee, so any questions for clarification or any amendments that may have been wanted to be put forward have already been opened and debated. We have one or more opportunities to add to that during this final parcel of debate, but I personally, and I know us on this side are looking forward to getting the piece of legislation passed so that on April 1, there is no delay. That the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the employees who are relevant to the House of Assembly and directly connected to it and us, as MHAs, the elected officials, would know what our policies are; would know the parameters and would know our responsibilities; would also know the rights and privileges that we have when it comes to being in an environment that's conducive to us being able to do the job that people elected us to do.

Mr. Speaker, there are a few things that change here that are unique. They were contentious issues a number of years ago when this first debate started around harassment policies that were necessary, because we didn't have the right pieces of legislation to ensure the process would be fluent and that everybody would understand the steps to move forward. As you know, we spent a fair bit of time and a fair bit of our resources to get to this point. Again, it was a process that needs to now get to a point where we have something in play that everybody is comfortable with.

One of the things that have changed here was the end of special powers for the premier. One of the things the bill will do is to remove provisions of section 36 and 38 that currently permit a premier to commission a Code of Conduct review of a Member and have the results reported back to the premier but not to the House. There is no need for such a provision. It's needed to be removed and the bill will remove it.

So that now says there can't be one full authoritarian decision-maker in this process now, it will be back to the House. There's a process in play now that will ensure the fluent mechanism for reporting or debating and discussion and the mechanism to be used to address any particular issue that may be put forward.

That will leave three avenues for a Code of Conduct review can be initiated. A review can be triggered by a Member, by a Commissioner or by the House of Assembly by way of resolution. So now it's three clean opportunities, which means everybody in this House has the ability to move a motion forward to ensure that a Code of Conduct initiated review starts in that process.

With the amendment, any Member of the House of Assembly, including the Premier, the same as any other Member, will still have the ability to request an option for the Commissioner about another Member or in relation to the Code of Conduct. That will not change. So what we had in before, the process of being able to initiate it still stands, but it takes away from the Premier having sole input into referring one or having to report back to them.

This is gone, it's open and it's transparent. Everybody agreed to it in this House. We all feel it's a move forward and it's a move on the integrity of the House itself and openness.

So all reports will be issued by the Commissioner to the Management Commission. We all know the Management Commission is an all-party Committee that's made up to oversee the management of the House of Assembly, from financial issues to policy-related issues, to restitution or in any way shape – punishments, I should say, or clarification on policies within the House of Assembly for all the Members related to it.

The Privileges and Elections Committee was on the view that it is not necessary for the Premier to have the ability to initiate these reviews and now it will go back to a proper process. That's a step forward and will be very positive in what's trying to be achieved as we move this forward.

There are some other amendments that people should be aware of. I want to clarify this because this has been ongoing for over two years. People who were very intricately entrenched in watching this and seeing how it played out – and there are a number of service organizations that do great work to ensure there's integrity of any organization, but the policies around harassment are totally dealt with. It's about any other types of interference from an employee point of view.

They wanted to ensure that our legislation was reflective because they want to be able to use that, in some cases, as a template.

More importantly, from our perspective, we need to set the bar higher than what would normally be thought of. This piece of legislation does that. We came together to ensure that we had the pieces of legislation that had the proper amendments that would reflect the changing times but, more importantly, reflect what we learned in the issues that we faced in this House of Assembly for a period of time, Mr. Speaker.

That, to me, is a more important lesson because there was a lot of information gathered here, there were a lot of discussions going on. Not everybody agreed with the process. Some of the processes probably could have been done more efficiently, other things could have been done and there was an open debate. But we wanted to get into a mechanism now that ensures that everybody involved has the right and ability to protect themselves, regardless on what side of the accusation or the issue is, that that opportunity is there and that there's an open and transparent process that everybody can adhere to.

Just some of the things here; I just want to note some of the other amendments here so people would know this was substantive in what we changed here in this new piece of legislation. The Committee also recommended, and the House concurred in December, that we need an amendment to make it mandatory for Members to annually file a declaration with the Clerk reaffirming their commitment to follow the Code of Conduct. This will be as such, because at the end of the day, when you get elected and you're sworn in, there's a noted acknowledgement that the Code of Conduct that you will follow is accepted by you.

Now, three years later – 3½ years, depending on how long an election came – that may fall by the wayside. People may not remember exactly what it was they had agreed to, what the rules and regulations and what the responsibilities are on your conduct. So this being put in there would remind people, would reaffirm their commitment to ensure we have a safe environment, a good work environment here, harassment free, so that people can have open



debate but, at the same time, feel that there's no intimidation and no harassment.

So that was an added one there that I think just reaffirms where we are and reminds people we have a responsibility in this House – again, as I said earlier – to set the bar beyond what people would think would be the norm. Because we're the example of how our society reflects on dealing with individuals and individual circumstances.

The Committee also recommended, and the House concurred in December, that an amendment was needed regarding the confidentiality of the identity of the person requesting an opinion. We talked about the ability for people to be private, that people can make an inquiry as such and that there would be a mechanism there so they wouldn't feel further intimidated as part of the whole process.

The proposed amendment regarding confidentiality mirrors that existing in the whistleblower provisions as we have it. We wanted people to feel comfortable coming forward that they could make a statement, they could open up a discussion on a particular issue around harassment or bullying and that they didn't have to feel there would be more recourse from those who may be involved because of their identity until proper research is done or proper investigation is done to determine if there are any merits to the allegation being put forward.

Finally, the bill essentially separates the treatment of harassment from other aspects of the Code of Conduct. Because in a Code of Conduct it's about your behaviour, but it's about your disclosure it's about some of your financial gains, all these things that we have as part of the Code of Conduct. This one here would specifically break out harassment and would have a set of guidelines and processes and procedures that would be accepted and the followed norm for individuals who find themselves on one side or the other when it comes to an allegation, for example.

Just a couple of things I wanted to note. The original Code of Conduct flawed from the Green report. Those who may not know, Chief Justice Green, a number of years ago after the spending

scandal, sat down and looked at all the operational procedures in the House of Assembly to ensure that there were checks and balances and safeguards so that every MHA would know the parameters of what they were entitled to; but, more particularly, what wasn't acceptable in the norm of operations of an MHA. A lot of it was around the financial operations, but there were other things that were outlined at the time.

Again, because the emphasis was on the financial situation, the scandal at the time, more things moved forward on that. That became the – I can't say the most important thing of the day, but the most noted thing of the day. He did note, as part of what was happening there, there needed to be a proper Code of Conduct that included all aspects of behavioural operation in the House of Assembly – financial behaviours, disclosure behaviours.

These cases now, what we've since dealt with over the last number of years is around harassment and intimidation. This is not something new. It's new that we finally dealt with it, but it was something that was discussed over a decade ago as part of the issue. It's now taken on a life of its own and getting to fruition, where we'll have something that is workable across the board and acceptable by all Members of this House.

We talked about some of the things here, but to separate harassment – because it all just became part of the long list of Code of Conduct operational headings. To separate that, the bill produced new definitions related to a legislature-specific harassment-free workplace policy, because we had to come to a definition of harassment-free workplaces.

Again, sometimes there can be a fine line between harassing discussion and proper political bantering, because we're in a unique scenario here. We're in a unique stadium when it comes to the banter, the debate and the disagreements. Where is the line to harassment and harassment-free work? This was a process that had to be defined. My opinion, and the opinion of our caucus, we came to a happy definition that clearly could be defined and clearly understood by all engaged here of what

harassment-free would be for the betterment of everybody here.

The bill gives direction for separating harassment issues from the Code of Conduct issues so the appropriate investigation can proceed. A financial issue in a Code of Conduct is specifically done by those who have the skill set to do that. If it's an accounting issue, if it's two plus two is four, there's a specific intervention and an investigation into that. If it's around harassment or intimidation, then obviously there's a different skill set for someone to do an adequate investigation to ensure all information has been shared and that at the end of the day what has been transpired would give you the evidence to determine if there's validity to the allegation or if there's nothing to the allegation. That was the key thing there, to ensure you had the proper skill set and the understanding that it would be divided in a certain mechanism.

We talk about harassment investigations will be conducted by the Citizens' Representative. We had a major debate here when this whole process started about who or what entity would be the best to do the investigative processes on the allegations that were put forward. Mr. Speaker, you know, you were part of this House here, there was a lot of debate on what was the best process. We never really did come to an agreement at the time. We debated on this side versus the government side versus the Third Party and some of the independents. We had differing views of who should have or what mechanism should have been used as part of that. This will clarify exactly the mechanism, and now everybody will understand who will be engaged as part of that.

So the Citizens' Rep here, as an independent arm of the House of Assembly, would have the investigative skill set and the resource ability to take this, particularly, around issues relevant to harassment and intimidation, anything relevant to that. Other entities may take and deal with it. The Chief Electoral Officer could deal with some of the financial things or the Code of Conduct, operational issues that may fall within the realm of their interpretation of what the act itself says.

The bill also defines the role of the Privileges and Elections Committee and the options available to the Committee in recommending penalties and sanctions. There was a whole debate – and I have the privilege of sitting on the Privileges and Elections Committee, where we have some good, open dialogue about the roles and responsibilities and trying to ensure that we, as electors here, have an understanding of the impact it would have when, in any way, shape or form that you're putting penalties or sanctions in on a fellow Member.

We would know what it means from a financial point of view. We would know what it means from a reputation point of view. We would know what it means to the impact on this House of Assembly from the operational stuff, but also for the integrity of every Member in the House of Assembly. That Committee itself is there. There are policies now outlined in the bill that would give them certain specific powers or responsibilities to be able to assess those types of things.

The bill also includes provisions intended to respect the confidentiality of the complainant and witnesses to the extent that this is possible. At the end of the day, this is all ready to go so that we protect everybody involved as part of this whole process, Mr. Speaker.

Those were the additional amendments that were added to the act. I'm very happy to say that the act we have here and Bill 24 has taken us to a heightened level here of setting the bar high enough, that we're confident on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that this will address the particular issues that we have in play and that the integrity and the accountability of this House of Assembly will be second to none. We all have a responsibility to ensure we act in the appropriate manner.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to stand and speak for a few minutes on third reading on this amendment, on this bill.

Again, as I always do, I want to thank the people of Humber - Bay of Islands for their support. I'm privileged to be standing here on their behalf. As I said, I will bring all the issues forward that are brought to me by the people. They petitioned on the hospitals encouraging government and last week on the roads – asked some questions on the roads in the Humber - Bay of Islands area, so I'm privileged.

Today, I'm going to speak on this bill. I just heard the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island speak about it. I really feel that this Member is a sincere Member, he always was a sincere Member in the House of Assembly, but there are a few things there I just have to bring to his attention.

Mr. Speaker, the Code of Conduct, of course, came out of the Green report, and I was a part of the Green report. Also, there were no infractions there whatsoever in financials. In actual fact, I was the longest person – it went back to '99 up until the report was done. I think there was \$67 of some bible that was double billed. That was it. I'm very familiar with the Green report and I'm glad that the Member mentioned that, because I did partake in the debate in 2007 on the Green report.

He also mentioned that it's not just financial, that it's the operations of the House of Assembly. This is where I have issue with a lot of the act itself, Mr. Speaker, because when you make statements – and this is an example, I say to the Member for Conception Bay East and the Government House Leader, also, who was in to the meeting with Bruce Chaulk in 2017.

The Management Commission falls under the Green report. The duty of the Management Commission is to ensure that every Member is treated fairly in the House of Assembly. When there are statements in the Management Commission that you refuse to bring forth to the House of Assembly, you're not living up to the Green report. You're actually not living up to the – it's not only the spirit, but the intent to ensure that the House of Assembly is running smoothly and every Member's rights are within the realm of the House of Assembly.

When the Member for Conception Bay East – who wasn't at the meeting back in 2018; I have

to say that, but the Government House Leader was. When you have information that was brought into the Management Commission that's not brought to the House of Assembly, the Management Commission themselves, the one who's supposed to ensure that the Green report is brought to the House of Assembly, is not even following the act, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just give you a good example. I wrote you, Mr. Speaker, a little while back and gave you information about how the information that was brought in 2018 should have been brought to the House of Assembly. You wrote back and said: The Management Commission only accepts the report and brings it to the House of Assembly. That's not true. The Management Commission at the time accepted a technical briefing. Whatever was said in the technical briefing should be brought to the House of Assembly if there's false information.

The Minister of Justice, the Attorney General, give him credit; he has courage. He stood up and said what was said in the technical briefing was false. We have documentation. Guess what? It was never brought to the House of Assembly. How can you have confidence in the House of Assembly when the Management Commission, the same ones who are supposed to oversee the Green report for all Members, is not bringing information?

The letter you wrote me, Mr. Speaker – and I think you're sincere, I honestly do, and I think the Management Commission was sincere. You wrote me on December 15, you mentioned that we only just take the report and present it, which again is not true. There was a technical briefing at the time. Then you also said that we're sympathetic to your cause and we'll have staff of the House of Assembly contact you to find ways that you can bring this forward. Guess what? I have yet to be contacted, three months later – your letter, Mr. Speaker.

How can you have confidence in the Management Commission when you, as Speaker, writes me a letter, says I'm going to be in contact with staff of the House of Assembly to help bring this forward or push the case forward? I've never been contacted, three months – three months.

You have a letter now from the lawyer that's representing me, saying that you had a technical briefing. So whatever happened in that technical briefing, if you're going to follow the Green report and everybody here stand and when the Management Commission stands up on their horse and says we got to follow the Green report, you should follow it. That's your duty, Mr. Speaker.

Now, you weren't at the meeting either, Mr. Speaker, in 2018; I'll say that upfront. You weren't at the meeting. Mr. Speaker, you have information now that you should bring forth. Anytime that you don't bring the information forth, how can anybody have confidence in the House of Assembly? The Member for CBS, who I have a lot of faith in him because I've seen in this House on many times, in the Opposition, I have a lot of faith in him that he do speak his mind and he do speak with honesty; I have to say that.

He also said in the Green report, a lot of it was financial, but the other part was the management of the House, this whole House. How can we stand here with the Management Commission and have faith in the Management Commission when you know, Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader knows, the Attorney General and the Minister of Justice went out publicly and said there's false information, but it can't get brought to the House of Assembly? Yet you're sworn to the Green report and, in my opinion, when you don't bring information forward to the House of Assembly, I lose confidence in the whole House.

This is a reflection on the House of Assembly. The Member for CBS is there and I said earlier, when you just left, to the Member that I do have confidence in you, that you do speak your mind and you're honest and sincere. I did say that. I did say that the letter that the Speaker wrote me and I'll say to the Member for CBS that the Management Commission is sympathetic to my cause and will find a way, I've yet to hear from any staff of the House of Assembly on how to bring this forward in three months. That was right in the letter that the Management Commission approved.

How can you have a lot of confidence in the Management Commission when the

Management Commission themselves writes a Member a letter and says: We can't do anything – which you can because you did receive a technical briefing, you received false information – but we will have staff contact you to find ways to bring it back to the House of Assembly. I have no contact in three months. I'm sure there are Members of this Management Commission who didn't even know that was going on. They thought we were in contact. That's what's you're dealing with in this House of Assembly.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's the kind of thing – and I'm glad the Member for CBS brought up about the Green report because it does involve the management of the House of Assembly, not just the financial part of it. When you lose the management of the House of Assembly, because the Management Commission is supposed to oversee it, follow the rules and are not following their own rules, we have a problem. That is the issue that has been brought up.

There is no doubt this policy, the Harassment-Free Workplace Policy, is a great policy, no doubt, but I just want to step in and talk about some of the drawbacks of it.

I heard the Minister of Municipal Affairs the other day, I think it was the Chair of the Committee – and he can speak to it himself when he stands up, I guess – he stood up and said we have to be to a higher standard; we all have to be to a higher standard.

In 2018, myself and Dale Kirby, absolutely no bullying and harassment whatsoever. The Commissioner for Legislative Standards said there's no bullying and harassment, but I'm going to have you to a higher standard Code of Conduct.

What this House of Assembly just did is brought their standard down, according to the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. If you have a higher standard and he's involved and there's no bullying and harassment, yet he on his own can say there's a Code of Conduct because there's a higher standard. Now you just took that higher standard away. So it just doesn't make sense what the House did.

If you're going to follow what the Commissioner for Legislative Standards did on his own, against the advice of Rubin Thomlinson, and say we need a higher standard; you just took that higher standard away. So you're bringing down the bullying and harassment that was supposed to be here to protect everybody, now you're saying it's a lower threshold for bullying and harassment because there's no Code of Conduct.

I know the Member for CBS just made a very interesting statement. I picked up on it and I made a little note of it. This is startling, actually, from the Member for CBS. I'll give the Member credit, I'm sure he didn't have all the information.

The Member for CBS said: This would take the bullying and harassment away from the Commissioner for Legislative Standards because he don't have the expertise. You just said that, that's in *Hansard*, don't have the expertise, but when he went out and did the bullying and harassment he hired Rubin Thomlinson. The man never had the expertise and the Member for CBS agrees, and I agree he doesn't. So when Rubin Thomlinson comes out and says there's no bullying and harassment, the Member who just said that he doesn't have the expertise said: no, Code of Conduct. So can you understand why the frustration in this House of Assembly, why this frustration?

What the Member said, I agree with. He's on the Management Commission, so he's taking the Commissioner for Legislative Standards – the Commissioner who doesn't have the expertise, who went out and got somebody to do the expertise, but he decides on his own there's a Code of Conduct and he doesn't have the expertise for bullying and harassment. This whole thing in 2018 was bullying and harassment, but now we're taking that away. We're lowering that step.

I just find it strange that all this went on. We know what happened in the Management Commission, we know what happened in the House of Assembly, and no one got the courage to bring it up in the House of Assembly, except the Minister of Justice. I know some of the people stood with it and stuff was said. I thank them all for that, because it is right and I would

do the same for anybody. But the Minister of Justice and Attorney General has been out publicly stating what was said in the Management Commission, you can't get it brought back to the House of Assembly. You can't get it brought back.

I'm awaiting the point of privilege, Mr. Speaker. I know you're doing your due diligence on that and I respect that, but can you imagine anywhere else – can you imagine a legislature in Canada where the Attorney General stood up publicly and said: by the way, Officer of the House, you made false statements in the Management Commission, and nothing done about it. Can you imagine? Absolutely nothing done about it, nothing done. And some of the people are still sitting in this House. Absolutely nothing. Strange, isn't it?

The other part about that, now we have people on the Management Commission saying he wasn't even qualified to do it, so we're taking it away from him. We gave it to him and when the experts said, no, there's nothing to it, he said, yeah, I'm going to find something else.

I'll tell you something strange, go back to 2008 and look at *Hansard*. I challenge anybody; 2008 when you talk about the Code of Conduct that was brought in. If you look at the Principle 10, Principle 10 talks about between government Members and public service employees. There's even a debate about it. What do we need to do this for? We already have it in there; yet, Principle 10, by a person who now we admit is not qualified for bullying and harassment, not qualified, went out and said Principle 10 is among the Members themselves.

If Principle 10 is true – which I know it's not, and everybody knows it's not, which it's going to be proven not – why are we changing it? Do you know why we're changing it? Because Principle 10 doesn't include between Members; it doesn't include it. We all know that; yet, no one has the courage to stand up for it – no one. No one has the courage except the Minister of Justice, the Attorney General, the only one. Strange isn't it, everything you go through.

It's all factual, Mr. Speaker. You know it, Mr. Speaker, it's all factual. There is absolutely nothing here that I'm saying that can't be proven

and hasn't been said in a Management Commission itself.

I look at the part with the Premier being taken out of it. As I said before, Mr. Speaker, on this part excluding the Premier: Do you know why that was done? Because the Premier made the complaint. I even think the Member for CBS was the one who was asking him questions at the time, talking about him putting himself emerging in the process. He made a complaint to the Commissioner. I still haven't got a copy of it. I have to go to court to get a copy of it. I can't get it.

He stood in this House and said he had no involvement whatsoever in this here. Guess what? He did, and we hear talk about confidentiality. Confidentiality is a big part, I agree, it should be. Do you know when the confidentiality was for myself and Dale Kirby? On the House of Assembly April 25 when they asked questions. Someone was leaking information. Questions asked in the House of Assembly. That's the confidentiality.

I have to ask another thing, Mr. Speaker, talking about confidentiality and the independent process. What would people think if I – which I think the Member for CBS, I don't mean to be picking on you but I'm just stating the facts; I don't mean to be but you know it. You want to talk about confidentiality of Members; you want to talk about the confidentiality of a person who is going through it. Guess what – and no one wants to challenge this and no one wants to do this. Guess what? I have a letter that the Premier of the province had his staff in talking to Bruce Chaulk during this process. I have an actual letter that the Premier admitted that he got his staff speaking to Bruce Chaulk during the process.

Where's my confidentiality? Where are my rights? Where are Dale Kirby's rights? Yet, no one wants to touch it. No one wants to stand up and say there's something wrong here. We should do an investigation. Absolutely, let's brush it under the rug. This is where all this came about. Let's try to brush it under the rug. Let's just take it and brush it under the rug, even though I think there should be confidentiality. Too bad myself and Dale were the guinea pigs for it all, but we're strong, we're tough.

I know a lot of people are telling me confidentiality. I just have to say something here, Mr. Speaker. Excluding the people in 2019 a lot of this information may be new because they had no involvement – excluding the people that were elected in 2019. I have to say that because I'm not including all Members here because you weren't even in the Legislature. I have to make that quite clear.

I know a lot of my colleagues, a lot of people in the whole situation, now they know that the Premier of the province was involved through his staff. What was his involvement? I don't even know. I have to find out. I have to go to court now to find out what his involvement was.

I heard last week, Mr. Speaker – and I hate doing this but I have to. When I made the point of privilege – and I thank the few people that stood up. I thank the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands for standing up and supporting it; I know the Government House Leader. I heard the Premier of the province stand up and say everybody should have equal rights. He's right but I have to ask the question: Premier, where were you in September 2018, October 2018, November 2018 and 2019 when you were privately telling me that this can't go ahead; this is wrong; this can't go ahead. Where were you, Premier? Where were you? Where were you telling me that your rights have been violated? Where were you?

So when he stands up last week and just says, oh, someone's rights, I take that with a grain of salt because you had the opportunity, Premier, to get to the bottom of this and you didn't do it because you wanted it pushed aside. Like you told me, Premier, on October 28 at the airport in Deer Lake: I'm getting too much pressure from women's groups; I'm getting too much pressure. So I said: You're backtracking and he walked away from me. It's the last time he and I spoke.

When you stand up there, Premier, last week and now that you're leaving you say: Yes, b'y, his rights were violated. You had the opportunity, Premier. I can't forgive you for that because for four months you were telling me it's going to be taken care of, you were going to stand up for my rights and you wouldn't do it, Premier. Excuse me if I take that with a grain of salt. I have to excuse you on that.

I'll just say to the Members of the House of Assembly, when you speak about this whole issue – and it has to start with the Management Commission. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and I say to all the Members of the Management Commission: You have information and all you have to do is call the Justice Minister. If you're going to do your duty correct, if you're going to stand up correct and say you're going to follow the Green report, which that was in 2007 and I was a part of – if you're going to stand up and say we have to follow the Green report, it's time for the Management Commission to do their duty.

I'll say to the Members of the House of Assembly – all the Members of the House of Assembly – it could be anybody in this House next when it comes to it. It could be anybody whatsoever. People always ask me about bringing this up in the House. I absolutely do. This is the bill that I'm speaking on now. I say to the people of Humber - Bay of Islands, who even up to Saturday night when I was down to Humber Arm South, two or three bunches in Humber Arm South said: Don't back down. It's not only my rights that we're talking about; we're talking about all the Members' rights here.

I can tell you, when there are people's rights that I knew in Humber - Bay of Islands outside that were violated, I was the first one to stand up. This is not just me. It's Dale Kirby. It's for every Member. I say to all the Members of this House of Assembly, if you're really going to talk about the Green report – I say to the Management Commission: follow the Green report.

Mr. Speaker, I don't mean to be looking at you but you are the Speaker now. You weren't the Speaker in 2018, I'll say that, but you have information. The Management Commission has the information that you're obligated under the Green report to bring to the House of Assembly. It's up to the House of Assembly what they decide on, but if you don't bring the information to the House of Assembly, and when someone stands up on the Green report I'm just going to say it just fits the bill whenever it feels good and whatever you want squeezed into it. That's my thought on this.

I think bullying and harassment absolutely should be separate, absolutely should be confidential. Absolutely everybody should have the right to make a complaint if they feel harassed, if they feel intimidated, if they feel that they're getting a lot of extra pressure from somewhere. They absolutely should.

This process, Mr. Speaker, I agree with, but when you stand up and you want to talk about a Commissioner who didn't have the ability to do it – and the Minister of Municipal Affairs is standing up now and saying we're separating it because we're going to have a higher standard and the higher standard was keeping it under the Code of Conduct. The higher standard was just something that was put in that report and the Premier used it several times just in the report so they can say we have to put ourselves to a higher standard. No one every explained to me what the standard was.

I'll take my seat now; hopefully I'll have another opportunity. Mr. Speaker, the letter you wrote me back on December 5 – that contact. I think now if I had contact with any of the staff now, it would only be because I raised it here in the House of Assembly. It wouldn't be because it was legitimately trying to help me to solve this issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Seeing no further speakers, is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

**CLERK (Barnes):** A bill, An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act. (Bill 24)

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

On motion, a bill, “An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act,” read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 24)

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

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

From the Order Paper, Motion 1, Bill 26.

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

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

I wish to inform the House that I have received a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor. A wonderful message.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All rise.

The letter from Her Honour.

As Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I transmit a request to appropriate sums required for the Public Service of the Province for the year ending 31 March 2021, by way of Interim Supply, and in accordance with the provisions of sections 54 and 90 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, I recommend this request to the House of Assembly.

Sgd.: \_\_\_\_\_

Lieutenant-Governor

Please be seated.

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

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

I move, seconded by the hon. Government House Leader, that the message, together with a bill, be referred to a Committee of Supply.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion is that the message, together with a bill, be referred to a

Committee of Supply and that I do now leave the Chair.

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.’

Carried.

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

### Committee of the Whole

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

We are now considering the related resolution and Bill 26.

### Resolution

*“Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:*

*“That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2021 the sum of \$4,602,859,900.”*

**CHAIR:** Shall the resolution carry?

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

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

Today we are starting debate on Interim Supply, which is a bill that we have to pass if we’re going to allow for the financial administration of ongoing business of government throughout the province, while we’re waiting to bring in debate and pass the budget.

As I had mentioned earlier in the Legislature, Mr. Chair, Interim Supply is required to keep snowplow operators on the streets or keep hospitals operating, pay nurses for going into



hospitals and performing the work that they do, or keep teachers in classrooms so that we keep classrooms open, just to name a few. Essentially, it's money to allow government to continue to operate beyond March 31, which is the end of the fiscal year, into the new fiscal year while we're waiting to vote on the next budget.

When we introduce budget 2020, we'll be seeking approval for funding to spend for the entire fiscal year, but it normally takes time to allow for that debate. During this interim period, that is what Interim Supply is for.

This year, Mr. Chair, we're looking for six months' worth of spending. We had questions in the Legislature today as to why we require six months of spending. Quite honestly, with the noise that we've heard about looking to form a coalition or looking to vote against government or bring government down, if that were to happen, if the opposite side of the House were to bring government down, Mr. Chair, in May or June after we bring the budget in and vote on the budget, without extending beyond June – three months, so you have April, May and June if it's three months' Interim Supply – without having any ability to spend money beyond June, if we were thrown into an election in the second or third week of June, come the end of June, our public servants no longer get paid; come the end of June, government stops writing cheques; it stops providing funding to our health authorities without Interim Supply.

Interim Supply is the legal ability for Treasury to continue to flow money to our health authorities, to our schools, to our university, to whatever government service. Wherever government sends money – Income Support recipients, Mr. Chair – it allows money to continue to flow, legally because the House has said money can legally flow for the continuation of government services. Quite honestly, the only reason we're looking for it for six months is, if there's a disruption of this Legislature, to allow for government services to continue.

Mr. Chair, when calculating Interim Supply, we base it off the previous fiscal year, but in some cases we make allowances for things that we anticipate in the coming year. This amount represents roughly 53 per cent of the 2019-20 fiscal year budget, and in some accounts more

than half of the budget is required to provide for those items that we need to expense earlier in next fiscal year.

The Department of Finance estimates that the Interim Supply will provide departments and public bodies with sufficient cash flow to manage their spending, Mr. Chair, up to September of this year. Essentially, as I said, if there's disruption of this Legislature, it allows sufficient time for an election and whomever should become government to come in and either put another Interim Supply in or to put a budget in place, should that be required, and have it passed by the Legislature.

This Interim Supply makes provision for the transfer of funds from the Department of Finance to all departments, all agencies, boards and commissions; transfers from the Consolidated Funds Services accounts to other departments for special retirement and other payments should they be necessary; the transfer of funds to and from various expenditure to facilitate the expenditures to facilitate the expenditures for financial assistance as they may be approved from time to time and set by Treasury Board.

Mr. Chair, we've heard Interim Supply referred to in the past as routine business or simply the administration of business in this Legislature. I don't want anybody in the House or anybody who may be listening to the broadcast mistake this bill as unimportant because it's administrative. The funds allocated through this bill go towards the continuation of any and all government services, any and all government payments throughout the province.

The bill ensures that key government initiatives and programs continue without disruption. I'd like to highlight just some of those key programs and services, as I've done a couple of them, Mr. Chair, that we will see as ongoing funding through the Interim Supply process.

If you look at industry development, growing our economy is an important part of overcoming the challenges that our province is facing today. In *Budget 2019* we allocated funding for industry development initiatives; many of those will continue into this year, and these are important job creation investments.

We featured \$13 million in provincial funding for employment and training programs. We also continue to support the Drive Program offered through the Community Business Development Corporations, which provides loans to young entrepreneurs of up to \$10,000.

Tourism is an industry with limitless potential, Mr. Chair, throughout the province. There's \$13 million allocated during *Budget 2019* for tourism operations in and around the province. We also see continued funding for Labrador Aboriginal Nutritional and Artistic Assistance Programs, which in addition to supporting artists and artistic endeavours, the funds also provide for nutritional programs, community freezer programs and food banks.

The Provincial Agrifoods Assistance Program provides assistance to eligible applicants involved in primary production or secondary processing activities that will improve the economic viability of the agriculture and agrifoods industry. In *Budget 2019* there was \$2.25 million toward that program.

Mr. Chair, \$100,000 was launched for the Community Garden Support Program, which will enable not-for-profit organizations and community groups to contribute to local food production and food security in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Chair, looking at health care and healthy living, like every province, health care is the number one spend for our government, it's the number one cost concern for the people of the province. As a government, we've kept spending steady in this province over the past four years on health care, something that most other provinces cannot say.

Our government, spearheaded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, has been working hard to change the way health care is delivered in our province. One example of this is the Autism Action Plan. Mr. Chair, that improves services and supports for those experiencing autism or the families of those experiencing autism. *Budget 2019* included \$2.5 million to implement the plan, and that will increase to \$5 million annually as of 2020-21.

This year, the Minister of Health also announced the midwife services program for expecting families in Gander, for which we earmarked \$370,000 in that budget. Government is continuing to expand primary health care teams.

Outside of the health care sector, wellness is also an area of focus for our government. *Budget 2019* included \$1.79 million for the Community Healthy Living Fund. That fund includes support for community groups, recreation committees and organizations offering physical activity, healthy living programs and wellness programs.

If you look at child care and education; Mr. Chair, something that we've heard loud and clear from the people of the province in pre-budget consultations was that education and health care were the top priorities. We just spoke about health care.

So to talk about education a little bit; under the leadership of the Premier, the Premier brought in the action plan a couple of years ago in 2018. The recommendations out of the Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes features an implementation schedule on these recommendations from now until 2022. We've already seen significant gains in that program and that action plan.

In *Budget 2019*, we allocated \$13 million to implement the action plan to support better outcomes from students, an increase from \$6 million the year prior. So this year that funding continues, Mr. Chair, provided budget 2020 is approved by the Legislature, of course.

Mr. Chair, child care is also an ongoing area that people often ask about. We know that it's a priority for many Newfoundland and Labrador families. In *Budget 2019*, we allocated \$11 million for the enhanced Operating Grant Program, which improves accessibility of child care for low- and middle-income families. That funding will allow us to expand the program to include regulated family child care homes.

We also allocated \$17.1 million to the Child Care Subsidy Program which helps families in need pay for child care in a licensed child care centre or a regulated family care home. We're looking at that program again in budget 2020

and what can be done in budget 2020 for those families.

Mr. Chair, financial support – I think most Members of the Legislature will recognize that the provincial government has a role to play in poverty reduction. We've heard the issue raised in debate and in the Legislature on a number of occasions. In *Budget 2019*, there was \$284 million to fund more than 100 poverty reduction initiatives.

We heard, I think it was last week, Mr. Chair, talk of when the poverty reduction strategy commenced in this province. I remember that. I remember it very well. It was in 2005-2006. I was actually one of the ministers who sat on the steering committee who developed the initiative of poverty reduction. I think it's something that all Members of the Legislature can be proud of. People in the province, we've seen a marked improvement since that time and continue through initiatives funded by government.

Since forming government, we've continued to fund income supplement programs. We've invested \$243.8 million in the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement which has benefited 155,000 individuals and their families in this province.

*Budget 2019* also continued to fund the Newfoundland Seniors' Benefit, which our government increased by \$250, Mr. Chair, in 2016. We've invested \$209 million to date benefiting approximately 47,000 seniors and their families each year.

Mr. Chair, we've prioritized improving service delivery as well in this province, and part of what we see as saving money over time, spend money now to save money in the long run. We've advanced our Digital Government plan significantly, making it easier for businesses and for people throughout the province to have better access to government services through MyGovNL platform, as well as a host of other digital services.

Mr. Chair, *Budget 2019* included \$123.9 million for community funding programs aimed at improving infrastructure and enhancing services.

I'm sure there are several other examples that I could get into as to why it's important to pass budget 2020 when we introduce it here, but, more importantly, why we need the absolute certainty that these services will continue through Interim Supply.

I know there are about 19 seconds left on the clock in which I'm allowed to speak to my initial talk on Interim Supply, Mr. Chair, but Interim Supply is vitally important to the people of this province. It's vitally important to ensure that services continue.

The reason we have a six-month Interim Supply, Mr. Chair, as I said, quite honestly, is in the event of an interruption in this Legislature.

Thank you.

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

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

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

(Disturbance in the gallery.)

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

The gallery is not permitted –

(Disturbance in the gallery.)

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

This House will recess.

### Recess

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

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

Every year for the past many years, the government has come to the House early in the spring with an Interim Supply bill. Interim Supply is intended to get the government through the first three months of the fiscal year, April to June. It's usually brought forward

because the budget is not usually passed until April or May, several weeks into the new fiscal year. Interim Supply is needed to cover expenditures, salaries and services until the budget is passed and we certainly support that.

What were the amounts of those Interim Supply bills? Let's take a quick look. In 2015, \$2.7 billion; 2016, \$2.792 billion; in 2018, \$2.8 billion; 2019, \$2.089 billion. Now, as it turned out in 2019, the Premier sent the province into an early election in the spring, before the budget was passed. The House returned after the election and he needed a second Interim Supply to tide us over until the end of June. That was a unique situation, but not so this year. This year the government started early on pre-budget consultations.

Everything was on course for the budget to be brought down in March or April and passed by May or June, as per normal. As a matter of fact, if you look at the history of that, in 2015, the Interim Supply was passed on March 26; the budget date was April 30. In 2016, Interim Supply passed on March 17; budget date: April 14. In 2017, Interim Supply: March 16; budget: April 6. In 2018, Interim Supply: March 12; budget: March 27. But lo and behold, we look at this amount in this year's Interim Supply bill and it's not just enough to cover the first three months of the fiscal year; it's nearly double – \$4.602 billion – and I have to ask why.

It's beginning to look like this government no longer intends to bring down the budget as they were planning to. It's beginning to look like this Premier and this Finance Minister no longer believe they have a mandate to bring down the 2020 budget.

Perhaps around the Cabinet table there was no longer agreement to sign off on a 2020 budget under this Premier. Perhaps this Premier has overseen the delivery of his last budget. Perhaps he will not get an opportunity to deliver another. Perhaps the Cabinet is insisting that the next budget be the work of the incoming Liberal leader and premier. But what does that mean for the processes that were already underway?

The Department of Finance work and the work of all the other departments, is that all on hold? Is the 2020 budget process in limbo? Is no one

any longer working on the 2020 budget contents and speech? Has the government pressed the pause button? Is that the reason they are coming to this House asking for a blank cheque to spend for the next six months without transparency or accountability?

We are also questioning whether this province right now can afford to be driving an autopilot for six months without anyone at the helm with the confidence to govern openly and transparently. Without a budget there is no sense in the business and investment community and among bond rating agency that anyone is in control here; managing our fiscal affairs in terribly tight times and overseeing a plan for growth.

Now, Mr. Chair, a few minutes ago the Minister of Finance stood up and said the only reason he's bringing in a six-month Interim Supply bill is to ensure, in case of any disruption of this Legislature. Let me say this loud and clear for everybody to hear, we on this side of the House will not disrupt this Legislature this session. We will not disrupt it. So if that is the only reason you need a six-month Supply then I will make the following amendment to the resolution, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to make the following amendment: To move that the resolution now before the House be amended by reducing the amount listed by half.

It's seconded by the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

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

**CHAIR:** This House will recess to review the amendment.

### Recess

**CHAIR:** Are the House Leaders ready?

Order, please!

We have ruled on the amendment, and it is ruled that it is not in order. To be in order an amendment should: leave out certain words; in order to add other words, leave out certain words; insert or add other words to the main

motion. An amendment should be framed that if agreed to, it will leave the main motion intelligible and internally consistent.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** It is disappointing, Mr. Chair, but I will use the rest of my time to highlight some other things.

The difference between a budget and this bill is that a budget process involves a great deal of accountability. There are detailed Estimates documents. There are Estimates Committee meetings where we get to question ministers and officials on painstaking detail, on the spending decisions for the coming year. We get to ask these questions before we have a final vote on spending. With Interim Supply, all we see is total dollar amounts for each department; no details whatsoever.

This is the definition of spending without transparency or accountability. It is not the way spending decisions are supposed to be made. Moody's has questioned whether the government has any realistic chance of reaching its targets. The Auditor General has raised the same concerns. The budget is supposed to be able to put those uncertainties to rest by outlining the targets and how the government plans to get there.

By hiding the fiscal forecast and plan for the past five years, the government opposite has left those uncertainties to grow. To now compound that problem by stalling the budget and seeking to pay the bills with blank cheques is not going to instill the confidence the market needs; it is going to further undermine confidence.

This government has no plan; this government is no longer able to even pretend that it has a plan. It is coming here asking for an advance on its allowance and saying trust us. What a way to cap off the legacy of this administration, the least transparent administration in memory. It is shameful.

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. WAKEHAM:** The people of this province have been waiting for a growth plan that will give them hope to stay here. They had been waiting for a plan. They had been waiting for five years and, over that time, the administration promised to stand, fight and deliver, but it did neither. Now we find ourselves here asking for an Interim Supply of six months – unprecedented. The reason they're giving for needing is this just in case. Not good enough, Mr. Chair – not good enough.

I think the people of this province deserve better. They want a government that's accountable. They want a government with integrity. I look forward to speaking some more later.

Thank you.

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

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

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

Mr. Chair, I move that the resolution be amended by striking out the amount \$4,602,859,900 and substituting instead the amount \$2,301,429,950.

**CHAIR:** This House will recess to review the amendment.

### Recess

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

We have reviewed the amendment and the amendment is found to be in order.

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Excellent.

Well, I'm absolutely delighted that the amendment has passed. So it seems now that we have an Interim –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** In order.

**MS. COFFIN:** Oh no, okay, the amendment is in order.

**CHAIR:** Correct.

**MS. COFFIN:** I got excited. I am sorry, Mr. Chair, I get excited sometimes. We're talking economics here.

So now we have a proposed Interim Supply that is more in line with our traditional Interim Supply. I think this is more reflective of how our House of Assembly traditionally works, and perhaps more reflective of what ought to be happening at this time when there is such a great deal of uncertainty.

Certainly, we've just found today that oil prices have dropped quite substantially. Given that we are heavily oil-dependent and, in fact, if I might refer to the Auditor General, she has regularly pointed out that we are very, very vulnerable to oil price shocks. So I think at this point a \$4-billion Interim Supply might not actually reflect half of our budget, if our budget is going to be on an adjusted oil price.

What else do we have? The Minister of Finance, I note, had pointed out that he had used a six-month Interim Supply because there was some fear that Members opposite might not pass the budget. Now, I will not give any latitude beyond three months, but what I will promise is that my caucus has absolutely no intention of holding the public service hostage with the potential of not passing a budget.

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

**MS. COFFIN:** But I would also like to point out that we have a legislative imperative that we need to pass a budget. So by having a three-month Interim Supply, I would consider that more like a probationary period whereby we can walk through the budget once it is tabled and we will have ample time to do our Estimates, to discuss what's in the budget and, for myself and my caucus, I cannot stand by and say yes, we will pass the budget without knowing what's in that budget. There could be school closures in that budget. There could be giveaways to oil companies in that budget. There could be hospital closures. There may be all kinds of good things in that budget, but I will not be responsible for passing a budget that I have no idea what it contains.

I think that this is a very prudent move on the part of our Legislature that will help us have a budget tabled in the appropriate time and give us ample opportunity to discuss what is in that budget and to be able to prudently and properly represent the interest of the people that have elected us to this Legislature. We need to stand by that.

What else needs to happen? Again, I promise to pass another three-month Interim Supply bill if the minister is inclined to introduce one. In the event that budget talks are going poorly or there is any potential that the budget will not pass, I would be delighted to pass yet another Interim Supply at that time, but I must insist that we have the opportunity to discuss the full budget prior to that happening.

At the same time, I will also promise that myself and my caucus will support Interim Supply. If in the event that there is a possibility that the budget will fail, I will not see our public servants, I will not see anyone who depends on core government funding to do without that as our Legislature is disrupted. I do want to insist that we see our budget, we are able to discuss that budget and we are given the opportunity to reflect what individuals have tasked us to do as Members of this Legislature.

What else would I like to talk about? I think that might be it for now. We want to continue the work of the House and we want to ensure that everyone's paycheques are in order. That's all I have on this amendment right now.

I do look forward to the support of the folks on this side of the House, but I also look forward to the support of the government because, as it seems, this is a natural progression and they have a full commitment that there will be no fear of Opposition Members – or at least my caucus – triggering an election without a budget being tabled.

Thank you very much.

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

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

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

I'm just going to stand and speak. I read the amendment and it is kind of unusual to have a six-month Interim Supply brought in the House of Assembly.

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. JOYCE:** What I always said, Mr. Chair, is that in the Legislature, we always have to do our due diligence and look to see what the reasons are. I have absolutely no doubt that the government right now, with the drop in oil prices, do have a fiscal problem on their hands. To be fair – which I was a part of in 2015 – there was a fiscal crisis back in 2015 also, because I was part of it and we received it. I just find this is the time that all legislators should try to come together and work something out.

I don't know everybody here very well personally – some of the new Members, I know them – but I don't think any person in this House wants to see the government services shut down in this province. I firmly believe that. I don't think anybody wants to see hospital staff laid off. I don't think anybody wants to see teachers laid off. I don't think anybody wants to see our snowplow operators not operating. I don't think that's the reality, Mr. Chair.

When it comes to the amendment – and we have to get a good case from the minister why we need six months. Then if the reason is that there may be an election, that may be a good enough reason, but right now we have to consider this amendment and listen to the minister why we need the six months. I can assure the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador – speaking to everybody, not just on the Opposition side or the NDP or my colleague for Mount Pearl - Southlands, the government also – no one wants to shut down the government for Interim Supply.

One of the things in the budget – and I've always said it and I brought it up last week to the minister – is that we have to try to rein in some of the spending from the agencies, boards and commissions. I know when I was part of discussions – and I don't want to release any privileged information because it wouldn't be

fair to my colleagues or to myself and it wouldn't be to the oath that I swore.

If we find some way to rein in the agencies, boards and commissions, which I'm hoping is going to be in this budget, then we have a chance to save hundreds of millions of dollars. When you go over a period of a number of years, that adds up. It won't eliminate the deficit, by no means, with the oil – and we are dependent on oil to a certain extent, not as much as we were before, but that would definitely help reduce it down. When you get a cumulative effective over 10 or 15 years, you'd be surprised how much money.

It's also for the general public – the general public when you hear people in government leaving. I use the Minister of Finance, a prime example. If he left government tomorrow and he was here for 17 years, he would get \$95,000 severance – period. Someone out in one of the agencies, board and commissions, the same amount of time, leaving with \$500,000.

People see that discrepancy and you can see the big payouts. Over a period of time for the number of employees that's going to be affected, it adds up to millions and millions. I know the Estimates that we have seen was getting into the hundreds of millions of dollars if we rein in the agencies, boards and commissions. So that's the kind of information we need before we can debate the budget, and I'm hoping to see in the budget.

Mr. Chair, as we know, it is going to be a tough budget. We know that. Back in 2015, when we thought we could get the deficit down to zero in '22-'23, there are a lot of things that happened. I don't shy away from the 2016 budget, which I was a part of. I absolutely don't shy away from that one bit.

There was a situation that arose that we needed to make some very harsh decisions, and we did. Some people say they were too harsh. I accept that criticism. Some said we should have started taking major steps then, and that is a possibility, but when you get in these situations and you try to not cut too much, yet you had to make sure the lights were going to turn on in all the buildings, you had to make a decision.

That's the kind of problem we're facing right here. Should we go three months or six months? The bigger issue is what are we going to have in the budget? That's the bigger issue. Even when I was on the government side, I'll be the first – every Member in this House, I'm willing to bet, approached the minister saying, here's what we need for our district. That's our job. That is actually our job.

I know it's been brought up on several occasions and they used to always say, well, you asked for this. That's our job. If there is a certain amount that has to be put forward for Transportation and Works, a certain amount for health care, a certain amount for Municipal Affairs and infrastructure, a certain amount for education, a certain amount for forestry, it's our role to bring that to the attention of the government so we can see if it is a priority, what we can do to make lives better. That is our job. That is no knock on any Member for doing that.

I say if a Member in this House of Assembly is not advocating on behalf of their district, I can assure you, you won't be long in your job – I can assure you that. That's just part of the process.

I don't envy the Minister of Finance because I know with the fiscal crisis now, that's going to put even more pressure on the minister, more pressure on the funds that we have. Interim Supply, if we need six months or three months, that's something we have to sit here and debate in this House of Assembly and justify if we need it or if we don't.

I use the Humber - Bay of Islands for example, Mr. Chair, and the greater part of the budget. The minister went out with me to Route 450 and looked at some of the conditions on the road. Am I advocating on behalf of Route 450? You better believe I am, because I feel it's unsafe. That is the part of an MHA. Was I advocating for the hospital in Corner Brook with radiation? Definitely. I think we found a great way to get it done, and I always commended the government for doing that. I always did.

I take no pride, Mr. Chair, in helping the government make a decision and then say backtracking because of our fiscal situation. I was a part of that decision, and I don't take one

step backwards on that because in the long run we're going to save money on the hospital and the radiation, and save money on travel for residents coming through.

That's the kind of thing we need to look at is the money that's put forward in the Estimates by each department and how that's going to be spent. We know dollars are scarce. We absolutely know dollars are scarce, but we have to try to utilize it the best way we can to stretch it a bit further. We also need to look at longer ways, Mr. Chair, in our spending. I said this, and people who were there know I've been advocating to in –

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. JOYCE:** – to bring in agencies, boards and commissions, find new avenues.

I know with the Forestry and Crown Lands, Mr. Chair, open it up for agriculture, that's going to take time to foster but that's the kind of steps for rural Newfoundland and Labrador that over the years will show benefits by opening up Crown lands, by promoting agriculture, by Food First in Newfoundland and Labrador and food security, that's going to take time. It's going to take time, but I can assure you they were the right steps made by government.

I know the amendment here is to have three-month Interim Supply, like we always have. So I'm hoping all the debate here in this Legislature is about the reasons why we should go with three months or why we need it for six months. I am pretty confident that there's not a Member in this House that will shut down this government if it need be. The minister is coming forward – and other government Members, not just the minister, you can't just rely on the minister to carry this. Other government Members can stand up and explain why – because it is a motion by government – six months is needed for Interim Supply.

I'm looking forward to all the other Members to stand up and have their say on different issues. There are good things happening in the province, no doubt, but every time we look at the fiscal reality – I just want to let people know



that Newfoundland and Labrador is in a tight bind, but if you look all across the world right now with this coronavirus, we're not the only ones that are feeling the pinch.

If you look at some of the other places and the downturns in the stocks and the markets, we're not the only ones. If you look at how Italy is being affected, look how China is being affected. I saw this stat the other day that because of this coronavirus, 25 per cent of the carbon emissions in the air from China have been reduced because of the lack of work in the factories.

So this is not unique just to Newfoundland and Labrador. I don't think we should panic as much as some people are expressing. It is severe, it is a crisis, but we also need to do this in a responsible manner, Mr. Chair, to ensure that we do have the services available for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Cape St. Francis.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Indeed, it's a great privilege to get up here again today. Like I always say, for the last 12 years I've always said it's an absolute honour to represent the beautiful people in the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis. And it is an honour for all of us to be here.

First of all today, before I start off, because this is my first opportunity to say a few words in this session of the House of Assembly, I'd like to just address our Premier. I know that he's leaving and leaving politics, and I just want to thank him for his service over the last 10 years.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** I had a lot of dealings with the Premier over time and we were on both sides of the House when we're here, but I always have to congratulate him and thank him. He's always shown me a lot of respect. If I have anything to ask or anything at all, he was always there to answer. All of us get into public life for a

reason, and it's not an easy job, and it's definitely not an easy job to be Premier of the province. So I just want to wish him all the best in the future in whatever you do.

I encourage everyone in this province to sit here and take the opportunity to stand in this House of Assembly. Like I always say, it's an honour and a privilege, so I encourage Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to do it. Now, we may disagree a lot of times in this House, but you're representing your people, you have an opportunity to do it, and I am sure that the 40 of us in here do the best with our opportunity.

Anyway, I just want to wish the Premier all the best in his future endeavours. I hope to see you down the road in the future, Sir, at some other different venue or whatever, but all the best in the future.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Now, Mr. Chair, we're here today talking about Interim Supply. Over the years, we've always looked at Interim Supply as a mechanism to get us through a certain period of time. That's no different than what we're doing until we get the budget and we start the spring session. Always one of the first bills that comes in is Interim Supply.

What an Interim Supply does, it gives us an opportunity to make sure that we can pay our bills; it gives our public service the opportunity to know that, listen, no worries, government is not going to come down and your money will be there until a budget is done.

The budget is such an important part of what this government is about and what all governments are about in the past. The budget is an opportunity for you get in and give your vision of the next year, what you're going to do, whether you're going to increase spending, whether you're going to spend money on roads, schools, hospitals, whatever. People in this province need to know what you're doing. I've gone through a lot of budgets. I've gone through 12 budgets in this House of Assembly and I saw some good ones and I saw some bad ones, but we always had the opportunity to debate.

A big part of the budget debate is Estimates. When we come in here, each department has the opportunity – you get a book and it shows you exactly where they're planning on spending their monies, different programs and things like that. We get the opportunity as an Opposition to question ministers on how they're spending their money for the full year. This Interim Supply, what we're asking and what they're looking for here, that's six months. It's six months out the road that they're going to have – listen, we have no questions. We can't ask what you're doing because the money is already allocated.

I'm telling you, we put a private Member's motion in today to ask this government to make sure they come down with this budget on time. The minister got up and he said you guarantee me you're going to vote for it. B'y, we're not going to guarantee you we're going to vote for it until we see what's in the budget.

Let's go back to 2016. We saw in 2016 budget that there were protests out here in the front lobbies. There were protests on the streets of Newfoundland and Labrador. We saw an increase in 300 different fees and fines and stuff like that. They were all increased. We saw 50 new taxes. This was government's way to get the financial situation in the province in order and so be it. We disagreed with it on our side and didn't vote for it, but the rest of the province, they had the opportunity to speak, too.

If you look what happened in the 2016 budget when it came to libraries in this province, there was outrage all over the province about closing down small libraries. Guess what? We stayed on this side and we stayed until 12 and 2 in the morning and debated it. Guess what happened? Those libraries didn't close, because we had fair debate.

What they're asking us to do here is to give them six months – look, let us spend for six months and go ahead and do what – that's not what the people of the province want. Now, if there is an election called, which, again, it's something else that the people of this province don't want. I've heard from constituents in my district telling me: Listen, you guys are in there; there are 40 of you in there; you should be able to work together and try to make this province the best for every individual in this province.

And I'm sure that's what everybody wants to happen.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** I know that's what I want.

I don't want to see another election, but to say to me that, listen, unless you vote for a document that I haven't seen yet, then we're going to stretch this out, that's wrong. That's absolutely wrong.

Do we want an election? No. Does anyone in this province want an election? No, and that's the answer that you hear at your Tim Hortons stores, you'll hear on your wharves and you'll hear it in community centres right across this province. They want us to be in here and do our job. I feel that we can do our job. I'm confident that we can still do our job.

But just to go out and say you guys over there, you want an election so we have to come in with six months Interim Supply is wrong. We did it the last election in May of last year; we had to come in on two different occasions with Interim Supply, so why can't we do it this time? They called an election; they called a snap election last year. Why can't we do the same thing this time?

If you look at the budget process, the budget process gives everybody in this province an opportunity to hear the voices, to hear what government has planned for the year and they make their choices. Listen, if they get a new leader or new premier, or whatever happens on that side of the House or no matter who it is, the people of this province are going to want to hear what your plan is.

That's what the whole problem is for the last five years here sitting in the Opposition is the lack of a plan. This government has had no plan whatsoever when it's come to our fiscal arrangements, when it's come with what our plan is for the future. I've listened now for five years here in the House of Assembly and always the previous administration. Do you know what? Five years have gone and you're the previous administration. You're the people that were in power for four years. It's time to get on and

work with us and work for the people of this province and ensure that we do the best we can.

Listen here, Mr. Chair, there's no doubt that we're in a hard position. We're in a hard position fiscally; we have a lot of questions today just to see what happens with the price of oil. I don't know, at one time I heard every dollar was equivalent to \$29 million on a barrel, but the minister said \$20 million now. Then today he gets up and says but that's over a full year.

When the price of oil dropped down today to \$30 a barrel, I, like other Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, are very concerned. We're very concerned. Your forecast was for \$63 a barrel, so where is the added money going to come up? Are we going to have to borrow? Are we going to have to cut services? Are we going to have to have layoffs? These are things that people want to hear. Do you know where they're going to hear it? They're going to hear in a budget.

They don't want to see a snap election. They want to see us do our job as legislators. Do what we were elected for; do what the people of the province want us to do: Be in here, bring down a budget and show the people that we have a plan. That's the problem. If you kick the can down the road, it means you don't have a plan.

We want to see Interim Supply done like it was done in the past. Three months Interim Supply shows the province, shows – and the main thing with Interim Supply always for me was to give reassurance to our public servants out there that, listen, your paycheque will be in the mail; don't worry about it. There's a time frame between the start of March to when we bring down the budget and it's a three-month period, there's money there to be done – when the budget comes in, that's also a continuation. You remember now when we talk Interim Supply, we're talking a portion of the budget. So the budget is \$8 million and we bring in \$3 million Interim Supply, there's \$5 million left in the budget that you'll spend down the road.

There's no reason for this government to ask for six months. If they want to call an election or their new leader or whatever come in and wants to call an election, that's up to them; but this

party here, we want to govern, we want to represent the people of the province and we want to make sure that their interests are being heard.

We heard it in 2016 when they came to us and said listen, you guys fight for libraries. You guys fight because of the levy. People were upset over the levy; changes got made to the levy. They were upset over the gas tax; changes got made to the gas tax. Give us the opportunity to do our job here as Opposition and you do your job. Three months is the amount of time it should be for Interim Supply.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

I'm glad to have the opportunity to stand and speak to this amendment to the resolution on Interim Supply. I want to say first off that I do support the resolution. I thank the Leader of the NDP for bringing forth the amendment.

I don't want to be too repetitive but, at the end of the day, I would agree that I don't see any need for a six-month Interim Supply. It is definitely outside the norm. I do accept the Minister of Finance's explanation around fear of an early election or the budget not being passed and so on. If you do the math, I don't think that that's something that they need to worry about, to be honest with you. I have said, and I will maintain as I've said to the minister privately, I've said publicly, I will say again, as my colleague the Leader of the NDP has said, I have no intention of bringing down the government just for the sake of bringing down the government. I have no intention of voting against the budget simply for the sake of voting against the budget.

People in Newfoundland and Labrador, as my colleague from Cape St. Francis said, they don't want an election. He is absolutely right. Now, he talked about the wharves. I can't say I had many conversations on the wharves. The only wharf we have in Mount Pearl is at Powers Pond.

There's a little one out there where they do the kayaking. Certainly we do have Tim Hortons and the Summit Centre and the grocery stores and all those places. I'm hearing the same thing primarily from my constituents, as I'm sure he's hearing. People generally do not want another election at this time.

Now, are there people out there that want an election, particularly in social media? Are there people who are still angry at the government for *Budget 2016* and other issues? Absolutely they are out there. They would say bring down the government, first opportunity. I don't think that's the general sentiment of the public. I believe people do not want an election.

Again, I will say to the Minister of Finance as I've said privately: As long as the budget is fair and it's reasonable, there are no big surprises, there's not going to be something totally out of the ordinary, you're not going to bring back the levy or something like that – I'm sure you won't, or you'll never have a chance of ever winning the election whenever it comes. But the point is as long as the budget is fair and reasonable, then I'm not voting against it for the sake of just voting against it. That is the commitment that I will make right here, right now.

Does that mean that I'm going to vote for the budget without seeing it? Absolutely not. I think it would be foolhardy of anybody on this side of this House, or any side of the House for that matter, to say that they're just going to blindly vote for the budget if you haven't even seen it and they don't even know what's in there. That would not be responsible. As long as it's reasonable, I'll be voting for it. I do want to put that out there.

With that said, I don't think there's any worry about the government being toppled. That's not what I'm hearing here today. I think that we can go through the normal process of a three-month Interim Supply. That way I think we're all comfortable, because it falls within the norms of how we operate in the House of Assembly. We're not giving government free rein to have six months, especially with where we're to financially, especially now with oil prices where they're to and the volatility that we have.

I don't think anyone on this side of this House is going to be comfortable to simply say do whatever you want for the next six months and you got free rein to spend money or not spend money on whatever you feel like without debate. I don't think that's reasonable.

I think that three months is fine. At least that way we're all comfortable – again, the government is not going to topple and, by the same token, I think that Members on this side would have some confidence as well that government is not going to pull a fast one. I think part of all this whole issue here is a little bit of mistrust perhaps on all sides, political mistrust of what somebody could be up to. I think that is what's kind of fueling all of this, that sense of is someone going to pull a fast one somehow. That's what everyone is trying to guard against.

By just going the three months, which is the norm, I think we should be fine. Everyone will be comfortable with it. I think that the budget – again, if it's a reasonable budget, based on where we're to financially and so on, nothing too harsh, nothing too crazy, I think that it will likely pass. If it doesn't, as has been said, if there's a sense that the budget is not going to pass, then I would be the first one, as has been said, to say bring in another Interim Supply, because nobody wants to see our public service employees not get paid. Nobody wants to see the services shut down to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Who in their right mind would want to see that happen? Nobody would want to see it happen. It's not going to happen. The bottom line is it's not going to happen because Members on all sides of the House are not going to allow that to happen.

We will find a way to bridge that gap and bring in a second Supply bill, if necessary, if the sense is there that the budget is not going to pass. I can guarantee you that's just reality. There's no reason why then, based on that, why we cannot pass this amendment and go through the normal process now with Interim Supply and there's no reason then why we can't go into our normal budget cycle with Estimates and our budget debate and so on.

As has been said, I'm looking forward to that budget debate and see what we're going to do.

I'm looking forward, as the Member here for Humber - Bay of Islands have said about agencies, boards and commissions. I think that's an issue. I think one of the things – myself and the minister have chatted about some things. I think we need to have a deeper dive into agencies, boards and commissions.

We go through an Estimates process with core government; we don't do anything, or very little, when it comes to agencies, boards and commissions. I would love to see some kind of a mechanism put in place where we're diving into the line by lines of what is happening at the NLC or Nalcor or any of those places; start questioning those directors and managers and whatever they are, line by line, what they're spending money on in agencies, boards and commissions. We don't do it.

I think that something that we need to start adopting: finding a way to be doing more of that type of thing. Because that's where, I believe, if I'm not mistaken, I don't know the exact percentage, I'm going to say 70 per cent maybe of the budget is actually expended through agencies, boards and commissions.

When you think about it, 70 per cent – we have a budget –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Sixty.

**MR. LANE:** Sixty, is it? Okay, 60, fine.

Think about it, the huge budget that we have, the huge deficits that we're running, 60 per cent of that money is flowing through agencies, boards and commissions and we'll spend all of our time in this budget process questioning line by line with ministers and assistant deputy ministers and deputy ministers and directors, line by line, scrutinizing everything that's going on in core government departments that represents 40 per cent of the money, yet 60 per cent of that money, and possibly 60 per cent of that debt and deficit is going through agencies, boards and commissions and we're not even delving into any of it. As elected Members representing the people, we're not delving into that. It makes no sense to me.

I understand we might have boards of directors in place, appointed boards and there might be an

annual report put out by Nalcor or put out by the Liquor Corporation or whatever the case might be, and you can look at the report; but as elected Members of this House of Assembly, we are not going through any kind of a process where we are actually delving into their budgets and questioning where their money is being spent.

These are the types of things that we need to start doing more of to get the spending under control. Because, as the Auditor General has said, we are in a very, very, very serious situation when it comes to our finances, when it comes to our year-over-year deficits, when it comes to our provincial debt, and we need to start working towards dealing with that expense side of the equation, and ABCs is really where we need start heading.

Thank you for the time, Mr. Chair. I look forward to speaking again.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

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

I'll always get the opportunity to speak in the House, and I will. It's always a great pleasure to speak on behalf of the people of Humber - Bay of Islands.

Just on some things that were brought up, I know the Minister of Finance – I heard the Member for Cape St. Francis. He's right, you shouldn't look at a budget, but there are questions that I know in 2015 when we took over – you're talking about we shouldn't vote on something unless we see it. How about Muskrat Falls when we were in the Opposition? We were in the Opposition over here asking questions. We went for the longest filibuster in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador trying to get information on Muskrat Falls.

So it's easy to start throwing aspersions on the Minister of Finance, but remember what you did when you were in government, because without Muskrat Falls a lot of this pressure would be off us.

I don't mean to be picking up for the Liberals, because we all know what happened to me with the Liberals, but I have to speak the way it is.

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. JOYCE:** Yes, I know people are getting upset with it, but I always said I'm going to speak the way it is, for right or wrong.

When the Member for Cape St. Francis stands up and says how come we go out and read something and then never seen? Well, we asked that for five straight days. For five straight days we sat in this Legislature trying to get information on Muskrat Falls and we couldn't get it; yet, all of a sudden we're going to vilify the Minister of Finance who's bringing something in which is open for debate. I look forward to a discussion on the amendment. I think it's a great amendment. It's something we should open ourselves to.

Another thing, Mr. Chair, the Member for Cape St. Francis, when he was talking about we should have all the information. Can you remember in 2015 when we first got the financial update? What was the deficit, \$2 billion? No, \$1.7 billion and it went up to \$2.5 billion the first or second day when we got a financial briefing. All the province of Newfoundland and Labrador were thinking it was down to \$1.5 billion, \$1.6 billion and it ended up at \$2.5 billion – I can't remember the exact figures, but over a billion dollars than what was actually said out in the public.

I'll say to the Member for Cape St. Francis, when you want to stand up and say you can't vote on things that you haven't seen, your government did it. That's no excuse for not looking at the budget here. Absolutely no excuse.

I agree with my colleague for Mount Pearl - Southlands that it's hard for us to go, but we can't just say we're going to criticize everybody if we did the same thing. I know in 2015 when that deficit went up over \$1.2 billion when we were giving the financial, we had to make harsh decisions. When you look at some of the harsh decisions we made, it's because the information was kept back from the party at the time and kept back from the general public. That's no excuse for us not seeing the budget this time. If it was wrong back in 2015, it's wrong now.

We have to wait for the rationale about if we're going to delay it for six months. We have to listen to the rationale. As I told the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, we discussed it. There's no guarantee that I'm going to just jump on with the Liberal caucus if there's not a good explanation for it. Absolutely not. I'm not going to put my hand up unless there's a good reason, and we don't have a good discussion on what's going to be in the six-month supply.

When you look at Interim Supply and you hold it up to six months, it's just estimates of what's going to be spent in each department. It doesn't say how. It doesn't say what the possibilities are and are there any new projects there? Is there any new hiring in Interim Supply in the line items? It's definitely not.

Those are the kinds of questions we even have to ask in Interim Supply; the type of questions we have to ask. There's no guarantee that I'm going to raise my hand with the Liberals and the governing party to say, yeah, we're going to have a six-month supply.

I think on behalf of the NDP, the Leader of the NDP, I think it's very prudent to bring in that amendment so we can have that discussion. I think it's great to have that discussion. Whatever conclusion we come up with is what we have to live with here in the House of Assembly, and we have to live back in our own districts. We all have to be answerable to our districts, which, collectively, we're answerable to the people of the province. And we will be, because I can assure you the voters will remember what we do in this Legislature.

Again, I look forward to the full debate on the Interim Supply, and I look forward to the debate on the amendment. I'll just take a minute, too, Mr. Chair, to talk about the budget, just to let people know who are listening and for the record. I just want to let people know for the record that in the budget you can talk about any issue in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm going to talk about some of the issues with the Humber - Bay of Islands. I look at Lark Harbour that's still looking for water and sewer, and it's really not the government's fault. The

PC government was in, it's not their fault. It's not the Liberal government.

Back in, I'd say, 1993 they were offered money and they didn't accept it because the people at the time didn't think it was the right thing but they are now. So they're a bit behind, but it's not because of any Liberal or PC government. It's because the residents at the time didn't feel they needed it, but now they do for health and safety.

It is moving ahead, and the first lot of money was given I think back in 2014 under the PC government. It has continued on under the Liberal government and a lot has been done. There is another tender hopefully going to be going out soon for that. That was money that was (inaudible) last year.

Lark Harbour and York Harbour, if we all remember, were hit hard during the floods. There has been a lot of work done through the Minister of Transportation and Works. The minister of Municipal Affairs at the time did a great job of it. I just have to say that they're moving along that way.

When you move up to Humber Arm South and along Route 450, that's one of the major safety concerns, is the gabion baskets and the route along 450. Will I be advocating to ensure that some of the work that's been done, the great work by the Transportation and Works staff, is going to continue on to make it safe? Of course I am, on behalf of the residents.

When you move up to Johns Beach, I know the minister visited Johns Beach with myself probably about two weeks ago, and we saw some of the issues of the major floods. The major floods are still evident in the area and the minister has committed to work with the staff on the West Coast and work with the residents to make the road safe. That is part of my job, to advocate on that.

Now people say: Well, you're looking for money. But there is going to be a certain amount of money and expenditures for Transportation and Works. As we know, it's all done on priority and it's all done on safety. I have been, for almost two years, pushing for the safety concerns. I know the minister visited two or three times and we know that the conditions, the

same with Mount Moriah, through the flood area. I'll be advocating those types of issues, Mr. Chair, and I'm standing up for the people.

In Corner Brook, the same thing. Corner Brook is a big part of the district and I know I work with the Member for Corner Brook and look at the ball field. We've been keeping a lot of youth in the baseball program in Corner Brook, keeping them in the fields and keeping them off the roads and the streets, giving them good guidance. That's the kind of thing that we need to work at and we will, just as the local MHAs.

If you go on the North Shore, one of the biggest projects over on the North Shore that went ahead was the outdoor skating rink. Right now they have a ball program in the summertime alone and they have an outdoor skating rink and they have a roof put on it. The volunteers and all the recreation committee and the town council in Meadows have this great outdoor rink now, which, wintertime, they even have to book times for it – with a roof on it. That's the long-term investment to keep youth occupied, keep them out of trouble and give them some guidance when they're in there. In Cox's Cove, the same thing, Mr. Chair; it's the arena where they bring youth, figure skating out there this year, the opening of the tournament.

Before I go, this past weekend I attended two firemen's balls, one in Humber Arm South and one in HIS – Hughes Brook-Irishtown-Summerside. There's no group of people more than first responders that get my respect. I know just the day before they had an emergency with someone, they went to an emergency and the person didn't make it. I know where one firefighter came home and his granddaughter went into convulsions. He actually had the needle out there, went in and saved his granddaughter right then and there.

So to all the first responders in Newfoundland and Labrador, and especially in the Humber - Bay of Islands, I tip my hat to you, I thank you for all the work that you do, I thank you for putting your lives on the line, and I thank each and every one of you from the bottom of my heart for keeping us all safe. I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs is agreeing –

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

Time has expired.

**MR. JOYCE:** Thank you.

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

**MR. CROCKER:** Mr. Chair, I move that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

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

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.

**MR. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred, have directed me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

**MR. CROCKER:** Tomorrow.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again on tomorrow.

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

**MR. CROCKER:** Mr. Speaker, considering the hour of the day, I move that this House do now adjourn, seconded by the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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