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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.

Before we start this session of the House that's a little unusual, I know, the Clerk of the House has provided us with some information in advance of the reconvening today. This guidance material is developed in consultation with the latest public health measures and advice from the chief medical officer. In terms of the Chambers, we've revised the configuration of the House to allow for more physical distancing between Members.

In addition to the revised configuration, the chief medical officer recommends the use of non-medical masks by Members and House officials when moving around the Chamber and other areas of the precinct, such as the caucus rooms, washrooms and offices in the area. They are not required while Members are sitting in the Chamber or when they are speaking in the Chamber but when they move about the Chamber, people should be wearing a mask.

In her approval of the Chamber configuration, the chief medical officer also stated the following: I would like to reinforce that the safety of the six feet of separation only applies when talking is happening at a normal volume and force. If there is shouting or singing – we don't have too much singing here, but if there's shouting, then droplets can travel further, so we must encourage MHAs to keep their volume at a normal conversational level and use their microphones as much as possible.

I also recommend staying seated to speak if at all possible, as the tendency to move around when standing could narrow the six-foot distance. These issues are small compared to the space issues, but we want to set the best example possible.

So that's from the chief medical officer. Based on the advice, Members will need to first stand to be recognized and then when they're recognized, immediately sit down and speak while sitting down, as I'm doing now. A temporary change in the Standing Orders to

accommodate this has been drafted and will require approval in the House today.

In order to minimize to the extent possible the number of persons physically present, we don't have any Pages on duty today. Bottled water is provided, and should you require more water or other things, you can indicate to the Sergeant-at-Arms.

Access to the Chamber: To reduce the contact points in the House, the doors of the Chamber will be left open while Members are in sitting so we don't have to touch the doorknobs to open the doors. If you require someone to drop something off to the House, get something to you in the House, you should bring it to the Clerk's office and the Clerk's office will arrange to get the material into the House.

Members should also note, as I said before, moving around all the precincts of the House, which includes the hallways and the caucus rooms and offices, people are asked to wear a non-medical mask, when moving around. And other precautions have been taken in relation to the number of people in an elevator, washrooms and things like that.

So you all should have this information prior to the House opening and if you require any further information on this, you should talk to the Clerk of the House. I just want to make you aware of those things before we start today's session.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for clarifying those –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. COADY: Oops, I'm the first one to break the rule.

MR. SPEAKER: It's going to take some time to get used to.

MS. COADY: I haven't made the motion yet.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. I see that there are 40 Members in today's sitting,

and it's wonderful to have everyone here and everyone back.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice, and seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Works and Deputy Government House Leader, to move the following motion: That for the period of the sitting of this House from June 9 to June 18 inclusive, this House will sit in accordance with the times prescribed in Standing Order 9(1) except that the House will not sit on Wednesday morning on June 10, 2020, or June 17, 2020; that for the purpose of this sitting of the House, the Speaker's gallery and the public gallery shall be considered to be part of the Chamber of this House; that notwithstanding any Standing Order to the contrary, a Member may be recognized by the Speaker from any place in which they are sitting in the Chamber; and that notwithstanding any Standing Order to the contrary, a Member shall stand to be recognized by the Speaker but shall speak in debate from a seated position in accordance with the recommendations of the chief medical officer of Health.

Mr. Speaker, I ask leave for this motion to be debated today.

MR. SPEAKER: We have received a copy of this motion in advance and it is in order.

Does the Member have leave of the House to introduce this motion now?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the leave of the House to debate this motion.

Mr. Speaker, these are the requirements because of the pandemic in which we find ourselves in. It is good to have Members back in the House of Assembly in full force today, Mr. Speaker, but we are still on Alert Level 3. We have consulted with the chief medical officer and we have protocols in place to ensure that we can indeed progress the House of Assembly, including having Members sit in the public galleries, in the Speaker's galleries, having Members recognized

from any place in which they are sitting, and, of course, Mr. Speaker, debating from a seated position which is new to this House as well.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we have delayed the House sittings on Wednesday mornings to allow for the All-Party Committee on the pandemic to meet, and, of course, going into the afternoon sessions for the public press conferences that are held, of course, multiple times during the week. So allowing that opportunity to discuss pandemic-related and economic-related issues.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad I have leave for this today and that we are able to progress the House of Assembly. I ask all Members to support this motion so that we can indeed do the people's work in this House; albeit in a modified manner, but still getting the work done that needs to be done in this House of Assembly and for accountability to be held as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's indeed an honour, and I know I can speak on behalf of definitely our Members of our caucus here in the PC and our Leader, but I would think all Members of the House of Assembly, to be back in doing the work for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and those people who elected us.

As the Government House Leader has noted, it's a very unique time that we find ourselves in, something that nobody could have ever imagined when they put their name forward to be elected, nor would I suspect the people of Newfoundland and Labrador ever expected this is how they would have to do their day-to-day operations and how we, as parliamentarians, would have to represent them in addressing legislation and the laws and the policies that operate this great province of ours.

We've come a long way in the last – less than three months. I recall the first meeting of the joint party committee to look at the pandemic health emergency and how that would unfold, and the decisions that had to be made in the best

interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We collaboratively worked together.

There are times when discussions can't take place immediately. There are times when some information gets shared that wasn't shared with everybody else, unfortunately. There are times when there are different entities that can't be, at a moment's notice, engaged in the process, but it's never meant to be deliberate. It's meant to be a collaborative approach, and working in a very unique situation, in unique times with unique challenges, we've all worked together to try to find the best way to make things happen.

In this House alone we have four direct entities. We have the government, we have the Official Opposition, we have the Third Party and we have our independents. There are approaches to try to engage all of them around the decision-making process and having input. At the end of the day, certain decisions have to be made to move things forward. If not, we'll be at a stalemate forever and a day. Things have to happen. The people deserve work that's necessary to improve their lives to continue, and for us to get beyond this and get back to some sense of normality.

What we're endeavouring to do this week is to do that. There have been pieces of legislation, for those who may not know, that has been on the docket from March when we recessed the House, and we only recessed the House, not because people didn't want to do the work that they had been elected to do, but because the pandemic was the immediate necessary situation that we had to deal with.

We've since been able to come back on a couple of occasions to deal with emergency-related things, and that's due to the co-operation of the Members in this House. Also, I have to note the staff. They've had to work diligently around certain protocols, abilities to redefine their roles and to work within unique situations to make this happen. We've managed to get to that point to ensure that the rules, regulations, the policies and the ability to be able to provide services for people of Newfoundland and Labrador didn't get hindered because we couldn't operate in the same standard process that we had in the past.

What we're trying to endeavour here is to get back to some sense of normality. For the people who may not know it, there was a Committee struck of virtual parliament that we wanted to look at, because nobody had any idea – and still have no idea – how long this may go. We're hoping that because of the great work of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, that we've managed to squash the curve, but we want to ensure that we're ready for whatever happens, to be able to keep the needs of the people forefront when it comes to responsibility we have as parliamentarians.

We've been working through a virtual parliament Committee process. All four entities have input to that to ensure we have a process that moves forward. Part of that debate was finding the best mechanism in the quickest period of time to ensure as many parliamentarians as possible, but in this case all – because while you can talk virtual, we know the virtual parliament process can work but it's not as efficient. It's not the same collaborative approach. It's not the same interaction as you have if you're sitting in the people's House and having that debate. We've managed to work through co-operation between all the entities, the staff, the House of Assembly and all the government officials to make this happen.

I'm proud to say that we were part of a collaborative approach here to get everybody here. We have one of our key government Members who's volunteered to sit in the gallery, who's still apt to do their job and answer questions, so there's collaboration. We've had other Members who have agreed to sit in the Speaker's gallery. We've had Members agree to all kinds of restrictions. That's a testament to what we do first and foremost, and that's to represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Will we still have an opportunity over the next seven days to debate the question? Maybe even to banter a little bit about policy and operations. No doubt, but that's what people expect us to do. At the end of the day they expect us to get into the House, deal with what's necessary, get answers to questions and move towards moving the best processes and policies forward so that we move beyond the COVID emergency and get back to doing our day-to-day activities.

We've come a long way in a short period of time. We've come a long way because the people of Newfoundland and Labrador supported what we did and we've come a long way because, as parliamentarians, we also supported each other.

I'm looking forward to the debate. We have four pieces of legislation that may not change the world, but they're important to the industries that they're relevant to and we need them to move that forward. No doubt we'll get back to normality, if it's in September or if it's back in our fall sitting in October or whenever it is, hopefully as normal as possible. But this is bringing everybody together to find the best way to do what we were elected to do, and that's serve the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to a good dialogue; good, open debate; good question and answers; and an opportunity to sign off on some legislation for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Certainly, I will echo the sentiments of the Government and Opposition House Leaders. This is, indeed, certainly an exercise in collaboration and co-operation. We may not agree on certain issues, but on this we've all come to the agreement that we do need to get back to the House.

Certainly, if someone had said to me that a year ago, when I first got elected, that I figured that was going to be the biggest change in my life, serving as an MHA; nobody said about serving during Snowmageddon or during COVID-19, a pandemic, so it's been a learning exercise in so many ways. Certainly, throughout this process I would like to say that there has been an awful lot of communication between our party, our Members and other ministers in dealing with issues. It's been very open. There has been a real attempt, while the House is not in session, to

work through problems, and to get questions answered and to get business done.

And that's been evident in the Joint Public Health Response Committee that really began almost immediately following the March – my God, it seems like an eternity ago, but in the middle of March. At that time, to be honest, this was something unprecedented. How do we deal with this, deal with the fear, the anxiety that was out there? The Joint Public Health Response Committee was dealing with ways of how do we deal with the – almost like an emergency situation – emerging needs as they came out.

Certainly, as it went on and as we, indeed, successfully flattened the curve, a lot of other questions came up, namely about how do we live with COVID-19. Well, this is living with COVID-19 right now. There is no going back to normal – or whatever normal was – until a vaccine is developed. So if at that time we're still looking for ways of how do we carry on with the business of society, the business of this House in a way that protects people, not only ourselves, but also for the people who do the lion's share of the work for us in many ways, the people behind the scenes, the executive assistants, the constituency assistants, the secretaries, the support staff, you name it, how do we make it safe for all people to do that work and also tend to the needs of the people in this province who depend on us.

Certainly, as being part of the Select Committee on how to get the House of Assembly up and running, there was a – I join with the Opposition House Leader in thanking certainly the staff, because they've done yeoman service in getting us the information, doing the research necessary to make some key decisions. At first, it was about whether we were going to have a virtual House of Assembly – and we've explored those possibilities and we'll have them in place if need be, but there was a clear attempt as to how to make a physical House of Assembly work in the COVID-19 world. This is what you see here.

This is not the first iteration, either. This is multiple iterations and the logistics in terms of wiring, getting the proper airflow. It seems pretty self-evident, but it takes a bit of work to get this physical set-up so that we can carry on the work that the people expect us to carry out.

There will be glitches; I'm sure of that. I think the fact that we're here, we're going to do our level best to make this work, says something about, irrespective of political differences, we are committed to serving the people and to debating the issues and to make sure that these pieces of legislation get through and that the people who depend on them are served.

Without any further comments, I will leave it at that and say that I look forward to seeing how this new House of Assembly works and I suspect that if it needs to be refined and improved, that's what we'll be doing. So it's an opportunity here for all of us to participate, to try it on for size and to give feedback to the Speaker, to Members of the Select Committee to see how we can improve this for everyone.

Thank you.

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and welcome back everybody and, of course, to you and the staff also for all the work.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a couple of times mentioned here of collaboration. I have to say that I don't know about the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, but we haven't been involved with any of the meetings on COVID, so the information I get is on VOCM.

There is a new era here of independents in the House. I commend the Premier, the Minister of Health and Dr. Fitzgerald for the work they did – I said it here publicly and I'll say it again – but there are issues that we must raise.

The first I heard that Wednesday mornings were going to be cancelled was yesterday when I got an email from the Government House Leader. Of course, in the spirit of co-operation, I wrote back and said I have concerns expressed to me from people in the district. Mr. Speaker, people from your own district have contacted me on some issues and I'll raise them now in a second.

I wrote the Government House Leader back and said, can we get two extra questions a week, myself and the independent, so that we can raise these issues and it was flatly no. So this idea of

co-operation may work with the three parties but not with the independents, I have to say that.

These aren't going to be gotcha questions. This is too important what's happening in our province. Every question I asked the minister on the opposite side, I gave him a copy of the question. I want answers. I want results. I don't want to embarrass anybody in this House – you get results. Mr. Speaker, that is one of the concerns that I had that we tried to get questions raised, because I do have a lot of concerns from people out my way – a lot of concerns. This is the only avenue I have, this House of Assembly, to get them raised.

To be fair, Dr. Haggie, there was some – when the last session was in I gave Dr. Haggie some concerns. He did look into the concerns, so I have to be fair that when you see Dr. Haggie face to face, he will do what he can to help out. I have to put that on the record. This is the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, for us and I know me – the only opportunity I have to raise the concerns of the people that are giving me concerns.

I commend everybody for working through this. This session – just to let everybody know, this is the way we should be trying to work together, everybody. I agree and I remember bringing this up in the last debate of how we can handle having everybody in here: use the Speaker's gallery and use the gallery. I brought that up in the last debate of what we should do. I wrote and said here's what we should do. Here we are today.

So, Mr. Speaker, some of the concerns I have – I just got an email today from this person who's a cardiac patient waiting for surgery and can't get in; in bed and can't get out. Because his heart is so bad he can't get out.

How can we find some way in this House – what ideas can we give to open up for health care? That's the big thing for me. It's the big thing I'm hearing, Mr. Speaker, is health care. There has to be a way that we can do it. I don't know the answers, I'm not a professional, but if we got in this House of Assembly – what is it the professionals will need for it.

There's another lady who contacted me a month ago about her husband waiting for surgery, and can't get in for surgery. There's a lady I spoke to on Monday morning, her mother is waiting for a hip replacement and can't get it done. They told her mother to sit down, because if she falls we can't visit you. What are we doing? Why can't we discuss that this in this House?

We're bringing in four pieces of legislation, which is important to people – which is important. Some of them, I believe, were already in this House of Assembly. We debated some of them already in this House, but don't you think that somewhere in health care we have to try to bring up that we can resolve in this House, that we can bring forward. I get to ask four questions, myself – two questions each, so we can bring it to – even answers for them. There is anxiety out there.

There is one person I know finally getting in this Thursday; gone blind in one eye, just after beating cancer. There has to be a way that we can help in this House, and the only way for us to do it is to debate in this House and see what solutions we can give.

The email I got back is that we want to extend Question Period; yet, we can't ask questions about these major concerns – major concerns.

This is my issue about this idea of collaboration. If you're going to collaborate, we have to collaborate with everybody, because I tell you the health care issues, that I'm sure a lot of Members in this House are receiving, are also in Humber - Bay of Islands and it is also in Mount Pearl – Southlands. So this is not confined in one area, we all have them.

The only avenue we have to bring it up is in this House of Assembly, either through debate or Question Period. Then when you're denied the opportunity to ask questions for some reason, which you weren't even involved in the discussion in the first place, to ask two questions, four questions a week, an extra three minutes on Wednesdays, and you can't do it; yet, we're going to lose five hours of debate. One of the reasons given is you want to get ready for the COVID briefing.

The Premier of this province, nine chances out of 10, won't be in here Wednesday. He shouldn't be. The Premier of the province should not be here Wednesday mornings if we're debating issues. That's not a knock on the Premier, that's not a knock whatsoever, but if we have concerns that we want to raise about health care, we should have the opportunity somewhere. If you're going to take five hours off debate, let us ask the questions in the House of Assembly so at least the people know that it's going to be brought to the people's attention. That's all.

If there's an opportunity that we all can help out in some way, what do they need to help with the health care issues? What can we do? This is the biggest issue I have, this is the biggest issue: how can we open up for surgeries? There are people home in bed and won't leave because they're scared of their heart. One is waiting for a pacemaker; contacted a pacemaker, hardly can walk now. This is what we need to do somehow.

I'm pleading to the House of Assembly, if there's any way we can bring something into the House that we can discuss or give us answers of what we can do in this House or the reasons why it can't be done or what do the health care providers need to do this here, I'll be more than happy.

This is no knock on anybody whatsoever, because I said it publicly. This has hit all of us. This is new to all of us, but I can tell you there are a lot of people out there suffering, people are suffering, people with anxiety, people with heart conditions, people who are sick, who are losing their eye, people who can't walk because they're scared if they go in hospital they can't be visited. These are real concerns.

I'm asking the House for some way that we can raise these issues, because I can assure you the four pieces of legislation that we have, Mr. Speaker, you can't bring it up. You can't bring these up in the four pieces of legislation. You can't do it.

So I just had to raise that as part of my duty as the MHA and the concerns that I'm hearing, but I will find a way to get them raised, I can assure you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to echo a number of the remarks that my colleague from Humber - Bay of Islands has made. We talk about collaboration; I can remember, even after the last election, everybody stood up in this House talking about the people have spoken. The people have said we need true collaboration, we need all Members working together. That's what everybody said.

Before I go down that road, I do want to, as well, acknowledge the fact I understand that we are in unprecedented times, and I respect that. I absolutely do want to co-operate, and I've said that time and time again. I also want to point out, in fairness, there have been a couple of ministers in particular that I will single out.

I have no problem singling out the Minister of Education. I have to say that I had issues, a number of issues – whether it be with child care, whether it be issues around schools and so on – and he has been nothing short of fantastic. I don't want to give him a swelled head now, but it's true; he has – and his executive assistant. I've told him that; I've told her that. They have been very co-operative.

I have had – not as many – a few issues as well that went to the Department of AES, and I give the Minister of AES full marks, and his executive assistant, in getting back to me on things. They have been great.

The Minister of Health, I have to say his executive assistant has been absolutely fantastic. She really has. They have been doing these daily meetings with all of our CAs and stuff. I know my CA participates pretty much daily on these update meetings on COVID-19 and what's happening and what they're doing and answers to questions. We appreciate that, and it's great information.

But it's pretty sad when I'm getting information from my CA. I'm the Member. She's getting a daily update and a briefing of everything that's

going on and questions about this and that and everything else. She's coming to me and saying, do you have any questions you would like me to ask, instead of the other way around. It's crazy when you think about it. I'm the elected member and I have to go to my CA to get her to ask questions at some meeting. I'm the one who's elected.

We're having these so-called daily All-Party Committee meetings, as the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands has said, and we're not included at all. We're getting our information from VOCM. We're listening to the Premier and Dr. Fitzgerald and we're having no input, no say on nothing. That's where we're finding out our information, and we're talking about collaboration and co-operation.

The Opposition House Leader was talking about the four entities working together. We have three entities working together. Now, albeit on the virtual Committee, I will give credit there. On the virtual Committee, on the virtual Parliament, the independent Members were invited to participate. I participated and I appreciate that. I really do. I will go back to the Member for Humber - Bay of Island to let him know what's on the go and if he has any questions or any input, then I will bring it forward on his behalf. That's what we've tried to do.

But when it comes to COVID-19 and all these meetings everyone is having every morning to update everything that's going on and now you're talking about the economy and everything else, and here we are. I'm representing a group of people who decided they wanted independent representation, and so is the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands. Somehow we're like outcasts or something. We don't have any input, we don't have any say, and we don't get the information. I have to find out from Paddy Daly or something what's on the go. It's wrong, Mr. Speaker. It's absolutely wrong.

So in terms of this particular motion, I want to sort of go to another aspect of this particular motion. This motion, one part in particular, is talking about not having the House of Assembly open on Wednesdays in the morning. We're going to forgo that because of the All-Party

Committee, which we're not part of, is going to have their daily discussion.

Well, first of all, they're having daily discussions, as we say. So they're all meeting four days a week anyway. I'm not sure if one morning, one meeting is going to be a major issue. And even if it is, the Premier is part of that and the couple of Members on the Opposition and one of the Members of the NDP or whoever is on it, sure they can have their meeting. That doesn't mean that the House can't still operate. That doesn't mean that the House can't be open on Wednesdays. We're all in here anyway. The people are already incurring the cost, the expense to have the House open and bring all the Members in, whether we sit on Wednesday morning or we don't sit Wednesday morning. So I see no reason why we can't be open on Wednesday morning.

On Wednesday morning – I would take it a step further – we should have an opportunity through the format of Address in Reply or whatever that format is going to be to allow Members to be able to stand up in this House and talk about issues that are important to them and important to the people of their district. Like the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands just said, you've got people here with major concerns over health care.

I'm getting all kinds of calls, Mr. Speaker, and emails and Facebook messages and everything else from people about health care – people who are waiting for procedures that at the time were considered non-emergency, now they've shifted into emergency. Imagine being told three months ago or four months ago that you've got some kind of a growth or something going on in your body, something growing and you don't know what it is and you're waiting to find out and you're worried to death. Or you need bloodwork or you need this type of diagnostic work done. Imagine if you've got a bad heart, as the Member just said, and now all of a sudden you can't get out of bed and everything is on hold.

These are important issues, Mr. Speaker, that we need to be talking about and debating, finding out. I mean, it's one thing to say we're going to have a gradual return to health care services, but if everything went back to normal now, in terms

of our health care system, even at the best of times there were significant wait times for certain procedures.

So how do we play catch-up? How do we deal with the backlog? What's the plan for that? Do we need to extend the hours of clinics and hospitals, do tests in the nighttime, open on the weekends? I don't know. Are those the types of things that we need to consider doing? If somebody is waiting for a particular test here in St. John's and it's going to take a month to get it done, for argument's sake, is there an opportunity to say to that person, listen, you can go out and get that test done in Carbonear or you can get it done out in Burin if you're willing to drive there to get it done, because we're not at full capacity at that facility as an example. These are the types of things, Mr. Speaker.

There are people who are really concerned about how the K to 12 went this year, in terms of did their children really get the instruction that they required. That's no knock against teachers or anybody else, but it's just the reality of the situation we're in. There are a lot of parents worried about what happens next year. What's that going to look like?

Mr. Speaker, there are tons of issues. There are issues with daycare. A lot of people are contacting me lately about daycare. I'll be touching base with the minister on that one again; he knows, I'm sure, the issues. There are a lot of concerns over daycare only being able to open – and they can only fit about 50 per cent of what they had before. How are they supposed to operate that way? Who are going to get the spots when people are trying to get back to work and everything else? There are all kinds of things that we need to be talking about and we need to be debating.

If we go forward with this particular way that we're going to go forward now, we're going to have Question Period which myself and the Member is going to get – I get two questions tomorrow, he gets two questions next week and that's it, that's our only opportunity to ask a question even, as is. Beyond that, there's no opportunity to raise any of these issues because we're going to have four specific bills.

I think there's a forestry bill or something, about I can cut wood for my grandmother – I think that's the one if I'm not mistaken – without a permit, or I don't need two permits like I used to, how am I going to talk about health care? You're going to rule me out of order. I have to be relevant so I can't talk about any of these issue. Where's the opportunity? Wednesday would be a great day to open the floor up and let Members talk about, debate and discuss the issues that are important to the people in their districts beyond these four bills, but as it currently stands, that's not going to happen.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to move an amendment to the resolution that clause 1 of the resolution be deleted and the following substituted: That for the period of the sitting of the House from June 9, 2020, to June 18, 2020, inclusive, that this House shall sit in accordance with the times prescribed in the Standing Order, including Wednesday mornings, and that on Wednesday mornings the House shall move to debate on Address in Reply.

That's seconded by the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands. I have a copy here, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, we're going to take a short adjournment to see if the motion is in order. We're going to take a short recess.

Recess

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Are the House Leaders ready?

MS. COADY: Yes.

MR. SPEAKER: The scope of the original motion, the intent of the motion – the resolution – is to establish the rules under which we will operate for the next two weeks. As such, I find the amendment consistent with the scope of the original motion and I find it to be in order.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I have been listening intently to the debate and I want to answer a few of the questions that have

been brought forward by independent Members of this House whom have been engaged – I make sure every week the House is open, I do engage with the independent Members to ensure that they are aware and advised as to what the processes are and what we're hoping to achieve in this House of Assembly.

By setting this amendment – allow me to speak to the amendment first, Mr. Speaker, because that is what is before us – they have set their own agenda for Wednesday mornings and have determined that they want to only deal with Address in Reply. Now, just for those sitting at home, Address in Reply is to the Speech from the Throne that was given over a year ago, Mr. Speaker.

We have major issues before this province, not just with the pandemic, but the economic result of the pandemic. We have many issues to debate and discuss and we're spending time here today debating the rules of the House for the next several weeks. This is the first time we've been able to assemble as Members of the House of Assembly in totality since March, and I had hoped to get to our agenda as quickly as possible and to Question Period.

The reason why we had said in the original motion that setting out the processes over the next number of weeks was to ensure that, first of all, the nine people on the pandemic Committee, which represents the parties in this House of Assembly, was so that nine people could discuss the requirements and the needs arising from the pandemic and it's economic aftermath, Mr. Speaker.

By setting out that time, and removing that time available for debate of legislation, only means that we will have to have other days to debate that legislation, which does include Members' Statements, Ministerial Statements, Question Period and also means that debate for those pieces of legislation will continue.

I am perplexed as to why the Members opposite, the independent Members, are requesting for Wednesday mornings to continue, and realizing that if we have pieces of legislation debated in the morning and we do not debate it, it might mean an extra day that would allow those

routine matters, Members' statements, Ministerial Statements, Question Period to arise.

Regarding the issue of Question Period and the request for additional time for independent Members, all Members of this House, Mr. Speaker, have the opportunity to ask questions. We made sure of that by allowing the independent Members to have time available on Wednesdays. It was carved out of the Opposition's and the Third Party's time allotted.

There are Standing Orders of this House, long-standing, traditional Standing Orders of this House that govern us in the rules around Question Period. We did allow, by consent in this House, for the Members opposite, the independent Members, to have questions. It was never permitted previously and there have been other independent Members of this House. This Assembly has made sure that we've carved out time.

Members opposite – and I'm speaking here of the independent Members – can make a petition to the Standing Orders Committee which governs the rules of this House, Mr. Speaker. I happen to be chair of the Standing Orders Committee. The Standing Orders Committee do meet to discuss the rules of this House. We bring it back to this Assembly to be decided upon, but we do have a Standing Orders Committee and there can be matters put before the Standing Orders Committee. It has not been put to the Standing Orders Committee.

Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure – and I think I speak on behalf of every Member in this House – that we have the opportunity to ask questions, we have the opportunity to debate matters, that we have the opportunity to ensure the functioning of the House of Assembly and to ensure that we're dealing with the matters of public interest.

I think the original motion does set out good ground rules for the next number of weeks, Mr. Speaker. It gives opportunity for several Wednesdays which would allow the independent Members to ask questions. It allows for Question Period. It allows for the Members of this House of Assembly that happen to be on the pandemic All-Party Committee to be able to meet.

Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed, I guess, that the independent Members feel it necessary to try and co-opt the agenda of this House of Assembly by putting forward this amendment. But I will say this to the people of the province: What we're doing this afternoon, in the last hour and twenty minutes, has been to debate the rules of the House of Assembly. We haven't gotten to Question Period yet, Mr. Speaker. If the original motion is defeated, then I guess we'd – and the amendment is defeated, then we don't have rules by which this House can continue to operate, so we'd have to adjourn.

There are several ways that the Members opposite can ask questions of this House. They can ask it in debate; they can ask it in private Members' resolutions. There is notice on the Order Paper under Routine Proceedings for answers to questions for which notice has been given.

So I find it challenging, Mr. Speaker, to support this amendment. I find it challenging that some Members of this House are not recognizing the requirements that we need to meet. We need to continue to address the pandemic; we need to continue to address the issues around the economic aftermath of the pandemic. There is plenty of opportunity for debate in this House of Assembly. By not having a Wednesday morning does not mean we will close early, it only means that we will close later, because those matters that we would be dealing with on a Wednesday morning will be dealt with on another day.

I say to this House of Assembly, and I say to my colleagues, I will not be supporting this amendment to the resolution. I will support the resolution; I will not be supporting the amendment to the resolution. I don't think it establishes the rules by which is optimal for this House of Assembly. It allows for us to do Address in Reply, which I think it's been well over a year since the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker. Some Members of this House have already spoken to Address in Reply, and that would take time away from legislation, that would take time away from other matters of this House.

I will not be supporting the amendment, and I ask Members of this House to follow my lead, Mr. Speaker, and not support this amendment.

But recognizing that independent Members have opportunity to raise, before the Standing Orders Committee, any changes to the Standing Orders that they wish to bring forward. They have opportunity, during the regular course of business of this House of Assembly, to raise matters, whether they be through Members' statements, through petitions, through debate or through, again, answers to questions for which notice has been given.

There are many, many ways for them to raise the matters they wish to raise to this House of Assembly. It does not have to be through trying to change this resolution that would govern the rules of this House that make good sense, based on what the chief medical officer is requesting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I don't mean to take up too much time, but just a few of the points that the Member has made.

These are unprecedented times. Yesterday, when I said, look, I have major issues – I said to the minister – about health care; I want to ask four questions, three minutes this Wednesday, do you know what I was told? Don't give me leave. That's what I was told. So I have to go back to these people and say I can't raise your issues because I didn't stand up for you. Six minutes.

MS. COADY: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: Do you want me to read the email?

Look, I'm not here to fight over this. I have major concerns about this. I will just say to the Government House Leader, when you just mentioned that we – the Committee, which I gave credit to and I always did, I always will. There are some things we need to open up quicker and find a way. If not, we can't do it. We need the answers.

But we're going to look at the financial crisis. If you're looking at the financial crisis for the Committee, so we're excluded from the issues of the \$2-billion deficit. So we're excluded, by her

own words. When you talk about that we can go back to the Standing Committee, I'm not talking about when things get back to normal to ask questions. I'm fine with that. I'm just talking about in this pandemic. This pandemic is all I was asking for. I'm not here to fight with them, but I have to stand up for these people. This is just a few of the people.

When you mentioned the word, that I'm going to co-opt the agenda. Does that mean the guy who now is trying to see a specialist, who's blind in one eye, that I can't raise his issue because I'm going to co-opt the agenda? Or the mother who doesn't move? Or will I go back and tell the person whose heart surgery – who's lying in bed, you just keep staying there now, because I can't raise your concerns or find out why we can't move this –

MS. COADY: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: This is what I'm trying to bring up in this House. We need to ask questions; we need some forum.

In the Address in Reply – I'll just let the Government House Leader – it's an open debate so you can debate these issues; you can bring them up. That's what Address in Reply is. You can bring up any issue you like that's in the budget. We all know that. We all do. We bring up things in our district. We always do it. This is just something that for whatever reason when I asked yesterday, well, can we get a few extra questions because of these concerns? I was told, don't give me leave. I'm not going to do that, but I have to raise these issues.

I'm not trying to be hard-nosed about this here. I ask anybody – again, I get along great with all of them. A lot of work through this here, but this is an opportunity for me to be asking questions and to bring up these concerns. I refuse, I absolutely refuse to let the Government House Leader think that I'm co-opting an agenda for a person who's lying in bed, who's too scared to move because he doesn't know if he's going to get a heart surgery. Or another one this morning that I noticed and needs work on his heart, can't get it done. Or a guy who's going blind in one eye just after beating cancer. You're talking to the wrong person if you think I'm not going to – I will find a way.

It was all I ever asked yesterday, and I don't even know if the other ones were notified and even asked. If we can change the Standing Orders not to have debate on Wednesday morning, it's all I ask to be included, that the independents, by leave of the House, we ask two questions each Thursday, extra questions. That's all it was, so I can get these issues raised.

So I'm not going to belabour this here. My point is made. I'm just standing up for the people that asked me to stand up who have major health concerns.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure, I've been around this House now, I think this is my ninth, going on 10 years. So I have a fair idea by now, I think, of how the House works and how the procedures work. I don't pretend to be any expert parliamentarian by any stretch, but I've been around long enough to know how it works. I have to be honest with you, when I hear – and I believe the Member for St. John's West, the Minister of Natural Resources, would know as well. So I'm a little confused by her comments.

When I said in this motion, Mr. Speaker, about having Address in Reply on Wednesday, I'm not talking about now all of a sudden – like she suggested, that all of a sudden now the legislation that we would do on Thursday or on Tuesday or whatever is now going to be done on Wednesday morning and it's going to cut our time short. That's foolishness. That's not true, Mr. Speaker.

I'm saying we will go on as was planned with the legislation on everyday, but on Wednesday I'm saying we're going to have an opportunity to discuss and to debate important issues that our constituents want us to discuss and to debate. On Wednesdays. The alternative that the Member is promoting is we do nothing on Wednesday morning.

She has her Committee meeting, nine Members – nine select, special Members get to have their

Committee meeting, which they're having everyday anyway, apparently, at the exclusion of the independent Members. Have your meeting earlier, have your meeting later, don't have the meeting on Wednesday, have two meetings on Tuesday, I don't care. At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, this is not disrupting anything. We're saying let's open the House on Wednesday, we're all here, that's the normal – we're not changing the Orders; they're the ones who want to change the Orders.

The Standing Orders say we're supposed to be opened on Wednesday morning. That's the Standing Orders. Maybe the Member should go to the Standing Orders Committee herself and suggest that we won't open on Wednesday. She's telling me to go to the Standing Orders to say that we will be open on Wednesday. She should go and say we won't be open on Wednesday. Because they're the ones who are changing the Orders; I'm not. They want to change the Orders.

We're supposed to be open on Wednesday morning and all Members are here to represent their constituents. To say that independent Members will have lots of opportunity to debate the issues – when? She talked about Members' statements. She actually quoted Members' statement. Now, if you're at home listening to this, you probably think that he can debate the issues in Member's statements. I mean, how foolish is that? We all know what a Member's statement is.

A Member's statement is that we get to stand up and say congratulations to a citizen in our district that got some award or thank you to the Lion's Club for the great work you did with whatever. It's all important stuff, it's all good stuff, but that's not debating the issues. Then we talk about the Private Members' Day. I haven't had a Private Members' Day in two years. It will probably be another two years, if I ever get one. So Private Members' Day, there's no opportunity for me to raise the issues in Private Members' Day.

As far as Question Period goes, they'll have their opportunity in Question Period. I'm getting two questions tomorrow and my colleague is getting two questions on Wednesday. I got two questions for the entire session – two questions.

That's my opportunity to debate the issues. I know that the Member knows the difference. They all know how it works, Mr. Speaker, but somehow trying to give the impression that we're trying to – and then to suggest that because we're raising these issues somehow we're disrupting this major agenda.

What's on the docket today? The wildlife, I think it is today.

AN HON. MEMBER: Forestry.

MR. LANE: Forestry. That I'm allowed to cut some wood for my grandmother and I don't need two permits.

That's the major legislation that we're going to be debating today, as far as I recall. Now, I agree with it by the way. I commend the Minister of Fisheries and forestry or whatever it's called. I commend him for that because that's something that a lot of Members have been asking for, for a long time, actually, that you don't need two permits to cut a bit of wood for your grandmother. I think that's what it is that we're talking about today. I could be wrong on that, but I think that's it.

At the end of the day, we're talking about being able to raise important issues for the people in our district, so what's wrong with it? What is wrong with not changing that Standing Order and debating in the House on Wednesday – I don't care if you call it Address in Reply. Let's just have an agreement that we're going to talk about the economy. Let's have an agreement we're going to talk about health care. Let's have a back and forth on health care and on the economy. Let's do that.

I don't care if you call it Address in Reply or whatever you call it. I call it Address in Reply because that's the only thing that I'm aware of available to us to be able to give us the opportunity to stand up and talk about the issues that we want to talk about. Not the four pieces of legislation that's on the books. I'm not saying that the four pieces of legislation don't need to be debated or that they're not important or whatever. I'm not saying that at all, but there's going to be opportunity to do that every day except Wednesday morning.

We have an opportunity, for two Wednesday mornings, to be able to stand up and talk about the issues, the concerns that people have with health care and wait-lists and dealing with the backlog, to talk about the issues around child care – which I know Members are getting calls about child care centres. I'm sure they are. I know I'm not the only person getting calls on child care, guarantee it, and people with concerns with the economy and businesses.

Let's talk about the oil and gas industry and all the concerns we have with that. Let's talk about rate mitigation. Where is that? What happened to rate mitigation? What about the Muskrat Falls inquiry report? What's being done with that, the investigation that's going on referred to the RNC, the RCMP and all this kind of stuff? What about all these issues? So these are all important things, Mr. Speaker, we want to speak about. This is not about trying to take over some agenda. The Member saying that we want to change the Standing Orders when she's the one who's changing the Standing Orders, we're saying keep the Standing Orders as is.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to take any longer to talk about this, but I would encourage all Members just to think about for a second, regardless of what side of the House you're on or what party you represent or whatever the case might be, we have a process put in place here that was decided on upon the parties. This process is basically going to say that even though we're all in town anyway – everybody came in, flew in, drove in, all the expenses associated to the House of Assembly – we're going to forego that on Wednesday mornings. We're not going to do that. When we could be in here talking about issues that everybody's constituents are calling them about and we're not going to do it. That's what's proposed.

That's why we put in the amendment. We think we should be here and we should have an opportunity to raise these issues because there is no other venue. There is no Private Members' Day for me or the Member for Bay of Islands this sitting of the House. Just two questions in total for me and the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands in this sitting of the House.

There's a Member's statement that I'm going to do about the Frosty Festival. That's really going

to address the issues of health care and concerns. It's important – I want to congratulate the people on the Frosty Festival, they did a wonderful job, but that's not debating the issues in the House. These are the things she's throwing out as our opportunities and, other than that, I can write the Standing Orders Committee. I might get a response or I might get that resolved in two years from now.

Mr. Speaker, it's not acceptable as far as I'm concerned. We should have had the opportunity to be more involved in this. We should be part of this Committee that's meeting talking about everything. We've been treated like outcasts as far as I'm concerned.

The minister talked about – and I give her credit; she does. I have got to say when it comes to the House and all this and we were talking about the House, she did call me and she called me every time, let me know what's on the agenda, what we're doing today, what the legislation is going to be – very cordial. I appreciate it 100 per cent. I really do. This is not personal, it's really not, but it's still telling me, what happened yesterday, basically, telling me and the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, this is what we have decided. Just giving you a heads-up; letting you know what we've decided.

Originally, a week or so ago, they were talking about only having 14 people on a side, 28 people in the House and the rest of the people up in the galleries and asking myself and the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, you switch out. I said, no, b'y; I want to speak to every piece of legislation. I'm not switching out and neither is the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands. That was going to be a problem, but all of a sudden, the Official Opposition raised it saying no, no, all our Members want to be in the House and we all want to have the opportunity to debate everything and whatever. Guess what? We're all here, because they raised it. They said it had to be, so now we're doing it but when we raised it, oh well.

The bottom line is that we were duly elected in our districts and we have a right to speak up on behalf of the people that we represent and we need to be included. We have not been included. We weren't included in Snowmageddon and everything that was going on. Actually, I don't

even think the Official Opposition was included in that one; didn't know what was going on; listening to the *Open Line* to find out; and now the same thing with COVID with myself and the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands. It's not good enough and we're not going to sit back and be quiet and pretend that it's okay because it's not okay.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Members to support this amendment. If they don't, that's fine; that's their prerogative. Everybody has a right to vote. We will move on from that particular amendment and we will see what happens next. At the end of the day, we are speaking up for the people we represent and I'm not going to in any way be intimidated or suggested that somehow I'm co-opting the House of Assembly and delaying important business because I want to talk about important issues to my district, as opposed to getting right on down to Nan's permit to cut a bit of wood instead.

I'll leave it at that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The House Leader for the Official Opposition.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to speak to this for a few minutes for a number of reasons. I'm disappointed; I'm bewildered and I'm a bit angry. We have spent an hour and a half on a simple leave request here to have a discussion around changing one minute part of our daily operations in a unique emergency situation, and to address the issues that the public health authority has imposed on us to operate in the same manner we're asking every citizen in Newfoundland and Labrador to conduct themselves during this emergency.

The only leave that was asked for here was that on Wednesday mornings, the two hours that we normally would have debate – don't forget, we have four pieces of legislation that have been hanging for a number of months that we wanted to get to, that were important to have done, that certain entities are waiting to have the legislation passed so they can do their daily activity and their entities can do what's relevant to being

able to provide a particular service – we asked that that would be exempted on the occasion for two weeks only – two weeks, not a Standing Order of the House of Assembly forever and a day – for two weeks particularly because we have an operational Committee made up of nine Members of the House.

Unfortunately, I'm sorry, everybody can't be on a Committee; all 40 Members can't be on a Committee to have it function. It's a reality that at times, certain people get on Committees because they represent a certain title or a responsibility and that's how it works in the world. I haven't seen it any different and I've been on national, international committees.

I have a problem when I read the motion that was pretty simple – and I could have lived 100 per cent had you come in and not give leave because you wanted to stand by the principles of the House of Assembly and you don't deviate from that, but when I see 5 per cent of the Members in this House try to hijack an agenda – because that's what it is here. You're hijacking an agenda on Wednesday mornings not to get back to debate the *Forestry Act*, or the *Social Assistance Act* or the *Social Workers Act*; it's to hijack it to get an Address in Reply because you want to talk about whatever it is, is relevant to your district. And not that things in your district are not relevant, because they're all relevant to everybody else here, but no other Member here saw that that most important thing was to hijack an agenda of the House of Assembly, based on principles that you're not really following here.

We asked for simple leave to do something because there's still a Committee that's very important to the operations of the people in Newfoundland and Labrador during this pandemic. We've seen that by the co-operation we've gotten from the citizens of this province; we've seen it by the results. We're one of the best-positioned provinces right now to get through the COVID challenge and that's because we co-operated and we worked hand in hand. All three parties collaborated.

Unfortunately, independents – the ability to put a process in place. We talked about House Leaders, leaders of the parties themselves and, in particular, ministers that had to be there because at the end of the day when the trigger had to be

pulled on certain programs and services, there had to be people move that forward.

This wasn't a deliberate attempt to leave anybody out, by no stretch of the imagination. It was a living entity that we made work through interaction with the line departments and, particularly, the chief medical officer. But to get in the House and use this opportunity now to hijack something for some other benefit, other than the betterment of what we're trying to do in this House – we're temporarily back because we need to address some pieces of legislation. We're temporarily back because we want to show to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador we're getting back to some sense of normality. So hang in there. There's light at the end of the tunnel. Things will get better. That's what this is about.

I will tell you unequivocally, the Member for Conception Bay East and I would suspect every Member in the PC caucus – I can't speak for the NDP but I would hope that they would support this also – will not be voting for this amendment. We would be voting to put in play the original motion that was put forward, because we want to move things forward in the House of Assembly and we want to get back the two hours that we just lost that belong to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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.

I'll only be one minute.

MR. SPEAKER: Sorry, I was confused there. I knew you had spoken to the other motion but I wasn't sure you had spoken to the amendment.

MR. JOYCE: I'll speak to the motion.

MR. SPEAKER: It's my understanding you spoke to both.

MR. JOYCE: Just one minute. Okay, no problem.

MR. SPEAKER: It's my understanding from the Clerk's records that the Member has spoken to both amendment and the main motion.

Further speakers?

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

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

We will not be supporting the amendment. It's interesting. The comments have been made that Wednesday mornings is when we should be able to do the business of the House. I would have assumed – and I have – that whether the House is sitting or not, we can still do the business of the House. That has never stopped anyone. While we debate here, there are an awful lot of conversations that take place on the outside to resolve issues, even between who've just been going at each other hammer and tongs. So there is that element there because there is that opportunity. Since I've been back here, there is that opportunity already to speak to a number of ministers about issues that I've raised.

I'm a bit mystified, because a lot of these issues were brought up at the Select Committee and there was an opportunity to raise the issues. This sitting right here wasn't just developed out of a hat or presented; it was a subject of the input of all Members on that Committee, of which the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands sits. There is an opportunity at that point to influence how this is going to unfold today. So I am mystified as to why now it's an issue.

I will tell you that somehow when it talks about a Select Committee or about special MHAs, I don't know if I consider myself a special MHA or not, but I guess I'm sitting on the joint health Committee because of my role as House Leader. But I can tell you that in this House there have been certain elements of co-operation. Take Question Period and the fact that on Wednesday the independent Members do get to ask the questions. That disproportionately affects the NDP, the Third Party, in terms of the ability to ask questions. But that's fair enough. To me, that's legitimate.

We've put forward a motion in this House that was supported unanimously of electoral reform Committee that calls for representation by all

party Members and independent Members. A Select Committee of the House of Assembly on how we're going to proceed involves representatives of all parties and independent Members.

I'm not sure what my definition of relevancy is before I became a Member, but it's changed significantly in that it seems you get an awful lot of issues in talking about in a debate that seem to have nothing to do with that debate but they are brought up and there's leeway given for that.

Standing up for people: I can tell you in the three months since this has begun – and I would assume that this is the case for all Members of this House, and I'll speak for my Members of the Third Party, dealing with the important issues – I've been in constant contact about issues that affect me and my constituents and issues that are near and dear to my heart.

Education: I have been in contact, and frequently, with both the Premier's EA, who is a former teacher, and the Minister of Education on what are the plans for this year, and what are the plans for next year and what are the issues that in my experience as a teacher of 32 years, president of a teachers' association, member of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, what is important. We have had those discussions.

Child care – huge issue. I'm still dealing with those, and they will be dealt with. Small businesses in my district – anxiety. They don't know yet if they can make it to Alert Level 2.

Since the beginning of this, another issue that's near and dear to my heart has to do with poverty, food security and it's because of that I ended up sitting on the COVID food security group with Food First NL. I have been dealing with those issues and they're all important to people in my district. Housing and homelessness: I've compared it, in talking to my constituency assistant, as a game of whack-a-mole, and it's frustrating because I cannot solve the problems. Before you can solve one problem, the issue is coming up again. It is an emergency.

But I can tell you that's a discussion we have been pushing. I know myself, whether the House is open or not, I have been dealing with these issues. Whether it's extended by another half a

day is not going to help me resolve these issues because I'm going to be working on the ground to resolve these issues, and I would assume that's the same for all MHAs here.

I will bring them up, but I can tell you the lion's share of the work is done behind the scenes and there will be time and I will be bringing them forward, but right now a lot of these issues that we deal with here are being dealt in the conversations. To me that's the value, in many ways, of being in the House, of being able to have contact and access to people who can help and make those decisions.

But again, I think it's a bit unfair to suggest that somehow that a lack of consultation – I will concede the point that certainly on the House Committee that yes, an independent Member wasn't represented there and maybe we should have. That's an oversight on all of our parts, but I will tell you that when it came to the Select Committee, there was participation by all MHAs representing all aspects of this House.

I think there was an opportunity at that point to raise these concerns and have these as part of the plan. I'm really having an issue, though, with the notion that somehow there's an attempt to shortchange the democratic process in this.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Seeing no further speakers, is the House ready for the question?

The vote is on the amendment to change the original motion. I'll read the amendment before we take a vote so Members – the original motion, the first clause is: “**That**, for the period of the sitting of this House from June 9, 2020 to June 18, 2020 inclusive this House will sit in accordance with the times prescribed in Standing Order 9(1) except that the House will not sit on Wednesday morning on June 10, 2020 or June 17, 2020.”

The amendment is: “That clause 1 of the resolution be deleted and the following substituted: That for the period of the sitting of the House from June 9, 2020 to June 18, 2020, inclusive, that this House shall sit in accordance with the times prescribed in the Standing Order, including Wednesday mornings, and that on

Wednesday mornings the House shall move to debate on Address in Reply.”

We're voting on the amendment first.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: The amendment is defeated.

On motion, amendment defeated.

MR. SPEAKER: We now revert to the main motion.

I believe the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands had some time left when we left –

CLERK (Barnes): (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: The Member moved the amendment and he had not used all his time, so he has approximately 10 minutes left to make comments on the main motion.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not going to take 10 minutes, but I do want to reiterate a couple of points and address a couple of points that were made. Again, Mr. Speaker, there is no attempt on my behalf or my colleague, the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, to do anything to disrupt the House of Assembly. We are not the ones who brought forward the motion to change the Standing Orders. Let's get that clear for the record. We're not the ones who tried to change the Standing Orders; we are the ones who are objecting to the changing of the Standing Orders.

The next point I want to reiterate is that by opening the House on Wednesday, as we normally would be doing in any case if it was not for this particular resolution, the bottom line is that if we were to open we're talking about having the opportunity to address issues which will not be addressed through the normal legislative process. The pieces of legislation that are on the Order Paper, unless there are more

coming that we're not aware of – but, currently, the four pieces of legislation are specific. They're not money bills, so it's not like there's some sort of a money bill, a loan act or something where we're allowed to stand up and speak about whatever we want.

If there's a change to the *Forestry Act* around woodcutting permits, or if there's a change to the *Social Workers Act* to allow them to enter, I think it's some college of their own, some governing body, whatever the case might be, then that's what we have to speak to specifically. We can't talk about the other important issues.

We're simply saying this was an opportunity to not change the Standing Orders, to come in on Wednesday and have an opportunity for Members to address issues of importance that they're hearing from their constituents, that are mostly stemming from this pandemic; issues around health care, issues around child care, as an example, issues around education and many other important issues. That was our whole purpose.

Now, we may have taken some time here this afternoon and somehow it was suggested we're wasting the people's time and so on. Well, I can tell you, I believe we wasted two or three days here just over some remarks made from one Member to another, bullying or whatever it was perceived as at the time. We spent three days doing that. So in the context of that, I certainly don't consider this a waste of time. This is about wanting to bring forward issues of importance to the people of our districts and doing it in the normal time allotted instead of changing it.

Again, I will say, if the nine Members – of which we're not included – want to go ahead and have their meeting on Wednesday morning, they can go ahead and have it. There are still 31 Members left. We came in here the last time with 10 Members, only 10 Members.

Twice we came in here with only 10 Members in the House of Assembly debating the issues back and forth because of the social distancing. So if we could do it with 10, we can do it with 31. We don't need all 40 here to do that. That's nothing but a lame excuse, as far as I'm concerned. That's why we're bringing it forward, Mr. Speaker, because we think there are important

issues that people want us to talk about, and we're simply not going to have the opportunity to do it.

Again, to suggest that somehow we have all these other opportunities, I'd like to know where they are. Private Members' Day, we won't be having one in this next two weeks. Question Period, I'm going to get two questions in the next two weeks, and the Member for Bay of Islands is going to get two. That's our Question Period. And as far as Members' statements go, that was laughable. Members' statements is a minute to stand up and say something good about something in your district that somebody did. That has nothing to do with debating the issues.

The opportunities are simply not there, Mr. Speaker, and to suggest that because we're taking this and taking the time to talk about this important issue that we're going to somehow disrupt the business, I can tell you that's not true. Because I'm pretty confident that what was on the agenda for today, I have a feeling between now and 5:30 we're going to have Question Period and we're going to make it through that piece of legislation. I have a feeling we'll make it. I know it might be tight, but I have a feeling we're going to make it through that piece of legislation today and it won't be disrupted at all.

The only thing that'll be disrupted today, Mr. Speaker, is that instead of us leaving here at quarter to five or five o'clock or 4:30 or something, it'll be 5:30 – which we're supposed to be here anyway. That's the only thing that's disrupted. I couldn't care less about that disruption; I really couldn't.

So thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time. I'm not surprised this got defeated, one bit, but we need to have the opportunity to bring these issues forward, myself and my colleague from Humber - Bay of Islands. We report to the people in our district. We don't report to anyone in this House. Well, actually, I report to you, Mr. Speaker. You're my constituent, but beyond you, nobody else in this House voted for me. You're the only one that voted for me, and I appreciated it. But beyond that, Mr. Speaker, nobody else did. So I'll stand with the people in my district, and I'm

sure my colleague from Humber - Bay of Islands will do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Before we move forward, I just remind the Member that I voted in the District of St. George's - Humber.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We spent almost two hours, Mr. Speaker, establishing the rules of the House during pandemic times and the protocols required by the chief medical officer, I will note that. And I will say to the Member who spoke a few moments ago, that every single person in this House who represents their districts –

MR. LANE: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I believe the Minister already spoke to the (inaudible).

MS. COADY: I'm concluding debate.

MR. SPEAKER: The minister is speaking to close the debate.

MR. LANE: Oh, okay.

MS. COADY: Many, many disruptions this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

I will continue with my thanks to those that did speak to this debate this afternoon. I will say, two hours discussing the rules of the House during pandemic times was interesting and the protocols required, of course, by the chief medical officer.

I was saying, before I was interrupted, that every Member of this House, every single Member of this House, takes an important oath and ensures that they represent their constituents well; they make sure they bring the issues that are required to the floor; they make sure they participate in debate and in Question Period where possible. I

will say anyone to suggest otherwise is not being fair.

I will say before I conclude my remarks this afternoon, I want to say a special thank you to the Clerk of the House of Assembly, the Table Officers, and Members of the Department of Transportation and Works, the Department of Health, who worked very hard to ensure that 40 Members could be here in the House of Assembly today, and for the next number of weeks, as we debate important issues, important matters for the people of this province, and that's exactly what we will be doing, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: We'll now have the vote on the main motion.

Are the Government House Leaders ready? Opposition House Leader ready? Third Party ready? We'll have a voice vote first.

All those in favour of the main motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

MR. SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion, please stand.

CLERK: Mr. Ball, Ms. Coady, Mr. Davis, Mr. Crocker, Mr. Byrne. Ms. Dempster, Mr. Osborne, Ms. Haley, Mr. Mitchelmore, Mr. Warr, Mr. Bragg, Mr. Bennett, Ms. Stoodley, Mr. Loveless, Mr. Trimper, Ms. Gambin-Walsh, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Mr. Crosbie, Mr. Brazil, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Tibbs, Mr. Forsey, Mr. O'Driscoll, Mr. Wakeham, Ms. Evans, Mr. Petten, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Parrott, Mr. Pardy, Mr. Lester, Ms. Conway Ottenheimer,

Mr. Paul Dinn, Ms. Coffin, Mr. James Dinn, Mr. Brown.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against the motion?

CLERK: Mr. Joyce, Mr. Lane.

The ayes: 35 and the nays: 2.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

We're going to move to Routine Proceedings.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today, we will hear Members' statements from the hon. Members from the Districts of Lewisporte - Twillingate, Mount Pearl North, Lab West, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi and Harbour Main.

Before I recognize the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate, one of the changes that I didn't mention at the start was we have a tradition where if someone is celebrating a hundredth birthday, we usually stand and applaud and help them celebrate their birthday. I ask that given the circumstances, in the case that such a situation should arise, that Members applaud while sitting down, under these circumstances.

The hon. the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

MR. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise, but now sit, to recognize a constituent of mine, Ms. Myrtle Hoddinott, a resident of Pleasantview Manor in Lewisporte. Myrtle was born on the Indian Islands of Notre Dame Bay on May 16, 1920, and spent her early years with her two brothers and sisters on Perry's Island.

Her father was a fisherman by trade and owned his own schooner, so most of their summers were spent exploring the island and picking berries while her dad fished the Labrador Coast.

Ms. Hoddinott married and had two children, Lorraine and Allan, before making the move to Lewisporte in the early 1950s. People around our area know her for being a master seamstress and she still keeps busy using her quilting and sewing skills. Mrs. Hoddinott is also a talented,

self-taught pianist and even took a few minutes to play a song at her own party.

In spite of COVID-19 restrictions, celebrations were held virtually with messages of love from family and friends both near and far. I'm told that she had a wonderful time.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to extend best wishes and continued health to Ms. Myrtle Hoddinott on celebrating her 100th birthday.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On February 27 at the Mount Pearl Sports Alliance hall of fame and annual athletic awards ceremony, Gerald "Jed" Butt was inducted into the hall of fame's athlete/builder category.

Jed's career began in baseball in the late 1950s when he first joined the Little Leagues. In the '70s he played with the Mount Pearl senior league, winning many awards and championships. After his playing career, Jed began building the sport.

In the early 1980s, he was instrumental in re-establishing Mount Pearl Minor Baseball. In 1994, Jed helped form the Mount Pearl Baseball Umpires Association. He umpired games for several years and served as a coordinator of umpires during the Canadian National Championship in 1997.

He has served on the executive of Mount Pearl Softball Association and Tennis Club – two other sports which he also played and contributed to. He has also coached soccer and baseball and, as a junior high school teacher, coached male and female basketball teams for over 20 years.

Thirty-five years ago, Mr. Butt was my Grade 7 homeroom teacher. As an amazing teacher, I really looked up to him and I still do today for his contribution to sport and community.

Please join me in honouring Jed Butt for his dedication to sports and sports development in Mount Pearl.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to give recognition to an individual and a group of volunteers who have gone above and beyond to help their communities.

Shannon Curlew started a group called, A Mask for Everyone in Lab West, to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Shannon has set out on a mission to make a mask for every individual in Labrador West.

Thanks to Shannon and her intake team including Noreen Careen, Bridget Baker and Jean Brown, the delivery team, and the 22 volunteer mask makers, over 800 masks were produced and delivered to residents so everyone could have one.

Partnering with Twin City Seniors group, they secured funding and were able to offer masks at no direct cost but on volunteer donations. With the donations raised, they were able to purchase 50 gift cards valued at \$50 each from local grocery stores to help seniors in the region.

There has been many similar stories throughout Labrador of groups stepping up making masks. Masks for Labrador and Labrador Upholstery in Happy Valley-Goose Bay had similar missions and have helped many people in our region and beyond. The ability of our constituents to help during a crisis just goes to show how strong Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking these groups across the province that have worked hard and their dedication to their communities during these difficult times.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Through his system-based mindset and his appetite for social change, Doug Pawson leads the team in developing and implementing the St. John's community plan to end homelessness.

Doug brings over a decade of community-based economic development experience to this role, having championed many social enterprise initiatives in the Ottawa region.

End Homelessness St. John's exists to prevent and end homelessness in St. John's. As they work in collaboration with community stakeholders, End Homelessness are leaders in the St. John's community plan to end homelessness.

The work of End Homelessness is important and extensive. You will find members of his team implementing the coordination and standardization of the homeless-serving system while using the Housing First philosophy, leading collection, analysis and sharing of information to support ending homelessness in our community and securing the necessary leadership and resources to support the community plan to end homelessness, while ensuring representation from all stakeholders integral in ending homelessness.

It is an honour to celebrate Doug Pawson and his team and to support them as they work to make St. John's the next city to end homelessness.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased today to recognize a woman from Chapel's Cove in the District of Harbour Main. I find it fitting to speak of this lady today on the very first sitting in this hon. House with Members being present after COVID-19.

Mrs. Rita Hickey is a 92-year-old woman who's well known for her amazing smile, her kindness towards others and her strong, fun-loving spirit. Mr. Speaker, everything changed for Mrs. Hickey on April 2, 2020, when she learned she had contracted the coronavirus.

At 92 years of age, she knew she was a member of the most vulnerable group to survive the virus. Although a terrifying time for Mrs. Hickey and her family, I'm happy to report that through inner strength, prayer and the outpouring of love and support from neighbours, friends and people throughout the province, she won the battle against COVID-19. Although feeling blessed and incredibly grateful, she is also saddened that other people were not as fortunate in surviving the disease.

I am proud as her MHA to acknowledge Mrs. Hickey today and I would ask all Members to join me in celebrating the spirit of this resilient woman and her victory against the odds.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I sit in this hon. House today to speak to the successful repatriation of the remains of two Beothuk, Nonosabasut and Demasduit.

The remains were repatriated from Scotland to Newfoundland and Labrador.

It was a remarkable accomplishment, where we honoured the return of the remains during a solemn but moving occasion which was held at The Rooms on March 11.

At that occasion, I was joined by Indigenous leaders and representatives.

With their co-operation and leadership over the past five years, we achieved an important

milestone in our history in Newfoundland and Labrador and our journey to reconciliation.

The call to return the remains was spurred on by Chief Mi'sel Joe, and what he said about this is: When you look at the history of the Beothuk people and how their demise came about, I think we owe it to them and their remains. And their spirit will never be free – we need to do something about it. These were his words.

With the help of the Indigenous leaders and the federal Department of Canadian Heritage, we have done something about it.

Repatriation honours the memory of the Beothuk and the important lessons their history can still teach us today.

We trust their spirits may now freely roam over the lands and the waters which they, the Beothuk people, once so proudly occupied.

The repatriation is an event of historical and cultural significance for all Indigenous peoples of Newfoundland and Labrador.

However, this is not an end, but a continuation of a further dialogue.

While there has been much speculation about the final disposition of the remains, no decisions have been made.

They will remain in a safe and secure manner at The Rooms until a decision on their final resting place is reached with Indigenous leaders in the province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, thank you, and I thank the Premier for the advance copy of his statement.

I join with all Members of the House to recognize the repatriation of the remains who have been returned home to the province.

I'd like to thank Chief Mi'sel Joe for leading the efforts to bring these remains back to the province. His dedication and efforts are appreciated and inspiring. I thank also the Indigenous leaders and representatives who have helped with repatriation and who continue to ensure that all residents of our province are aware of the Beothuk and Indigenous history within the province. My appreciation also extends to those in the federal government who worked to make this possible, and those officials at The Rooms who continue to provide safe storage of the remains while they await their final home.

Mr. Speaker, repatriating these remains honours the Beothuk who walked these lands before us. It also prompts all residents, especially our younger residents, to ask questions to learn important lessons from history.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Congratulations to all who worked on the repatriation of the remains of Nonosabasut and Demasduit. This is an important moment for all Indigenous communities. I agree that repatriation honours the Beothuk and the lessons their history can still teach us.

We need to continue efforts to recognize Indigenous history in this province and to educate our children on the importance of Indigenous culture and how it has shaped this province today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased today to recognize June as Seniors' Month, and June 15 as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

As we celebrate our Seniors' Month, I encourage everyone to also take this opportunity to reflect on our shared responsibility to raise awareness about elder abuse in our society.

Our seniors have always been a source of inspiration, for their resilience and tenacity in the face of tremendous challenges throughout our province's history.

We look to them for guidance in difficult times, and we draw on their strength and wisdom in our everyday lives, as their communities benefit from the gifts of their time, talents and knowledge.

I extend my sincere appreciation to our community partners, who provide vital supports to seniors throughout the year.

Together, we have been working to help ensure seniors continue to have access to programs, services and supports throughout this public health emergency.

I would especially like to thank SeniorsNL for the critical supports they continue to provide, including their information and outreach services, which help keep seniors connected to their communities.

The Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors, the Newfoundland and Labrador 50+ Federation and the Seniors Coalition, as well as the many 50-plus clubs and other local organization are also to be commended for the innovative ways they have been supporting seniors during this unprecedented time.

In the spirit of honouring seniors for their contributions to our communities, I am pleased to note that nominations are now open for the 2020 Seniors of Distinction Awards.

I encourage everyone to visit our website to find out about how they can nominate a senior for this honour, and I also invite all residents of our province to celebrate seniors during this special month.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a little bit unprecedented. I'm usually having to face the minister, but I do appreciate an advance copy of your statement.

I join with the minister in recognizing our seniors and also recognizing June 15 as Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

Today, we are in a pandemic. While this is the first time many of us have faced daily living outside the norm, many of our seniors can reflect on war and poverty while they blazed a trail for us all. Their guidance in helping many families adjust to living during a pandemic, seniors residing at nursing homes and personal care homes are still showing strength in waiting for visits from loved ones.

Each and every community within our province can identify organizations, community groups, church groups – and the list goes on – which provide supports to our seniors. Our shut-ins, our seniors' homes, especially the visits from community groups. And a big thank you goes out to all our senior musicians who've entertained residents at homes on a weekly basis.

Nominating an individual to receive the Seniors of Distinction Award identifies the spirit of thanks throughout our communities.

I ask all citizens to reach out to a senior on June 15 and let them know you care.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement and join her in recognizing June as Seniors' Month, and June 15 as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

In many cultures and societies, elders are held in high regard for their wisdom and their perspective and experience. Their sacrifice, struggles and accomplishments helped lay the foundations for our society, but these are just words if not accompanied by meaningful actions.

COVID-19 served to highlight the many challenges facing our seniors: poverty, loneliness, health care, housing, mental health issues and homelessness. The best way to celebrate Seniors' Month is to address these concerns with their input.

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: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Although I want to rise, I stay seated today to congratulate the high school graduating class of 2020 in Newfoundland and Labrador.

These young women and men were faced with an extraordinary situation with the onset of COVID-19 and the closure of their schools in the last few months of the school year.

Despite this situation, students across the province stepped up to meet the challenge of continuing their learning in the midst of a global pandemic. There's no doubt that learning remotely was new for many and not easy. Enhancing the ability for remote learning in the school system, if needed, is a key consideration in our planning.

We recognize students' hard work during these trying circumstances. I would also like to acknowledge our school districts, teachers, principals, school staff and all parents and

caregivers for their efforts over the past year, and particularly these past three months.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, students this year were unable to hold their normal graduation ceremonies, something they plan and looked forward to all year long. To protect us all, graduates and their families have found many creative ways to mark this important milestone virtually. Thank you all for your efforts to help flatten the curve.

I ask my hon. colleagues to join me in congratulating all graduates of 2020.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to thank the hon. minister for the advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I join the minister in offering sincerest congratulations to the many high school graduates throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. As a former teacher, administrator and parent of four, myself, I recognize and appreciate the milestone achievement it is for these young people and their families.

I would also be remiss if I did not note the unique circumstances of 2020. These young people will never forget being graduates during COVID-19 and will have quite the story to tell their children and grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, once again, congratulations to all 2020 graduates and very best wishes for all future endeavours.

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.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement and I join the minister and my colleague, and former educator in the Official Opposition, in congratulating the high school graduating class of 2020.

The final year of school is a significant milestone, marking an exciting new chapter for our students. It's a testament to the resilience and determination of students, parents and teachers that they have achieved so much in these unprecedented times.

On behalf of this House, best wishes to our young graduates as they begin the next chapter of their lives.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Question Period.

Oral Questions

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier ended his March letter to the prime minister by saying, our province has run out of time.

What has changed between then and now?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the letter that was written near the end of March, at that particular point in time we had difficulty as a province to actually borrow. We made that quite clear in the letter. Since that time, of course, the Bank of Canada stepped up with some measures that made it a little easier for us to borrow. It was backed and supported by the Bank of Canada. Since that time, we've been able to go out and actually borrow as a province some longer term financial solutions to where we are.

The borrowing last year remained the same at \$1.2 billion. This year, we were able to borrow both with the Bank of Canada and on our own as a province. I will also say, Mr. Speaker, this is not unusual. Other provinces find themselves in the same place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: We could add, Mr. Speaker, that our credit rating has been downgraded, thousands of people laid off, many businesses are closed.

Did Mr. Trudeau tell the Premier how long the federal government will backstop our ability to borrow before we run out of cash?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, once again, I think there was an unusual situation that happened this year, because we were fully anticipating that we would be in a position with the federal government to have their budget in place. There has been months of negotiations and discussions around a new arrangement. I think everyone in this province would know that we do not receive equalization based on what I consider to be poor criteria around that program.

There was a need for Newfoundland and Labrador, Alberta and Saskatchewan, with the support by the way of all provinces, to put another program in place that would reflect the current needs of provinces like Newfoundland and Labrador. We were very active, Mr. Speaker, in those discussions.

That arrangement, the fiscal stabilization program, we were expecting would have been in the budget of this year but, of course, the federal budget has not come down yet. So that's one of the things that have changed and hopefully when the federal government gets to their own budget, we will see provinces like Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly Newfoundland and Labrador, find some support under that new program

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

How long does the Premier expect the emergency temporary borrowing backstop to continue?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, right now, we haven't been notified of when the Bank of Canada would not support provinces. That was just not an initiative for Newfoundland and Labrador; that was a federal initiative.

Mr. Speaker, right now, as I said, we do not have a federal budget in place. We will continue to work and lobby the federal government to support provinces like Newfoundland and Labrador. We need it without question, Mr. Speaker, but let's not forget the fact that since those late days in March, as a province, we've been successfully able to borrow on our own as well, with some long-term financial measures to support the borrowing that we needed at this difficult time.

Mr. Speaker, I will tell you that this province needs support from Ottawa, no question about it. We need support for the oil and gas industry, no question about it. Mr. Speaker, there is no other province in Confederation within this country right now that needs support any more from Ottawa than Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: It's clear to many that some of those supports will not arrive, Mr. Speaker.

To reassure public servants and others, will the Premier announce a budget date before he leaves office?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, of course, right now, as I've said so many times, putting in place a budget, given the situation that we're into with this pandemic right now, is something that will be very difficult to do. It would not be realistic. In best days, putting together a budget is really a forecast of projections. We've done a very good job of doing that. I think everyone on the floor of this House of Assembly, when you look at what we inherited since 2015, it was very difficult. We put in place budgets that actually reduced our deficits year over year and we were on track of getting to a fiscal surplus, as we know.

Mr. Speaker, this pandemic has changed all of that. I think provinces who have put budgets in place realize, as I've said so many times, it's really not worth the paper that it's written on.

Right now, the date of the budget, we will be working with officials within the Department of Finance and the Minister of Finance to see when it's best so we can actually position this province to put in place what would be a realistic budget.

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

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

I believe the value of our essential workers has never been more apparent than during the current pandemic. I think we all thank them for their dedication to the job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DINN: With that in mind, I ask the minister responsible: Why haven't these low-income essential workers received the wage top-ups?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I agree. The essential workers stepped up. I can tell you, when this economy was closing down people did not have a choice. We required our essential workers. I think there has been a new definition of essential workers within our province as well.

We had truck drivers, Mr. Speaker, that were bringing in essential foods and very basics of life. The irony in all of this is they couldn't even really find a place to eat, as goods and services came and were delivered to Newfoundland and Labrador. It was people like the Salvation Army that stepped up in places like Port aux Basques who actually supplied meals, Mr. Speaker. That only discontinued on Sunday of this week. So the essential workers definition itself has changed quite a bit in recent months.

Mr. Speaker, the program we're talking about is a cost-shared analysis with the federal government. We're still waiting on the federal government for final approval for this program. It will be a one-time payment that will be delivered sometime after July 4, because that's the end date where we will reflect and support the essential workers that worked over the pandemic time frame of some 16 weeks by mid-March.

It will be sometime in July that there will be a one-time payment to support those workers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I understand other provinces have already worked through the criteria and eligibility requirements for low-income essential workers.

I ask the responsible Member: What are we using to determine the criteria and when will that be finalized?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, we have a proposal that's already gone to Ottawa. We're working with the Minister of Finance and his officials. It's a real good program. It's very different in some other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario and Quebec had put in an hourly wage prior to the program that would have been put out, but from my knowledge, no province right now has approval from the federal government for the essential workers program.

Ours will be based on those that have an income of less than \$3,000 a month, and there will be a tiered approach. Some people that work a number of hours will get a certain amount, and those that maxed out the number of hours at 40 hours a week when required to go to work as an essential worker will receive the higher amount of that bonus.

Mr. Speaker, it will be a one-time payment available sometime after July 4, when the number of hours that have been worked will be tabulated. We will work with the employers. That will be the fastest way that we can get the money in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to support the work they did during this pandemic.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Essential workers, at the time they answered the call. They went to work. They put themselves at risk to serve the public, and they've been waiting now for a top-up to their income. They are struggling because they are low-income earners.

I ask the responsible minister: Why is it not done quickly, and who exactly are we talking about in terms of the definition? Who falls under the definition of essential worker?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think some of the information that would've been coming out through our panel discussions, Mr. Speaker, there is a definition that has been used by public safety, it's a federal definition of essential workers. What we've been able to do in Newfoundland and Labrador is to make this a very broad approach so people, as an example, that have been cleaning the buildings that we – customers would actually have to frequent, they're included. Truck drivers are included. People that work in our grocery stores, they're included. So it's a very broad range of people that would have worked – it includes some part-

time workers, too, that had to juggle some family priorities that would've been occurring in their life. They will receive part of this money as well.

Now, the timing of all this, Mr. Speaker, the program doesn't end on July 4. On July 4 a determination of the number of hours that would've been worked during this 16-week time frame, that is how the incentive will be based. This is a recognition for the work, the hours that they put in to support Newfoundlanders and Labradorians during the pandemic.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, the policy restricting any support person from accompanying a patient into hospitals must be re-evaluated. A 96-year-old senior in my district was brought to emergency department twice by ambulance. This elderly lady was hallucinating, could not provide adequate medical information to medical staff, and even with her family doctor intervening to advocate for the presence of a support person family member, no one was allowed to be present with her. She has suffered significant mental decline as a result.

How can the Premier continue to support these type of restrictions in the face of such suffering and mental distress on individuals and families?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, I will tell you, from public health officials these are some of the most difficult decisions that had to be made. We understand the impact on especially seniors and visitation, as an example, as the Member opposite just mentioned, at long-term care sites.

Mr. Speaker, I think on any given night all we need to do is look at the news coming out of other provinces and you can see the impact on some of the most vulnerable. Nearly 80 per cent of the people that would've passed away as a result of COVID are people that were over the age of 80, some of the most vulnerable that we have in our society.

Tough decisions, Mr. Speaker, but some good news on the horizon for those that are looking for visitation rights for people in personal care homes, some of the loved ones that we see in long-term care sites. We're anticipating, and in a position very soon, to be able to make some changes to visitation. We understand the emotional stress this puts on those most vulnerable people and we want to get those visitations and those supports in place as quickly as we can. Hopefully, you'll hear some news on that later this week.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, we all understand the importance of restrictions but surely cases have to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Another constituent's spouse, who was weak and frail, had to go to the hospital for diagnostic imaging emergency visits and during one of these visits was told he had cancer, while his spouse was not even permitted to be with him during this traumatic experience.

Why did the Premier and officials ignore the pain and suffering of families and the anxiety experienced by so many people in these situations?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, in my own life, I think I spent nearly 33 years in health care. A large part of that was dealing with seniors. So I do take exception to think that as Premier of this province, that this is something I would personally ignore. That is not the truth.

Difficult decisions were made. They were made with the advice on evidence and science from the public health officials. I think all Members of our all-party Committee would understand how difficult decisions were. On a case-by-case basis there are provisions. We've seen it where children were born, we seen in it in palliative care situations; very difficult situations, Mr. Speaker. Decisions were made to protect some of the most vulnerable we have in our society.

I don't know the case that the Member opposite is talking about, but I will tell you I spent many hours during this pandemic talking to families on specific issues, and I'll continue to do that in the best interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I do take exception on the comment that this was ignored by me, as Premier. It definitely was not.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear from constituents, all of us in the Opposition, and we need to know how it is possible that these vulnerable people are not given the dignity, the comfort and compassion of family support and accompaniment in these painful and trying circumstances.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, I think the Member opposite is – we just talked about essential workers. The decisions that were made in this situation were to protect essential workers as well. It was very difficult for people who are working as essential services to go to work under the stress and anxiety of what could occur if, indeed, they had to become a positive case of COVID and bring that home to their own families. These are the difficulties that were made in that decision.

Mr. Speaker, I think you look no further than what happened in Nova Scotia at Northwood where we saw nearly 50 seniors pass away. In some cases, COVID was brought into that facility as a result of people coming in, visiting or supplying services. Mr. Speaker, that is the level of what was happening across this country.

Decisions were made. We were able to do, by all the analyses that we're seeing, a very good job in flattening the curve here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I appreciate the work that essential workers did. We did what we could to protect them, but also to protect some of the most vulnerable in our society.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has indicated that there is some relief coming or there is some suggestion that these restrictions will be relaxed.

Can the Premier please indicate when the families and individuals who are in these circumstances can expect these restrictions to be lifted?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will just mention to the Member opposite that if we're in the position that these restrictions are something that could be changed as early as this week, even with the restrictions being lifted and the easing of currently what's happening in those homes, there will still be restrictions put in place.

Keep in mind that if you're a senior that lives in a long-term care site or in a personal-care home these days, you're some of the most vulnerable that we would have seen anywhere in this country. Just look at the statistics that we're seeing. These are the people that were impacted the most by this virus. They have, in many cases, a compromised health situation on a normal day, and that has been extremely compromised with the impact of this virus. They have been compromised just with the thought of having this enter their home by a visitor or coming in through one of our essential workers.

Mr. Speaker, when the public health officials are ready to lift those restrictions based on the evidence and the science that they have available to them, that is when this will be released.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Over the last three months, I heard gut-wrenching stories from constituents being denied the proper right to say goodbye to a loved

one. One of the family's grief led to an exasperated statement in the media saying that maybe we should host the funeral at Walmart because 40 of us could have gone there.

Minister, do you think this is right, and how would you feel if it's one of our family members or your family members?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, back in late March of this year, during the early days of this pandemic, there were many people in our province at this point asking officials to consider an all-down lockdown of this province, telling everyone to stay inside and suggesting that no one would even be allowed out for what would have been some very basic services.

As a matter of fact, I think when the minister used to speak very regularly on this issue, he would say what's non-essential today might be essential in a few weeks time. So these were the types of decisions that were being made.

Mr. Speaker, I would speak to just one event that happened over a period of two days, when we saw somewhere up to around 170 people that were impacted in this province as a result of visitation at a funeral home. We had three people that passed away in this province, some of them as a result of what happened there. This is how the decisions were made. It was based on evidence, based on science. Public health officials made those decisions without political interference.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you for that answer. Hopefully we can get back to some normalcy for those families that – if it happens in the near future that we can get back to, hopefully, some normalcy for those people. I certainly appreciate your answer. Thank you.

Minister, I know a constituent that had a requisition for blood work that was denied to get the test. Feeling unwell, this person approached me for some help and found some private

collection agency that got a number for me that arranged for this person to get some blood work done. The sample was taken, the individual was later diagnosed with cancer and had to wait a long period of time and I understand the situation.

I ask the minister: How does this person be denied to a critical diagnostic test?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't know the details around the specifics of the individual that you just mentioned here, but I know that what I've been told and understood that those people who would have required emergency services, these were provided during the course of this pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, as we speak today, just under 70 per cent of the capacity within our hospital acute-care setting is being occupied by people that are receiving services within our health care system. The specifics of an individual case, unfortunately, I would not be able – if I had the answer to that I would share it. But what I've been told is that those that required emergency services throughout the pandemic could receive those services in an acute-care centre within our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, this House of Assembly has approved \$200 million in contingency funding for COVID-related expenditures.

I ask the minister: How much of that money has been spent to date, and will the minister table the details?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've got about \$74 million allocated out of the \$200 million. The thing with the contingency fund, departments have to use available savings

prior to going into contingency fund. So while we've earmarked \$74 million, that may not necessarily be \$74 million out of contingency, once departments determine whether or not they have other sources of revenue they can use prior to going to the contingency fund.

There's been \$30 million for the new home renovation; \$20 million for the compensation grant for regulated child care; \$20 million for tourism and hospitality support; \$2.5 million for Newfoundland Power; and the Canadian emergency rent is \$1.4 million.

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his answer.

Mr. Speaker, this government has authority from, again, this Legislature to spend up to \$4.8 billion in taxpayers' money. We are into the third month now of fiscal '20-'21, I ask the minister will he provide details on our expenditure and revenue numbers for the year to date.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, we've put Interim Supply in place. A department can't spend outside of the line-by-line items in Interim Supply, so they're restricted to where they can spend. It has to be within the amounts within a budget item or a line item, the amount voted.

The Department of Finance officials, today, are working towards – as soon as we can possibly put forward a realistic, accurate forecast of budget that will be done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Again, I thank the minister for his comment, but I would like to know if he can actually provide us with the details of

exactly what's been spent and what revenues come in.

Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the minister again if he will provide the expected date or projected date or estimated date of when he expects the Interim Supply amount of \$4.8 billion to run out.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Interim Supply brings us up to the end of September. It's six months into the fiscal year, so at this particular stage we have sufficient to get us through the six months of the fiscal year – is it September or October. It's six months beyond April 1.

We've got sufficient to get us through the six months of the fiscal year. There's no indication by any department of undue financial pressures.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, government has gone to the federal government for bailouts three times this year: first, for rate mitigation; second, because they couldn't borrow; and, finally, to save our oil industry. This fiscal mismanagement has placed the province in a precarious position. Now government is handing out money without a plan or a budget and it seems a consultant is running the show. The people of our province deserve a better accounting of how their tax dollars are spent.

I ask, whomever is in charge of the economic recovery, when will we see a plan and an enabling budget?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, two words that stood out in that comment today, one was bailout. We never once went looking for a bailout. We went looking for a

partner. We went looking for fairness. We're not a province that receives equalization. That's what we went looking for –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: – and we fought very hard, Mr. Speaker.

From a rate mitigation point of view, Mr. Speaker, the officials are still working on that. The federal government has agreed to work with us to keep rates affordable in Newfoundland and Labrador. So, Mr. Speaker, again, that was not a bailout.

When it comes to fiscal mismanagement, Mr. Speaker, I take exception to that as well. If you look at the history of this government from an expense point of view, Mr. Speaker, we've done a very good job. I'm not so sure if the Member opposite is suggesting that we should lay off, like others have been asking, a bunch of public sector workers. That is not something that we think we should do.

Mr. Speaker, we've laid out a plan. The pandemic had a big say into this, but, Mr. Speaker, I would expect that this government will continue, after I'm gone, to make sure that we keep a good fiscal framework in place, one that meets the needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and will continue to supply the much needed services.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

MS. COFFIN: Tomato, tomato, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has shone a spotlight on the gaps of our labour legislation regarding workers' protections. Workers deserve paid sick leave and emergency leave and presumptive workers' compensation coverage for those infected with COVID-19.

I ask the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, will he better protect workers and

table these changes to the *Labour Standards and Workplace Health, Safety And Compensation Acts* this sitting?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: I thank the Member opposite for her question.

Over the last number of months we've actually brought in legislation into this House of Assembly to deal with worker protection, legislation due to COVID pandemic so that no worker would be impacted should they get sick or have to care for a loved one.

We also put forward measures for self-isolation based on protections that were put forward that if somebody had to self-isolate for 14 days they could receive a benefit of up to \$500 a week if they weren't entitled to CERB. The essential worker child care measure was put in place, and the federal government has put forward to mandate 10-days of paid sick leave for workers here in the province. Although that's provincial jurisdiction, we'll continue to work with the federal government and stakeholders on this matter.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: 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.

Mr. Speaker, I ask: Why is the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour engaging with a Facebook group called Fight Back against WERAC – or the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council – Northern Peninsula chapter, and seeming to plant worries and suspicion about WERAC and encouraging residents to raise concerns on the draft natural areas system plan for the Island?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: I thank the Member for the question.

I've been elected as the Member for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows to represent my constituents, and when this plan had been put forward – the WERAC draft proposal – it certainly was my prerogative to put forward that information out there publicly so that my constituents could have their input.

I reached out to all towns, municipalities in the district to encourage them to read this draft plan to engage their citizens, and that's exactly what people should do. They should be engaged in public debate and public forum and make sure that the consequences that would happen on a decision where there has been no public consultation, that people have that right. And it's certainly not a plan that I currently support.

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

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

On the same Facebook group, the minister expressed his concern about WERAC and encourages residents of the Northern Peninsula to ATIPP the council's documents.

According to legislation, this is government's plan, not WERAC's. WERAC is merely a volunteer advisory body appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to advise the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources on developing a plan.

I ask the minister: Why is he trying to undermine a plan from another department and a fellow minister?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the hon. Member for his intervention. This is indeed the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council's plan itself. This is their work.

The Member may recall, and the House may recall, that some months ago there was a lot of anxiousness, a lot of hope that WERAC would

put forward their plan. I certainly commend WERAC for putting forward their plan and encourage them, because there was some indication that they felt as though some elements of the plan over the last 25 years may have been compromised. I encourage them to put forward their plan, to hold fast to their plan, to consult with their plan and to gauge and see if, in their view, there should be modifications to their plan.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear to this House and to all people of Newfoundland and Labrador that share a passion for protected areas and for ecologically sensitive areas that need to be protected. This is, indeed, WERAC's plan and they are consulting with the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are very interested as a government as to what they hear from that consultation.

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice of the following private Member's resolution which will be seconded by the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune:

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore oil is one of the least carbon-intensive extractive crudes and emits significantly less greenhouse gas emissions than other oil-producing jurisdictions per barrel of oil extracted; and

WHEREAS upon completion of the Muskrat Falls hydroelectric project and the forthcoming closure of the Holyrood Generating Station, 98 per cent of electricity consumed in the province will be generated from renewable energy; and

WHEREAS in March of 2019 the provincial government released *The Way Forward on Climate Change in Newfoundland and Labrador*, a five-year action plan which outlined 33 actions to reduce provincial greenhouse gas emissions and 17 actions to build resilience to climate impacts;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador in their commitment to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Pursuant to Standing Order 63(3) the private Member's resolution entered by the Member for Lake Melville shall be the one debated this Wednesday.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Highway 210 is the main road through the community of Swift Current.

The Department of Transportation and Works currently are working on a two-year project on Highway 210 from Garden Cove to Piper's Hole.

The current tender for the highway work includes Highway 210 only. The side roads of Swift Current are not included.

The side roads in Swift Current are in deplorable condition. The side roads have not been repaved since the initial paving in early 1970s. The side

roads, which were used to divert traffic during the current tendered construction contract, are in worse shape now due to the extensive traffic it endured.

Therefore we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call up the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to consider paving/upgrading of the side roads, including Darby's Cove, Sharpe's Lane, Maple Crescent, Old Church Road, Academy Hill, Hollett's Point and Shoal Cove Heights in Swift Current to the current existing road upgrade project as an add-on.

The construction has started now for the second season. This is something that I've presented to the House last year on several occasions and I'm hoping that this is the season. I think we're looking at getting an agreement with the minister to have a look at some of the side roads, certainly. In these uncertain times, I guess it would be nice to fulfill the full list, but that might not be realistic. Maybe we can look at those side roads over two years, Mr. Minister.

Hopefully, we get a propensity to help these people out. It's a very picturesque part of our province and certainly my beautiful District of Placentia West - Bellevue. The people have spoken and that's what they want. They want a reconsideration of those side roads because this is a town; this is not a drive-through experience the same as, we'll say, like a Goobies where the gas stations are. I drove through a few days ago on my way to Marystown and had to go over in the other lane because there were two young boys driving their bicycles.

So I would like the minister to have a reconsideration of these side roads because I think it'll certainly bring the town to a different level, especially in the picturesque setting that it is in Swift Current.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The Witless Bay Line Route 13 is a well-travelled highway and a significant piece of infrastructure as the connection from the Trans-Canada Highway to Route 10 and plays a major role in the commercial and residential activity of our region.

Therefore we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to perform upgrades on pavement to Witless Bay Line, District of Ferryland.

Mr. Speaker, we've been advocating for Witless Bay Line, I'm going to say this is my third time speaking on it. I'm sure the former MHA has probably spoken on it as well. I do thank the minister; we are getting two kilometres paved. But people in our area say that's like putting a plug in a boat with four holes in it. That's not going to keep her afloat. So you really need to fix the road.

The area has so much tourism that they offer with boat tours. We have the archeological dig in Ferryland. We also have the UNESCO site in Portugal Cove South.

During this time of the year, the crab fishery is going strong and the truckers use it for trucking back and forth across the province. That is their way to make the route shorter to get across the Island for the crab and bring it to the processing plants. So it's something that needs to be looked at.

Also, we have a marine base in Bay Bulls and a proposed one also in Fermeuse. So there will be some high activity there, hopefully, in the next few years. So we're certainly looking forward to that.

I get some calls from campers, people with mobile trailers and also after I made this petition the last time I had a fellow message me, don't forget the bikers. So we have a lot of people that are travelling, bikers, around the Irish Loop and we'd love to see more upgrades to that road and we certainly look forward to it in the near future.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

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

Order 2, third reading of Bill 20.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Works, that Bill 20, An Act To Amend The Medical Care And Hospital Insurance Act, be now read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Medical Care And Hospital Insurance Act. (Bill 20)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Medical Care And Hospital Insurance Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 20)

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper Order 6, second reading of Bill 28.

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

MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Works, An Act To Amend The Forestry Act.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Forestry Act." (Bill 28)

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, this is a relatively uncomplicated amendment, however, an important one for those involved in the business of measuring, quantifying or scaling wood supply, wood materials. This is important. There are about 200 professional certified scalers in this province. I call them scalers because they measure or quantify the amount of wood that's harvested in a particular area, which is very important not only for an industrial purpose but the calculation of payable royalties to the Crown related to the timber.

While there are 200 scalers certified in the province, the vast majority of scaling activity is done by a small number. The greatest amount of timber is scaled by a very small number of those scalers. However, that does not diminish the importance of the others. Many small sawmill companies also have their own internal or in-house scalers which they provide a quantification or measurement of the materials, the amount of wood that's harvested. This does determine the amount of royalties that are payable to the Crown. The Crown does have audits and checks and balances related to this.

But, Mr. Speaker, the objective here is to reduce red tape. Right now each scaler, each one of those certified members, must renew their scaling permit or licence, their certification, on an annual basis. It costs \$10 a year to recertify or re-engage your qualification.

We heard during the course of our Way Forward and our strategy, *The Way Forward* work plan

on forestry, one of the comments, one of the suggestions, is that if that could be made a multi-year certification, that would improve not only the ability, it would reduce red tape for the scalers. It would allow greater consistency and capacity within the industry and reduce the actual demand on government, the amount of resources that are required by government to initiate this annual certification.

It was suggested that, consistent with other jurisdictions, if we could move to a five-year permit or certification, at a cost of \$50, five times 10, so there's no change in the fee that's being charged for the certification, but what it simply does is allows it to occur for a five-year extended period.

Mr. Speaker, this is important simply because not only does it reduce red tape, but it also is important because it just allows the profession itself to be more consistent and able to govern itself. What I really want to emphasize is that there's no loss or concern to the Crown, to the conservation of woodland resources. It's in keeping with what happened and has occurred under the Forestry Sector Work Plan. It's simply makes a lot of sense.

It's consistent with the views of the industry as we consulted them. It's required because, of course, the language, the precision of words in statute, in law, are very important. As we know, Mr. Speaker, there's a very significant difference in the two words "may" versus "shall." In law, that has a very significant meaning and consequence. Under the current statute there can only be an annual permit or annual certification, so we need to change the act. As simple as this may be, we need to change the act in order to allow for the five-year certification to be consistent in law.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if it's really worthwhile to beat on this one too, too hard. I think that hon. Members have had an opportunity to review the legislation. They've been briefed on it. I think it seems to make a lot of sense to everyone.

Notwithstanding the fact that I can speak on forestry issues for a very, very long time, we'll allow other Members to now provide some input and some insight to the House and I will end my

introduction on second reading to the amendment to the *Forestry Act*.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the minister and the department for the briefing. (Inaudible) important and I'm sure we'll let the amendment go through.

Mr. Speaker, currently, in section 129(1) of the *Forestry Act* a scaler's certificate is valid for one year and expires each year on March 31. The amendment allows the scalers to – would expire five years after the date it was issued. That just allows the scaler to keep his permit for five years instead of one. Of course, that gave him a lot less time to think about he has to renew it and that sort of stuff, so he'll keep it for five years.

Under section 129(2) of the act, a person who has held a scaler's certificate can renew the certificate for one year by applying to the Timber Scaler's Board and paying the fee. Again, under section 129(2) the state that the person holds or held the scaler's certificate can renew certificates now up to a further five years upon applying to the board and paying a fee.

The fee that used to be for one year, Mr. Speaker, is now – it was \$10 so they're going to extend it for five years and the fee will be \$50. Of course, yes, there will be no loss to the Crown and that way the scaler then keeps his licence certificate for five years.

Mr. Speaker, the second part of it was the ineligibility for renewal of the certificate. Bill 28 also amends section 130 of the *Forestry Act* to state that if a person who was issued a scaler's certificate fails to make an application for renewal within three years after the certificate has expired, the board shall not renew the scaler's certificate.

Officials explained that individuals failing to apply for renewals within three years would have the option of completing the required scaler's course and reapplying for the certificate, as would be the process of new entrants. So if a

person goes past three years without applying for that certificate, he can fall back and he can still go in as a new entrant for the certificate. So those are a couple of amendments that they need to pass through and I'm sure it will happen.

Mr. Speaker, under the *Forestry Act* all timber cut for commercial purposes on forestry land in Newfoundland and Labrador must be scaled by a timber scaler before being manufactured. Scaling is an act of measuring timber to determine its volume mass for the purpose of purchase of sale.

Those certificates are very important to have, Mr. Speaker, because a scaler obviously plays an important part in the forestry products of our province and having those certificates now in place for five years gives the scaler opportunity to hold those permits. Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is an important part of the forestry industry for the scalers to have those permits.

According to the department, the data collected from timber scaling may be used to determine wage payments in commercial timber transactions, determine wood volumes for royalties, verify annual harvest as calculated in the allowable annual cut growth models, monitor inventory control and perform statistical analysis.

So those are some of the important things that the scaler does, Mr. Speaker, to determine what happens to the wood, not only as it's being cut but as it's being transported for sale or produce, whichever end product that may be. So that just signifies some of the importance of a scaler.

In order to legally measure timber in Newfoundland and Labrador, a person must successfully complete a timber scaling course and obtain a timber scaling certificate. Of course, Mr. Speaker, that's official that he must complete this course, and to complete this course they can apply now within three years up to five years to have the course, which is a good method to be doing. So that will extend their course.

In order to maintain certification, scalers must remain active in the field. So they'll continue to be active in the field, keep employment through contractors or other means. They'll be employed

and keep their certificates active, and that way they can keep going for five years and keep that certificate.

Currently, as the minister pointed out, there are 200 timber scalers in the province, which is a good employment for timber scalers. I know in Central Newfoundland forestry could be a big industry. It has been known as the fibre basket of the province. I'm sure Forestry could be taking a hard look in our area, as well as the Northern Peninsula, of course.

There has been some impact on the Northern Peninsula to have some forest product-based companies there, but I don't know if that's going to go ahead because right now they're 10 months, almost, into their permanent contract, which they had 30 months to do 40 per cent of the cutting, which nothing has happened there. So this is going to – with 200 scalers being employed, could have given more opportunity for more scalers to be employed, and especially forestry products themselves.

Officials noted in the briefing that while 90 per cent of the timber being sold in the province is being captured by four large stakeholders: Sexton, Cottles Island Lumber, Burton's and Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, the Crown has about 300 commercial operators. Most of these are smaller operations in rural areas doing fire and sawlogs.

So 95 per cent of the permits out in 2018, there were 280,000 cubic metres freed up from Abitibi rights to the province. There is 95 per cent gone out of there with the work that's being done in Central Newfoundland in regard to forest products. We've got 200 scalers – I don't know where it's all going, really. It's a lot more work that we could have done in Central Newfoundland in regard to harvesting, forestry and having an end product in Central Newfoundland itself. If this is being trucked out, I can see where they need 200 scalers easy, because it's all leaving Central Newfoundland and going to other places in the province.

Those scalers do need their permits extended and, yes, five years would be a good time limit on it. We would like to see more happening with the forest industry, especially in the Central Newfoundland region. Again, on the Northern

Peninsula, we would like to see more movement on that, if they're going to be working with the permits for scalers.

We would, again, like to see more forestry activity, especially in our area in Central, Exploits District, Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, of course, and on the Northern Peninsula. I think it can be. I think there are lots of opportunities. It's just we're not tapping into it. It's been there before. Like I said, there were 280,000 cubic metres that were left to the province and now the province owns it, and giving away those permits and no end product in the Central area. There could be more work produced for those scalers and other people.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure we will have some questions in Committee. For now, I would like to thank the minister for a chance to speak on these notes.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to follow the Member for Exploits and certainly echo his sentiment that there are great opportunities for the forestry on the Great Northern Peninsula and also in the Central region.

I represent an area that's historically based around fishing, and forestry and the natural resources. I remember when I talked to a number of my constituents, they always raise, oh, do you know this fellow? Do you know Stewart Mitchelmore? He was a scaler back in the day of Bowaters. People are very strongly connected, whether it be in Main Brook or Roddickton or Hawkes Bay, working in the various camps on the Great Northern Peninsula dealing with scaling the timber products.

I had the opportunity to travel around the province and visit the Burton's Cove logging operation, the Cottles Island logging operation that they have, Sexton Lumber there, as well as various engagements with Corner Brook Pulp and Paper. There are tremendous opportunities in our forestry.

I have to commend the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources for bringing forward this piece of legislation that reduces red tape. That's certainly something that's very important. Myself and the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation and the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board have been meeting with a number of stakeholders and we've been hearing it time and time again the importance of reducing red tape.

Government, actually, through Service NL, through the minister, has launched a portal calling on business initiatives to how can government reduce administrative burden that could be placed on individuals? This piece of legislation will do that for these 200 scalers here in the province. It'll cut down on the administrative time to file for this certification, the processing, the wait time. This just makes good sense to do as a piece of legislation.

As well, in my role as Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, I want to commend the workers who are scalers that have the skill set required for the various grades, whether it be the scaling of timber collectively in uniform length or individual units, or in primary, secondary forest products by mass to look at fuel wood measurements, stud woods and pulpwood measurements in cubic metres, sawlogs and in mass scaling.

It's important that we look at and we recognize the types of training that is required when it comes to completing a scaling course. There is no fee to do this, but previous experience in forestry or scaling would certainly be considered an asset here in the province.

In my previous life, Mr. Speaker, before I got into politics in 2011, I did work in terms of community economic development and business lending and financing, and one of the first things I dealt with was in forestry around financing equipment, like harvesters and porters and how you would look at – and we're seeing new technologies and innovations happening in the forest sector where you could get into wood processing, and one area is domestic wood permits.

I only look at my own district, which I represent district 17 and 18 on the Great Northern

Peninsula, and domestic wood cutting is 65,000 cubic metres allocated under the 2016-2020 annual allowable cut out of 250,000 cubic metres of softwood for those two combined districts.

Mr. Speaker, that represents 15.6 per cent of the entire province when it comes to allocation of forestry activity that could happen based on the provincial total for the Island of 1.6 million cubic metres. That's the Crown total for the Island and it's quite significant. Central would certainly have a significant allocation as well.

We've been working with companies, talking to individuals wanting to see investments. Like the Member for Exploits talked about, there is opportunity, whether it's investing in sawmills in terms of modernization and technology. That's something that's really important and to have that upskilling take place.

We've been investing in various sectors when it comes to mentorship to try and engage youth in various areas, whether it's in the forestry sector, in aquaculture, in agriculture to get them some hands-on training. Maybe scaling would be something that they would want to look into as well that we could provide support.

When you go to a place like Hampden, in Burton's Cove, and you see the type of technology that they're putting into their sawmill it is quite significant, the lasers and the cutting-edge technology that you can get a very precise piece of wood.

The same way in Cottle's Island with the various types of products, the value added that they would have. It's quite significant. How they look at getting into energy markets as well. Then you look at what Sexton's did with the stud market that they have in terms of supporting housing. It's all interconnected to the economy and economic recovery.

The Minister of Finance announced, in partnership with the Home Builders' Association, to launch an initiative that sees new home construction. This is good for the forest sector; this is good for other forest and value-added products. It will help in terms of how we build and support the local economy here in

Newfoundland and Labrador. All these things are very important.

We've certainly seen – the Member for Exploits has talked about it – since the loss of the mill in Stephenville and in Central at Grand Falls-Windsor that there's only been one mill currently for end product and that's Corner Brook Pulp and Paper. With it, we saw there a significant reduction in employees in the forest sector. That's had a negative impact.

I know on the Great Northern Peninsula in 2007 there were over 400 people employed in forestry and, today, that's certainly not anywhere near that amount. There have been initiatives that have been put forward to try and stimulate forestry activity, whether it be in the form of a pellet plant or biofuel plant or looking at sawmills or looking at other initiatives and incentive programs.

I had the ability to go with the Minister of Education in the District of Baie Verte - Green Bay to see the activities that are taking place in Springdale. Springdale Forest Resources employ a significant number of employees and the work that they had done in land clearing and in brush clearing, as well, throughout the province. There are other companies that are getting into that. It's really about diversification and it's about collectively working together for the benefit of our regions and of the province.

There were many times when I met with the council of Botwood, talking about the great triangle that could exist for shipping, whether it be through the port of St. Anthony or on the Northern Peninsula East, as well as looking at the port of Botwood and looking at initiatives that could stimulate economic activity to cut down on trans-shipment and making sure that people could get the resources closer to home where we can create opportunities, and that's something that is so important. It's important for the people of the Great Northern Peninsula, it's important for the people of Central, but also Eastern Newfoundland and in Labrador. There are tremendous opportunities all across our province, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say, as we go back to this piece of legislation around scaling, it is a modest change, but it's something that is really important. I

think as ministers and as MHAs, as we're listening to business, as we're listening to workers and others as to how government can do better, especially in today's digital world, how we can make some changes and modifications to the legislation that streamlines the process.

We see where our driver's licences are renewed five years. We see where passports have gone to 10 years. It reduces that time, that burden, that administration where you can work on other policy issues or matters that are important to the people of the province.

By making this particular change, of reducing the annual renewal from a one year to five years, certainly will make a difference to those 200 individuals, associated companies and all these particular matters are where we need to start looking. It's small initiatives that can make a big difference, Mr. Speaker, so we must continue to focus on those small initiatives but also not lose sight on all the opportunities, as the Member for Exploits talked about.

I look forward to having further discussions with him because he's certainly been helping and being a real champion for the people of the Great Northern Peninsula as well, wanting to see investment on the Great Northern Peninsula and I certainly commend him for that. Every time he gets up on his feet and talking about the people on the Great Northern Peninsula and how we should have investment in forestry products – because there's no person sitting in this House of Assembly that agrees with that more than me, who is the Member for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows representing the Great Northern Peninsula, and I'll continue to advocate very strongly for my residents as I have been since 2011.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'll be brief. Certainly, we'll be supporting this bill. It's a positive amendment. The Member

opposite more or less stole some of my thunder, which is fine, too.

I look at our driver's licences and passports and a number of other things where we don't renew them every year. What it does, I would like to believe, is that it takes the burden off the person having to renew the licence and it also frees up the people who are the personnel, our public service, to do other things as well, to take care of other issues.

Certainly, from what I can see here in this, it moves the renewal from one year to five years. Then, it allows for another three years to renew, should they forget to do so after five years. I guess I like to think of that in terms of sort of when life gets in the way of things, or when people go on to different, other aspects, that they have that opportunity to go back a job that maybe they had some success in, loved, went on to other things and they can come back and do that. Five years takes the burden off the individual to have to do it each year. March 31 is busy enough in many ways.

The other aspect of it is that it also means that people in the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources can also focus on other aspects other than just the paperwork of what seems to be a pretty straightforward piece of clerical work. It actually saves money in many ways. The \$50 fee at the end of five years, I would like to look upon that as a bigger bang for the buck in many ways.

Certainly, here this is a case of red-tape reduction indeed, which benefits the individual, has benefit to government in terms of savings and freeing up of person-hours and it allows for people to engage in an industry that, basically, depends on a renewable resource. For those reasons, certainly, we will be supporting this legislation.

Thank you.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going just keep this brief. Just for the record, as I always like to do for every piece of

legislation, I wish to have recorded, I guess for the sake of *Hansard*, my position on various issues.

I will be supporting this piece of legislation. I have no problem with it whatsoever. I'm not going to belabour what's already been said.

We're going to go from one year to five years, \$10 to \$50. It seems very insignificant but it's something that needs to be done. If it supports the forestry industry, the people in Central Newfoundland and the people on the Northern Peninsula or Eastern Newfoundland or Labrador, wherever it is, if they're involved in this industry and this is a little bit of a help to them, if it helps government in terms of reducing a bit of red tape not having to go processing these permits, then why wouldn't we support it? I do support it 100 per cent.

I will vote for the legislation. Despite the little bit of a scolding I felt I was getting from across the way, I'm glad to see that speaking out on these other issues important to the people of my district, that I did not disrupt the House. We're actually going to get through this major piece of legislation of changing a permit from \$10 to \$50 – which needs to be done, I support it – but I'm glad to see we're going to get this done today.

Me and the Member for Bay of Islands raising issues important to people in our district did not disrupt the House. We will get the legislation done as we said we would.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. PARDY: Many might be very surprised that the Member for the District of Bonavista is standing up relating and talking about forestry. I would at least inform everybody that at the tip of the Bonavista Peninsula there is very little forest, but on the upper part we are significant contributors to the forest industry. As my hon. friend had mentioned about the stud market from Sextons, it is in the upper part of the District of Bonavista.

I just had a couple of quick notes in relation. My understanding is that we are the last province –

or we are the only province – with a one-year certification for the scaler's certificate. Every other province in the country has five years, except Ontario has three, so it's nice to follow suit. Yes, administratively it's great and it tidies things up quite nicely.

Just to be brutally honest with you, before this morning I didn't know what a scaler was. I can tell you it is a grader and a grader on the wharf in Bonavista, or in the District of Bonavista, I can share with you that, but as to a scaler, I didn't know.

But this makes clear and good sense. It reduces administration, which is obvious, but one question I would ask the minister – and he may in his recap, there may be a good answer for it: Why we would not go with the measurement instead of cubic metres? Why not go with just the regular mass in weight? If we want to streamline administratively, why not have it measured in weight as opposed to cubic metres?

The Member for St. John's Centre mentioned it's a straight-forward piece of clerical work, that it is. Mr. Speaker, I'll rest it at that.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Seeing no further speakers.

If the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources speaks now he will close the debate.

MR. BYRNE: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you colleagues for all of your insightful thoughts and ideas on a very important piece of legislation that affects the livelihoods, not just of the 200 scalers but of those engaged in the forest industry. There are 5,000 people either directly or indirectly employed in the forestry industry of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is a significant contributor to the economic well-being of our province and one that we have to do everything to not only protect but to expand.

I'm delighted to see the House occupied today with what some may call a minor piece of legislation but it is a major, major initiative for a very important industry for our entire province.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member who just spoke in the latter asked a question, it was a good question about weight versus volume, why is it that we continue to use cubic metres versus kilograms or metric tons, and the answer is simply in the capacity to be able to take a volume measurement versus a weight measurement.

Timber is normally, or logs, fibre is found on a wood truck, on an 18-wheeler for transport. That's where it's most often scaled. At the entryway to a woods road often you'll find either a weight scale where the timber is scaled, but you'll also see where the truck itself is measured.

In order to quantify the amount of wood that's on the truck, you'd have to take two weights; an empty weight of the truck and then a weight of the truck and the timber. So putting those two together, this is a standard practice of just quantifying the volume of wood and it does not allow for any ambiguities or inconsistencies with the weight of the truck.

You can imagine, Mr. Speaker, in winter a truck can actually carry a significant load of ice and snow and water that would add to the weight of the truck. Often we see that on our highways. So measuring by volume is a standardized method, which makes a lot of sense, but I do appreciate the hon. Member's question. For someone who just became aware of what scaling was this morning, he showed great insight and depth into the field, so I congratulate him on that.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I think that's all. We could engage in a game of frivolities just for fun to have a little cheekiness and say this is not about fish or fish scales. This is not about scaling a mountain. This is about wood and scaling wood.

I want to congratulate, not only the people in the industry for maintaining a strong position for each and everyone of us in rural communities throughout our entire province, but I also want to say a very special thank you to the conservation officers at Fisheries and Land Resources and all those who not only monitor but assist in our forest industry, continuing and perpetuating its growth and its capacity to be able to provide jobs in a sustainable way for

each and everyone of us so that we can maintain the high quality standard of living that we enjoy in this province.

I want to say a very special thank you to all of the front-line workers, the conservation officers and the forestry officials who play an integral role in maintaining a robust and strong forestry industry.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

The motion is that Bill 28 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Forestry Act. (Bill 28)

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

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

MS. COADY: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Forestry Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 28)

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 28.

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

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt 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, the Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Bennett): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 28, An Act To Amend The Forestry Act.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Forestry Act."
(Bill 28)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: These are different classes of certificates. Do these changes apply to all scalers' certificates?

CHAIR: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Yes, indeed, they do. This is a universal applicability.

The key point here is that the hon. Member for Exploits had such a strong acumen of this, I'd like to confer with the hon. Member to determine if he would agree with the statement, because you know about as much about this as anyone else, Mr. Chair. Congratulations to the hon. Member for Exploits.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: Why are these changes being introduced at this time?

CHAIR: The Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This was one of the elements that came forward from the Forestry Sector Work Plan consultations. It came forward from industry. This was an appropriate time to be able to deliver this single amendment.

I'd like to thank the House also. We've had a number of amendments to the *Forestry Act*, including the ability to gift firewood, which I think all of our constituents in each of our districts have been able to enjoy in some respects. So this is a comparable measure that may be small in the eyes of some, but it is very significant and very large. This is the first opportunity we've been able to bring this to the House.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: Were the stakeholders consulted?

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

MR. BYRNE: Yes, Mr. Chair, there was in-depth consultation that was conducted through the Forestry Sector Work Plan. Industry had the opportunity to assemble and gather and provide feedback to the department on a number of different issues, and that included those engaged in professional forestry, registered foresters and

those that were involved in the scaling industry or scaling that currently have scaling certificates. So yes, indeed, they were consulted and I believe they are very satisfied and appreciative of the House's change, should we decide to adopt it.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: When will the associated regulations be corresponded to the changes outlined in the bill?

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

MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I believe as soon as the hon. House provides the indication to the Executive that this, indeed, is a welcomed amendment to the *Forestry Act*. Regulatory changes, as required, will be brought forward shortly thereafter.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: How do you plan to make the stakeholders aware of these changes?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Chair, the changes themselves are fairly straightforward. They mimic or would respond to the legislative change, but at this point in time the key element here is to get the capacity to be able to change, which of course as we said earlier, as I noted earlier, the current statute does not provide the Executive with any capacity – or the minister with the capacity to issue these kinds of permits, so the change itself will just simply be a pure reflection of the amendment to the act itself.

CHAIR: Seeing no other questions, shall clause 1 carry?

MR. PARDY: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Oh, sorry, I missed you on the corner.

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Bonavista.

MR. PARDY: Thank you.

Bold of me to bring in one more question. I'm not sure if the time or the place is correct, but it has very much to do with forestry.

One thing to commend: The forest management division number two is the one that looks after the District of Bonavista and they do a highly commendable job. I can speak very highly as the past mayor of the Town of George's Brook-Milton. We had a lot of dealings with them on forestry resources and to be highly, highly commended.

One thing I would ask is that we have two residents and constituents who were long-time harvesters in the District of Bonavista – again, in the upper end – and even to give you the names, Mr. David Ivany and Mr. Lawrence Parrott. These two individuals are looking for a small commercial licence, but my understanding of the knowledge of the department is that it won't be attainable. It's certainly within the five-year plan that we have, it's not now, but it seems like these plans roll over.

I can appreciate that even the current harvesters who are in the system would like to have more. I understand that too, and I would be an advocate for them having more, but I just didn't know if there was any capacity in the system that we would look at increasing the annual allocated cut. Is there a capacity within the system, and, in particular, the District of Bonavista?

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

MR. BYRNE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the hon. Member's question. He's advocating on behalf of his constituents, which is something we can all understand and respect. I won't be able to speak to the specifics of this particular situation in Forestry Management District 2, but what I can say from a general sense is that there is always an appetite for increased fibre allocation and that's certainly understandable. Within a five-year forestry

management plan, it would be quite normal and sort of intuitive to think that because there is a stand of fibre that's still strong and standing, that there's plenty of forest to be able to allocate for any available user, any ambitious user.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, within a five-year plan, often we don't cut all of the trees within the first year of the five-year plan, we have to roll over, we have to maximize, we have to ensure that there is capacity for existing operators to have five years' worth of allowable cut within a five-year plan, each and every successive year. So that sometimes leads to the conclusion by some that there is a surplus of fibre within a particular Forestry Management District area.

That's not always the case, but what I can say to the hon. Member is that's one of the key reasons why we came forward with a use-it-or-lose-it forestry timber permitting plan or arrangement or regulation. Often, we had users who are permit holders that were renewing their annual permit, each and every year, never cutting it or never cutting a substantial amount of it. So basically, they were booking this stand of timber and preventing it from freeing up for those who would harvest it.

So, Mr. Chair, a tree can only be cut once. It does grow back, but it takes a long time. A tree can only be grown once. So we do have to be very conscientious of our conservation requirements to ensure that we sustainably harvest our forest allocation. But what we also know is that there are resources, there are timber blocks, there are allocations that have gone unused year after year, and now with the new policy in place that says that if a particular permit holder does not use their allocation or a substantial portion of their allocation within a two-year period, then of course that can be reallocated to others.

So to Mr. Ivany and Mr. Parrott who desire additional allocation, Forestry Management District 2 and the professional staff that are there would be happy to sit down with those two individuals, those two ambitious sawmill operators – or woodcutters – to determine whether or not an existing or additional body of fibre can be made available to them from an allocation that had been left fallow for many,

many years but has now gone back and available for reallocation.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Seeing no other questions, shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clause 2.

CHAIR: Shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 2 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Forestry Act.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 28 without amendment.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 28.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 28 without amendment.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): Order, please!

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

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

them referred and have directed me to report Bill 28 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee has considered the matters to them referred and has directed him to report Bill 28 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MS. COADY: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This has been a historic day; all 40 MHAs have been able to join the House of Assembly during unprecedented times. I thank the Members for their co-operation during debate and look forward to seeing them tomorrow.

On that note I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Works, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It's been moved and seconded that the House does now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 o'clock.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 2 p.m.