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The House resumed at 6:30 p.m.

CHAIR (P. Parsons): Order, please!

We will now continue debate on the amendment.

The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again, everyone is congratulating you. I'd like to add my congratulations to that as well, because it is an honour to see you in the Chair and to have you presiding over this evening's events.

Madam Chair, I'm perplexed as to why the Opposition is so focused on a 60-day Interim Supply versus a 90-day Interim Supply. I, for the life of me, don't understand the rationale here. It is a normal process in a regular budgetary process to have a three-month Interim Supply. It allows for the time that is required to do the analysis, ask the right questions, to ensure accountability, to ensure due process, and it normally takes – look, there are a lot of semantics here today as to whether it was 15 sitting days or whatever. But I can tell you in budget 2018, which was normal year, it was released on March 27 and passed on May 22, 57 days later.

Now, Madam Chair –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. COADY: I'm sorry; I'm being interrupted. Madam Chair, I will say this: We're in the middle of a pandemic. We don't know what – things are tumultuous; we know that. Things are uncertain; we know that. We don't know what may happen in the next number of weeks. We are observing what's happening in other jurisdictions with regard to the pandemic. So for the life of me, again I don't understand why we wouldn't be prudent and responsible enough to ensure we had adequate Supply.

Now, Madam Chair, I will say this: If we do not need that Supply, if per chance we get through this process expeditiously, everything goes well, absolutely we do our due diligence and we vote within the 57 days that it took us in 2018 and so we're sometime around the end of – well, I

guess 57 days will be the end of November because I'm not bringing it in until September 30, then the Interim Supply bill rests. I will again reiterate Interim Supply is based on the 2019 budget that was thoroughly reviewed, thoroughly vetted and approved by this House.

This Interim Supply does not allow extra money at all, does not allow a change in that direction. It only allows for a continuance. That's important for the people of the province to know. Now, I have already announced that the budget date is set for September 30. That was to ensure the Opposition knew that we were not trying to thwart or not have a budget or not bring one in. That we're not going to try and skirt around. I told the entire population of Newfoundland and Labrador – in fact, I also told bond rating agencies and the consortium of banks and the Canadian government and anybody else in Canada that may be listening what date our budget will be.

In fact, Madam Chair, I also put the motion in today. This is moving forward on September 30. I've met with the Members opposite; they know I'm moving toward this. I've reassured everyone that I'm not expecting them to be surprised or anyone in the province to be surprised what's in that budget. We had a fiscal update at the end of July. So why, Madam Chair, would anyone be concerned?

The Oppositions are in control of this. If they want the budget to pass more quickly, they can speed up their processes and ask for more sitting time. They can actually move this process more forward.

If indeed, as the Member opposite likes to say, we can get this in 15 days then great, we can move this forward expeditiously and we sunset the Interim Supply. I'll again say: I am confused by what their concerns are. I'm being honest. I am perplexed by that.

The only thing I will say – and we are in a minority situation, so I'm going to again reiterate what I said earlier. Normal budgetary process is a three-month supply. We're in the middle of a pandemic; we're six months through a year. There are reasons to be responsible at this point in time. There's nothing untoward about having a budget based on 2019's full

review of that budget and being brought to this House.

I will say, though, I was listening this week as the people of the province were and I noted on CBC where the Leader of the Opposition did say he was willing to vote down the budget. He said that on CBC. We are in a minority situation, Madam Chair, and the Leader of the Opposition, that is his right and his team's right that if they do not have confidence in this government, they have every right to do that. Wouldn't it be responsible for everyone in this House of Assembly to ensure the people of this province have the necessary funds they need in order to continue with health care, with education, with essential services and everything else?

I again say, and I implore the Members opposite, to realize this is the responsible thing to do is to have a 90-day Supply. If they want to speed it up, if they want to ensure accountability, if they want to ensure they are analyzing and focusing on the numbers, please do so. That's in the Estimates process and the concurrent debates in the House of Assembly. We welcome that, we want that and it is important to have.

But if you do the math and the numbers from the sitting time of this House, September 30, to ensure that we are not at the last minute running in, trying to get an Interim Supply and, God forbid, something happens in a pandemic situation and we are delayed for some reason, for whatever reason, here we have a situation where we do not have the required appropriations to continue with government functions. Again I will say if they are concerned about something in that, we can make sure we move expeditiously and well through the budgetary process to ensure the budget passes as quickly as possible and sunsets the Interim Supply.

So I think that's very reasonable. I think I'm making a good argument. I again express concern that we are not thinking about these potential situations and that we're spending time, valuable time that we need to spend looking at the numbers in discussions about that. I will say this: The same people that are doing the budget, the same people that are doing the accounting functions are in the Department of Finance tonight working. And they need to be

assured of what period of time they have Interim Supply. They need to be sure of the right numbers, Madam Chair. There are a lot of systems in play when you're trying to analyze and do the numbers and fix the numbers and make sure that things are actually correct.

I'll again petition my colleagues in the House of Assembly to be reasonable, to be prudent and to be responsible to ensure that the people of the province have the appropriation they require in case something happens. The Leader of the Opposition, he suggested voting down the budget. Maybe that won't happen, but maybe COVID does. Maybe something else happens. Isn't it our responsibility to ensure the thorough and good functioning of government on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

I know my time is running out, Madam Chair, but I will say, I will implore again, I think it's very, very responsible and I don't think we should be playing politics on this, I really don't. People of the province are already concerned enough about COVID, they're all ready concerned enough about their future, their jobs. I think we should be focused on the fact that we're going to have a budget in a couple of weeks and all this goes away as soon as it's passed.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's great to have an opportunity to speak again. I just want to reiterate a couple of points I made. I'm not sure if the Deputy Premier heard my comments or not but I will make them again anyway; perhaps to allay her concerns, maybe not.

First of all, we have the Official Opposition now who has gone on record – despite what might have been said in the media, the Opposition House Leader has gone on record when he spoke last saying that they have no intention of voting against the budget and bringing down the government. That's what I heard him say. Now

maybe I misheard him, but that's what I thought I heard him say. The idea of needing this extra month as a contingency in case they decide to bring down the government for political reasons – it's been said it's not going to happen.

Here's another reality: If we're going to talk budgets, let's talk math. Here's another reality. I have been quite clear, has as the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, that unless you have something for us to be concerned about in that budget – I say to the Deputy Premier, unless there's something there that's so egregious that you're concerned we're going to vote against, we're not bringing down the government. I don't care what the Opposition does; they can't bring you down. It's impossible. The math doesn't work. I'm telling you it isn't going to happen. The people don't want it. They said they don't want it and it's not going to happen anyway.

I don't know what the concern is. If the issue around the 90 days versus 60 days is around what happens if there's an election, then the only thing I can conclude is that the only one that's contemplating an election is the government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: That's all I can contemplate, because that's the only thing that seems to make sense to me, Madam Chair.

Now, I'm not going to say that's what they're doing. I have no idea what they're doing. I could tell you it would be a big mistake if they did, I think. I don't think the people of Newfoundland and Labrador want an election right now. I think it would be a big mistake. It's been said that nobody here wants an election, so I don't know what we're worried about.

If we do the 60 days, 60 days gives us plenty of time to debate the budget and there's plenty of Supply – plenty of Supply. If for some unknown reason something happens, we have a system. We already talked about having a virtual Parliament.

When we passed the other Interim Supply we only had – what was it, 10 Members, I think it was – 10 Members and all the meetings that we've had. I know we've had a bunch of meetings on democratic reform and other things.

It's all being done online on the computer on Zoom. So there's no reason why we can't have a Zoom meeting of 10 people or whatever to pass another Interim Supply if it was needed.

To suggest somehow that if we don't go 90 days it's irresponsible and people aren't going to get paid and all this kind of stuff, that's absolute nonsense. I have to say, that's absolute nonsense. I don't buy it for a second and I don't support it. I just wanted to add that.

Now, Madam Chair, there are a couple of other things I did want to raise. The first one, I'm glad my colleague for Topsail - Paradise raised, is about the wedding industry, and I understand. I fully understand the concerns around weddings and so on. I do, and the risks. I do, but the bottom line is that whether it be people that are having weddings or whether it be people working in the wedding industry, on numerous occasions – one particular individual, who is a constituent of mine, works in the wedding industry and they have their Facebook group and so on and he's very active in that. He writes us all, and Dr. Fitzgerald. He writes us all on a regular basis and he's asked a number of questions.

For the record, and the House of Assembly, I'm just going to ask and ask the Minister of Health and Community Services in particular. I'm not asking you to cave. I'm not suggesting you've got to cave on the COVID restrictions and so on. I'm not suggesting that. I'm not saying the decisions you've made have been wrong and we're not in a better place for it, because that would be foolish, I know you have.

All the man is looking for is an answer to a number of questions that he's asked on behalf of a lot of people in the wedding industry and a lot of people that are going to have weddings. All he wants is an answer. Why is it they can do it one way in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, but we can't do it? Simple question. How is it any different? Give the man an answer.

If the overall answer to the question is going to be here are the guidelines we have in place and they're not going to change until there's a cure for COVID. Until there's a vaccine that's been approved and it's widely administered, until that time, here are the restrictions: No more than 100

people, including the servers and everyone else involved; nobody can have a dance and people have to wear masks and all this stuff that's in place. If that's the answer, come out and tell them and let's bring an end to it. Say until there is a vaccine widely distributed, nothing is changing. That's all.

At least then those people who have invested in their businesses, at least they know where they stand. And at least families who have invested in weddings, paid money on down payments on wedding halls and all this kind of stuff, at least they know where they stand and they can make a decision now of I'm either going to go ahead with my wedding or I'm going to cancel and get my money back. If I have to wait five years to get married before this is over, then that's my choice, if that's what I decide to do. But give people an answer. That's all they want is an answer. It's not unreasonable.

The other thing I want to talk about – I know I'm running out of time here, and this has been raised as well – is the oil and gas sector. I say oil and gas, but really it's oil. We have lots of natural gas, but at this point it hasn't been to a point that it could be developed. It's not feasible and so on, but we have an awful lot of people that are employed in the oil industry. This impacts all of our districts. It certainly impacts my district. I can tell you I have heard from, I don't know how many people in my district – particularly in Southlands. Southlands, in particular, there are a lot of people working in the oil industry; and Mount Pearl as well, and all throughout the province.

People are worried. They're worried to death. A lot of these people now have been without employment and they've hung on. They've gone through savings that they've had. CERB is just not cutting it for them. The CERB was a great program for a lot of people. Some people it sort of replaced their income. Some people are better off than they were when they were working, but I can tell you there are lot of people in my district, and I'm sure other places and districts around the province, working on oil and gas that CERB is just a drop in the bucket compared to the expenses they have to pay based on their normal income. They are in big-time trouble.

I would suggest to you that Al Antle is probably the busiest man in Newfoundland and Labrador this last while at Credit Counselling Services, and pretty soon it'll be Fitzpatrick's Auction; they'll be the next one. That business is going to be booming because of this crisis we have in our oil industry.

I'm not going to suggest for one second that the government, that the minister of – it's not Natural Resources any more. I forget what it's called, but anyway, he knows who I'm talking about. He said that he goes to bed thinking about it and he wakes up thinking about it and I believe him, I really do – I'm sure we all do – because it's having such a huge impact on our province, on our revenues coming in so that we can pay for services and so on, health care and education, but also on our individual constituents, not just those who work directly in the industry but all the spinoffs as well.

I mean, you take it. If you have a community and – especially a lot of smaller communities – you have a number of people working in oil and gas, that's what's keeping that community going: the money they're spending. That's what's keeping the local store going and the gas station and the little restaurant and so on. A lot of it is by people working in the oil industry.

I encourage the minister and the government to push, keep pushing that agenda. I'd love to know where our federal MPs are. I'd love to know where they are. I don't know if they're in the witness protection program or something but I haven't heard a peep. I really haven't and I'm very disappointed in that. I'm not saying they're not doing anything behind the scenes and I'm not saying that we should be taking down the Canadian flag and tearing it down either. I'm not saying that, but it sure would be nice to hear from them all that they're actually actively working on this, because I'm not hearing a sound.

I certainly encourage our government, our minister, our Premier, to push this agenda because there are a lot of people in our province depending on this.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Congratulations also as the Deputy Speaker, great to see.

I'm going to speak about the contradiction that I hear in the room here right now. I've walked around, talked to several of my colleagues in the last few hours, and let's just go back to Question Period today, Oral Questions. I keep a tally every day of the questions and the subject matter and so on. There were a couple of questions raised about Interim Supply, but look at the real issues that are going on out there that the Opposition says they're very concerned about: the offshore industry, outside workers, essential workers, the issues around education, trying to get children on buses. These are the issues that this province is very much preoccupied with.

As we've all said thank you very much to our constituents and so on, I need to pause and do that, but we all need to do it for all of the residents of this province because we have just gone through the toughest pandemic that the world has known in probably 100-plus years. This country, this jurisdiction has done extremely well, and for that we should all be very grateful and very appreciative because that was an all-party effort.

I know that the representatives met daily. It was a very intense time and it's only six months ago. We have come out of this so far very well. Now we have some tough economic questions and issues in front of us, and we're going to argue over whether this should be a 60- or 90-day Interim Supply? Are we really going to take a stand on something as bizarre as that?

For the record, I go to the bible. Elizabeth Murphy used to talk about it all the time. You go to the mothership; you go to the bible. For all those people watching out there trying to figure out what is it that they're talking about, we're talking about Interim Supply. There's some lovely text in here. I would refer you all to page 869, great guidance for everyone to read.

Nice little summary, so here you go: Interim Supply. As full Supply is not granted until June, the government needs authorization to spend funds during the first three months of the fiscal year; thus, Interim Supply is usually three-twelfths of the amount outlined in main Estimates. An Interim Supply bill is three months. We don't argue over whether it should be 57 days or 73 days and so on. Yes, we had an unusual situation and that's why we all worked together the spring to set up the situation that we're in.

I refer to the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands over in the corner because only recently he said, hindsight is 20/20, when he was speaking about how maybe we should have voted and added another three months, another three-twelfths to what we had to deal with. That's just the situation we are in.

I'm talking to my colleague there from Labrador West, the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, we have an interesting situation developing in Labrador. As the number of cases is starting to spike in Quebec, they're getting closer to Labrador; these are real issues. I've got to talk to people tomorrow that I sat in the House here tonight and we talked about whether it should be 30, 60 or 90 days in terms of this Interim Supply. It's really quite something.

I want to go back again, just in the spirit of transparency, because I feel that's the only way you should perform as an MHA in this House. I'm going to go back to the Government House Leader, and it's a very key little phrase. I asked him just to confirm while we're chewing on a piece of pizza just now over our break. We have announced that on the 30th day of September, we are going to introduce the budget. We are probably going to anticipate a week thereafter for constituency week.

If we take the next three weeks, we are looking at the end of October, perhaps the first week of November for the budget decision, depending on what the Leader of the Opposition is really saying, because I have heard him say both ways. I have heard him say - I think it was on the floor here in June or July - that he would support the budget, he would not bring down this government and so on, but I'm hearing in the press other things. I'm hearing today, now he's

back with us. So we're not sure. I do believe we all need to work together, but we'll have to say. Again, as we all respect the democratic processes and the role of Opposition in government, we'll get our way through it.

So here we are, let's just say, for example, Opposition does not support the budget. If that is the case, boom, we're into a writ situation and we're into a 35-28 day campaign that'll see this all concluding. Here we go into December –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. TRIMPER: Yes, they like to try to drown me out. Here we go into December and we're having an election, 14 days to confirm the results. Guess what? Christmas Eve, instead of watching little Johnny open up his goodies and so on, we will need to be in here –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. TRIMPER: We will need to be in here trying to find and ensure that there are monies available –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Again, I know we're all excited and passionate to be back here in the House of Assembly, but please can we please keep the level to a respectful level, please. Thank you.

Continue.

MR. TRIMPER: Again, can you imagine? What we are trying to do in the most transparent of ways, as the Deputy Premier has just explained very carefully, it's just to say we need to make sure we have a window. What difference does it make to anyone whether it's 60 or 90? We are back in here on September 30, we're going to put a budget in front of everybody and then we're going to go through it.

What we should be talking about here today, by the way, is what is government doing right or wrong in your eyes? What is that we should be doing? Let's talk about busing, let's talk about

White Rose. Maybe there are some regulations we should be working on. Maybe there is some we can rustle up some resources in this province that we can reach out to all those who are really concerned – all those constituents who are reaching out to every one of all 40 of us.

Anyway, I don't know if I can go on anymore, but I just wanted to say and I wanted to talk about some of those key issues back in my own district. I want to say, if there's something wrong with the \$11.7 million we're spending on the wellness centre, please let me know. If there's something wrong with trying to get 80 kilometres of asphalt down on the Trans-Labrador Highway to connect Labrador with the rest of this province, please let me know. Let us all know if we're doing something wrong.

If there's something wrong with the way we've approached mental health, the six-bed mental health wing that we're building in Happy Valley-Goose Bay attached to the Labrador Health Centre, if there's something wrong with that, let me know. Maybe we should do something else. I don't know, maybe cut it in half.

I heard the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture – FFA – indicate the great expenditures and investments and tomorrow we're going to talk about investments in agriculture in every one of our own districts. Even those who have a tough time growing a potato, there's still investments going in to help us grow our own food. Is there something wrong with this policy? That's what we should be using. I challenge all of you, where is your intellectual competitiveness? Come at us with something that really is going to challenge the spending policy of this government.

Instead, we're going to argue over 30, 60 or 90, some kind of game. Anyway, go to the bible, find out what it says there and I ask everyone who's watching at home to just understand that I'm not sure what the posture is, but there are a lot of serious issues out there. This guy is watching it. I believe a lot of my colleagues are watching it and I even believe Members of the Opposition are watching it. Let's come together and figure this out.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Congratulations first on your new role in this hon. House of Assembly.

I'm delighted to get this opportunity to talk to the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador about the value of Interim Supply and the fact that we will introduce a budget on September 30 for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Interim Supply is basically the Supply that keeps the day-to-day activities of our government going. We are in different and difficult times, Madam Chair, and that is why we are talking about Interim Supply in September, the funds that keep the province operating.

Given this is a money bill, I will just start off with a topic that is very important to the people of Placentia - St. Mary's and Trinity South. Most people hear me talk about this every opportunity I get in this House of Assembly, and of course that's road infrastructure and our Five-Year Provincial Roads Plan.

Two years after introducing a Five-Year Provincial Roads Plan, the Department of Transportation and Works, now Transportation and Infrastructure, has clear evidence that this plan is working. Contractors are starting road construction as soon as weather conditions allow. This is a fact, Madam Chair.

In 2017, the first year of the plan, contractors hired by the department paved more than 600-lane kilometres. That's a fact, Madam Chair. In 2018, contractors paved more than another 800-lane kilometres. Both totals surpassed amounts of paving completed in previous years. This is what Interim Supply does.

In those totals, in my district we saw the road to Point Lance. We saw paving completed on portions between Branch and St. Bride's. We

saw paving going to Ship Harbour. This is what rural Newfoundland and Labrador wants.

A three-year multiyear plan that should be completed this year will see Salmonier Line towards North Harbour paved. We want paving in rural Newfoundland and Labrador and we need it in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Tenders for roadwork are issued early in the year so that the contractors can be better prepared for the upcoming road construction season. They can plan their work with consideration for our vast geography and make informed investments in their equipment, keep their employees working in the province and start improving roads as soon as the weather allows. Because of that, in the District of Placentia - St. Mary's and Trinity South we did see multi-year paving from Riverhead to St. Vincent's and we saw paving in Blaketown and Old Brigus Road in Whitbourne, and I'm sure that our RCMP officers are grateful for that because it assists them with the response time to the TCH.

Issuing tenders early in the year and starting work as soon as the weather allows, as opposed to mid-summer, means some projects are getting completed in May and June, and more work is completed by the end of a construction season. These are all facts.

This year, after being named number four in the top worst roads in Atlantic Canada, Markland Road is finally getting paved. It took 4½ years of advocacy, engineers confirming the need and a multi-year plan to get it to this point. But we got there.

I am a strong supporter of the road plan. I will talk about it each and every time I get the opportunity, and the value that it brings to transparency for all 40 of us sitting here in this hon. House.

Madam Chair, as the MHA for the District of Placentia - St. Mary's, I believe Husky's request was unreasonable. When our government saw the problems in the oil and gas industry, they started reaching out immediately to the federal government and our oil and gas partners to find a solution here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Husky's ask is beyond what we are fiscally

capable of providing provincially. The West White Rose project is vital to Newfoundland and Labrador as it generates thousands of good jobs, and it is certainly vital to Argentia and the District of Placentia - St. Mary's.

We are all feeling the impacts of COVID-19, Madam Chair, but some, more than others. The families that have lost loved ones are for certain the most impacted and I offer my condolences for their loss.

In the Placentia area some business owners, especially those people who are renting apartments and homes, are feeling a huge impact. I have one individual that now has nine homes vacant because of what is happening in Argentia. The Town of Placentia, the port of Argentia and those employed by Marine Atlantic are greatly impacted.

Yes, there is a global pandemic at the heart of the drop in oil prices. This is a fact. Yes, the price of oil is at \$40 today and in March it was around \$60. That's a significant difference, but it is a fact that we all have to face in this hon. House.

I strongly believe that we are going to vote to pass this bill, as we all have the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador at heart. That, however, will not change the price of oil and what my constituents are going through and have yet to go through.

If we ever needed help as a province, it is now. If we ever needed to work together, it is now. Madam Chair, COVID-19 has highlighted the need for more space in some of our classrooms throughout this province. For example, the Grade 6 class at Woodland Elementary does not have enough physical space and the Department of Education is monitoring the situation.

There are 29 students in that classroom and yes, it does meet the provincial policy, but there's simply just not enough space to meet the growing need in the area of the district. This is a valid concern. These are concerns that we all need to work together to address. Road infrastructure and education is very important to my district, very important to everyone's district in this province.

Madam Chair, children and adults with disabilities have been greatly impacted by the changes brought on by COVID-19. Most people don't realize that changes in activities and schedule and daily routine for persons with disabilities have a huge impact. Imagine your child waking up one day and he's entire schedule is gone blank because of COVID-19 and you cannot explain to him what happened because he does not understand. That is what is happening to some families in this province.

People in their lives are changing. Home care workers that worked in long-term care during COVID-19 and had part-time jobs as home care workers couldn't work in both environments until recently. This is a huge impact on some families.

Madam Chair, we had a difficult winter, we are living with COVID-19 and no one knows when we will have a vaccine. That is a reality. We need to use facts as we debate this evening and ensure the security for the people of this province. While we had a nice summer weather-wise, we seriously need some normalcy in this province and in this House of Assembly.

As the MHA for the District of Placentia - St. Mary's, I strongly urge everyone to work together for the people of this province.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

MS. DEMPSTER: My colleague the Government House Leader said earlier today that is the title that I hold most dear. However, I will say that the portfolios recently entrusted to me when the Premier invited me back to the Cabinet table on the 19th of August were also portfolios that are very near and dear to my heart, as an Indigenous woman from Labrador to be given the tremendous privilege to hold the titles of Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

Madam Chair, to be the first minister to hold the title of reconciliation, it's a powerful word. It's real. I think it speaks to the direction that the Premier wants this government to go for the Indigenous people's in our province that know what it's like to fight for equality. Reconciliation is about narrowing the gap between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

I've totally strayed off my script and I know I only have seven minutes, but I'll start by saying congratulations as well. I served as Deputy Speaker of this province for 20 months, and it was a tremendous privilege and honour and I did learn quite a bit that bode well for me when I moved into Cabinet. I believe you are only the third female since 1949 to serve as a Deputy Speaker, and I wish you well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: I also would be remiss if I didn't start by thanking the beautiful people of – the good people of – Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair. They have been very, very good to me in a by-election in 2013, in a hotly contested nomination in 2014 and in the general elections of '15 and '19. That's what motivates me to work hard; it's because they have supported me for seven years. It's very humbling, really.

Madam Chair, I was reflecting today as I've listened to the dialogue in the House, of the changes that I've seen in the seven-plus years. I joined a small Opposition caucus. I was the only female. I think it was a team of five or six of us. I believe the Member for Burgeo - La Poile might have been the only other person here when I came. There have certainly been a lot of changes.

I was reminded of that a few nights ago when I was ironing – and my mother's name is about to be read into *Hansard*. I wouldn't be Glenda Goulding's daughter if I didn't iron everything. My husband came over and the ironing board was full of masks that I had washed in laundry. I have to share that because you just took a look and we stopped and pondered at the changes and the society that we're living in now when you're ironing your wardrobe and it's a bunch of masks in there as well.

Someone recently said to me, 2020, the year to forget. I was in Children, Seniors and Social Development, which is also responsible for poverty reduction, food security. Snowmageddon hit in January with a vengeance, and while I often say it covered the entire Avalon Peninsula, it exposed many things. Snowmageddon, just like this pandemic of COVID-19, it impacted different people differently.

One of things also, Madam Chair, that Snowmageddon did was it cost quite a bill for the province. I remember in Transportation, we all saw those pictures of those trucks going down the parkway. More snow than you could imagine. Those were all unexpected bills at a time when the province was already facing a very serious fiscal situation.

Then in March, I mean, we all sat in front of our TVs every single day. I went home for two days, Madam Chair, on Friday the 13th of March with a small carry-on piece of luggage and I came back for Parliament on the 4th of May. The first ever public health emergency was declared in this province by my colleague for Health, working with the province's chief medical officer of Health.

There was a whole series of events that happened from that time. My colleague the Minister of Industry and innovation mentioned it today, the plummeting oil prices. Newfoundland and Labrador has long been a resource-based economy, Madam Chair, so the price of oil has been very, very important when it comes to paying the bills in this province. You talk about a perfect storm to have things like Snowmageddon, to have COVID, where you had all of these unexpected expenses. You had expenses going up; you had plummeting oil prices; you had revenue going down.

There's lots of toing and froing and healthy debate that happens in this Legislature, and that is perhaps how parliaments have always been since the beginning of time and how they will continue to be. One of the things that really, really, I have to say, does bother me is when we get questions asked on – look at all those tradespeople out there that have no jobs and you're doing nothing. I often, Madam Chair, like to remind this House, those are our constituents

as well. Those are our brothers and in-laws and cousins, so we have every reason of why we would want to get this economy back on some kind of track to generate jobs.

We are in a very difficult situation. The World Health Organization and then you look all across the country. I need to throw a bouquet to Dr. Fitzgerald and my colleague in Health because my mom lives on the other end of the country, and so I've always been closely connected since COVID to what's happening in BC. My sister's in Alberta. When I talk to family – I've a lot of family in Ontario – about what's happening in their province –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS. DEMPSTER: They're not really interested in listening to why we're in this difficult situation, Madam Chair, and why we're sitting here tonight. We're talking about a very serious matter.

We are here tonight debating Interim Supply. We would've normally brought down a budget – and I've been through quite a number of them now – in the springtime. We had worked hard in preparing a budget, but when the public health emergency was declared, that sort of got sidelined. Then, you bring in an Interim Supply bill, for anyone who might be watching. That's to keep the bills paid during the interim.

My colleague the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance has already said September 30 is the day of the budget. In the meantime, because sometimes in this business in particular that we're in things do not always go as planned, we have brought forward a motion to extend the Interim Supply –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. DEMPSTER: Is there something you'd like me to say again, I say to the Member?

We have brought in a motion for an Interim Supply bill for three months. Madam Chair, some things I believe that you do not play politics with if you want to be responsible here. I am one of the few Members that lived through a time in this Parliament when decisions were made that were not well-informed decisions, and

that is why we have no things like liquidity today, because of disasters like Muskrat Falls. We have to learn from that.

When the Finance minister says that her officials have advised her, based on Estimates in the past number of years, that we should be looking for a three-month supply, I'm not a finance expert. Ask me about Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair and some things that I know very, very well and the people that are there, and maybe ask me about something in Children, Seniors and Social Development or Housing or disabilities, where I've been for three years. Ask me about some Indigenous matter and I may know. I'm not a finance expert, but when those folks tell us that we need three months, then we should be listening to them.

When I look at my district – and every other Member could get up and talk about why it's needed in their district – when I look at the teachers that are teaching our kids, kids that went through a very difficult time, a lot of anxiety this spring, it had to be hard. They're back in the class; there's some normalcy in their lives. Not like my little niece who went to school in Alberta, got one day and got sent home for two weeks because her teacher went in isolation. We're happy to have that.

Our health, Madam Chair, is so, so important. We need the bills paid in Health more so now, I would argue, than ever before.

Transportation, Madam Chair, we like to talk about all of the pavement, and we've done tremendously well, this government, not a lot of money to work with but we have paved 300 kilometres of road on the Trans-Labrador Highway from 2017 to 2019. But without Interim Supply, and should something go awry, Madam Chair, we won't have the money to make payment and that would be extremely irresponsible for the good people of Newfoundland and Labrador who get up every single day and take pride in the work they do. That's why this is just absolute foolishness: should it be two months, should it be three months?

The officials in Health have said you need three months to be on the safe side and, frankly, I don't understand why we're sitting here for

hours debating whether it should be two months or whether it should be three. Let's do the responsible thing and let's not play politics, Madam Chair.

I thank you for your time and I will have an opportunity again.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Congratulations once again on your new appointment. I look forward to seeing you shining in the House.

Madam Chair, the reason we are here at this late hour is because we require accountability and transparency.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. COFFIN: Six months ago, we gave this government ample opportunity to table a budget. If I can reflect on the 2019-2020 budget, I will point out that that budget was dropped shortly after they were granted a three-month Interim Supply but then a writ was dropped immediately after. We did not get the appropriate amount of time to debate that budget and instead we were forced into an election which got us to the minority government situation that we are in.

This minority government, we have given ample opportunity as a Third Party caucus to work together, to help ensure stability over the next four years, to collaborate, to try and engage all of our respected responsibilities, all of our priorities and to work together to provide a stable environment for individuals, businesses and government to operate in. Every opportunity that we had to collaborate has been thwarted. We have had an incredibly difficult time trying to work with the current government to try and help sustain our government. One of the things I have learned in the very short time that I have

been here is the government likes to play games with time.

What I am going to do right now is speak directly to the amendment, and our amendment is not to have a three-month Interim Supply but to have a two-month Interim Supply. The rationale for this two-month Interim Supply is partly due to the behaviour of the former Liberal government when last they dropped a writ.

One of the things that we ought to be considering today is the order of operations. We have given six months for Interim Supply. During those six months, we have had ample opportunity to present a budget and debate a budget. In fact, had we had ample time, Sir – because if the budget that we are about to see on September 30 is very much like the budget that was going to be presented on March 30, then there is absolutely no reason in this world why that budget could not have been dropped on August 15, on September 1. We could be debating the budget right now.

In fact, had we had the intention and the desire to be accountable and transparent for the \$4.6 billion that we have granted the government right now, and the additional \$1.5 billion that they are looking for, then we could have had this budget done. We could have prepared the people of Newfoundland and Labrador for what is coming. We could have ensured them that we are planning for their future.

We have programs and services in mind that will help them manage throughout the COVID-19 emergency; that will help support businesses; that will help people withstand this financial hardship; that will help children get back to school; that will provide for home care when we only have one individual that can visit a particular client at a particular time.

Presenting a budget will allow for new programs and services to be introduced, as well as for changes for current programs and services. What we have seen instead was an attempt to run out the clock, and we have seen this time and time again.

We have pushed up against our six-month Interim Supply, and what we have seen instead of a budget dropped was a rearranging of

Cabinet. That rearranging of Cabinet, while it might provide some direction or the sense of direction that a brand new unelected Premier would like to have, however, it has also created a tremendous amount of work for these hardworking individuals in Finance and all the other government departments that now have to rearrange a budget to match the rearranged Cabinet.

Had we taken our time and used the appropriate order of operations, perhaps we could've dropped this budget, passed the budget and then allowed a new Premier – who perhaps will win his riding and be able to sit in the House of Assembly – who could then craft a Cabinet and prepare a budget that reflects that new Cabinet in the budget that we are going to see in 2021-22, which is six short months away. Instead, we sit here late at night debating over whether or not we want a two-month Interim Supply bill or a three-month Interim Supply bill.

What we need to do is bring in a budget that represents the needs of individuals in our province; that meets the requirements that help businesses work; that paves our roads; that give health care to individuals; that gets home care to nan and pop. All of these things need to happen; however, we still sit here. At 7:25 in the evening we are trying to determine, well, maybe we can run out the clock a little bit longer. Maybe we can run this out a little bit more and then we will have less time to even debate the budget, if indeed we do see one.

I think I would have a much greater sense of certainty – I would feel much better about passing an Interim Supply bill if I had hard dates for the Estimates process, if I had a strong sense of when we were going in and debating that budget, and I had some certainty that we are not going to see another attempt to run out a clock and say the budget has not been passed and we need another three more months Interim Supply. Then we've passed an entire year without an actual budget, and I will not stand for that anymore.

I have said and my caucus has said that we would not support an Interim Supply bill over the summer, and we did that because we knew of the tendency to run out a clock. I would hate to have seen us bump up against September

looking for another Interim Supply bill without having seen a budget. That is why my caucus and I said we would not support an Interim Supply.

Today, we will support a two-month Interim Supply. If a budget is presented and we start working our way through the Estimates process and there happens to be an impediment or happens to be a hiccup and we do need a little bit more Interim Supply, if I see that we are going through that budget and Estimates process in good faith and there is nothing egregious in that budget, I will gladly give more time to support an Interim Supply bill because our public servants are very working very hard.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. COFFIN: I will not see anyone do without. However, our primary responsibility is to ensure transparency and accountability, give certainty to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and present a budget in due time and in good course to give us ample opportunity to present it. Now I think it is time for us to call the question.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I, too, would like to add my welcome to your presence. I see in your short time you've already valiantly leapt to the defence of the Member for Lake Melville when he was being harangued by the Opposition. For that, we are grateful for your protection.

I would also just like to point out for the benefit of anyone who's listening, as well as the membership that today is actually quite the specific anniversary; it is Battle of Britain Day. September 15, today, is the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain. The battle actually went on over the summer of 1940 and reached its peak on September 15 of that year, which is why that date was chosen.

Under other circumstances, were we not here sitting I would have been proud to go with the wing commander from 9 Wing and the squadron CO from 103 and lay a wreath along with Legion members at the war memorial in Gander. I can't but I think it's deserving of a short pause and reflection of what might have been had that battle gone a different way.

The thing that is shared in common with that era and the last six months, which the Member from the Third Party has been alluding to, is considerable uncertainty. I think one of the things that we are trying to do here is to provide elements of certainty in a world where it is actually very difficult. We have found over the course of six months we have actually, as a government, been focused on important things and not to sound glib but the pandemic was probably foremost amongst those. I think it's a little bit disingenuous to suggest that we had liberal amounts of free time to summon the House to meet to discuss any kind of issue that wasn't immediately related to health.

Our successes, however, now find us in this part of the world, not just Newfoundland and Labrador but in Atlantic Canada, in a different place. The uncertainties, however, remain and whether or not we remain in this good place will depend on some factors we can control and some we cannot.

I think you have heard timelines laid out by my colleague the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Finance, repeated by the Government House Leader and the Member for Lake Melville. I think it's well and good for the Members opposite to scoff at that, but really and honestly we do have to plan for the unpredictable.

Quite frankly, returning to the theme of uncertainty, I have heard from the Third Party, from the Leader of the Opposition and from the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands wildly opposing views of what they propose to do with the budget, not having seen it. The changes, in the case of the Leader of the Opposition, have occurred over the period between last Thursday when he went to the media and said I am prepared to vote down this budget, to today where the Opposition House Leader and another Member of the Opposition say we don't want to

vote down the budget because we don't want an election. That's a four-day gap.

The Leader of the Third Party has danced around the issue and I'm not sure where she's landed, except for what she said in the last few minutes, because that is a variance with what she said on previous occasions. I have no faith that it won't change again after September 30th.

The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands has actually said in the space of 90 minutes completely opposite things about what he proposes to do with the budget. Given that, we are in a situation where we have to hope for the best and plan for the worst. Hope is not a strategy, Madam Chair. It is not a strategy on which you can plan. Planning, as the Members opposite says, you pick a likely scenario and the most likely scenario here is we don't know what the heck they're going to do. But the facts of the case are we have a definite date for the budget. That is the 30th of September.

We know that they have played the clock out repeatedly with previous budgets, to the point where we've sat in this Chamber until midnight on many an occasion. I can remember before the current Minister of Industry, Energy and Trade, in his capacity as government House leader, actually made this Chamber far more family-friendly and we didn't have to sit here until 4 in the morning because the Opposition were running out the clock.

From September 30, given past performance and likely behaviour of the crowd opposite, we are committed at the best to vote on a budget by the end of October and possibly early November. If, given the express views of at least three parties in the House we get this budget voted down, we are into a writ period which will last between 28 and 35 days. Whatever government is successful at the end of that requires a 14-day wait by law for the electoral officer to validate the election results.

Now, we don't know whether that process will in actual fact lengthen, because it is highly likely at some point during that period we will end up with an increase in COVID cases and we will be forced potentially into a situation where we could do the whole ballot by mail-in – something that's never happened in this

province before and something for which the Chief Electoral Officer is planning. So by then you are up to Christmas Eve.

Much as I sympathize with little Johnny or big Johnny not being able to open his presents, the real date is not Christmas Eve. The 21st of the month is a date that is referenced by my colleague, the Government House Leader. That's when all the accounts are keyed in for monthly accounts. At best it has to be sorted out by December 21 or no one employed by an ABC or a government agency will get their money – no one. That is snowplow operators in December in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is nurses in the middle of a pandemic. That is physicians. That is essential workers, first responders. That is utterly irresponsible.

We can take them at their current word, when they all want to get out of here and say we're going to play nice, but tomorrow the wind will be blowing in a different direction. Who knows what the heck they're going to do because of the uncertainty that they've generated with everybody saying something different, and the same people saying different things within 90 minutes of each other.

I mean really and honestly that is the key. We need to manage that uncertainty. The only way we can do that is with the classic, typical, usual 90-day Interim Supply. We're not asking for anything outlandish; we're not asking for anything without precedent. Indeed, the parliamentary bible to which my colleague from Lake Melville, a former Speaker of this House refers uses 90 days as the standard. So why are the crowd opposite playing politics and running out the clock when we could all, as the Leader of the Third Party says, be home in our jammies having supper?

On that, Madam Chair, I rest.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TIBBS: I'm glad the Minister of Health brought up a plan instead of hope, and I was kind of hoping that the Minister of Energy could sit a little closer to him so he could hear that for the offshore workers here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Because hope doesn't pay the bills, the plan does.

Earlier today I asked a question to the Minister of Energy about offshore workers, and my question – of course, I'm the messenger, I bring that question forward from the people I hear from every single day. It was a legitimate question about what we tell those people that are leaving their homes, that are losing their homes, that are losing their vehicles, their families and their lives. This is going to take a big hit to our mental health and whatnot.

The answer I got: he should be ashamed of himself. The answer I got was about Muskrat Falls. I know the minister does lose sleep because I would too, and I know he cares about the offshore workers, but to give me a garbage answer like that and give the people of the province a garbage answer like that, Muskrat Falls. That's not a solution. It's not an answer. It's not. These people need an answer. I looked to you; these people looked to you for an answer today. Again, I'm the messenger.

If the minister thinks this position could be stressful somewhat, imagine facing the fact of losing your house tomorrow. Imagine looking at your kids today and telling them you can't join hockey, you can't join dance. It's happening in our province. It's not one person's fault, it's not a party's fault, but I tell you what, it's something that needs the attention right now. So when a question comes to you like that, we want an answer.

We talked about, where could the money come from? One thing I'd like to know from the government, we hired on a consultant back in 2017 from the Liberal government. It was one of their buddies they hired on again. They paid him \$337,000 a year. What did he do? Where is –?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. TIBBS: Okay, but he was a consultant. He's supposed to go out – I worked with consultants before, they're supposed to go out and drum up business and make Newfoundland and Labrador look very attractive; \$337,000, he went to Guyana. What about Newfoundland and Labrador?

You're looking for savings of money; there's lots of savings that can be found and passed along. No, there is no easy answer, but I think we all have to work together and come up with the best answer we can because the people of the province are really hurting. Ninety days, 60 days Interim Supply, if there's no difference there's no difference, is there not? You guys want 90 days, we want 60 days, but it's not about that. It's about getting it through to pay the bills at the end of the day, and it's going to happen.

I'll remind you that there's only one government here that triggered an election before a proper debate happened in a budget, and that's on the other side of this House right now. Do we know it's going to happen again? We don't know if it's going to happen again. It's something that we're looking forward to.

The Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture stood up earlier, and I have to be honest, I was impressed with what you said. You talked about Crown lands. You observed the problems, what could be mitigated and the backlog that is there. That's a great approach, because it is a huge issue in Newfoundland and Labrador and I was quite impressed with the way you took it on. You said there is a backlog, there are issues, and it's not a reflection on the people that work there by no means but that's a plan, that's how you tackle something, that's how you answer a question. That was pretty good; I liked that.

Unlocked pensions; I don't know where the confusion is with these unlocked pensions. You can unlock pensions throughout the rest of Canada. I did it myself. I worked in Alberta. When I needed it, when I had hardship, I took it. It took about two weeks to get it. At one time in 2015, I have to be honest, it saved my house. The oil industry took a big hit in 2015. My family took a big hit and it saved my house. I had money locked away, I managed to get some of it and it saved my house.

There are many, many other people throughout the province that are in the same boat that I was in then. These people have \$80,000 of their own money locked in and are not able to get access to it, knowing that you are three, four months behind on your mortgage and that bank is ready to take your house. How can anybody live with themselves like that? It's a horrible feeling. It's a horrible feeling to pick up your family and have to move to an apartment or a smaller house and pay rent after living in a house for 10 or 15 years. There are people out there that are losing their families, and the state that we're in is not a very good one.

The mental health strain that it's going to take on this province, it's going to get worse and worse and worse. We can sit here, we can banter back and forth and we do it, and we laugh at each other. We try to come up with the best answers possible, but at the end of the day it's the people of our province that are really going to suffer. They're suffering now, and it's on us to try to help them as best we can.

This mass exodus that's about to come up, it's going to be huge. I want you to know that.

Back in 2014, 2015, 2016, I was spending eight months out of the year in Alberta, four months at home. I was doing my taxes that year. It was the first year I spent more time up there than I did at home. If I would have done Alberta taxes like I totally could have done, I would have gotten about \$12,000 back in taxes. I had to pay in \$10,000 that year.

For those rotational workers and for those people in oil and gas that are staying here and flying back and forth and all around the world, they're our heroes, I tell you right now. Because at any point in time they could have picked up their family, moved them away and not had the flights back and forth and provided a great life for themselves and their family. They didn't. They believed in us, they believed in the province, they believed in the process, they believed in our plan and they stayed. They stayed here. They paid Newfoundland and Labrador taxes and they made sure they did the best for the people here in Newfoundland and Labrador. They should be commended for that and they should be helped out as best they can.

Our seven MPs, how they're not camped out at the Prime Minister's back door, front door, I don't know. I can't explain it, but those guys – if what we've been doing so far for the past year has not helped us or shown us any progress, don't you think we should do something different? Working with Ottawa is great, they are our Canadian partners, but at the end of the day you have to put your foot down and say we've had enough here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have had enough in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have to start putting Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first, and we really do. Rotational workers still come in. I have plumbers and sheet metal workers – sheet metal workers and plumbers on the long-term health care centre in Grand Falls-Windsor that do not – I know you say it's only 5 per cent, there's no way that's right. There's no way. I've been there. I went down to the site; I talked to the guys. There's no way that's right. I don't know what the number is, but that's not right.

Even if that number is right, why is it not 100 per cent? That's my question. I'm not trying to put anybody on the spot but that's maybe something we should look at in a benefits program. Why is it not 100 per cent, you guys? Because I literally had a plumber across the road from this long-term health care centre in Grand Falls-Windsor that was out of work and watching these guys roll in every single day and do the work that he could have done. That's wrong. We need to start taking care of our own people, our own Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The rest of the country is taking care of their own people. Trust me, nobody prays for a day like I do where we need to take in other workers because we have so much work. My God, that's going to be a great day here in Newfoundland and Labrador but it's not today. It's not going to be tomorrow. We need to take care of our own people here in Newfoundland and Labrador, get them working and get them jobs so they can take care of their families.

To have a worker from outside the province come in here from Quebec, Ontario, and not have to isolate? But we're asking our own workers to come home and do the five to seven

days. I agree we have to keep the province as safe as we can, but that double standard, where does that come from. I just can't explain it. It's something we all have to look at and try to do the best we can.

I worked for 17 years in oil and gas and, trust me, as much as I loved my job, boy it was hard. It was a very hard, hard life I tell you. But I did love it, and I know all those oil and gas workers– and we're going to see them tomorrow – love it as well. They love their job every single day and they just want to go to work. These guys and girls are working 12- and 13-hour days; they just want to go to work. I know it's not an easy task, but if what we've been doing so far isn't working we have to do something different.

If we have to get tougher with Ottawa, we have to get tougher with Ottawa. I'll say this; your new leader is talking about moving forward. We all have to move forward, not look back and give me answers like Muskrat Falls. Did you vote for Muskrat Falls?

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

MR. TIBBS: Did you? Did you? Did you?

CHAIR: I remind the Member to direct his comments to the Chair.

MR. TIBBS: This is a new party. Look at the new faces, guys. We want to move forward and we want to get the best for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I'm asking you, I'm asking everybody in this Chamber now, put Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first. It's not a bad word; it's not a bad phrase to put our own people first. It's not and we have to start doing that. That's all the time I need.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

MR. BRAGG: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

As my colleagues, I would like to congratulate you on the position you hold today and were nominated and elected to. I trust you'll do well right there.

I look forward to my close to 10 minutes to talk about the Interim Supply, but I guess it's pretty fitting that I will come after a person that's very emotional, that spoke from his heart. For that, I commend the Member opposite for Grand Falls for his thoughts here today.

My question – I could cut mine down to a minute or I could go the full 10 minutes – is this: what are we all here for? We're here for the people that elected us here. We sit on each side of this House with a common goal, to do the right thing for this province. Do the right thing at the right time.

The Member opposite talked about 2015 when he found hard times, when the oil industry, when Alberta dried up; found it difficult to find his way through. We're there now. That's where we are today. There was no COVID in 2015. In March we were in this House happy as larks, every one of us smiling and laughing. Some Members had plane tickets for Florida. Some went.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAGG: The next day –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. BRAGG: Let's go there. On March 12 or 13, every one of us here, COVID was something you knew was – and I don't want to sound like Trump. It was a disease that the origin was in Wuhan, China, right, a half a world away. I often said to my friends, if we drill a hole right through the centre of the earth now, that's where we come out, half a world away. That was December 31.

The middle of March our world shut down. We are faced with a crisis like we've never seen before. I couldn't make this up what we're dealing with today. We are here – Interim Supply – as the Member for Lake Melville said,

with our bible that we go by. Traditionally, it is 90 days and we're going to spend this evening, whether it should be 90 or 60 days. The big picture is this: we need to ensure that the people who work for this province, who got us through COVID, will get us through the next 90 days.

We talk about elections. The day after you were elected you prepared for your next election. Every one of us here, if you didn't think the day after you were elected you were campaigning again, you're in the wrong, you didn't look at this. Since I came here in 2015, every day you're in election mode.

Do we want to go to election? No. Do we want to knock on doors? First of all, let's get back to COVID. Who wants to see a stranger come to their door? You walk in the hallway and people treat you like you have a bad disease; everybody backs to the wall. We have arrows telling us which way to go. We worry about our kids in school. We worry about the teachers of our kids in school and the close proximity. We know we can't build enough schools in 24 hours to accommodate the distance; we have to do it as safe as we can.

COVID will forever change us and we're going to spend the time here – the budget is coming down on September 30th. It's there. That's the day, that's the debate we need to have. Let's get the budget. Let's present the budget and let's talk about what's in the budget. Then you vote for it or against it.

From what I can hear, everybody doesn't want to vote down Interim Supply. They want Interim Supply, not to bring down the government, because no one wants to go to an election. Good on that because the people need us now more than ever. They need us to be leaders. They need us to demonstrate that we're not here playing a political game, that we are out there for the good of the people that we represent. That we're just not there so we can have snickers back and forth.

I feel for the Member opposite. A lot of my close friends are rotational workers. A lot struggled. My neighbour worked away since he was 17 years old. This year I saw the strain on that man's face. When I go to work and my wife goes to work, I look at him over there and he

can't find work. Now, don't think that doesn't hit me right here because it really does.

I know the gentleman has a truck payment, he has a payment probably on his Visa like most people and God knows whatever else. Even if he doesn't, he doesn't know where his next cheque is coming from. He's trusting his EI to get him through. Luckily, all of my life, since I was 21 years old I've worked full time and my wife has worked full time. We've never had to chase a job. After this –

AN HON. MEMBER: How many years ago?

MR. BRAGG: That's a good many years ago. October 6, '86 I started full time with the Town of Greenspond; loved every day I worked there. The job I do today – we just went through the strike of the ferry captains. It weighed so heavy on me my wife said: Derrick, you might as well go to St. John's and stay in the hotel because you're not talking to me anyway. Your mind is forever thinking. You think about people who can't get across from the islands.

I look at the Member for Terra Nova. I can see St. Brendan's from my window, I know what those people are going through that the ferry would leave in the morning, bring you across and not bring you back until that afternoon. I was the one in our department that said: Guys, we can't have it. The ferry must be on that side because we have to think of the people.

I like to think that every one of us in this House think about the people we represent. The Interim Supply part of this, it's unfortunate that we're going through this a third time. COVID is putting us there. Our budget is going to be the budget. It's going to be presented to this House on September 30 and debated. Whether it takes a week to go through or 90 days, we need the assurance that people like – I'm going to be honest; my wife is in health care. My daughter is in health care. None of you guys wants to do without their services, trust me. Not one of you. Not for a day, not for an hour.

Any Member here who just represents an island, 2½ weeks your people on those islands couldn't get back and forth, they couldn't get essential travel. Let's take it through 60 days and the budget doesn't go through, or worse, a next

wave of COVID comes through and we're back where we were in March. Then what do we do?

It's fine to say we can have a Zoom meeting. We all know that's not going to work. We are here today with the opportunity to make this work. It's a shame on every single one of us for not letting that happen. We need to get it through; we put the budget through and do what we're supposed to do in this House: represent the people we do best and let's look out to the people.

Every Member in this House, since I was in this position and in my previous one in MAE, have called, Minister – well, in this case, I think I can call myself by my own name – Derrick, what can you do for me? Well, if we don't get Interim Supply, I'm telling you now, nothing, duck's egg, ditto. There'll be no ferries; there'll be no plow operators, so let's get it done. Let's get it through.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. BRAGG: I hear the Member opposite chirping over 30 days. Over 30 days, the Member opposite wants to hold this province hostage. I think it's terrible. I absolutely think it's terrible. It's not like we're trying to reinvent the wheel here. We're trying to do what needs to be done for this province to get us through.

For that, Madam Chair, I could go my other minute, but I would love to give someone else the opportunity to speak. If there's anybody here feels any different than me, stand up and say so. If you're not here to represent the people, stand up and say so.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Madam Chair, and congratulations on your new position.

I don't know where to start here tonight. I just listened to the Minister of Health there talking about how everybody has jumped all over the place. I got in here last year; we started with a

six-month supply and we got it back to three. I don't know if that's in your Bosc or not, but you had six months that you asked for and you ended up with three, if I'm not mistaken, and that was a start.

We're talking about going all over the place. You started that, not us, and you broke the bible. Just sit here and listen to everybody talk about everything that they're talking about and everybody should look at it and be embarrassed. You're representing constituents and normal people, and all we're looking to do is put people up on a pedestal.

We have a new Premier, now how are we going to make him look good? How are we going to do this? How are we going to do that? That's what you're at. We're here trying to fix problems in the province and you're here trying to put a new Premier who doesn't have a seat yet up on a pedestal. We have to earn our way and we have to remember to take care of the people that took care of us. That's we're were to.

You're looking at schools. I have notes jotted everywhere here and I'm never going to get to them, talking about teachers and talking about busing. You talk about teachers and talk about sports that are in school and talk about when you stop sports in school and how it affects the small stores and the people that are working there and the tournaments that they play and how much that they spend. Does anybody even think about putting in these rules, that you have masks? You have 46 kids on a bus with masks on and they all have to go in a classroom; why can't they put 72 on it with a mask on? What's the difference? They're all going in the same school and we can't look at it that way.

You're talking about getting down to the common people. We brought in experts that did Muskrat Falls. I won't even use the word because it would be thrown out. It's gone. It just went down the rat hole. Were you all here when Churchill Falls came in? None of you, and we're still paying for it, and you're going to bring up Muskrat Falls every time we ask a question. We don't bring up Churchill Falls 50 years ago or how ever long it was. Done, move on past it.

You talk about tourism and how it all affects the rotational workers. You're sitting here talking

about rotational workers. Everybody in this room here has rotational workers – whether they stay up there for three months, whether they stay for 14 and seven, whether it's 21 and seven, 28 and 28 – and you're all here trying to look like heroes because you're trying to get a budget from 90 days to 60 days. It's embarrassing, to be truthful. It's embarrassing to be an MHA, to talk about what you're trying to get done here and just get it done.

The kids, you use the kids as an example. The kids are going to school. It's no different than when my kids were born, recycling started and now recycling is a part of life. If kids go to school now and they have to wear a mask, it will be a part of life. If you go somewhere, you get out of your car, you forget your mask you have to go back and get it. We will grow to get used to it until a vaccine gets by, so we have to learn to deal with stuff.

The kids will be the most resilient of it all as long as we, as leaders, don't make them so nervous that they're frightened to death to anything and talk it down to death. They will get used to it. They got used to seat belts. We all know that most people here never wore seat belts when they were kids, and now you wouldn't get in the car unless your grandkid or kid told you to put on your seat belt. It won't happen. They will grow, they will definitely be resilient to it and they will definitely get there. We just have to give them the confidence to do it and we are doing it.

If you go in a store now and you step three feet behind the person, you're looking at the line to see where you are to, so we're getting used to it. That's the way life is going to be until it's done. We sit here and it's just continuous. I've listened to that now for three hours and I'm nearly gone out of my mind listening to it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. O'DRISCOLL: It's just crazy. It is crazy. It's wrong; it's totally wrong.

You're talking about oil and gas; you're talking about fisher people. We had a great summer here with the crab fishery and now the federal government has that program fooled up. We're looking at our government, which is the Liberal

government on our side, hopefully to get that ironed out so these fisher people can be taken care of and get their unemployment when December starts or get their top-up of \$10,000, and there are different rules. Hopefully, you're representing the people of Newfoundland to get these programs in and get them in properly, and they're not happening. It's just not happening.

I use teachers as an example. I listened to the Member here talk about teachers. I sold cars, and they have to be the most difficult people to deal with when you're trying to sell –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Let me quote it – when you're trying to sell a car.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Because he is right. They are organized – I have to give them credit – they are organized. They have all the numbers from every dealership and every car and it has aluminum wheels, it has steel wheels. They're organized. These teachers – and not to make it fun – are organized and they're ready to go back to school and they have their homework done and they know what needs to be done. All right. We sit here and we complicate it to death. We're talking about experts.

If you're going to get the schools back in order, why would we bring someone in to do it when you have the people there to ask? Why would we bring people in to do it? It's just crazy. We hire an expert now for the economy. Why not ask the people that have the businesses here on how to run and how they're going to get the money. How are we going to do it? An expert in schools would be the teachers and principals and the former administrations that are there. They'll tell you how to figure it out.

I'm sure, minister, you're after dealing with them and they've got good ideas. I've seen some of our colleagues, that their principals have called and said he's not taking the seat, not taking the seat. He's making room for other kids because they haven't been on the seat. That's pretty simple, but it takes time. They didn't do that a month ago; they're doing it now. They're trying to figure it out, obviously. They didn't get

an email on Sunday night when Wednesday they have to go to school. That's too late.

I don't know who to blame. I'm not sure. I'm getting calls on it, but I'm new at this. I'm not sure who the blame rests with, but obviously that's an issue. Getting a call on Sunday night and you've got a parent with – well, single parent, no car, two kids, and she tells me they can't get on the bus. She said, well, I'm going to bring them down to the bus. I go, I don't know if that's a good idea. I don't know. I told them to call the principal, hopefully that someone is backing out and they're going to get the two kids on.

That's how low it goes. Instead of us being way up here trying to figure this out, we've got to get back to the people that put us here. I think that we go down the wrong path all the time. This miniscule 90, 60 days, we asked earlier, we asked for six months, we brought it back to three. You ask for 90 days; we bring it back to 60. Let's move on to get 60 and get the budget done September 30. Why wait so long? Just get to it. I think we're wasting time. We're here now; it's 8 o'clock in the night. I don't care if we stay here until tomorrow morning – doesn't bother me. We just have to get it done and get it done right. That is our problem.

And trust? We hardly trust our own people; we're hardly going to trust you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'DRISCOLL: It's just unbelievable that it goes here. It is unbelievable. It just doesn't make sense. For people to trust the other people, there's some chance in this. It's mind-boggling. For anyone that's here 15 months the same as me, it's mind-boggling how this all works and how we don't get it done.

Anyway, I'm finished. Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

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

May I also congratulate you on your installation as Deputy Speaker and Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole. May I say how appropriate I think it was for the Minister of Health and Community Services to begin his oration tonight speaking of the Battle of Britain and the anniversary.

Today, September 15, was indeed a bittersweet moment when the people of Great Britain and her allies commemorate a very serious event. Those heady days back then were not just about life and death; they were about something more important. They were about the defence of freedom and whether or not Britain and her allies would be free; free people to make judgments, to make choices and to respond and live in a free society.

Madam Chair, we here tonight have an option as well. We can lament what is not, we can argue about choices we do not have or we can certainly just simply create opposition for opposition sake to matters, but what we should never ever do – what we should never ever do – is think for one moment that we are not masters of our own house. The people of Great Britain never surrendered. They never surrendered their house, they always accepted that they will own their own house and thwart any foreign enemy.

Well, Madam Chair, if we lament tonight that we do not have the capacity to make change, if we lament that the debate here tonight is worthy of nothing but yawn, or that it is just simply us just talking amongst ourselves with no impact on anything else other than ourselves, then we surrender. We should never ever surrender. If we look at the debates of today, what we have heard is that we spent a lot of the day today talking about the developments of Newfoundland and Labrador and whether or not we should thicken the barriers to non-Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in projects.

In reply to that, we also heard – we were counselled – that in the construction projects of Newfoundland and Labrador we have approximately 95 per cent Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that are employed. For example, the Botwood protective care facility, 20 of 20

workers are all from Newfoundland and Labrador. In Paradise Intermediate, the 45 workers that work there, 45 are from Newfoundland and Labrador. Yes, that is the statistic. It is not fiction. We could go on with the Corner Brook acute care hospital, which I'm very proud of, which is fundamentally staffed and run by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We also heard arguments today that the successful – while some were talking about the thickening of the borders of Newfoundland and Labrador from those outside of Newfoundland and Labrador, we heard stories about or we heard arguments that we should also forego the success and the significance of a Newfoundland and Labrador company and it should be replaced by a Spanish company. It's counterintuitive to suggest that a Spanish company is better than a Newfoundland and Labrador-based company, especially when it's a proven Newfoundland and Labrador-based company. These are the arguments that matter.

Madam Chair, if we were also to consider the arguments about thickening our border, and if we look at the construction projects here at home, we also argue today about the importance of treating our rotational workers with care and respect, something that all Members of this House understand and share. We heard from the Minister of Health and Community Services that process and procedure has been put in place to show that care and respect, but look and argue that – while we say we should thicken the borders of Newfoundland and Labrador, we also argue that many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians go elsewhere for employment.

Madam Chair, we really have to be very prudent, we have to be very thoughtful about our arguments. This Chamber matters. While we may say that the arguments put forward here are worthy of nothing but yawn or contempt, that it's embarrassing, well, it's not for many of us. Many of us feel that this Chamber is relevant, it is important and that we should use every opportunity available to us to advance constructive arguments that support us.

Madam Chair, if you think of who has constructed arguments in this House today that is, I think, constructive and reasonable to the times that we live in, the Minister of Health and

Community Services is someone that I would certainly listen to. Why, because the people of Newfoundland and Labrador listen to him. They also listen to our chief medical officer of Health.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BYRNE: One of the things, why the people of Newfoundland and Labrador listen to our Minister of Health and Community Services is because he's earned their respect and he respects them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BYRNE: He has approached COVID-19 not from a position of folly or fancy or indifference to risk, he's actually approached it with a very conservative strategy, maximizing the abilities of the province to thwart any pandemic or any epidemiology which would advance a second wave of COVID, while at the same time responding to it in a way that recognizes that risk has to be managed and that we have to be prudent, we still have a province to run. The bottom line here is what has been respected here is that risk has been assessed and managed, and that we are living in an environment where we do not take fancy with risk.

Madam Chair, when it comes to advancing a budget, when it comes to the very authority that we grant to the government as a House, as to whether or not income support recipients will be able to receive the very sustenance they require to maintain them and their families, when it comes down to the question of whether or not we will afford resources and award resources for those who are front-line service providers, our health care workers, our education professionals, those that we depend on the most, the government has taken a position, as has been consistently conveyed, that risk should not be taken with folly. A three-month Supply period provides us with a reasonable basis to ensure that public services are not put at risk.

The Opposition, or some in the House, may find that this is an opportunity for them to be able to advance the fact that there's politics going on, there is the advancement of political advantage that is being expressed here, when what has been expressed in the House is really just simply this:

we do not want to put the province in a risky position. It goes no further than that.

So, Madam Chair, when I reflect on what we try to do, I take no efforts to suggest that any hon Member of this House is acting any less honourably or proficiently or efficiently than any other, but what I do know is that we have a basis to be able to judge the merits of an argument on the facts that are conveyed, the evidence that is presented and the reasonableness of the argument.

It is very reasonable not to want to put those who are most vulnerable at greater risk, either economically, socially or from a health point of view. And extending a premature deadline on Supply, which could potentially put greater risk on the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador, I believe they would find that unacceptable. Just as they would find unacceptable unreasonable risks in reopening our province or economy and the very social structure that could spread additional COVID.

We depend on our experts. We find their previous actions to be honourable and trustworthy and found in fact and evidence and have proven true for each and every one of us. Why should we do no less today? Why should we take suspect the advice of our Chief Medical Officer of Health when it comes to individual questions of public health guidelines during the middle of a pandemic? Why should we take the advice of our Finance officials who are non-partisan in their performance of their duties, who have recommended to the government in strongest voice possible that a three-month Interim Supply is a prudent move which reduces risk?

So, Madam Chair, I thank you for this opportunity, and I would encourage all hon. Members of this House, that instead of expressing that this House is a time for pointless debate or exaggerated belief and that it is folly, take the opportunity, seize the moment and advance constructive arguments for the betterment of our –

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I too, Madam Chair, would like to take my opportunities to say congratulations to you – but you're not going to listen to me.

Interim Supply, Madam Chair, is great to be debated on, and it's great to be here representing the District of Exploits on this important matter. It's great to be back in the House of Assembly on this important matter. There are things we needed to get back in this House of Assembly to debate.

A 90-day, Madam Chair, is a bit excessive – 60-day Interim Supply is plenty. I'm sitting here tonight again, along with my colleagues and everyone else, listening to the spending in the districts of what they've done. I've heard of pavement in Placentia, dairy and forestry industries in Corner Brook and Deer Lake, fire trucks going to all Liberal districts and that sort of thing. I know there hasn't been anything coming to the Exploits District – I guarantee you that – in regard to roads.

Also, I heard the Minister of Health talking about health care. In Exploits and Grand Falls-Windsor right now, Madam Chair, they are stripping away our primary health care. They took away our 24-hour emergency service in Botwood. Now they're taking away our lab services in Grand Fall-Windsor. They are stripping things away, not putting things there.

As you talk about spending money in districts, there's no money coming this way. So we need to get the Interim Supply done as quickly as possible and get in here and debate things in this House so we can work for our districts to get things done for our districts. Never mind prolonging things that need to be – other interests that may be on people's minds. Sixty days, we'll guarantee them 60 days that the Interim Supply will be done, and I think everybody in the House has this consent.

Madam Chair, I heard the Member for Corner Brook say, in regard to employment, there are 20 workers down at the long-term care unit in Botwood. Maybe that's because they did give that contract to a Newfoundland company. The Newfoundland companies are not Newfoundland partners, where most of their partners are in Ontario and Quebec.

Maybe the company from Corner Brook did hire 20 local workers from this province and that is keeping Newfoundland first, and I'll agree with that, because the company is from Newfoundland and the workers are from Newfoundland; not Newfoundland partners going outside the province bringing in their own workers into this province. Those are things we can do. We're bringing in those people, and not enough money to go around this province.

Madam Chair, I've also heard the Minister of Finance, only today, say we're holding this government hostage with regard to providing health services and income support services because of this act. That's unreal, Madam Chair, when they're stripping away the primary health care services in my district alone. We don't need to be holding them hostage when they're already stripping it away in the Exploits District anyway, and the Minister of Health would know that.

Madam Chair, it's also good to stand here and talk about the work, the employment. There's no employment in the Exploits District. Again, that's being done to the oil-based companies in Alberta – all that's dried up. We need to be providing employment to our home-based province, Madam Chair, and we need to get workers back to being able to pay their bills, pay their expenses, sit home and be comfortable and be able to go to sleep at night so they can pay their bills. So we need to be investing monies in to that.

Madam Chair, it's great to be able to sit here for a few minutes to be able to debate the Interim Supply. Those are things in my district that I've seen that is mostly faced upfront with me. My constituents are asking me this everyday. They're talking about this everyday and it doesn't go away.

I'd like to see more done in the district, and if this means to get the Interim Supply done in 60 days, let's get back in this House and debate things for our own districts, debate things for the province and let's get to work instead of just wasting time trying to get other, probably political, bases done. This is not the way to do things. Sixty days is enough for Interim Supply. Let's get back in this House and get it done, and let's get back to work for this province.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm just going to have a few words about a few speeches I had and I just want to add a few comments to it. I say to the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor, I know what you're saying, the comments about Muskrat Falls, but I was here also when myself and the Member for Burgeo - La Poile went through the debate and we got crucified. We actually got crucified over trying to defend it.

MR. K. PARSONS: Christ got crucified.

MR. JOYCE: The Member for Cape St. Francis is saying Christ got crucified. That's part of the problem why we're in this mess because of people like you talking about Christ when we should've stopped Muskrat Falls.

What I'm trying to say, my only point, is I know your statement about the Member for Burgeo - La Poile, the Minister of Industry today. I can tell you, I seen that man help so many people out. Sometimes you may think an answer is flippant, but his character does show when people are in need. Sometimes when there's banter and we're in this banter and we're bantering back and forth, but I can tell you his character does show when people are in need.

I had to just let you know that, because I know the man personally. I dealt with the man personally. I was with him when people were in need. It's all right to be political, but I can tell

you he's a genuine guy who is really concerned about people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: His answer. No, that's fine, but I just had to say that.

I heard the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, let's get on. Well, I'll just ask one question, and I've been trying to get it, I can't get it. Where's the big report, the \$350,000 for Paul Mills? Where's that at? So that's the kind of things of why we're here. Where is it at? Can anybody show it to me and put it on the Table and table it?

I heard the Premier talking about over in MMSB. What happened was the position was put there, but it was the clerk that put him there and he's the Premier. I always said – and I go back to some ministers that were there at the time – that should have been to the department years ago. They would've saved over a million, \$1.5 million a year. That's the kind of decisions. That's why we need to be here to discuss this.

It's easy to say, well, let's not just be here, let's just go on, give us the two months, but that's what we're here for. Those are the kind of things that we're here for, to discuss, well, why do we need to give three months and you don't need three months. Then, there was some money that was spent in the \$200-million contingency fund. I just gave one good example, the numerous economic recovery programs, \$28 million. I think we all have the right here to ask the government, how did you spend the \$28 million?

No one should be criticized here for standing up and wanting to get answers. We shouldn't be. It just shouldn't be that way. I know people are going to look and say, well, you're with the Liberals, but I'm not with the Liberals. I'm not. I'm an independent person. I'm going to ask the right questions for the right reasons. I'll stand with the PC Party; I'll stand with the NDP. I have done it in the past before.

I know the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor brought up rotational workers. I feel there is something that we should sit down and see if we can work something out. I don't know the

answers. I'm not a medical expert, but I'll say this – and I know I've seen some of your comments on Facebook – I agree with you, to the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor. My colleague the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, we have to try to arrange a meeting with the reps from the workers and the PC Party, the NDP and us to see if there's something we can come up with. If there's not, at least they'll have it to say that they had their say.

We have to try to find something that we can do. For the rotational workers, there has to be a way that we can help out a small bit. There has to be a way. That's the kind of things we're in this House and this is where our forum is in this House. No one should be able to say, oh well, whatever you're saying is not right because you're representing the people that elected you. There are a lot of other things here that I could say. I'll save it for the debate in the budget or even tomorrow itself. There are questions that we need answered. When the minister can put Paul Mills's report on the table here, I'll stop asking about Paul Mills's report, simple, when that can be done.

Then, when people start saying give us three months, who cares, wait until an election comes up, there might never be an election. What happens then: you have three months and we have to wait another month to question what money was spent. That's the idea of the Estimates. We're missing time on Estimates every time it goes on. It's so logical that the quicker we can get at a budget, the quicker we can get at Estimates, the quicker we go line by line, the quicker we keep the government accountable, which is the job of the Opposition and the NDP and the independents. That's just the job.

I know back in Clyde Wells day that was normal. People looked forward to that. I have to say, back then in the days it was a bit more fun because they understood it was just issues, not personalities. That changed over the years, but back then people would argue back and forth all night and then go out and have a beer or go out and have a Coke or something, but now it all changed. I think when you see the animosity, that's where a lot of it is, where people don't get along. People can't separate the personal with the business side of it and that's fine, too. That's

the way it works and I have no problem with that.

Again, what I'll say about the Interim Supply is that it came to it. I heard the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure say, what if it's an election. Well, why didn't we bring the budget in earlier? Why didn't we bring the budget in earlier so that we would be beyond that?

These are the questions that we can ask as an Opposition and they are the questions that we should ask as an Opposition. These are the questions here that we all should be trying to have the answers. We should have answers. When I can't get an answer to how you spent \$28 million, I should be able to raise it in this House. I should be able to raise it. When I say, where's the plan, \$250 or \$350 million, Paul Mills, this plan, where is the plan? If you can't get the plan, that's why you raise the questions, because you keep asking. There must be something if you can't get it.

There are many ways that a lot of us could work together with the government to help out and work together. In my day – I'm probably here the longest one; I don't know about the Minister of Education. I can tell you one thing, when Clyde Wells and them were in government, there were a lot of people in Opposition that had a lot of good ideas. When we were in the Opposition, there were a lot of people in the Opposition that had good ideas. There are people on both sides of this House, and I always said it, that has a lot of great ideas.

The person who can pull the ideas together is the one that's going to make this province a much better place. If this is our place in this House, that we should try to get the answers that we need for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I know I spoke several times today so I'll stop speaking now. The words that I had about the Member for Burgeo - La Poile, I can say that I dealt with him on many occasions and he is a person who is very compassionate. I understand the Member for Grand Falls and I know what he said, that he's the answer, not the person. I accept that and I'll put that on the record. I'll accept that.

I just want to say let's try to get the ideas for when the budget comes out, because whatever better budget we can get, we'll have a better Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm happy to have an opportunity to speak to the Interim Supply bill. I won't belabour why we're here. We all know why we're here. This is usually an annual event where everybody sits and talks but has an opportunity to speak about a multitude of different things, whether their districts or current issues or you name it.

The one issue, obviously, that I'd like to speak about, because it has a huge impact on our budget and on our province and everything else, is the oil and gas industry. It's something that I've been tasked with since August 19. I have to say that it's been a bit of whirlwind since then, but it's been absolutely exciting in the sense of trying to learn something new after spending so many years in a different role.

Again, coming in at this particular time, it's a tough time. The one thing I will say is that obviously big shoes to fill when you come into a role like that. Trying to follow the now Minister of Finance has been very tough, but thankfully she and I both were and are blessed with an awesome team. There are a number of great individuals over there in the different areas, whether it be mining, whether it be technology, economic development, the oil team, electricity – you name it.

Again, it's been a tough time since being there though. There's a multitude of issues when you go into a department like this, whether it's dealing with rate mitigation, dealing with the mining sector, which has also gone through a tough time again with COVID restrictions that are placed on us. Dealing with Muskrat Falls and talking to Mr. Marshall about trying to get that over the finish line. Dealing with tech, which

again is a very bright spot, but trying to advance that sector during these times.

Perhaps the biggest one that I'm hearing about and dealing with is, obviously, the oil industry. Obviously, it has consumed a lot of time and attention here in this House, as it should, because it affects every single one of us; it affects our province as a whole. It affects our constituents, friends, family – you name it.

One thing I've realized in that time though is that there's certainly no easy answer. In a lot of cases we get here in this House and we debate policy decisions and we debate decisions that government makes as it relates to how they want to proceed. It's very easy to criticize them or to judge them or to argue with them. That's a good thing, that's never a bad thing, but it's because they are decisions that are made by government for which government has direct control.

As I pointed out on a number of occasions, when you're dealing with something like the offshore industry, it's extremely difficult because not only is it you're dealing with the provincial government, you're also dealing with the federal government on it as well. My colleague across the way who deals with fisheries can talk about that and I know Members opposite can talk about that. When you're dealing with something that has multiple masters, we'll say, that's difficult.

Then you throw in the operators. Again, you have to work with these individuals. It's not working with people – these operators are global. They're not just local, they are global players when you look at the ExxonMobils, when you look at the Huskies, when you look at some of these outfits and the decisions that they are making. They're not just making decisions whether they're going to operate here or not here, it is competition, whether it be Guyana, whether it be Brazil, whether it be Norway – you name it. It's fascinating but at the same time it's certainly pressured filled.

One of the big issues obviously is – and I don't care who you are, nobody planned for it. I know *Advance 2030* never accounted for it. I know nobody on the other side would have accounted for it. Nobody did and that's the impact of

COVID on the industry. Some of the numbers are staggering.

The reason I'm bringing this up is because I've heard a lot of comments from across the way. They talk about you need to help. You need to do this, you need to do that, but I think we need to recognize – and I haven't heard much about this – the industry as a whole. It's something that I immersed myself in, in the last month. Prior to that, I was like many people. I was aware, I understood but, obviously, I've delved right into that now.

The industry as a whole – this is not a just-today issue, a current issue that we face. This is an issue that may have long-term, long-standing impacts. When you just look at the demand around the world, demand has gone down. Depending on which analyst you read and which person you listen to, it could be gone down for the next number of years. This is a huge issue.

When you look at the price, I've always maintained that nobody can accurately budget the price. I remember being in debates here where oil was going to hit \$150 and never look back. I can remember hearing that and seeing that and a lot of the decisions I think were made based around that. We know what happened there; it has gone down, it goes up. Since COVID and since the pricing war with the Saudis and the Russians, we have seen a dramatic decrease in price. That volatility is still there and will remain there.

This is not just something today that can be fixed; this is something that we are going to grapple with as a province going forward for some time, and as a country. The number that hit me today, when you talk about these companies, has lost \$1 trillion this year. That is a fantastic number. It's hard to fathom that number. When I hear about some of the comments that are coming about you need to do this and that, I don't think people truly recognize the impact that this is a having on a worldwide level.

Dealing with the problem specifically, the one that we've been asked about – and, again, there was a report put out last week by Husky. They've come with a problem and it's not just one that the provincial government has a fix for. They've said in their own release it's got

nothing to do with the attractiveness of the field. They realize the product that we have, the light, sweet crude that we have, is competitive worldwide and draws a premium. They realize this is a very attractive process down the road.

The problem we have right now is they're dealing with capital issues; they're dealing with liquidity issues. They want to maintain a strong balance sheet. What they're looking for is a capital injection. They're not looking for royalty relief, they're not asking for – and every project is different, depending on where they are in their life cycle and where they are in their span, but everybody is going through this. This is happening everywhere. I'm sure in Norway they're having the same conversation. I'm sure in Texas they're having the same conversation that we're having here.

When people say – and this is the thing that frustrates me. I hear from the other side: you have to be a good government and you have to fix it. I've only heard one suggestion so far and that was – I'll give him credit, the Leader of the Opposition. I think he may have suggested taking an equity amount from Equinor and putting it into this. What I would suggest, just so people know, that's like throwing a cup of water in the ocean. The other thing is amazingly Husky is a partner in that. So you're trying to help Husky, you're taking away from a project that Husky is a 35 per cent partner in.

I would say, at least that was an attempt to make a useful, constructive suggestion. I don't think it would work, I don't think it will play and I certainly don't think it will fix a single thing, but at least it was an effort. I've looked at the PC plan that the leader put out there a week ago. The fact is the majority of this is stuff that has already been done. I look at my colleague, the Minister of Finance, who wrote on this six months ago. We talked about, we have to stand together and work together. Well, she mentioned an industry summit that got together to work together to figure solutions, not there. The Leader of the PCs was not there. That's the frustrating part.

I've been here nine years, and tonight may have been the first time that I had a Member tell me that what I said was garbage, that what I said was I should be ashamed of myself; talking

about, basically, that I don't know anything and that I should not have mentioned Muskrat Falls. Well, one of the reasons I bring it up is not to talk about the mistakes of past but it is to reference the reality that we deal with, just in this one department, that the cash flow issues we have as a government are due to that investment.

Now, I'm sorry but that is a reality. I'm not blaming anybody.

MR. TIBBS: (Inaudible.)

MR. A. PARSONS: Pipe down and let me finish. Pipe down.

Madam Chair, what I would say to people out there, the minute I mention it, the Member opposite for Grand Falls starts yapping. So what I would say – here's the funny thing, the Member opposite stands there and he spouts a lot of good rhetoric: We need to help Newfoundlanders and Labradorians – as if we're over here and we don't even think of that.

Here's the issue, twice he actually said in the speech: We need to work together. Now, I will say to you, if you want to work together there are two things you need to do. Number one, you may want to refrain from telling somebody that they had garbage ideas and that they should be ashamed of themselves; and, number two, they may have to offer one, single, coherent, cogent idea or solution to the debate, because what I heard there earlier was nothing but a lot of empty thought.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. PARDY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a privilege to speak on behalf of the residents of the District of Bonavista. If somebody in the District of Bonavista had to ask me what is happening tonight as far as the timeline and how this is all evolving, I'm really not sure. I'd have to give some more time to be

able to formulate and answer as to exactly what we are squabbling about – and when I say squabble, I mean in the most parliamentary sense.

If the budget can be done in six weeks well, so be it, everything else becomes a moot point. So if it is, it becomes a moot point. If it can be done in a little over a month, then a little over a month is when we can do it. It becomes a moot point.

I want to start with a little anecdote, if I may, a little short story. When I was doing my graduate program at MUN, I was enrolled in a class with – many people would know – Dr. Phil Warren.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PARDY: A great man, and certainly enjoyed that class. Part of that graduate program, I decided to bring in, then, the deputy minister of Education at the time. I brought in a gentleman by the name of Lorne Wheeler. Lorne was on one side of the House, I would think, while Phil Warren was on the other side of the House, but what an amazing conversation we had. What resonated with me back in 1985-86 was the fact that Lorne Wheeler had stated: in the very near future health care will surpass education as a portion of the provincial coffers.

I didn't know a great deal at the time as to what those figures were, but just let me – with a little bit of research, back in 1985, at that time when those two great minds were in that room with us as graduate students, Health was at \$474 million; Education was at \$505 million. So when I started my teaching career and in the teaching, I said I'm going to keep an eye on our figures to see whether Lorne Wheeler was correct. Well, it happened in 1990.

In 1990, Health was at \$712 million as part of the financial picture of our province. Education was in second place, for the first time in the history of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, the budgeting at \$707 million. Let me repeat those figures and see if we can – I'll test you on it later. Health, \$712 million; Education, \$707 million.

Let's go ahead 30 years, three decades. We know inflation – and I know that some are going to say declining enrolment, but we can engage in

another time on that issue. Health, 30 years later is \$3.2 billion; Education, \$836 million. So in 30 years from \$707 million to \$836 million.

In the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Madam Chair, when we look and say, well, we have schools out there where the ventilation systems are not fixed, and in a COVID we're scrabbling now and know they're not fixed, I would say to you they are not fixed because education is underfunded. How do I know? I don't, but I would say in conversations I've had, why would they not be fixed if the school district had the resources to fix the ventilation systems in our schools? Why wouldn't the screens be on every window in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador if we had adequately funded education?

Let me say one thing, from \$707 million 30 years ago to \$836 million today, I don't have the economics background to know what the rate of inflation was to compensate and where that lies in there. Have we made advances in education? We sure have, but we don't need to wonder why the ventilation systems in our schools were inoperative.

After saying that, there comes a degree of accountability with \$3.2 billion in Health. Maybe the minister doesn't have a lot to play with if we look at this \$836 million in Education.

I presented a petition today on our long-term care in Golden Heights Manor. I appreciated the reply by the minister. The only thing being is that the situation in the long-term care in Bonavista has been going on for 2½ months, because that's the point in time I relayed on to say that there's an issue in the long-term care in Bonavista. Remember, the moral test of any government, whether the one before this one, the one that was before the one before that, is often how they look after those that would be in the twilight of their lives, the aged.

I have a constituent who's in Golden Heights Manor whose son travelled back to St. John's this afternoon and sent me a message. Madam Chair, just to share it, he calls me by name: Back in town again now for a bit. Man, what's going on at that home is unbelievable. Elevator not working for two weeks, food on stairs not

cleaned up where the staff has to form a line to pass food trays up the stairs – then he goes on, but bottom line is the nature of the care.

I would say to you that we don't have an endless amount of resources, but one thing that everyone in this House would agree on is that we surely, goodness, would look after those most aged and the most vulnerable in our province. And if we don't, that is shame on us. When I say that, shame on all of us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PARDY: When the Minister of Health and Community Services says – in referencing the Interim Supply he says we have to deal with the elements of certainty and avoid uncertainty.

There is no uncertainty in the long-term care in the District of Bonavista 2½ months ago. When you know we have a shortage of staff with 26 individuals off on sick leave, it's because the burden is so great that they just can't perform their functions. Everyone I'm aware of are great staff, but they just have difficulty functioning under the system. I would say to you, if we're looking at cost cutting show us the data, because I would say it's costing us more in the long-term care in Bonavista at Golden Heights Manor with the current situation than what it would be if you had the full complement of staff that would be there.

I started out here wanting to talk on Education, but maybe I'll get a chance to talk a little bit about Education at a later date.

I said I don't know a lot about economics, and I'm sure in the follow-up someone is going to speak and address later on what I say. I know that the Deputy Premier had said earlier, and her words, I think – if I didn't capture it correctly, I probably got the general census – our fiscal responsibility has been prudent. She said that in her preamble in today's session. I just jotted it down, because one thing that stood in my mind is: I know that the public were always aware of the deficit. We always threw out the deficit was getting less, but if we had a look at our debt and if we had to look at our rate of borrowings over the last five years, then I would say that is not so kind.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

MR. PARDY: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the time.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's great to have the opportunity to speak again.

Madam Chair, first of all, I thought I clarified the – I said how I felt about the budget and Interim Supply the first time I spoke. I clarified it the second time I spoke, but for some reason – I don't know if the Minister of Health and Community Services was listening or not – I feel I have to clarify once again, because he seemed to think that I was saying two different things.

Let me make it crystal clear one final time for the record. I have no intention of voting against Interim Supply and bringing down the government. Point one. Point two: assuming – and obviously I would have to see the budget; it would be irresponsible to make a statement otherwise. Assuming the budget is a reasonable budget, assuming it's a reasonable budget and they're not going to do something that's totally off the charts, bring in the levy again or something like that, which my constituents certainly would never stand for and neither would I, but as long as things are done reasonably, I have no intention of bringing down the government on the budget either.

So I say that once again for the record. I'm not sure where the mixed message is coming from. I don't know how I could be any clearer than I'm being, but that is certainly my intention.

In terms of the Interim Supply, we'll say once again, I think 60 days is sufficient. At the end of the day we can argue about it all we want, there's going to be a vote shortly. The numbers are where they are. So unless my colleagues over here have changed their mind, it's going to be two months, not three months. That's reality.

I think one of the things that government needs to – one of the observations I feel I have to make

since the onset of this minority government is, unfortunately, I've had this – before I make this statement, I have to say that along the way I have received great co-operation from certain ministers when I've gone to them on various matters. I have to say that.

The Minister of Education most recently – the Minister of Education when he was minister of Finance – and the former minister of Education, they were the two in particular that I had most dealings with, and even the Minister of Health and Community Services and his office during the COVID and lots of questions. Full marks to his executive assistant on getting us answers and so on. That's not to say anyone I don't name didn't do a good job or whatever, but those were the main people I had to deal with. They have been very cooperative in that regard.

In a general sense, I have to say that I feel as if we have a minority government who has acted as if they're a majority government. That's the sense I feel. It's a minority government acting as if they are a majority government, and they're not a majority government. The reality of it is when it comes to matters such as this, the numbers are what they are. You can't ram something through and expect that we're just going to simply go along with it. You can't expect that that's going to happen.

This is no surprise. The Leader of the Opposition, I've heard in the media the last few days, made it quite clear that three months wasn't on. The Leader of the Third Party made it quite clear three months wasn't on. So knowing that it wasn't on, we didn't have to be into this debate tonight. You could've gone to those leaders, you could've gone to the independents back a week ago or whatever and we could've settled on something.

The fact that we're actually here having this debate at now 8:52 at night really, in many ways, is your own doing. Because if you would have come to us and negotiated something then, we would've had something. We would've all known where we stood and we would not have had to go through this exercise. So I feel like I have to make that point.

Anyway, moving on from that, Madam Chair. Another issue I want to raise – and this is related

to the budget and to our finances in general. It's nothing new on Members. I said to the Member for Labrador West when we were coming in – just a little bit of light humour, I guess – when I think about the fiscal situation we're in as a province, I think back to a comedian that I can remember watching one time, Richard Pryor. I don't know about the younger people, but the older – not older, but my generation, I can say, and above, maybe a bit below – certainly would know who Richard Pryor is.

AN HON. MEMBER: I wasn't born then.

MR. LANE: The Member says he wasn't born.

Anyway, he was a good comedian. I think about one of the lines he said one time, he said: When we were growing up my daddy was so poor he didn't leave me a will, he left me a won't; and our credit was so bad that the stores wouldn't even take our cash. That's where we're to, unfortunately. Unfortunately, that's where we're to as a province.

We are in a big financial mess, we really are. There are a lot of people in this province that are worried about it; an awful lot of people that are worried about it. I'm sure everybody has heard from people in the province that are concerned about it. We really do, and people are concerned about the fact that we don't have a budget and we haven't had a budget.

People want to – now, more than ever, their eyes are on how money is being spent, because they realize the dire straits we're in. It's a time when we really do need to be sitting down together and formulating ideas of how we can get our financial system under control, how we can save money and so on.

I said to the former minister of Finance, and actually the new Minister of Finance when we met there the other day, a couple of things. I think COVID-19, as disturbing as it is and the damage that it's caused both physically, emotionally, mentally, fiscally to the province, if there is any sort of silver lining, if you will, is that it has shown us we can operate in a different way, that government can operate in a different way. We've seen many government employees, as a result of COVID – not just government employees, but certainly we have seen

government employees – working from home as an example. Employees working from home.

I would say to the government, kind of look at it as a pilot project. If you have government employees that are working at home and they're being effective and it's working, why don't we make that a permanent thing so that we can save office space and consolidate office space and get some of our expenses down. If we are offering more services and programs virtually and online, let's do it.

We've already discovered that this whole idea of every time you have a meeting everybody in this office and that office has to travel to wherever around the province to have a meeting, it's not necessary. It's happening now. Everything is happening virtually. It has to be saving us money on accommodations and gas and everything else. It has to be. So if we're doing that and it's working, let's keep doing it.

I did want to put that out there that let's not be – and maybe some of these things are happening anyway in the departments. I have no idea what the ministers are doing in that regard because, quite frankly, we haven't had a budget, we haven't had Estimates and we haven't had those discussions. But if we are doing things differently, more cost-effectively, more efficiently and it is working, let's keep doing it even after COVID-19 is over, to try to save some money to get our expenses under control.

Another suggestion which I brought forward, and I think we should be doing it, we go through a budgetary process, an Estimates process with core government departments where we analyze things line by line – and it's a great exercise, I agree. The Member for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis, I think, said that was the most valuable part of the budget debate. I absolutely agree with him. It really is. You actually get some answers.

Why is it that we do not have a similar process – maybe it's not inside the normal budget process; maybe it's a separate one. Maybe we pick a certain agency, board or commission and do one every other year, whatever. Why can we not be doing the same thing with the ABCs? As elected Members here, why can we not have the president of Memorial University and everybody

else and start questioning them, or the College of the North Atlantic or Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation or Newfoundland and – well, I think we have Newfoundland and Labrador Housing as part of one, so I won't – but you get my point.

There are a number of ABCs. Why can't we start questioning Nalcor? How great would it have been if we could've done that long before now? I understand they have autonomy and so on, but we were elected to oversee all this. It's the people's money that's being spent on this, and that's something else we should be doing.

Unfortunately, I'm out of time, but thank you for the time. I'll hand it over to somebody else.

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Oh, I thought we got away with it.

MR. LANE: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Education.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Madam Chair, and congratulations on your position.

Madam Chair, I just wanted to go back. I know we've talked in the House today about political banter and about politics being the reason for asking for three months. I just want to go back to March. I mentioned leading up to the vote on whether or not we'd have the three-month Interim Supply or a six-month Interim Supply on a couple of occasions that I felt it was prudent because of COVID.

On the day we voted, I just want to remind Members – I'll read from *Hansard*: “Mr. Chair, speaking to Interim Supply, again, I don't want to sound like a broken record, I know it's the will of the House to move from six months to three months on Interim Supply. We just passed a motion in the House to allow for a continued recess of the House, should that be necessary. Mr. Chair, I've said in this House, previously, that one of the reasons for the six months was COVID-19.

“I have to admit, a week or two weeks ago when my officials suggested that we have a six-month Interim Supply because of COVID-19 when it started and it could become a pandemic, I thought the chances of” that “were ... slim, and I mentioned that in the House. But it seems to me that the chances perhaps are becoming a little more real.”

Went on to say: “I just want to put a caution to all Members of the House again before we finalize debate on Interim Supply. We're taking precautions in the House in the event the Speaker needs to call an extended recess. Interim Supply allows for the continuation of services for the people of the province in the event of a” disruption “in the House and that we're not able to extend it from three months to six months.

“I want to put that on the record again. I want to just make all Members aware that that is my concern. If it is the will of the House that we move to three months, I will respect the will of the House. This is a democratic House, but I wanted to put my concern on the record.”

“I think that was a prudent move. I take your advice on reaching out to agencies, boards and commissions” to ask them to cut travel.

“I made that call earlier today” to “Deputy ministers, ministers, and the clerk” to have them “sign off on all travel ... to protect the public service and therefore the extended population in this province.”

“Mr. Chair, I think it goes without saying that that abundance of caution is absolutely necessary.”

Now, I say that because when we initially debated that, we were accused of playing politics, we were accused of maybe wanting to call an election, sneak an election in, and that was the reason for the six-month Interim Supply. It wasn't. I think we're in a much better place today with COVID based on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, based on the Minister of Health and Public Health. I think we followed their advice relatively well. I think three months Interim Supply is the normal. Again, from sitting in that department and understanding the process, I would say an

abundance of caution on the ability of government, of Cabinet, of officials to be able to carry out the duties of the people of the province is necessary. I think we need to put the politics aside in the House and look at what is in the best interest of the people of the province.

I indicated, Mr. Chair, two weeks later, when we came back to this Legislature to move it from three months to six months – two weeks after we held that vote, and I said those comments that I just read out.

I'll just talk a little bit, Mr. Chair, here. Literally, two weeks later we were talking about moving it back to six months. The reason for this? Quite honestly, we don't know if we're going to be back here before June to debate the budget. We don't know for sure how COVID is going to unfold, what the impacts are going to be.

Mr. Chair, I will admit myself, when the department initially asked for six months Interim Supply, I spoke to this in the Legislature prior to passing Interim Supply and indicated that even if I didn't fully appreciate at the time whether or not we needed six months – and the fact is now we do – today we're here and we do. It's no reflection on anybody really, because two weeks ago we didn't have any cases in this province, a week ago we had four and today the numbers are consistently considerably higher than that. We can anticipate that over the next – and so on and so on.

The reality is that was two weeks later. The advice given to me from Finance officials was to go with six months. That's not political advice, that's advice from officials. It is advice from the people that we are supposed to trust to run the bureaucratic division of the Department of Finance. Today, they're recommending three months.

Again today I will suggest that we put the politics aside. I can go on and read the comments from the day that we moved it from three months back to six, literally two weeks after we voted on the three-month Interim Supply, because there are several Members in the House that – I won't identify anybody in particular, but it was: worrying about the uncertainty from a political environment, we could have been the next couple of weeks into

an election because of the changes that were about to happen.

That was the thought. The thought was on the other side of the House here that it was all about politics, and it wasn't. There are other instances here where there were similar comments.

There was one Member here, Mr. Chair, that said to me, after we voted for three months, that in hindsight he wished he had voted for six. He says that here in the *Hansard* that he should have voted for six at the time. He kind of got caught up in the debate that was happening in the Legislature.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. OSBORNE: There's no need to go into that, but the point is – you can read it yourself in *Hansard*. I'm not interested in identifying anybody in particular. It's the theme that I'm speaking about; it's the theme.

The fact that officials are suggestions three months, we understand the length of debate on budget, we understand the Estimates process, we understand what's in the best interest of the general public. Really, to argue over 60 days versus 90, I think is more politics than being prudent. I put it out there tonight that we should vote in the best interest of the people of the province, not what sounds political or in the best interest of our political motives.

So, Madam Chair, I am saying tonight the advice of the officials is a three-month Interim Supply, and that is what I am supporting.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

We seem to be caught up on three months versus two months and if we don't get the three months we could be in some sort of dire straits. We don't know what's going to come our way. We

don't know what could happen – if the number of COVID-19 cases increase, it could impact the ability of the House to do its business, people won't get paid, so on and so forth.

Well, fortunately, we have a plan; a plan that was developed in the spring shortly after that. The plan was developed by the Select Committee on Rules and Procedures Governing Virtual Proceedings of this House of Assembly. We sat down and we developed a plan. We developed it virtually, online. It actually lays out several situations where the proceedings can take place virtually. Committees can take place virtually. We have laid out the procedures.

Basically, the Plan B, which we developed several months ago – it's too bad the education plan wasn't developed that many months ago. But we developed a plan because we didn't know where this was going to lead us. We took it upon ourselves to have a Plan B in place in the event that the House of Assembly could not carry on business the way it would normally carry on business, so that it would not be disrupted. In other words, even if we do have an outbreak, we have a Plan B that will allow the proceedings of this House to take place, that we can address the very issues here that are being raised as some sort of, I don't know, fear tactic, concern.

If this report did not exist, Madam Chair, I could understand the concern, but a lot of good people, a lot of good staff and a lot of MHAs took part in this to come up with a plan. They looked at what other jurisdictions and other legislatures across, not only the country but across the world were doing, to come up with a plan that would allow the business of this House.

Now we're talking as if this plan doesn't exist. It's there. We have it. Why are we so concerned about the outbreak of a pandemic shutting down the House? We have it here. We have the plan, a virtual approach to this where we can actually carry on the business to make sure that people of this province, that the civil servants do get paid, that the lights are kept on, that the social assistance cheques are sent out. You name it, we have it.

AN HON. MEMBER: Who Chaired the Committee?

MR. J. DINN: Who Chaired the Committee? I'm glad that question was asked. The hon. Member for St. John's West.

AN HON. MEMBER: It was a very good job.

MR. J. DINN: It was a very good job. We worked very well together.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. J. DINN: We worked very well together and we came up with something that I thought, in my humble opinion, had a chance of working. Now, I'm not a fan of virtual proceedings but this worked. This will work. I have the confidence because we've put an awful lot of effort into it. I have that confidence in the plan.

I think in many ways the debate around two months or three months, I'm confident in two months for a number of reasons. I think we'll have the budget that we need; secondly, if we do need more we can ask for more; thirdly, if for some reason – I hope this never happens – we have an outbreak, we still have a Plan B with regard to continuing on with the proceedings of the House of Assembly. That's the first bit.

I will leave it at that. I do have a letter that I would like to present, but I'll save that for another moment. That's really all I need to say on this, Madam Chair. I do want to talk about something related to dental care and this budget, but I'll bring that up at a later point.

Right now, I think let's get on with it. I don't know if it's in order to call the question, but I'd like to see the question called.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Windsor Lake. Pleasantville - Windsor Lake?

Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

So many names to remember.

MR. DAVIS: Perfect, thank you, Madam Chair.

Let me first of all echo the comments of my colleagues to say congratulations to you assuming the Chair and being only the third

female in this province's history, this illustrious history. Thank you for that. I think that deserves a round of applause.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: I think I'd first like to set the stage and bring us back a little bit to my constituents that may be watching this tonight. I know they're, with bated breath, watching what we're doing here tonight. I'd like to set the stage for what's actually happening here today with the debate.

We're here debating the Interim Supply bill that's bringing forth the ability for us to continue paying civil servants and the services that are being provided to our constituents, each and every one of us in this House of Assembly's constituents, to this beautiful province. It is actually a little bit hard to follow what's going on in the House of Assembly from time to time because we have some people having other conversations that are existing, but one of the things that are not hard to follow is the importance of this bill.

Interim Supply may not seem like a budget, but it's an agreement on funds to get us to where the budget is going to be passed. I agree with some of my colleagues on both sides of the House that spoke here today about its importance.

I don't remember a time when there were no seat belts. I have to correct the Member. I was going to call parliamentary privilege on that, but I decided against that. I don't remember a time when there were no seat belts.

The Member for Ferryland made a point in an impassioned speech about the fact that we asked for six months before. The Minister of Education stole a little bit of my thunder, because that was where I was planning on going with some of my comments, which was simple: we started a process in March to ask for Interim Supply; we asked for six months. It was agreed upon by this House, through the democratic process, that we do three. Some two weeks later, we came back looking for six months.

The prudent thing, in my opinion, and without politics entering into it, without anything other than the betterment of the constituents that I

represent – which is what all of us should be discussing here tonight – whether it's 30 days, 60 days or 90 days, it's the officials in the Finance department – and the hon. Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans mentioned about listening, and I hope he heeds the words I'm going to say here today, because it's exactly that.

The Department of Finance advised against – and I'm going to say the two most hated words that the Opposition don't like to hear – Muskrat Falls. The Finance department advised against doing Muskrat Falls. They're advising us today that we need three months' Interim Supply.

I'm not a finance professional. I am not an expert in the realm of finance, although I have a commerce degree from the university. I don't claim to know exactly –

MR. BRAZIL: (Inaudible.)

MR. DAVIS: If the hon. Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island can listen, because I'm trying to make a point here. I know he has a hard time listening to me when I'm trying to make a point, or anyone, for that matter.

From my standpoint, it's pretty simple. If the Finance department had recommended to me, like they have, that we should institute a three-month Supply then that's exactly what I am going to support. At the end of the day, we can banter back and forth about politics, it's an election, it's electioneering or whatever. This is exactly what the Finance department put forward to us; it's exactly what I'm willing to support.

The Member for Exploits made some great points that two months are enough. In his opinion, and maybe even in my opinion, that may be enough, but I'm listening to the officials that do this for a living. Not necessarily me, because I know full well I don't. I don't know if the hon. Member for Exploits does that for a living. I don't know what he did before this, but I know I didn't. I'm just listening to the experts that have advised us that the prudent thing to do from a finance perspective to ensure the continuation of services and the fact that our

civil service and the services that we provide to our constituents continue without interruption. We know that that may not happen. I agree, that may not happen. What we're doing is planning for the eventuality that it may happen. That's what good stewards do, of the economy, that's what good planners do. That's what leaders do.

The MHA for Bonavista mentioned about Health and Community Services. I have to comment on the Member for Bonavista, by the way, because that man is listening to every person when they speak. I have to commend him for that because I understand how challenging that is. I have to give him credit for that. Not everybody does that in this House, but I guarantee you he does every time. I thank him for that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: One of the things he said that I intently listened to was that some 30 years ago, Health and Community Services was at \$712 million – I thought it was an interesting fact – and that Education was \$707 million. Some 30 years later, Health and Community Services is over \$3 billion and Education is at \$836 million. Those are great numbers. I didn't check them, by the way; I'm just taking their word for it, which is perfect. Education numbers have declined, but our population's age is the oldest in the country. It's not unreasonable to think that Education costs would at least stabilize a little bit better and Health and Community Services costs would go up.

One of the good things that we've done over the past five years – and I was very happy to be parliamentary secretary for the minister of Health and Community Services for a period, because I did learn an awful lot from a man that knows an awful lot about health care. The one good thing that we've been able to accomplish and I can point to right off is that Health and Community Services spending has almost remained stagnant, even against all of the other pressures that we've had to face as a government.

The MHA for Mount Pearl - Southlands talked about the negotiation between parties and independents. I agree, if there was an ability to negotiate, whether it be 30, 60 or 90 days, I'm

listening to the staff that came forward and suggested that it be 90 days in the eventuality that something could happen. Like an additional pandemic that just came through, life in COVID is a little different today than it was a year ago. So just think about all of the things that we have to accomplish differently or do differently because of that.

I said I wasn't going to mention politics per se, but the Minister of Health and Community Services, when he did speak, talked about it's really hard to know where everyone stands. I know where the man behind me stands because he said it three times in my left ear, so it's pretty ...

I just recently read an article from Mark Quinn from CBC, who talked about the Leader of the Conservative Party, or the Leader of the Opposition, who said he's willing to bring down this government based on the budget. I fully agree that may not be what he's saying today but it was what he said four or five days ago.

I do know the Leader of the Official Opposition in the House of Assembly, a good friend of mine, has said there's not going to be an election. I don't really know who is actually leading it on the decision-making process with respect to that, but all I do know is that there is a question. When there's a question out in the public or when there's a question in this House of Assembly, I have to do the prudent thing and support the people that we entrust to provide us with the best advice.

Had we listened to that advice some 12 years ago or 10 years ago, we wouldn't be in the situation that had the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans talk about garbage decisions and things like that.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. DAVIS: Garbage answers, okay. In any event, we wouldn't be in that situation. From my standpoint, I can unequivocally say that I will be supporting a three-month Interim Supply bill because that is what the experts in the Department of Finance have said we should do; that is the most prudent thing to do for the people of this province. I echo the comments of my colleagues on this side of this House and I

hope that the colleagues on the other side of the House put politics aside and put people first in this case, because this is the most important decision we have to make here today.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Seeing no further speakers, shall the amendment carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

CHAIR: Division is called.

Division

CHAIR: Are the House Leaders ready?

Order, please!

Everyone ready?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

CLERK (Barnes): Mr. Crosbie, Mr. Brazil, Mr. Forsey, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Wakeham, Mr. Lester, Ms. Evans, Mr. Petten, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Parrott, Mr. Pardy, Mr. Paul Dinn, Ms. Conway Ottenheimer, Mr. Tibbs, Mr. O'Driscoll, Ms. Coffin, Mr. James Dinn, Mr. Brown, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Lane.

CHAIR: Those against.

CLERK: Ms. Coady, Mr. Crocker, Mr. Haggie, Mr. Bennett, Ms. Dempster, Mr. Byrne, Mr. Davis, Mr. Osborne, Mr. Loveless, Ms. Stoodley, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Mr. Bragg, Mr.

Warr, Mr. Trimper, Ms. Haley, Mr. Mitchelmore.

Madam Chair, the ayes: 20; the nays: 16.

CHAIR: The amendment is carried.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: We'll go back to the debate on the resolution, as amended.

The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Finance.

MS. COADY: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I would like to speak directly to the people of the province this evening. I've been speaking a lot in the House and now I think it's time to really explain and try and explain to the people of the province, because I can tell from this House I guess I need to appeal to a larger audience.

I will say this: Interim Supply provides funding for government operations while the budget process is ongoing. As my hon. colleague mentioned earlier, we do have a book that we follow in terms of guidelines for how parliamentary procedure and practice is held. It's called the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. In that, it lays out the Interim Supply process and sets out three-twelfths, or three months of the fiscal year for Interim Supply.

I'm going to talk to my friends, my colleagues and my family and say that's a normal, standard process: three months for Interim Supply. Why is that the normal process? I can tell you – and I'm going to use good examples – that in a normal year it takes somewhere upwards of 50 days to pass a budget. In *Budget 2018*, for example, it was released on March 27 – we had budget day on March 27 – and it was passed on May 22, 57 days later. I can go back over the years and give you other examples. It's generally around 50 days. That's how long it takes to pass it.

This year was a little different because of COVID. The government had been planning to bring down a budget; it was getting ready to do

Interim Supply. The minister at the time came into the House of Assembly and in his learned fashion he said: We're starting down the road of a pandemic. It would be prudent and responsible for us to do a six-month Interim Supply.

I will say this: We had a rigorous debate here in the House. People thought it might have been nefarious and a challenge to really do a six-month Supply, though it was prudent and responsible, and said, no, no, no, we're only going to do a three-month Supply.

Lo and behold, COVID happened and we were back in the House scrambling to try to make sure we were following all the pandemic rules in the new world of COVID. We are back in the House yet again to pass another Interim Supply. I will also say to the people of my district, to the people of the province, we did another Interim Supply to ensure that we had \$200 million for COVID-related expenses.

Here we are today. We know that we're still in the midst of a pandemic. It's been a global crisis. It is challenging times. We sit before this House of Assembly again with a budget date of September 30. We're only the third jurisdiction, I believe, in Canada to set a budget date this year. The federal government has said they're going to do a fiscal update in November; we're doing a budget at the end of September so we won't even have that information.

Why does all this matter? We want to ensure – and I'm sure everybody in this House wants to ensure – that we have the authority to spend money at the end of September. As I said at the end of September, Interim Supply ends, we'll have a budget and then there will be a budget debate so during the period we're having a budget debate we have money to operate the government. That's the services of health care and education, and making sure that we can pay people that have social needs from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. We all want to be really responsible to the people of the province. In a general session, we would now presume to have what's called an Interim Supply. What we're arguing about here in the House of Assembly tonight is whether that should be for 90 days – the three months – or 60 days, which the Opposition clearly would like to have. I'm

going to just say, on principle, we have always followed the rules of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, even when we were debating whether we should have six months or three months. We fell back to the three months, even though we thought it was prudent to do the six months because of COVID.

The reason for that – and I outlined it before – is it can take somewhere plus 50 days. What happens if in the middle of all this debate and discussion – and it's very important debate and discussion on the budget, where as a people of the province we do a line-by-line review, we go through the Estimates, the ministers are held to account, the Opposition has plenty of time to kind of get into the nitty-gritty and make sure we're spending wisely, or as best a financial plan as possible.

But we are in the middle of a pandemic and we could have something happen. It would be prudent and responsible to ensure we have the full 90 days available.

Another colleague in the House tonight spoke up and said we have a great plan B; in case there's COVID we can go online. Well, I'll say to the Member opposite, I was the Chair of that Committee when we developed that plan, and yes, it's a very good plan B. But we do not know; we cannot know if, in any way, shape or form, that would impact the people in this Legislature. For goodness sakes – I don't want to say this – but maybe I come down with COVID, and then what happens? Because the budget would have to still be brought in.

I will say to the people of my district, to the people of the province, it's responsible to do 90 days. We've heard the Leader of the Opposition muse in public media – it wasn't to me; it was to the public, to the people of the province – about if they do not like the budget, then perhaps they'll vote it down. Well, if that happens, we'll be in the middle of an election campaign. It is responsible; it is prudent. If we're going to do it for 60 days, and hopefully we get through the budget, I'm going to hold my breath and hope fervently that we get through the budget in time; otherwise, we will be back here yet again for another Interim Supply.

Doing the 90-day regular Supply makes the best sense. It is responsible. It is not about politics. This is about protecting the people of the province, making sure they have the monies available to them and the authority to spend the monies that would be available to them.

A lot of people in the House have talked about we don't have the accountability on the money that you're spending now. Well, let's get to a budget so you have that accountability. Remember, when we talk about Interim Supply, it's just using the money that had been previously approved in a budget.

I say again, I do not understand why the Opposition would insist on 60 days when it seems to me to be a responsible, prudent, effective, natural and normal process to do 90 days. The only thing I could suggest is that perhaps they're playing politics, which would be unfortunate. It would definitely be unfortunate because, of course, as I've said repeatedly in this House, people in the province are concerned about COVID, they're concerned about their jobs and they're concerned about their future. They want to get to see the budget; they want to see what impacts they're going to have. I'm asking exactly the same thing.

Again, the budget will be on September 30. The very nearest time after that – and I could speak to the House Leader to say within days we'll be talking in both – there are two concurrent processes that happen. There will be debate in the House of Assembly; there will be Estimates in Committee that will be happening. We will get through the line-by-line review of the budget.

As soon as the Opposition is finished that line-by-line review, we'll go to a vote and have a budget and Interim Supply rests. It just goes away. That might be in 57 days, it might be in 50 days, it might be in 60 days. God forbid it's any longer than that.

I thank you for your time; I thank you for your attention. I thank the Members of the House of Assembly for staying here late tonight to debate this important issue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's an opportunity again for me to speak to Interim Supply and to outline exactly the debate we've had for the last five hours. I can't say it's a waste because when you debate through the democratic process what you feel is in the right mode for representing the people in Newfoundland and Labrador, it's never a waste of time.

As I listened to the Minister of Finance, I do have some concerns about her argument or her rationale for why 90 days is the only logical alternative to implementing Interim Supply when 60 days has been explained very professionally, very diligently and very explicitly here by – and let's just talk about, you talk about politics.

We have two different parties. We have two independent Members from two different parts of the province. We have Members here from Labrador to the different parts of the Island. They all come to a consistent understanding that we want to do the right thing for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. The way to do that is to amend the motion that's put forward to 60 days for Interim Supply, then get to what's the most important part of any Legislature: the budget that will represent the needs of the people and implement the programs and services that we were elected to ensure are done properly.

They're elected to outline what the policies are, and the programs and services. We're elected to ensure those are the ones that meet the needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That's what we're doing here as part of our democratic process. It's a simple process. It's not politics; it's what we're elected to do. What we're elected to do is ensure that the accountability and the transparency is open and available to everybody. We're doing that. This is not about politics. When you have two Members who are independent, when you have the Third Party and the Opposition Party agreeing – and not only on how we're going to vote but agreeing on the philosophy of why we're voting that particular way – that to me is what this House of Assembly is all about.

When we start playing politics is when you're trying to rationalize something that's irrational. It's irrational to need 90 days when you need less than 60 and spending time on something that's not as important as it is to get to the budget line when you have pure continuity and pure security, because you have your full budget line until March 31; you have your monies to spend. We know the reason we're moving this forward is to ensure that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador for the next 60 days are protected. We know in 30 days or less they will be protected because there will be a budget here to cover them until March 31. Anybody who worked in the civil service would know in late November we're already into the next budget cycle anyway and starting to put together what's going to be our budget line for presentation in early April.

To say this is anything other than us doing our democratic right to ensure that people are protected to me is irresponsible and it's misleading. I don't accept that, because we've spent five hours here agreeing, debating and not getting personal. We're trying to keep it away from that, but it does get frustrating for people when we don't see why this is being dragged out for any reason other than somebody feels they need something that is not logistically necessary here.

I've been so open in my 10 years in this House that I've even changed going against my own government when somebody on the opposite side could give me a logical reason why the best thing to do was what they were presenting. In this case, it doesn't work that way. In this case, it's not working to that argument and I can't see the justification.

We had a valid debate. Everybody outlined their views, and I understand it and I respect their views. Some of it is following the party line and I've been there, done that. Unfortunately, sometimes as you get older, more experienced, you can sort of move away from that and try to decide that your views should be based on what's the right thing to do, and what you normally do is you try to encourage your colleagues to think the same way. That's where I thought this House was going in the last number of years, that people would think about: what's the best thing, not just the party line here.

When we talk about that and you see that on this side, as I just outlined, we're coming from different backgrounds, different parties, and the independents themselves came from different parties. So then you have a whole collage of people agreeing, this is the way forward. I say the way forward, because this is the way we're going to address the needs of people very quickly to ensure they're safe and secure financially.

Then we get into the crux of why the House of Assembly exists when it comes to our fiscal responsibility, the budget. Open debate, presentation, getting the Estimates so we can have all the data that's necessary, having that public because it's a public domain, the media has it, the general public can have it, and then we have an open vote on it. That's democracy. That's what the House of Assembly is built on. It's what we've been successful at for the last 10 years. You don't have to agree with the budget but you do have to agree with the process, that's important for democracy here.

With that being said, we've debated, and the only way we're going to move forward to really represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador is we get Interim Supply. We know where we stand on it. We've rationalized it. We've made one amendment that's been passed – there are a couple of more to get to where we want to be – that 60 days is reasonable. We think that's more than adequate for the government to be able to do what they're doing and for us to be able to support that.

Madam Chair, I move, seconded by the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, that clause 2 of the bill be amended by striking out the amount \$1,560,324,100 and substituting instead the amount of \$1,040,216,400.

CHAIR: I would like to remind the Member that we can't enter the amendment until we get to the clause.

Seeing no more speakers, we'll now vote on the resolution, as amended.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: This is the resolution as amended.
Okay.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

The resolution, as amended, has carried.

On motion, the resolution, as amended, carried.

A bill, "An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2020 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service." (Bill 40)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: 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?

The Chair recognizes the hon. Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

As I've already had an outline and my colleagues here –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. BRAZIL: This is clause 2 now. I haven't spoken to clause 2.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again, it's always a pleasure to speak. I won't take my full 10 minutes now to allow the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island to actually bring in the next amendment, which will lead to some more debate I'm sure. I will allude to the remarks of the Member opposite in his remarks just a few minutes ago when he talked about – and I agree with him. Believe it or not, him and I spend a lot of time agreeing with each other.

This is not a waste of time. This is debating a very important issue for our province and for the public servants in our province. Not only the public servants but anybody who relies on the province for any type of benefit or need that the government provides. It's certainly not a waste of time. I believe in the first Interim Supply this year we spent around eight hours on that debate. Debate in this House is never a waste of time.

I want to draw the attention to something the Member said. He said this is for the protection of the people. We want to bring in protection for the people for 60 days. What we're saying here tonight is we want to go one-third further and bring in protection for the people of this province for 90 days.

AN HON. MEMBER: As recommended by (inaudible).

MR. CROCKER: As recommended by the officials in the Department of Finance.

That's the reality here. We have officials in the Department of Finance who are diligently working; they're probably still down there now. I don't feel a bit bad about working late tonight, no problem with it whatsoever. I can almost guarantee you that if you were to walk out of this Chamber right now and head to your right or your left you will find officials in the Department of Finance preparing our budget. Those are the same public servants that have given the advice that in the best interest of the

people of this province we provide 90 days of Supply. This doesn't get us new programs; this doesn't get us any type of new spending. The level of transparency – the Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier, yesterday afternoon on her own initiative, actually tabled in this House the expenditures to date of the COVID fund that we brought in back in the spring, and she did it up until September 13, 2020. It was an analysis that she, on her own will, brought into this House to show everybody that the money that we had that wasn't in last year's Estimates, our COVID contingency fund, how it's been spent.

I must say, the Department of Finance and government must have done a really good job with that expenditure, because we went through Question Period here today – after the minister tabled this yesterday I didn't hear one question today in Question Period about how we'd spent that money. Do you know why? Because we spent it properly and we spent it prudently. We didn't have any extra line items in Estimates, because until we pass a budget we do not have an ability, we do not have the head and we do not have the line item to actually change anything in a budget. This is supplying last year's budget.

Once we bring down a budget on September 30 – and I'll go through the timeline I went through earlier today again one more time, bring down a budget on September 30 – it's going to take four weeks or five weeks to pass that budget. We've already agreed that during October month we will take one constituency week. We've agreed to that, so that leaves us three weeks in October.

MR. PARROTT: (Inaudible.)

MR. CROCKER: I hear the Member for Terra Nova over there still chirping and saying amend that. Well, if he feels that we can amend the schedule and go straight through October, there will be no problem on this side doing that.

If that's what the Member wants us to do, we will certainly amend October so that we go straight through but no constituency week. That's fine. If he would like to do that we can certainly do it, no issue whatsoever but –

AN HON. MEMBER: Should have been here all summer.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. CROCKER: It's amazing; we should have been here all summer.

One thing we haven't heard today, Madam Chair – we heard the Opposition House Leader talk about how no talk of an election. There's one voice we haven't heard today. The last time we heard from that voice was on Thursday, when the Leader of the Opposition told Peter Cowan of CBC quite clearly that I have no problem bringing down this government. That's what was said on Thursday. I haven't seen or haven't heard the Leader of the Opposition correct that today, at all. I haven't heard him correct that statement and say that is not a correct statement.

Maybe, before we go any further tonight, the Leader of the Opposition may want to reiterate what his House Leader has said multiple times today. I have no reason not to believe what the House Leader is telling me when he says they have no intentions of bringing down the government, but he's contradicting what his Leader said on Thursday.

Let's be clear here, we do want to find our public service, our front-line workers, people with drug cards and our seniors in this province – we do not want to find them without coverage after 60 days while we're in an election campaign. Let's clear the air. What is it? Is it the Opposition House Leader or is the Leader of the Opposition when it comes his statement?

Madam Chair, that's the question I have. We will continue to debate this for as long as it takes until we get those answers.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll just spend a few minutes here and I'm sorry to jump up again. Here's where sometimes problems are caused by your own doing.

I just heard the Minister of Finance talk about the budget, 51 days in 2018. The budget was brought down March 28, 2018. It was 17 days Easter – it was brought down on a Wednesday, it was 17 days. So this is the type of situation when you stand up and say 51 days, but you forget that 18 of those days was Easter break – it was Easter break.

I have to say another thing to the Government House Leader. I have a copy of this contingency. Do you know where this came from? After multiple letters to the minister asking for it, that's where this came from. I'm just saying, when you give the impression that the minister walked up and tabled this, it was multiple letters that I wrote to get it. Then, we were at the meeting the other day and she said, okay, I don't have it yet but I'll table it tomorrow. That's where this came from.

This idea that, poof, we're going to release this to the public just never happened. This is where people like myself who have been on that side start questioning things and say why don't we just put the facts on the table? I asked before, if all that's on the table where's the \$350-million Paul Mills's report? Somebody in government has it for sure. Someone has it. I asked the question earlier, numerous economic recovery programs: \$28,870,000. Where is it tabled what those projects were for? Where is it tabled?

I say to the Government House Leader – and I've known you for a long while – if you want to accuse me of playing politics after being through politics for a long while, I'm guilty as charged. I was elected, which is politics, to represent the people of Humber - Bay of Islands, to ask questions on their behalf. I will continue to do it as long as they put their faith in me. For someone to think that because myself and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands is standing up with the Opposition and the NDP because we feel that if it's extended a bit further – it's going to go on a bit further. We had the opportunity for the budget; it wasn't brought in.

When this kind of stuff comes up that we disagree with the government, all of a sudden

we're playing politics with everybody? There was a good quote I heard a while back: Why raise your voice? Why don't you just strengthen your argument? Once you start raising your voice and saying that I'm playing politics, that doesn't faze me. I'm sure it doesn't faze the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

When you realize that there's information there that's being put out that's not correct, that's where you ask the questions. It's not that we're trying – I know me personally – to bring down the government, because I don't think anybody in this province wants an election. I'm not worried about the election to be honest. I'm definitely not worried about an election because I won before and I lost before. That's all you can do.

I can tell you one thing, if there are questions needing to be asked – and I asked the question earlier and I still never got an answer. How do you get workers in from outside this province as essential workers? We heard today how you do it is because the company says they're essential. If you're essential, who gives an exemption? Who classified them?

I know there are certain connections that people have. They say, okay, these people are essential; therefore, they're automatically brought in the province without going through the COVID regulations. I never got an answer on that yet and I still don't have an answer. I definitely don't have an answer. I don't have an answer on Paul Mills. Please excuse me if I'm going to ask those questions because I'm going to continue to ask those questions.

I'll just take my leave on that and that's the few points that I made earlier. I'll still wait for my answers.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I may not take a full 10 minutes but I, too, just want to sort of echo what my colleague for Humber - Bay of Islands has said. Speaking from my perspective I have said in this House and I have shown in this House, quite frankly, over the last number of years, couple of years for sure as I've been an independent – I have

voted with the government, I have voted with the Official Opposition, I have voted with the NDP and I've voted against all three of them.

There's no motivation here for me. There really isn't. There's no politics at play here for me; there's no motivation here for me. At the end of the day I'll still say I don't think people want an election – I really don't. I know there are suspicions going back and forth. I think it speaks to the lack of trust that's there between all Members. As has been mentioned, I think it might be because the last time there was a budget dropped and we went straight to an election, so I can understand why the other parties would be suspicious. I get why that would happen.

For me, personally, as the Member for Bay of Islands said, if you want to call an election tomorrow, let's go for it. I don't care. I'll win or I'll lose, it will be one or the other. If I lose I'll move on, I'll survive. I feel very confident in my chances but I'm certainly not taking it for granted. I'm prepared to go to election tomorrow if that's what it's all about. That's it. That's part of democracy.

It's certainly not motivated by anything by me, other than trying to sort through this and do what I think is reasonable and try to do what I think is right. I've said three times now, I'm not interested in bringing down the government on Interim Supply or the budget as long as it's all reasonable.

People don't want it and if the people don't want it, I don't want it. It's as simple as that. I heard – I think it was the Member for Bonavista. It might have been the Member for Bonavista. He quoted three different elections or something and the amount of time – maybe it wasn't him; maybe it was the Member for CBS, one of them anyway. One of the Members of the Opposition quoted three or four budget cycles and how many days it took. It was somebody over there. I can't remember who it was.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: Okay, Stephenville - Port au Port, sorry about that. He talked about that, and I believe that to be factual.

The Minister of Finance keeps going back to one year. She keeps talking about 2018. She didn't talk about 2017, 2016 or 2019, because those dates seem to match the narrative that she's trying to put across, that it's the longest possible scenario. The reality of it is, as my colleague said, Easter break was right in the middle of that. It's disingenuous to throw that out there and give the impression that somehow it was longer than what it was because it wasn't, once you remove the Easter break.

As we move through this, if we do feel that time is an issue – and I really don't think it is. You only have 75 hours, and this time even Interim Supply is coming out of it anyway. If they felt time was an issue, the option is there on the constituency-week piece, and the option is also there to do what we're doing here tonight. If they want to run out the 75 hours, sure, we can sit out every evening. I don't care. Instead of going home at 5:30, we'll go home at 10:30 every night. Go for it. It's not like there are no options available to us in terms of the timing.

Yes, I understand we're in the middle of a pandemic, COVID-19 and all that, I totally get that, but as my colleague for St. John's Centre said, there's a plan in place. There's already a plan in place. We already did an Interim Supply back a number of months ago with only 10 Members. So if we could do it with 10 Members then, why can't we do it with 10 Members if we had to come back, and so what if we have to come back? This House is not open enough. A lot of people would say that we're never in the House, so if we have to come back for another Interim Supply, so be it, who cares? If we have to do it online, virtual, let's do it.

I don't understand. I'm trying to understand the argument and the rationale why it has to be 30 days. I understand they're talking about convention, but in convention, normally, there's one Interim Supply for 30 days – one Interim Supply. This is the fourth Interim Supply, isn't it, I think?

AN HON. MEMBER: Third.

MR. LANE: Third Interim Supply. This is the third Interim Supply, so we're not talking three months; we're talking eight months. That's not convention. I'm sure there's no convention

about eight months. Three months might be, but eight months isn't.

By and large, what we've done, we're continuing to just grant Interim Supply, grant Interim Supply. What we're basically doing is just giving an open chequebook, to some degree, to the government to just keep on spending money. I'm not suggesting that it's not being spent properly, Madam Chair. I'm not suggesting that. I don't know. I mean, the report that my colleague here referenced on the contingency money, I'm glad we got that, but that's not a detailed report. It's all under a number of headings, but we don't know the details under those headings.

I'm not suggesting that the money was spent imprudently and improperly. I'm not saying that, but we don't know. The reality of it is that we're supposed to be in the House of Assembly debating this stuff. We're supposed to be here to ask questions and to raise concerns and hopefully get answers, not to come in and just keep on granting Interim Supply and just let government keep spending and spending with no accountability.

That's not an insult to anybody in the Department of Finance. I appreciate that if someone in the Department of Finance actually said that – if they actually said that now, that we strongly recommend that you got to have three months, I'm not saying that they never said we should have three months. All those departments and officials are there to give advice to government, but at the end of the day we're the Legislature, sure, why do we need a legislature if we're just going to simply just whatever the officials say we just do it, everything gets rubber-stamped. Nobody every questions nothing, challenges anything. No, b'y, that's the way you want to do it. They're not the ones that were elected; we were. They do great work and I'm sure they give great advice.

Although I have to say that I'm a person – we talk about Muskrat Falls. I thought I was taking great advice from officials and experts. I heard my colleague here for Virginia Waters – I think that's the name of the district – talk about the expert advice –

AN HON. MEMBER: Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

MR. LANE: Virginia Waters - Pleasantville talking about the expert advice. I took expert advice from the \$6-million man. That's who I took advice from. Where'd that advice get us?

I don't mean to cast aspersions on the people in Finance. I'm sure they're doing great work and they're experienced people. I'm not knocking them, but the concept of simply saying because somebody in the civil service says this is the way to go, that everybody in the Legislature says that's all right, b'y, they said it. Forget about the fact that we were elected to make decisions, we're just going to go along with everything that some official says and that's the end of the story. No need to debate that. No need to be in the House of Assembly. What a waste of time that is.

We're talking about a waste of time, but at the end of the day I think there were a lot of issues raised here. I'm glad we're having this debate tonight. I heard Members talk about rotational workers; I heard issues raised about school busing, the issues with the schools, the issues with our health care system, issues in long-term care, issues about hiring local people and issues about money that's being spent in the province. I don't consider that a waste of time. If that's a waste of time, what isn't a waste of time, if that's the case?

Tomorrow, we're going to go through a process of a Private Members' Day. Nothing against the private Member or the motion, but at the end of the day we all just get up there and we talk – government will bring in their private Member's motion, tell them what a great job they're doing in some area. Opposition will get up and they'll bring in a private Member's motion and saying what a crappy job you're doing somewhere.

We all just sort of have this bit of banter, everybody votes on it and it's kind of a meaningless thing because it has no teeth, it's not binding on anybody. That's the process. So I think this is more valuable than some of the – I'm not saying we haven't had private Member's motions now that haven't been important topics, we've had some good ones, but we've also had

some that were, let's face it, just political banter back and forth.

I don't see anything wrong with what we're doing tonight. I'm glad I'm here and I'll continue debating as long as we have to be here.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to propose an amendment to clause 2 and attach a Schedule also which is related. It is moved by myself, as the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island, seconded by the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi: That clause 2 of the bill be amended by striking out the amount \$1,560,324,100 and substituting instead the amount \$1,040,216,400.

The Schedule would be amended as follows: The Schedule to the bill be struck out and the following be substituted: Head of Expenditure, Amounts; Consolidated Fund Services, \$334,000; Digital Government and Service Newfoundland and Labrador, \$5,879,800; Executive Council, \$13,504,400; Finance, \$20,185,600; Public Procurement Agency, \$320,400; Public Service Commission, \$371,000; Transportation and Infrastructure, \$12,421,400; Legislature, \$3,678,800; Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, \$17,299,800; Immigration, Skills and Labour, \$121,011,400; Industry, Energy and Technology, \$61,680,000; Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, \$10,576,000; Children, Seniors and Social Development, \$27,053,000; Education, \$131,369,800; Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities, \$50,470,600; Health and Community Services, \$526,138,200; Justice and Public Safety, \$30,231,600; Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, \$7,690,600. For a total of \$1,040,216,400.

I present these as amendments to clause 2 and the Schedule as attached.

CHAIR: Thank you.

We will take a very quick recess and we'll come back.

Recess

CHAIR: Order, please!

Are the House Leaders ready?

The amendments are in order.

The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

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

CHAIR: 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. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

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

The Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

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

When shall the Committee sit again?

MR. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Given the hour of the day, I move, seconded by
my hon. colleague, the Member for Gander, that
this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

The House is now adjourned until 10 o'clock
tomorrow morning.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned
until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 10 a.m.