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Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we begin the Routine Proceedings today, I would like to provide some information to the House now related to a point of privilege raised by the MHA for Humber - Bay of Islands on March 5, 2020.

At the time the Member raised the point of privilege, I heard the Member's submission and various other speakers in response. I then took the matter under advisement. Since that time, a statement of claim dealing with related matters has been filed by the Member in the Supreme Court in Corner Brook. An action has been taken against two sitting Members of the House as well as a former Member of the House and the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, a statutory officer of this House.

As you know, the Speaker is the guardian of the privileges of Members of the House of Assembly, and it is the Speaker's duty to enforce and uphold the rights of all Members. The sitting Members named in the action also enjoy parliamentary privilege which must be protected by the Speaker. In this unusual context, the privileges of a Member – and a possible *prima facie* violation of that privilege – are set against the *sub judice* convention. Free speech in this House is a key element of parliamentary privilege and the *sub judice* convention is a voluntary limit on that free speech. The *sub judice* convention is not codified, and as so it is within the discretion of the Speaker to apply or enforce it.

The *sub judice* convention has been described as a voluntary restriction on a Member's right to free speech in order to prevent the possibility of such debate having prejudicial effects on the rights of citizens to a fair trial; it is a restraint imposed by the House on itself in the interest of justice and fair play.

The *sub judice* convention also goes to the House's respect for the court processes, with the court of course being separate and independent. As *Bosc and Gagnon* indicates: "The *sub judice* convention is important in the conduct of

business in the House. It protects the rights of interested parties before the courts, and preserves and maintains the separation and mutual respect between the legislature and the judiciary. The convention ensures that a balance is created between the need for a separate, impartial judiciary and free speech."

I have reviewed rulings of other Speakers on similar matters. I note that in a March 22, 1983 ruling in the House of Commons, former Speaker Sauvé said "the *sub judice* convention has never stood in the way of the House considering a *prima facie* matter of privilege vital to the public interest or to the effective operation of the House and its Members" but goes on to say that "strictly speaking...while the *sub judice* convention does not prevent debate on the matter, the fact remains that the heart of this question of privilege is still before the courts which have yet to make a finding. I believe that it would be prudent for the House to use caution in taking steps that could result in an investigatory process that would, in many ways, run parallel to the court proceeding, particularly given the Minister is already a party to the court proceedings." That's Speaker Sauvé's comments.

In addition, in a May 9, 2000 ruling in this House, Speaker Snow indicated that the *sub judice* "convention exists to protect parties to judicial actions, civil and criminal, although it is invoked more readily in criminal cases or those in which reputations are at stake." He went on to say: "If the Chair is called upon to rule on a matter of *sub judice* again, the matter will be reviewed in light of the information available and the Chair will again exercise its discretion, always keeping in mind the rights and interests of parties including the Members of the House of Assembly."

In conclusion, the point of privilege raised by the Member includes a protracted discussion of interactions with former Speaker Trimper, Premier Ball and the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. Given the intertwined nature of comments made to the point of privilege and matters alleged in the statement of claim, a ruling on the matter while it is before the courts has the potential to influence the judicial process and could result in a process that would parallel court proceedings.

For the information of Members, based on these considerations, I will not be ruling on this point of privilege raised by the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands until the related matters have been resolved in the courts.

Further, I remind Members that the sub judice rule forbids reference being made in debate, as well as in motions and questions, to matters awaiting or under adjudication. Members should govern themselves accordingly to this convention in debate while the matter is before the courts.

The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, because it's the earliest possible time. You can rule on it in a couple of years, that's fine, but I'm going to raise it. This will be my first opportunity.

I rise today on a point of privilege. O'Brien and Bosc in the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states that a "Member must satisfy the Speaker that he or she is bringing the matter to the attention of the House as soon as practicable after becoming aware of the situation."

As per our discussion on Friday, September 11, 2020, I sought your guidance on a point of privilege. I have given you notice. I have a written copy of my point of privilege.

Mr. Speaker, in the Joyce report October 18, 2018, Bruce Chaulk, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards writes: "I considered whether these findings could support a conclusion of harassment in that Mr. Joyce's action during the hiring process behaviour was unwelcome by the Complainant. I found MHA Joyce's comment that he would follow the rules now too to imply a threat, even if he never intended to act on it, and as such is objectionable nature.

"However, I was struck by the language used by the Complainant herself to describe many of their interactions on this matter, that such behaviour is what they do, trying to get their points across whenever they have a moment in front of someone. Accordingly, I'm not sure that MHA Joyce knew, or ought to have known, that

calling the Complainant about the hiring process would have been unwelcome by her." This was the finding of Rubin Tomlinson; the experts hired and confirmed that there was no bullying and harassment.

"Relationships between Members and government employees should be professional and based upon mutual respect and should have regard to the duty of those employees to remain politically impartial when carrying out their duties.

"I find that the conduct of MHA Joyce is a violation of principle 10 of the Code of Conduct. His behaviour during the hiring process fell below the standard expected of a Member of the House of Assembly. I find that the manner in which he addressed this issue was unprofessional and showed a lack of mutual respect towards members of the public service by placing those individuals in the middle of a process that is supposed to be politically impartial. This type of conduct is not acceptable and must be discouraged."

Rubin Tomlinson, the expert, found that there was no bullying and harassment, even with the phone call. The Commissioner clearly states that the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's was a government employee, misled the House of Assembly and squeezed it under principle 10, relationship between Members and government employees. This is false, an intentional interpretation of principle 10 and is unbecoming of the ethics commissioner and I will explain why.

In a session of the House of Assembly the Commissioner tried to justify this by saying that Members are plural. He refused to address the issue of clarifying a Member as a government employee. Mr. Chaulk stated it is up to the House to decide who to apologize to.

Mr. Chaulk stated on many occasions that he is an independent Officer of the House. Was there any outside influence or did the ethics commissioner violate his own oath by communicating with Dwight Ball and his staff?

On August 23, 2018, in a public statement to the media, Dwight Ball stated: no room for political interference, so hasn't sought any update.

Dwight Ball states he has not seen or sought out any information, given it's an independent process. I quote: There's no room for political interference in these reports, said Ball. I have not received any information from the Commissioner, nor have I ever went looking for any.

These statements were made in response to a press release from the Leader of the Opposition, the day the by-election was called, August 23, 2018.

These statements are totally false, as on August 6, 2018, Dwight Ball informed me that the Holloway Report would be coming out on August 6, 2018. He called me that night and informed me that the Holloway Report for myself and Dale Kirby will be coming out together. On August 24, both reports came out together.

I have a letter dated May 31, signed by Dwight Ball, in which he states: I can confirm that there were limited occasions whereby my office contacted the Office of the Commissioner for Legislative Standards.

Mr. Kirby made an application to the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador to obtain a copy of the Rubin Thomlinson report. In that court case, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards is stating: Members are not government employees. I quote from the submission from the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Paragraph 24: "It remains the Respondent's position that members are not considered employees pursuant to ATIPPA. The language of the Act supports the conclusion that a member is not an employee, with a distinction made between the two roles throughout the Act. This distinction appears in s.55 and s.62 of the Act which read as follows: ... An employee or a member who reasonably believes that he or she has information that could show that a wrongdoing has been committed or it about to be committed may make a disclosure to his or her supervisor, the clerk, a member of the audit committee chosen under paragraph 23(2)(b), or the investigator."

I'll go on to section 62: "Where a supervision, the speaker, the clerk or the investigator is of the opinion that it is necessary to further the purposes of this Part, he or she may, in accordance with the rules, arrange for legal advice to be provided to employees and members" Referenced by the Commissioner for Legislative Standards: *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*.

The Code of Conduct, which I was found in violation of, also recognizes a distinction between MHAs and employees.

Section 10: "Relationships between Members and government employees should be professional and based upon mutual respect and should have regard to the duty of these employees to remain politically impartial when carrying out their duties."

In paragraph 26: It is clear that one reviews the act and the Code of Conduct that there is a distinction between Members and employees. If Members were to be considered employees for the purposes of the act and the Code of Conduct, there would be no need for such a distinction to exist.

Section 2(i) of the ATIPPA defines "'employee', in relation to a public body, includes a person retained under a contract to perform services for the public body."

Members are not retained under a contract to perform services for a public body, but rather they are elected representatives that are subject to the rules and conventions of the Legislature. The duties they perform are by virtue of them being elected to hold office, and not pursuant to a contractual relationship.

Paragraph 29: When the definition of 'employee' is considered in the context of the distinction made between the terms 'member' and 'employee' in the act and the Code of Conduct, it is evident that Members are not to be considered employees in the context of ATIPPA, but rather elected representatives who serve at the will of the people.

Mr. Speaker, I quote again from *The Joyce Report* of October 18, 2018: "Relationships between Members and government employees

should be professional and based upon mutual respect and should have regard to the duty of those employees to remain politically impartial when carrying out their duties.” The Commissioner went on to say, “I find that the manner in which he addressed this issue was unprofessional and showed a lack of mutual respect” to a member of the public service.

Mr. Speaker, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, our ethics commissioner, cannot make contradictory statements, one in the House of Assembly, to define an elected Member as a public servant, to find a member in violation of principle 10, then claim in the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador that a Member is not a public servant to deny access to the Rubin Thomlinson report.

The Commissioner for Legislative Standards, the ethics commissioner, made false and misleading statements either in the House of Assembly or in the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Was there any influence by Dwight Ball in the Premier’s office, who was in contact with Bruce Chaulk, to make these deliberate findings? The question has to be answered.

My rights, as a Member, have been violated by the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, who happens to be the ethics watchdog.

All the evidence is in writing and enclosed is a copy of the submission to the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador, where these statements were made.

This is serious. This is attacking our foundation of the House of Assembly to allow such disregard for the House of Assembly.

If you make a decision that is a *prima facie* case, I’m asking that you refer *The Joyce Report* of October 18 and *The Kirby Report* of October 3 back to the House of Assembly. I want to make it quite clear if you decide this is a *prima facie* case and this is referred back to the House of Assembly, we’ll be discussing the process, not the merits of the reports, but the process alone.

Mr. Speaker, O’Brien and Bosc states: “It is impossible to codify all incidents which might

be interpreted as matters of obstruction, interference, molestation or intimidation and as such constitutes *prima facie* cases of privilege. However, some matters found to be *prima facie* include” – and this is very important Mr. Speaker – “the damaging of a Member’s reputation, the usurpation of the title of Member of Parliament, the intimidation of members and their staff and of witnesses before committees, and the provision of misleading information.”

O’Brien and Bosc quote Maingot as stating: “The purpose of raising matters of ‘privilege’ in either House of Parliament is to maintain the respect and credibility due to and required of each House in respect of these privileges, to uphold its powers, and to enforce the enjoyment of the privileges of its Members. A genuine question of privilege is therefore a serious matter not to be reckoned with lightly and accordingly ought to be rare, and thus rarely raised in the House of Commons.”

I refer to O’Brien and Bosc, page 141, where matters involving privilege before the House of Commons are treated with utmost seriousness. As you outlined, there is a formal process to be followed. I have followed that process and notified the Speaker of my intentions to raise the issue of privilege and this is the earliest possible opportunity.

MR. SPEAKER: Any other speakers to this point of privilege?

I’ll take this matter under advisement. I also should note that our requirements are that points of privilege be presented in writing to the Speaker an hour before the House opens, and this one was about a half an hour late by that standard. But I’ll take this matter under advisement and report back to the House at a later date.

Statements by Members.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Humber - Bay of Islands, Mount Pearl North, Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, Ferryland and Bonavista.

The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, on July 29, I had the honour of presenting the Newfoundland and Labrador Award for Bravery to Ralph Joyce of Lark Harbour in recognition of his heroic efforts in saving his friend, John Parsons.

On February 7, 2019, Mr. Joyce and Mr. Parsons were walking on Bottle Cove head trail in Lark Harbour when Mr. Parsons slipped and began sliding down an icy embankment towards the ocean, with about a 100-foot drop.

Fortunately, his foot caught a small rock which stopped him about two feet before the edge of the cliff. Realizing that it was too far to go get help, Mr. Joyce quickly responded instructing Mr. Parsons to remain still while he searched for something he could use, and eventually found a dead tree nearby.

Despite facing incredible dangerous icy conditions himself, Mr. Joyce managed to carefully extend the tree to Mr. Parsons and pulled him to safety. As Mr. Joyce stated, "I could have went on just as well as him. I didn't think about that at the time." The outcome of that day could have been much different but due to Mr. Joyce's unselfish act, Mr. Parsons was able to return home safely to his family.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Mr. Joyce on receiving this well-deserved award.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I honour one of Mount Pearl's most respected and valued citizens, Mr. Harvey Hodder. Mr. Hodder's first memories of Mount Pearl are visiting his future wife, Pearl, in 1962. He moved to Mount Pearl in 1963 where he and Pearl settled and raised their family. They still reside there today.

Over the years, Mr. Hodder has put his heart and soul into the community of Mount Pearl. He

began his career in the early '60s as a teacher at Mount Pearl Central High. As my former principal, I can assure you he is remembered as someone who genuinely cared and respected each and every student.

He was elected four times as mayor; he served a total of 23 years on Mount Pearl City Council and was a driving force behind the creation of the Mount Pearl Frosty Festival – now in its 38th year. Harvey served as MHA for Waterford Valley from 1993 to 2007 and spent four years as Speaker of this very House.

To mention just a few of Harvey's accomplishments, he served 12 years on the St. John's Metropolitan Area Board, former secretary of the Canadian Heart Foundation, a former member of the Board of Regents of Memorial University, recipient of Canada 125 medal in 1992. He's also an honorary member of the Royal Canadian Legion.

I ask all those present to join me in wishing him well and honouring Mr. Harvey Hodder for his invaluable contribution to Mount Pearl.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this year, 2020, has been deemed the Stay Home Year.

I'm inviting everyone to make the excursion around the bay to come and visit the Conception Bay Museum in Harbour Grace. Come for the summer lunchtime concerts in the park, the Haunted Harbour Grace hike, book launches and guest lectures, tours of Peter Easton's pirate path, historic Gibbet Hill and the many exhibits that display our rich, local heritage.

Folklore dictates that the earliest museum structure on the site was Pirate Peter Easton's fortification construction in spring of 1612. Later in the 1800s, the building served as the Customs House, a tuberculosis clinic, as well as an office for the provincial department of Social Services. The building was also the centre of

business and international trade for all Conception Bay ports.

The Conception Bay Museum is a non-profit organization guided by a committed and dedicated group of volunteers who continue to uphold high- quality, professional standards. More than 3,000 people visited the site last year.

The Conception Bay Museum social media profile has the second most Facebook likes, followings and website visits, second only to The Rooms Provincial Archives.

Mr. Speaker, 2020 marks the 150th anniversary of the Customs House construction.

I invite everyone to come and visit the Conception Bay Museum and a special thank you to all volunteers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Today in this hon. House I would like to recognize all essential workers. The past several months have been a very trying and difficult time for everyone in society.

I am honoured to have this opportunity to send out a big thank you to the many of the essential workers who have worked so hard over the past few months and continue to work diligently to complete their duties safely and efficiently. The essential workers have done a great job ensuring that life's essential necessities and services are readily available to everyone during this pandemic.

Each and every one of our essential workers have certainly helped ease the burden, relieved the stress and worked persistently to keep the rest of us safe since the start of the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members in this House of Assembly to join me in congratulating all essential workers, especially the ones of

Ferryland District and this great Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, Tom and Pearl Janes of Musgravetown – Tom a retired teacher and Pearl an accordion and guitar player – have entertained for decades at educational and social events. The Janes – married over 50 years ago – have contributed to their community just as long.

Tom studied and played the infamous ugly stick and has made approximately 500 of these instruments. Tom is admirably referred to as the ugly-stick man. They have played at coffee shops, senior homes, summer programs, kitchen parties, Screech-ins, singalongs, birthday parties and other events. They always look forward to putting smiles on people's faces, especially seniors.

Last year, Tom and Pearl worked with 28 students at Heritage Collegiate in Lethbridge making ugly sticks. Each student made a musical instrument and they all played "I'se da B'y," with Pearl leading the group. They taught exchange students from Owen Sound, Ontario, to construct their own ugly stick while visiting Anthony Paddon Elementary.

Tom serves as president of the Bloomfield-Musgravetown Lions Club, while Pearl serves as the club's secretary. Tom has served on municipal council, served as zone chair for Lions Club in District 4 and served as district chair for the Dog Guides project.

I ask this House to join me in congratulating and celebrating these consummate community volunteers, Tom and Pearl Janes of Musgravetown.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to be in this hon. House today to highlight a new approach that can help residents of our province stay active as we learn to live with COVID-19.

Last week, I was pleased to join more than 200 participants for the Regaining Momentum Webinar, which was hosted by my department.

The webinar was co-developed and moderated by Joe Doiron, who has extensive experience in sport, physical activity and recreation policy and programming.

Mr. Speaker, those who work and volunteer in the public health, physical activity, sport and recreation sectors play a valuable role in the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities.

They have adapted their approaches to program delivery during the pandemic, and we appreciate their dedication and ingenuity in finding new ways to engage with the public.

This two-hour event provided a valuable opportunity for them to share and learn about ways to help people of all ages stay healthy and active during these challenging times.

I am pleased to say that it was the first webinar of its kind in Canada, and we hope that these types of sessions will become a model for other provinces and territories to follow as we all continue to find ways to stay active during this evolving public health situation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Over the last number of months, we've had to find new, alternative ways to get together and innovate through video conferencing and social distance gatherings. I would like to thank Joe Doiron for hosting this webinar. His experience in sport, physical activity and recreation policy provide guidance to all those who took part. Finding ways to adapt to the new normal is something we all must do in order to stay active in this COVID world. The minister noted that the webinar was the first of its kind in Canada as well.

Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition joins the minister in commending the host and participants of the Regaining Momentum Webinar, who are encouraging people to stay active during these unprecedented times.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement and compliment his department and Joe Doiron for hosting this event.

We know the part that exercise and physical activity play in mental health and creating a healthy society. The COVID-19 pandemic closed gyms, recreation programs, dance studios, swimming pools, to name just a few, and with them the social and exercise routine of residents. Webinars such as this help organizations reopen services and safely adhere to public health measures.

I trust government will continue to dialogue with these organizations to determine what other supports they need to deliver their programs.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

MR. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, on September 12, hunters took part in a highly anticipated cultural and recreational tradition in this province – the start of the big game hunting season.

Based in part on valuable input from the hunting community, several positive changes introduced for 2020-21 will modernize and enhance the hunting experience in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, for the first time, the starting date for all Moose Management Areas on the Island has been aligned to support the desire for fair and equal opportunities for all hunters. Previously, the opening date in the Eastern region was three weeks later than the rest of the Island.

Other policy changes for 2020-21 include the reintroduction of the Jawbone Collection Program, and permitting the use of crossbows and smaller calibre rifle .17 rimfire ammunition, creating consistency with regulations already in effect in most other jurisdictions in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I wish all hunters good luck this hunting season and encourage everyone to review the *2020-21 Hunting and Trapping Guide* for important safety and hunting information.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, we are glad to see the department making changes and incorporating knowledgeable input from people in the hunting community. We are particularly pleased that government has finally acknowledged the importance of the Jawbone Collection Program

and reinstated it. This is something that we – in particular, my colleague from Mount Pearl North – have been lobbying for, for some time.

Mr. Speaker, this program should never have been paused, as the scientific data collected provides valuable insight into the health of our province's moose and caribou populations which is so critically important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, the opening of the big game hunt is something that many people across the province look forward to every year, and I want to wish everyone a very safe and successful hunting season.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

I wish hunters of all abilities a safe and bountiful hunting season, including my wife on her first moose hunt as a licence holder. These changes are good –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BROWN: These changes are good, but one thing that was overlooked was the restrictive minimum distance requirement for hunters with disabilities who cannot navigate difficult terrain despite their ability to obtain a moose licence. I hope the minister will fix this unfortunate gap that severely limits people with mobility issues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, since the days of my late father, the hon. John C. Crosbie, the PC plan for offshore jobs included commissioning offshore platforms.

Is the Liberal plan for offshore jobs to create them by decommissioning platforms?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll speak slowly to this one, Mr. Speaker, because I find it very disingenuous of the Member opposite to even suggest that we would want to decommission. We have worked tirelessly over the last five years, Mr. Speaker, of this administration to grow the offshore industry. The Member opposite knows that, every member of the oil and gas community knows that, operators know that. I can say to the Member opposite, we have worked tirelessly to grow the industry. We have a very strong plan that was approved and developed by members of the industry.

He's a late start to this game and he's a late start to bringing in any kind of plan. I would say to the Member opposite that the PCs had no plan and thought they'd just take ours.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, with all these pro-oil principles that the minister is telling us about, I'd like to know when she's going to break ranks with the anti-oil Trudeau Liberals.

We heard that the Trudeau Liberal's are offering Husky \$500 million to shut down work. Can the minister confirm whether this is on the table?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

I'm happy to take this question from the Member opposite. What I can say is I have absolutely no idea what he's talking about there. That is not a conversation that I have had.

I can say that we've been speaking to Husky. We've been speaking to the federal government and it's about trying to get these projects up and running, getting people back to work. We have some big challenges, but, again, we're trying our best to get through them.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, the press asked the Premier if the Trudeau Liberals will come to the table on offshore support. He said: The question is best asked of the Trudeau Liberals, not him.

Does this mean the Premier thinks the press have a better chance of getting an answer than he does?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

Again, I think the Premier is saying that if you want to get something from the federal government, you can certainly ask them.

What I can say is that what we are trying to do is, yes, work with the federal government as they are a partner in this and they have a role to play in this when it comes to supporting the offshore.

Again, I have to mention to the Member that it wasn't that long ago that a leading Member of the Conservative Party said that investing money in these businesses was a losing idea. So, again, we're talking about the federal government here, you may want to talk to your colleagues up there as well.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I would say to both ministers opposite and the government that offshore workers want the Premier to use his claimed ability to leverage relationships in Ottawa to save their jobs.

How many more jobs will be lost before the government decides to use the Premier's so-called leverage?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said earlier, the PCs are linked to this game. We've been working with Ottawa for the last six months; working with industry, working to develop a plan, working to ensure that we have a vibrant industry offshore.

We have been diligent and forthright with the federal government, as partners in our offshore, as to some of the concerns. Mr. Speaker, we have been working with both the operators, as well as the investors, as well as those that do exploration offshore.

Just because he's late to this doesn't mean that the work hasn't been done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can see you're doing a great job. There's a protest tomorrow; we should have a good crowd. We will talk to you tomorrow.

The Terra Nova FPSO sits in Conception Bay while many proud and skilled Newfoundlanders and Labradorians sit home without a job. The Terra Nova is not producing oil as it's waiting for major maintenance and a refit.

I ask the minister: What efforts have you taken that this refit take place in this province, in places like Marystown and Bull Arm?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and certainly I appreciate the question from the Member opposite, because we all know how important this industry is to this province.

The reality is that there are not many shipyards that are available to handle a refit of this nature and we're still working through this. One of the issues, obviously, that came in at the exact same time as this is the world-crushing impact that COVID and the price wars had on this industry. When you just look at CNBC saying that oil companies have lost a trillion dollars this year, the reality is that they're all looking internally to see what they can do and when they can do that.

We'll continue working with them. We've met with them literally on a day-to-day basis to try to help them work through this and see what we, as a provincial government, can do.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a significant portion of the Terra Nova was originally built by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and these same workers are now sitting home without a job. They could be helping us get the vessel back in production.

I ask the minister: Why haven't you been able to secure a future for the Terra Nova in this province and get our workers back to work?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

I can say that certainly there's been no lack of effort on behalf of everybody, I think, in the industry, as well as the federal government and the provincial government, trying to get this industry back up and running. The reality is, as I just mentioned, that some of the impacts are beyond the control of absolutely everybody in this building, when we talk about what COVID and the pricing war have done. This is the reality when we have a province that's so reliant on oil that we're at the mercy of it.

What I can say is that when you have trillion-dollar losses in this industry, even very successful companies have to look inside as it relates to liquidity, as it looks at their balance sheet. We are making those efforts, but there are some factors that are out of our control. We are working with these companies, working with the federal government to figure out solutions and options to help get people back to work.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, thank you for the answer, but I tell you, the industry are looking for leadership within this government, so I hope that's not lost on you.

The sooner the refit is completed the sooner production can resume. This would help our province's finances, but more importantly, it will get our people back to work.

I ask the minister: What is the timeline to have the Terra Nova back in production?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, and I appreciate the question from the Member.

What I would point out to people is that we need to be talking about this. I do appreciate these questions because they are important to all of our constituents.

I don't have a timeline to report here right now. The reality is that these companies, which are facing dropping oil prices, a volatility – we saw a \$5 decrease just last week alone. We saw what happened last April and the fact that there have been huge losses faced by the entire industry. Right now, I don't have that information to report to the House, but what I can say is we are extremely cognizant of the impact of what's going on. We're aware of the timelines and that time is of the essence.

What I would say is that I do think we are providing leadership, we can, and the abilities that we can to try to get this back up and running.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, over the last 10 years, Trades NL has donated \$20 million to our community organizations like Ronald McDonald House, Daffodil Place, The Gathering Place, Kids Eat Smart Foundation and the School Lunch Association. As Trades NL themselves said: when men and women are working they are giving back to our society. We know right now that people are not working.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Without corporate support from groups like Trades NL, where will this money come from?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

For certain, there is absolutely no doubting the impact that groups like Trades NL and their workers have had on all the groups that the Member named. That's extremely difficult to replace.

What I would point out is two things; one, COVID has had a significant impact not just on business and the economy around the world but also on these groups. You only have to talk to some of these organizations that are having huge

trouble trying to raise money in times like this. That's absolutely certain.

The other thing I have to point out here is when we talk about that issue and when we talk about Husky, for instance, we talk about the huge, huge cash injection that's been asked for. One of the issues that we have, like companies, is liquidity and one of the reasons is all the money we have invested in Muskrat Falls.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, the offshore oil industry is not only important for jobs but it supports our communities. For example, Husky is a proud supporter of Easter Seals as the title sponsor for their facility. Last year when called upon, Husky gave additional monies towards the Flood Relief Campaign.

Without corporate support from the offshore oil industry, I ask the Minister of Finance: Is she prepared to step up?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

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

We understand how challenging this is for the industry. We have worked very closely with the industry. We hope that it can rebound. It's a global crisis, not a provincial crisis. We would love to be able to have the oil industry in this province not only back to where it was, but more robust again. And we would be able to say to the communities that the investments by the oil and gas companies have certainly helped to grow our community support system and we hope to have it back doing so again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Finance explain why she needs three months Interim Supply?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Three months Interim Supply is a normal supply period for any budget – a normal supply period for any budget. As the Member opposite surely should know, that once you have a budget, of course, the Interim Supply rests. There is no reason not to have an Interim Supply period that really does understand the Estimates process, the budget process.

It naturally and normally takes over 50 days, Mr. Speaker, to conclude a budget process. Once the budget process is concluded, Interim Supply rests. We actually have a democratic process in this system and we must adhere to that.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I beg to differ. I understand normal supply period of three months when a budget is brought down in April, but over the last four years it has taken an average of 15 days to introduce and pass a budget. In other words, four sitting weeks.

So once again I ask the minister: Why does she need three months Interim Supply when we know the budget will be introduced and can be passed by the end of October?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

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

I would say to the Member opposite, his information is incorrect. I can provide him the information on how long it has taken. I can say to the Member opposite, because surely he knows, just one of the concurrent processes of

budget takes 75 hours, Mr. Speaker – 75 hours to just do one concurrent process of the budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I'll gladly provide the information to the minister tomorrow, exactly what it took for the last four budgets.

I'd ask the minister again: Why do we need three months Interim Supply?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I will say to the Member opposite, multiple factors. First of all, it normally takes over 50 days. I can tell the Member opposite, that's the information I have, I'd be happy to provide it to him. Over 50 days in a generalized rule of thumb. Two, we are in the middle of a budget – it's a normalized budget process, so normally three months supply, and where it takes over 50 days we came in with the same process.

Mr. Speaker, three, I've heard the Leader of the Opposition talking about: well, he doesn't know what's in the budget, maybe we'll go to an election. We are in a minority government. We do have to have provisions to ensure that if the democratic process does mean that we're going to an election – and, obviously, the Member opposite is musing about that – then we have to be prepared as a government because that's what we do, we lead.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador do not want an election. As a matter of fact, your own leader said he did not want an election.

Let me clearly tell the minister: Budget 2016, presented on April 14, 2016, finished in the House on May 31, 2016, 24 sitting days. Budget 2017, presented on April 6, 2017, finished in the House May 16, 2017, 15 sitting days. Budget 2018, presented in the House March 27, 2018, finished in the House via Supply Act, May 22, 17 sitting days. Budget 2019, passed via Supply Act, June 26, nine sitting days.

I ask the minister: Why do we need three months?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS. COADY: Two can play this game, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2018 was released on March 27 and was passed on May 22, 57 days later. Budget 2017 was released on April 6 and passed on May 16, 41 days later. Budget 2016 was released on April 14 and passed on May 31, 48 days later.

Mr. Speaker, I completely concur that the people of the province do not want an election, but when the Opposition plays politics – Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are worried about COVID, they're worried about their jobs, they're worried about their future, and they're playing politics.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, there is nobody on this side of the House asking for an election; apparently you are.

Do you need three months Interim Supply?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite should know that we do not control that process.

Mr. Speaker, the reason why you normally have three months supply is to allow for Estimates, is to allow for concurrent debate. The Member opposite should know that. The Member

opposite should know we don't know if they're going to bring in an amendment or a subamendment or have everyone speak three times to the budget. Those are things we do not know, so we have to be prudent and responsible and leaders in this province, and prepared. That is exactly what we are doing on behalf of the people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

If the Member opposite wishes to pass that budget on October 2, then we will no longer need Interim Supply.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. TIBBS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, I was shocked, like so many in the province, to hear the Minister of Energy say he knows what the people in the oil and gas industry are going through.

I drilled for oil for 17 years and watched the Liberals – your buddies in Ottawa – decimate the industry throughout Western Canada – decimate it. We now face the same fate here in the province.

I ask the minister: Does he really think relying on Ottawa will preserve jobs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

I'm happy to speak to this question, again, as I did yesterday. The reality is that I certainly am hearing from workers all over this province that are fearing for their future. I certainly, as I said yesterday, empathize with them. I feel for them.

What I would say to the Member opposite is that what this company is asking for is a significant cash injection, one that is quite beyond our capacity to do. To say that it's similar to Hibernia would be not to recognize the scope of where we are. We, as a province, are just not there.

So what I can say is we will continue to work with the operators, but as it relates to this particular request, we do not have that ability right now for multiple reasons.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. TIBBS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Good government should be able to talk to these people and get a deal done.

Mr. Speaker, the minister continues to rely on his friends in Ottawa without any evidence that support any help is coming.

I ask the minister: What do I tell my friends around the province who I've worked with that are about to lose their homes, their livelihoods, their families? It's happened throughout Western Canada and we see it happening here.

With no support from the government in Ottawa and no fight from this government in the eleventh hour, what do we tell these people who are about to lose absolutely everything? Because they're going to lose it; they're losing it right now.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

I think the Member opposite, while passionate, clearly doesn't understand the significance of the ask that has been made, and to say that good government will get a deal done simply does not cut it.

What I will say – what do you tell your friends? One of the things that you should do, we have an issue with liquidity because of the billions that has gone into Muskrats Falls, so I suggest you look at some of the Members that sit around your table and say why did you do that deal that is hampering our ability to make these investments today?

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, we're continually bringing workers in from outside the province to work on government infrastructure projects, yet we have so many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians without a job.

I ask the minister: Why are out-of-province workers still doing this work? When is this government going to put Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, I would advise the Member opposite to do a little more research. He will be happy to know 95 per cent of the people working on our projects in this province are local Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARROTT: I suggest the minister go to Grand Falls or Corner Brook to see some of the workers from Quebec that are doing drywall and ironwork. There are lots of people here to do that work.

Mr. Speaker, many rotational workers in our province are only getting one day at home outside quarantine, yet the so-called essential out-of-province workers can come and go as they please.

I ask the minister: Why the double standard? When are you going to put Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first?

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

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

Essential workers are deemed essential by the employers. As far as quarantine or isolation requirements are concerned, they are exempt only while going to and from work and on the work site whilst maintaining COVID-19 precautions such as physical distancing and mask wearing. They are not free to roam around at will.

Rotational workers, we have heard of their plight. We have twice over the course of the last six months made adaptations to make their life easier, including very recently testing to allow shortening of their quarantine period to seven days, Mr. Speaker.

It is working. We have a very low prevalence. The rest of the country is looking at us to see what they did wrong.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARROTT: I'll remind the minister that the essential workers from outside the province are working alongside Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Rotational workers are key drivers to our local economy. They pay taxes; they work hard to put food on their tables. Many workers are feeling stressed about the current rules that are relaxed to support non-residents but are tightened against Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, I ask again: Why can't rotational workers do a day-one test at points of entry?

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

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

The evidence shows quite clearly that what we have suggested as our latest adaptation to help rotational workers is based on sound science. It is a four-week pilot; it will be analyzed at the end of that. If it's possible to improve their conditions still further, I would love to be able to do it.

But I turn around to the Member opposite and say look at Ontario, look at British Columbia, they are going back into lockdown. Our restrictions, unpleasant and a nuisance as they are, are vital to the protection of the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, the minister continually refers to the testing at point of entry as a snapshot in time.

A simple yes or no: Would you have liked to have that snapshot back in March when the Caul's Funeral Home cluster started?

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

MR. HAGGIE: There is no scientific evidence, Mr. Speaker, to justify point-of-entry testing. It is a waste of resources and it encourages a false sense of security.

You have seen what has happened in other jurisdictions where they do this. They are now suffering and talking about locking down the most populous province in Canada once again. I'm not going down that road, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Yesterday, the Premier was asked about unlocking pensions and said that he had not had any discussion on this issue. Many people in the province are struggling financially, like those in the offshore sector, and do not have a job and are facing bankruptcy, but cannot access their own money at this time.

Minister, as this was not an important issue enough for the Premier to be briefed on, can you provide an update on this very important issue to so many people?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you very much, and I thank the Member for the question.

Unlocking pensions is a very serious and complex issue. We currently have consultations open on engageNL and that's available until September 30. So far we've received over 70 submissions, so I encourage you and all your constituents to file a submission. Using that information, working with stakeholders, the department will make a recommendation.

I'd also like to add, though, that one of the key factors of unlocking pensions that I think is misunderstood is that no one anywhere in the world allows active plan members to unlock their pensions. We're talking about LIRAs, for example, not public service pension, not NLTA pension. It's very complex and I encourage all of your constituents to submit a submission to our consultation online by September 30.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the spring, this House approved \$4.6 billion in government spending with no budget or plan. Today, government is asking for another \$1.5 billion more.

I ask the Minister of Finance: In the interest of accountability and transparency, without passing Interim Supply, how much longer can government make payroll?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

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

Allow me to address the first of the preamble to that question, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we did approve six month Interim Supply during a pandemic. We had to come into the House during a

pandemic to pass the second three-month period, I remind the Member, because they wouldn't allow before we went home, because we were in the middle of the pandemic.

I will say to the Member opposite, as she should be aware, this is money that – this is based on the 2019-2020 budget. There's no new spending here. So the accountability provisions, the review, the context of the review, is based on the analysis and review that was done in the 2019-2020 budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I repeat: How much longer can government make payroll?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Member opposite well knows that it was a six-month supply, that by the end of September we would be out of money, and if they do not provide government with direction on Interim Supply before the end of the month, they would be impacting health care, they would be impacting teachers, they would be impacting seniors getting their pharmaceuticals, they would be impacting the health and safety and services of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The English School District's reopening plan or document or workbook, whatever you want to call it, was sent to the department on May 27.

Considering the financial implications of this plan, I ask the Minister of Education: When was it discussed at Cabinet?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't believe it was discussed at Cabinet. It was a report done by the English School District to help form a plan with consultation with many stakeholders. There was a wide array of possible solutions.

The plan that was eventually put forward, Mr. Speaker, in early July, that's what was discussed at Cabinet.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I think a lot of people would be disturbed by that information.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Education: Is he content that while MHAs enjoy over 50 square feet per person in a spacious, well-ventilated Chamber, that in at least one classroom in this city, 24 students and their teacher are crammed into a poorly ventilated, small, windowless classroom with a little over 16.5 square feet per person, which, as I understand it, is less than what is permitted by fire regulations?

AN HON. MEMBER: Question (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: It's the option of a Member to not answer a question if they see fit.

The hon. the Minister of Education.

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, as a former Speaker, I'm well aware of the jurisdiction of this Legislature and who makes the rules in the Legislature, and it isn't the Minister of Education.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The (inaudible) of our highways is a long drawn-out project with many parts still without blacktop. It is known that the contractor moved equipment back to the Island for other work further delaying completion of this project. The patience of Labradorians have grown thin.

I ask the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure: Why is he allowing these delays to happen?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to speak about the Trans Labrador Highway. I had the opportunity to drive it this past summer.

The Member opposite would be happy to know we spent about, I think, 25 per cent of our budget over the last five years on the Trans Labrador Highway. Right now, it's actively being done. There's a contractor in place right now. COVID, no doubt, caused some delays in most everything. The work is ongoing. Everyday they're laying asphalt.

As we speak, Mr. Speaker, they will lay asphalt this year until – I won't say until the snow flies because it could be beyond that, but until conditions stop us we will lay asphalt this year; hoping to complete another 80 kilometres of pavement on the Trans Labrador Highway. Well done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West, time for a quick question.

MR. BROWN: I ask the minister: Will the contractor face penalties for significantly delaying the completion of this project in obligations that were favoured for work on the Island?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, for a quick answer.

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Member wants to make that accusation, I suggest he go to court with that one because we are not in a place to judge on that right now. The work has been allocated and the work is ongoing. We cannot favour where a contractor goes. They have the ability to move throughout this province and there's no way you can write in any contract where you have to be at any given time of the year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

(Inaudible due to technical difficulties.)

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

MR. SPEAKER: I have a few documents to table.

In accordance with subsection 18(9) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, I wish to inform the House that the current Members of the Management Commission are the Government House Leader, the Opposition House Leader, the Minister of Finance, the Member for Lake Melville, the Member for Conception Bay South, the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, myself, the Speaker, and the Clerk of the House.

Also, in accordance with section 19(5)(a) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, I hereby table the minutes of the House of Assembly Management Commission meetings held on December 4, 2019, December 18, 2019, July 8, 2020, and July 15, 2020.

Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

I give notice that the House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply to Consider Certain Resolutions for the Granting of Supply to Her Majesty, Bill 42.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

Answering the Third Party, Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure that the House understands. We'll be out of appropriations, which is approval to spend the money. We won't be out of cash by the end of the month. I just want to make sure people understand that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Any further answers to questions for which notice has been given?

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The long-term care facility in Bonavista serving the region has been short staffed on numerous occasions. There have been wings at Golden Heights Manor with 20 residents, neither of which are ambulatory, served by only two staff members. Staff struggle to provide care in such cases and are often called upon for extended shifts and overtime. The net result is a workforce that is heavily burdened, as indicated by the number of staff on sick leave, and jeopardized care for those residents requiring a high-level of personal care. We contend that with a full staff, the ratio there is still substandard to providing appropriate care.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately deploy the appropriate staffing to deliver acceptable care.

At the last sitting of the House, a future sitting, my colleague for Mount Pearl North had referred to health care being in tatters. The minister had stood and responded and took exception to that.

Just a few moments to speak on the long-term care at Golden Heights. The minister proudly stated that we are at and around the national average, which is 3.3 hours per resident per 24 hours.

In a report in June 2020 by the Royal Society of Canada, which is a consortium of academics that did the study, the report was entitled, *Restoring Trust: COVID-19 and The Future of Long-Term Care*, they had cited an expert, I believe his name was Harrington, who stated that the minimum care ought to be 4.1 hours per resident over 24 hours, and this does not include physician care or the allied services.

So let's assume we're at the national average in Bonavista. How do we know that the care is adequate? We listen to the residents, the family members and the staff. The data would say it all, and the data would say that all is not well.

To make matters more challenging, for months now the staff on leave were not replaced – assuming unable to find casual workers to work. So the 3.3 hours per resident on those days and weekends falls well below three. The

government must have the data; I would love for the data to be presented in the House for all to see.

This has been well studied, as cited by the Royal Society of Canada, and they cite 100 published reports over the last many years studying the same and they came up with some scandalous conditions experienced by all. One of the most critical components they state of quality in nursing homes, the right amount and type of staffing. A significant problem in Golden Heights Manor in Bonavista, the staff are great but not enough and maybe conceivably not the right mix.

I end with a citation in that report, and the citation in the report: "The moral test of government is how it treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the aged; and those in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped."

If Golden Heights Manor is used as a measure, health care may well be in tatters and not good enough, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

Sorry, I didn't see; the minister wanted to respond to the petition.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

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

The Member opposite raises an important issue; one, in actual fact, that has already been identified by Eastern Health with issues particular to Golden Heights. There is a working group formed already which consists of Eastern Health and the management of Golden Heights, as well as union representation. They will be looking at those issues that are peculiar to Golden Heights.

The Member opposite made reference to a variety of benchmarks. We are actively looking at those and have been as part of an arrangement

organized previously about a core staffing review.

I would also say that COVID has thrown all of that back into the blender again, because we have seen what has happened in other jurisdictions. We have escaped that. So whatever we've done here has actually worked. What we need to do is find out how our success has been achieved and to build on it and improve the situation.

I would be happy, once the group in Bonavista have come to some conclusions, to report back to the House.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My petition is a petition for Internet infrastructure upgrades required for essential Internet service.

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who are urging our leaders to ensure that the infrastructure be upgraded in the Northern Labrador Indigenous communities of Nain, Natuashish, Hopedale, Makkovik, Postville and Rigolet.

Our Northern communities have broadband but the required high speeds essential for online courses is not available on a consistent basis causing the system to lock-up and to boot students off the system. The aging and inadequate infrastructure does not support broadband required for online post-secondary and secondary courses. Therefore, our students are now handicapped at this critical time in their education path, impacting their ability to succeed if the Internet systems in each community is not upgraded to provide adequate speed and reliability.

We can't stand idly by and watch our students be burdened by this unfair reality of current circumstance. Therefore, we provide you with this petition asking you to help ensure the

upgrades will be done for our students so that they can have the same access to Internet services as the rest of the province.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to provide adequate upgrades to Internet infrastructure in Northern Labrador Indigenous communities of Nain, Natuashish, Hopedale, Makkovik, Postville and Rigolet so our students can have the same access to Internet services as the rest of the province.

I read this petition several times before; I also met with the minister earlier on in the spring. I don't think I'm going to take the three minutes that I have allotted. It's probably the first time. I know you're always calling me on it.

What I find really disheartening is – I'm not going to age myself, but a long time ago when I went to university it was just me, my sister and another student from Makkovik. We were the only three people from Makkovik going to post-secondary. There was nobody from the community of Postville going to post-secondary.

I actually have a picture in front of me; it's a screen capture of a post-secondary student in Postville right now trying to do online courses. In her message to me she says: this is what the screen looks like for the past 15 minutes. It's not loading.

Mr. Speaker, what really bothers me is all the students on the coast of Northern Labrador in my district, in every community, has to look at screens where their courses are not loading. This is a recorded lecture video, fall 2020 for a post-secondary student and she can't access it.

This petition is just a petition, but it's very, very important because we can't have our students dropping out. We finally are getting students from all the communities and now what's happening is we're failing them because they don't have adequate Internet access.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Before I recognize the minister for a response, I just want to ask Members to keep the noise level down. I'm having a hard time hearing the speakers.

The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member for the petition.

It's similar to ones that I used to make when I was sitting in Opposition, and I think what that goes to show is that I share the concern that the Member has, and also reside in a district where connectivity and broadband are still major issues. In fact, while you were doing your petition, I spoke to the Government House Leader who talked about how he faces the same issues. It's one that does not just fly by and I don't empathize or agree with or understand. I certainly do realize that.

I think that if 2020 has shown us anything, it's the importance of connectivity going forward. When we're home, when we're isolated, when our children are out of school, we realize the importance of connectivity and broadband going forward. What I would say is that while there have been investments, while there have been great steps forward, we acknowledge that there is work left to be done.

I will say, again, like many things, that we aren't the only player in this, that we still have to deal with the federal government, who I believe have a commitment and a mandate to work on this as well, as well as working with the companies. Many of the issues, when they fall just within a provincial jurisdiction it makes it easier, but when they fall where responsibility lies on multiple partners, it does make it more difficult. Plus, the fact that we have a huge land mass that's spread out, I realize the issues that we face there on a technical basis as well.

What I would say to the Member is I appreciate the petition, I am listening to the petition and I'll continue to work with you and all of our colleagues so that all of our constituents hopefully will not be facing these issues as we move forward into the future.

Thank you.

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

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

Each day I hear from many constituents who contact me about various issues, in particular about the uncertainty of the future of the oil and gas industry here in this province.

The District of Harbour Main consists of many tradeswomen and men that depend on this industry for the survival of their families, some of whom are on the verge of losing their homes and everything that they have worked so hard for.

The Terra Nova FPSO, the West White Rose and the industry as a whole has caused layoffs with more to come if we don't change the direction the industry is going.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To immediately take the necessary action to turn around the oil and gas industry and to ensure that the tradeswomen and men that are impacted most are able to continue to be employed in the oil and gas industry right here in this province.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt of the importance of this industry to Newfoundland and Labrador. It is the economic engine of our province. Over 20,000 direct and indirect jobs depend on it. We know that 30 per cent of Newfoundland and Labrador's economy is dependent on this industry. As I've mentioned, the District of Harbour Main, I see it first-hand in the communities in this district. I hear about it from the people who live here.

Residents and families are deeply impacted by the loss of jobs and the potential loss of jobs – hundreds and hundreds of workers in this area alone. This district is filled with hard-working, educated and experienced individuals who have worked offshore. And that is the same for the province as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sad to say that it appears there is such a lack of government support at both levels, federally and provincially. Our governments have desperately failed. They

failed to give hope to the thousands of our people who work in this industry and the spin-off industries like construction. The government's response has been silent. We're waiting and waiting and waiting for months. We've heard from the CEO of Trades NL and we've heard from the chair of Noia, they are frustrated as well.

It's almost as if the oil and gas industry in our province does not exist. Why isn't our provincial government holding the federal government accountable? Where are our Liberal MHAs? Why are they silent? Where are Newfoundland and Labrador's elected Members of Parliament? They should be out ringing the alarm bells.

Mr. Speaker, I hear from the ministers – both the Minister of Finance, who was formerly the minister of Natural Resources, and our current new Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology. The language that they use is frustrating: They've been at the table for quite some time with the federal government; they're working very closely with industry; they've outlined in multiple letters. Is that what we can expect? They've been working with many operators, they've been speaking, but we see nothing.

Mr. Speaker, we need action. The people of this province are counting on our government to show leadership and the time has come for them to do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, for a response.

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

I'm hoping that I might get some leeway on the response time from my colleagues, because I do plan on providing a response to what I heard.

Now, the first thing that I would say is that I've sat on the other side, so I fully realize the purpose of petitions and what they do. I appreciate them and I know that they are effective and can work. One thing, though, is

that you have the petition itself, and that's one thing, but the second part is the commentary that comes after the petition.

I appreciate, too, that we have to put on a good show for some of our colleagues, but I have to tell you I'm a little disappointed that the Member has not suggested one concrete, structural suggestion to what this is except to – she's talking about frustrating terms? Well, it's frustrating when the terminology that they use is they need to provide leadership; they need to be good government. The reality is that every situation that we're facing here is different.

I'll tell you some of the issues that we do face. Number one, this was not either government that caused the drop in oil prices. It is not either government – and I'm talking current government, past governments – that caused COVID. This is something that's not just faced here in our offshore; sadly, this is a global issue.

I just mentioned here that companies have lost not a million, not a billion – \$1 trillion lost in this industry. Obviously as a province that is reliant on this, we are going to feel it. There's one thing I don't do –

MR. SPEAKER: Does the minister have leave to continue with his response?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

MR. SPEAKER: Seeing no objections, continue.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you.

If there's one thing I don't doubt, I don't doubt the sincerity of the Member. I know that she, like I, am hearing it from constituents, hearing it from people. I empathize with it. I also don't doubt that they're hard working and that they're feeling it, but what I would say here is one of the suggestions is you need to take action.

Let's look at Husky. Let's look at this one particular situation. What they have asked for – they haven't asked for anything but a cash injection. The reality is that we, as a province, for many years have been in fiscal dire straits. That, like the oil companies, has been completely thrown off by the impact of COVID.

If you can tell me one thing I can do to fix that situation, I will listen, I will take it, but right now I don't think that the Member opposite understands the gravity or the severity of what they have asked for.

We're about to see a budget here – the other reality is that I'm not sure what else we can do. If they can tell me something else I can do about that particular situation, I would love to do it. The reality is Husky has said themselves it's not the project, it's not the regulations, it's not the issues, it's not that government is doing anything wrong, it's that COVID has hurt our liquidity. COVID has hurt our capital. COVID has hurt our balance sheet and we need to find a way. We love the project, we love the attractiveness and we love the product that you have here in this country and in this particular Newfoundland and Labrador offshore, but the reality is they need a cash injection.

One of the things that hurt us as a province in our liquidity, the reality is that we have billions and billions tied up in Muskrat Falls. If that money wasn't gone, maybe we're having a different conversation, but that money is gone. That's what I'm saying here.

When it comes to the other situations, I can tell you that there are conversations happening.

I'll say this, I don't mind giving answers but if you want to cut off my leave because you don't like what you're hearing, you'd better watch what you're asking is what I would say. If you want me to speak –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

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

MR. BRAZIL: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

In this House we try to be cordial to every Member here and we try to work through the parliamentary procedures. We gave the minister the opportunity to – he needed some extra time to answer the question. He got on a rant about something that happened. That's unparliamentary, Mr. Speaker, and not in the good intent to what this House is all about.

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

MR. CROCKER: Orders of the Day.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 5, first reading of Bill 41.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service Newfoundland and Labrador, that Bill 41, An Act To Amend The Insurance Contracts Act, be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the hon. minister shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Insurance Contracts Act, Bill 41, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

Motion, the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Insurance Contracts Act." (Bill 41)

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Insurance Contracts Act. (Bill 41)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MR. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 41 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 10.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that under Standing Order 11(1) this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. of the clock, Tuesday, September 15, 2020.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion has been moved by the hon. Government House Leader.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 11.

I further move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that under Standing Order 11(1) this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 17, 2020.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion has been moved and seconded.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply to consider a resolution relating to the granting of Supply to Her Majesty, Bill 40.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. SPEAKER: All rise.

A message from Her Honour:

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

Sgd.: _____
Her Honour, the Lieutenant-Governor

Please be seated.

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

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

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

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the message, together with a bill, be referred to a Committee of the Whole and that I should now leave the Chair.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (P. Parsons): Order, please!

We are now considering the related resolution and Bill 40.

Resolution

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

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2021 the sum of \$1,560,324,100."

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

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

The item before us today is Interim Supply, which provides funding for the government to operate while the budget process is ongoing. It's very standard that during a budget process there is a three-month supply and that is what we're asking for today.

We're asking for a tremendous sum of money, I agree, \$1,560,324,100, that is what the bill today before you is requesting in Interim Supply.

It was asked during Question Period, Madam Chair, would we be out of cash or out of funding by the end of September. I want to make sure I address that again and say there is an appropriation for six months, that was the appropriation period, which is really the authority to spend money. It has nothing to do with what we have in the bank, an ability to pay, but that, basically, we are not allowed to utilize that money without the authority of this House of Assembly.

So today, we're here before the House of Assembly. The House of Assembly does know the date of the budget, Madam Chair, and we've been very forthright in saying that it is September 30. It's probably one of the earliest times that we've actually given a date for the budget. I do want to just talk a little bit about what Interim Supply is so that people that are listening today – and I'm sure some Members might be interested in understanding a little bit more about Interim Supply. Interim Supply is just that. It is interim monies while you're going through a budget process.

For clarity and for certainty, allow me to say it's based on the previous year's budget. So it's not anything new added in or any other available funds to government. It is based on, clearly, what was reviewed, what was analyzed, what was determined from the previous year's budget. So it's based on 2019 numbers. Then also we look at the various periods and the various monies that would be required and certainly make that determination as to how much that dollar value would be. I can tell you the Department of Finance is busy. It has to be a very exact sum. It's based on what is required during a specific period of months to come.

For example, when Interim Supply was introduced previously and we have, I'll call it, Interim Supply number one, which would've been pre-COVID or just before COVID hit because we were going into a budget process, it was somewhere in the vicinity of just over \$2.6 billion. The reason why that would've been higher, of course, was because the majority of the funding for the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure comes upfront. And they need the money available to enter into infrastructure contracts. Then health care, of course, is a very high expenditure, not an abnormal expenditure and then K-12 and the education system and Immigration, Skills and Labour, the post-secondary education requirements.

So this hasn't been a normal year, Madam Chair. We've had to do a number of Interim Supplies. The first was done just as COVID became known. We brought to this House a suggestion to do a six-month because we saw what was happening with COVID, but the will of the House was to do three months. Then we came

back during the lockdown of our community and had to get a second Interim Supply. We also did an Interim Supply to allow for some contingency for COVID funding. The will of the House was, of course, that we have a set fund available, \$200 million. Yesterday, I tabled where that money has been spent so that the House is aware.

Madam Chair, allow me to also say, because there's been a fair amount of back and forth over the last couple of days about why three months. I will say that three months' Supply is quite normal. It allows for the process to unfold, as it should. It allows, for example, the Estimates process, which is very thorough, up to 75 hours. It allows for concurrent debate in the House of Assembly. It also allows for the democratic process.

We've heard the Leader of the Opposition say that he doesn't know how he's going to vote on the budget. Maybe it'll be a matter of confidence and he may take down the government over this. We have to be prudent, we have to be responsible, we have to be prepared as a government, we have to lead and we have to make sure that the people of the province are protected.

We want to make sure the services that are required by the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador, the requirements of health care, for example, the requirements of education, the requirements of seniors looking for their prescriptions, the requirements of infrastructure are maintained should that happen, Madam Chair. I'll also say that the federal government also does a variation on the three-month Supply.

As I stated during Question Period, and I'll say it again here today, in 2018 – I'm going to use that because that was probably a normal year – the budget was released on March 27 that year and 57 days later it was passed on May 22. If you go back throughout the years – I named it off during Question Period – it could be up to somewhere around the 50-day mark is what we see as a normal process, going through and ensuring and allowing the Estimates process is thorough, allowing a good examination of the spending to ensure that we are doing everything that is right and proper and procedurally fair.

I will also say, Madam Chair, that there's been some suggestion by the Leader of the Opposition that we don't really need Interim Supply, we can just get a special warrant. Allow me to correct the record. You can't just do a special warrant under section 28 of the *Financial Administration Act*. That wouldn't be permitted. It has to be within main Supply. I say to the Leader of the Opposition, he may muse that might be the way it can happen but that is not indeed the letter of the law under the *Financial Administration Act*.

Yes, indeed, we do need to have Interim Supply to allow for the spending of the money, to allow for the permission to spend the money. We also feel it prudent and responsible to go for the regular period, and that would allow the fullness of what needs to occur from a democratic process, the fullness of what needs to occur to be held to account, to have the books reviewed, to have the questions answered in Estimates, to go through that whole very important process.

Madam Chair, I will say that the Leader of the Opposition talked about it has to have some serious scrutiny. The scrutiny must come. Interim Supply is only based on the numbers that were previously approved and then again, as we get into the budget, we could have that serious scrutiny. Estimates are that serious scrutiny. The possibility of asking the questions, of going line by line, of holding ministers to account, that is through the Estimates process. I know my colleague has been through this process a number of times now herself. She's sat through this and I know that it would be important to ensure that that process is allowed to be fulfilled.

Now, if the Opposition in their rightful thinking wants to give the budget to the government earlier than that, that can certainly be arranged and we wouldn't need a longer Interim Supply; but in the fullness and the context of ensuring that we have the accountability, the questioning, the rightful review, it is very important that we allow for that three-month process. We may not need it. We may not need it, and that would be fine that we may not need that three-month Supply but, as soon as the budget is passed, Interim Supply rests.

So there is no real reason why they would not give us three months, unless they're thinking

politically and I can't answer to that. As I said earlier, I would think that today Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are really reflective of their concerns around COVID, their concerns around their jobs, their concerns around their futures, so I would think Interim Supply would be pro forma. It would just happen because that is the way we should conduct ourselves.

They can use up all their time allotted to them to do Interim Supply, or they can choose to make some amendments to Interim Supply. I will say that the people who are currently doing the budget, working very hard to have a budget for September 30, which is only a couple of weeks away, I will say, are the same people who would have to change the Interim Supply bill.

I will say that we have diligent and hard-working members of the Department of Finance. They're working very, very hard to have a budget by the end of September. We are only, I think, either the second or third jurisdiction in Canada to have a budget during COVID. Think about that. We are only the second or third jurisdiction during COVID to have a budget.

I have to say that I'm proud of the fact that we will be having a budget; we will go through that scrutiny. We're six months into this year, we thought it was responsible to do that. I have said repeatedly that I don't see any surprises in this budget. I don't see any reason for the Opposition to not support it. They will make their own deliberations around that. It does reflect priorities, I think, that the people of the province require. I think it's very important for all of us to reflect on what is happening in our province, what is happening in our world and understand its impact on our day-to-day operations of government.

So the question becomes: What is Interim Supply used for? It's used – and I think they said it upfront – to ensure smooth operations of government while we're in the budget process. Because, again, while we may have cash on hand, we cannot spend it unless we have what's called an appropriation or permission of the House of Assembly in order to be able to do that.

Think about it this way – I'll use my colleague behind me, a new minister who's done an excellent job answering questions on Digital Government and Service NL, and very proud to have her as a Member of Cabinet, but Motor Registration Division, Vital Statistics, MyGovNL, all that would require Interim Supply to keep going. The Public Procurement Agency; the Public Service Commission; Transportation and Infrastructure, roadwork, for example; Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, the work that's being done in those areas; Immigration, Skills and Labour, of course, the Employment Services. Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation require spending.

I will say, Madam Chair, Education, K to 12, post-secondary education, we're just back to school and I want to congratulate the Minister of Education and post-secondary education for the tremendous work he's doing. It's tumultuous times. I know that people have worked very hard to ensure that back to school is functioning as best it can during these very difficult times.

Health care, front-line services for COVID, we need an appropriation; we need permission to be able to spend that money.

I would say to this House, Interim Supply isn't really about politics. It's about the proper functioning of government. I have given to this House when a budget will be brought down. I have actually put a motion before this House today, to have it there on the books so you know that is the day. I've said that is the day we will have a budget, we will.

I think the Leader of the Opposition talked about it as an extravagant request. Again, Madam Chair, I will say, how does he view the right to health care as an extravagant expectation? How does he view income support clients as an extravagant expectation? How is that, under the view of this Member, an extravagant expectation?

I would say it's a natural progression of government. It has been scrutinized. It is using the 2019 budget process. It does not give new spending. We are about to have a budget on September 30. As quick as we get that budget, Interim Supply rests, Madam Chair. I would say that it's time for us to move forward and it's

time for us to move to the next part of this process, which is the budget.

I will say this, Madam Chair, as I wind down my final moments: This government, the Liberal government, has worked very, very diligently to keep costs under control. They've only risen in the last five years by about 2.5 per cent, and that's even less than inflation. I will say that during the PC tenure, the time they had in government, it raised over 60 per cent. I think our fiscal responsibility, our prudence, our diligence has been proven and I will say to this House, I think it's important that we get to the budget and move forward and to give Interim Supply the three months it is required.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's nice, I suppose, to speak about a money bill, the Interim Supply bill. It gives you a bit more latitude, and I guess during these times it's always good to have that ability to move off. You're zeroed in on one topic; it's nice to have a broader conversation because there are an awful lot of issues facing our province. There would be too many to list. There's not a lot of time to list them all, obviously.

The Minister of Finance, I listened closely to a lot of her commentary, and respectfully, if we just went the way everything is rosy, we would just say, yes, well have it all. Here's your budget, here's your Interim Supply and we will see you whenever. It's not as simple as that.

Minister, respectfully, we have a job to do over here. The Leader of the Opposition may say this or may say that, we all may say things. We have a job to do. Realistically, we do the job for Liberal supporters because when you're in government, Opposition plays a role for everyone in this province. It keeps a government accountable. No matter who is in power, Opposition does have a role. You're called the Loyal Opposition for a reason.

The Loyal Opposition is meant to keep government to account. Expenditures, decisions, actions they're doing, actions they're not doing – that's what we do. We don't always disagree with government because we want to disagree with government. There are times, believe it or not, we'll actually agree with some things. Not everything, but there are a lot of things. That makes us unique, because we're different parties, we have different beliefs, we stand for different principles. Overall, we all share some common concerns for the province: budgetary issues and our oil and gas industry. I think we all feel that.

We feel there are probably more things that could be done, probably not been done enough to our liking. We operate by different philosophies, so we'd like things done differently. Right now, we're into such a predicament with our oil and gas we feel that now is the time to do – actions have to match words. Words alone are not going to cut it.

We actually have the federal minister of Natural Resources, one of our local MPs in this province. That's pretty good. Most times if you have a federal MP sitting at the Cabinet table that represents your province, that's a good thing. You look at Ottawa, you look at the federal government and they've given billions and billions and billions and billions of dollars to Quebec. They've given billions out west. They've given billions to Ontario. We're on our knees now. We need help.

Where is the federal government? Where's our federal minister? Where's that strong relationship? Where's the other MPs? I don't hear anything. The minister said politics. This is politics. We're in the House of Assembly, what do you expect. Politics is everywhere. Not only in this House, it's everywhere. Go up to a minor hockey arena and you'll find politics. This issue is serious and it needs attention. Drinking a cup of tea and having a chat, a folksy conversation, is not going to solve our oil and gas problems. That's all I see. I've seen it numerous times.

Unfortunately, right now we have this new shiny Premier, so we thought. He comes in and he checks a lot of boxes and he's doing well. Everyone thinks – well, everyone doesn't know. They're trying to connect the dots. All we hear

is platitudes and everything is wonderful and we're going to work together, we're in this together. That's not putting bread on the table. That's not paying people's bills. That's not what people want to hear. People want to hear decisiveness, make a decision. Oh, that wasn't my responsibility, the Clerk's responsible for that hiring. I can't overturn contracts.

You're the Premier of the province, you can void every contract out there in this province. Every single one. You may have a penalty to pay, there's no way you cannot void a contract. You're the leader of –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. PETTEN: I'm getting a few comments. It's working now, yeah.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: You're the leader of the province, you can do as you please. Don't pass the buck, it stops on the eighth floor. His name is over the door, we want him – not we. I'll say this in another form, too, people have to realize we're – no, that's the Liberals, this is PCs and NDPs and independents, but we have one Premier. He's all of our Premier. Whether we wear the same stripe party-wise, but he's one Premier. He's our Premier.

We're looking for our Premier to show leadership with our federal minister and our one and only prime minister, who happens to be our prime minister, to stand up. Stand up, tell us something. Don't say you're concerned and you're upset and you're worried. Everyone feels that. You're only wasting time. That's not what people want. That's not what the media want. That's not what we want, that's not what people want. That's not what the thousands of people who are out of jobs want, and I say that with full sincerity and honesty. I'm frustrated by listening to that. I'm expecting more answers.

You go last week, about a week or so ago, to find out that the new mental health hospital, \$40 million over, extra. The winning bid is \$40 million more and it's going to take them an extra year. I did discover the scoring matrix, that counts for 60 per cent of the scoring but there was a change in plans, too. There was a

consensus decision made. So what you can't get through the front door sometimes you might have to go through the back door. We don't know. We won't know if that's the case until we get the information. We're looking for information to verify that.

The minister then comes on the news that evening and he says we're getting caught up in the money. We're getting caught up in \$40 million. Like, it's not that big a deal. There's no one who really cares.

It would be nice to take that \$40 million and probably give to the offshore to try to get a few people back to work, wouldn't it? Wouldn't that be the right place to spend the \$40 million? No, no. But don't get caught up, we're getting caught up in the tens of millions. It's gibberish again; the Opposition are making up stories. It's not a story, it's an actual fact.

I've asked him, and I'll keep asking again and I'll keep asking here in this House, show us the documents. And if we haven't got a case, I'll be the first to say fair game, it was done the right way. We don't know that.

There was a fairness advisor the Minister of Finance alluded to yesterday, but I only had about 40 seconds to respond and I had about 20 different angles I wanted to go on. But that fairness advisor is hired by government. You're hired to be a fairness advisor, so who's paying your cheque? I'm not knocking the fairness advisor, I'm being realistic. We're all in that boat. The one who's paying your cheque – you're hiring that person; that needs to be done. That's not independent. The minute you're on the payroll you're not independent. It's a pure, full stop. It removes all independence.

No, they said, it appears to be fine. Well, we think it doesn't appear to be fine, but we'll never know that until we get the documents. We can't get that until after financial close. So after you lock the barn up. It's too late when she's empty, and that's our problem.

Then we hear commentary across the way and we're told, like, we know better than you. How dare you ask us? What are you doing asking us these questions? Where are your solutions?

Your government, this crowd of government, we gave the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, we gave him a bit of leave to answer our petition question but he couldn't resist going down the gutter. He couldn't resist. Yet, they've been in charge of Muskrat now since 2015, two elections ago, but then the term today is Muskrat, Muskrat, Muskrat; blame, blame, blame. Sure, I don't care, I wasn't there when it was sanctioned. I'm here now representing the people. This foolishness of getting on.

Do you realize why you're in a minority situation? That's one of your reasons. People got sick of listening to the gibberish, the rubbish. That's all we were listening to. That's all the general public listened to. The blame game, the blame game.

The Minister of Education, that's all he's done. He's 25 years here, the last five years he's blamed everyone.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: Blame, that's all he does is blame.

Our issue is that's not going to solve the problems of this province. That's not going to get us where we need to get; there's nothing more evident.

You have your oil and gas industry on its knees. Rotational workers are ready, they got some leeway made, which I'll give them some credit there, but they are working offshore and they're coming home. They got a bit of leeway. They have a seven-day quarantine now and then some testing; yet, we have workers from outside of the Atlantic bubble coming in, working on sites next to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with no quarantine involved, but then they go back to the hotel and have to quarantine. It's too late after everyone are infected.

You had a situation last week, 6,000 children – I would like to say it's more than 7,500 children – without a school bus. We had to live with that a few weeks ago, then there was a big outcry. Ottawa kicked in some money. All of a sudden we have \$10 million worth of school buses;

buses for everyone, but we don't have them yet. They're coming along and it is improving.

There was a plan. Concerns were raised by the school district months earlier, but that plan was not accepted. That plan was parked there and that plan actually covered a lot of good information. Actually, that plan's concerns came to raise their ugly heads three weeks before school opened. The exact things in that plan were what come – busing, the social distancing, yet I have schools up there with 36 children in the classroom, one window working. I'm working on it, but they're still there. They're almost a week in now. Is that preparedness?

There are lots of other schools we hear. Out in Ascension Collegiate is another issue we've heard. We've heard from other schools. I have video of a child sat on the floor of a bus. But we're doing great. Listen and make the right decisions for the right reasons. Government were given that report back in May or June, but no, the minister says today it didn't go the Cabinet room. They just ignored the report. Why?

You look at that report, that report raised a lot of the same concerns we're dealing with now, but then we jam pack it in three weeks ahead of school opening. Parents are screaming out because they're nervous, they're frustrated, they're concerned. We are in a pandemic. It's not abnormal for a parent to be concerned, sending their child to a school, not knowing the safety protocols, not knowing what they're sending their child out to. As a parent, I'd be very concerned too. Thank God my children are past the school age, but I would raise concerns. I think anyone in this House that has a child would say the same thing.

What's wrong with raising it? That's a valid argument. But what do you get? Nothing. I have children that walk to school; I have constituents that are on the news every second night about the busing issues. It's still not gone away. Great news now, we're down to about 4,000 without a bus.

My argument is, there should never be a child without a bus. I've always stood for that. I've always believed the 1.6 busing policy should go. I do not believe any child should ever be left

behind. I don't care, I've said it in this House and anyone that's ever listened to me, it's something that I stand by, I live by, I'll never back away from. I think it's out to lunch. Unless you live next door to a school, fine, but otherwise you should not have to walk to school. I don't agree with it. I never have and I never will.

People pay taxes. We're all contributing to society. Why do you pick one over another because of where your house is located? It makes absolutely no sense. There's not a parent in this province that has ever agreed with it. This government has been given a golden opportunity over and over and over again. I'll be the first to say, previous administrations, I was not a part of those, but I'm part of this one and it's in our Blue Book and it's something that we're committed to. It's something that I'm committed to and my colleagues are committed to. We'll go.

You've rationalized, you've reasoned. This has been going on for years in this House, but does anyone listen? No. You get it threw back it you today, it's insulting our intelligence.

The Member for Stephenville - Port au Port and critic for Finance outlined the exact days it took to pass a budget, the sitting days it took to pass a budget. I thought he hit the nail right on the head of listing off the days. We're talking about sitting days.

The Minister of Finance then, in the wisdom of they're smarter than us again, told us the calendar days. When you count the days when people are travelling to Florida and out of province, pre-COVID, again that's nonsense. That's not what we say. Ninety days to pass a budget – no, you don't need 90 days to pass a budget. You don't need 60 days to pass a budget. We know how many sitting days. We're talking sitting days. Let's talk and compare apples to apples, but we get this constant reminder we know better than you.

I have news for them, the people of this province know better than all of us in this House a lot of times and they don't really appreciate that stuff. They see through it, but for some reason, this administration in particular – I know all governments sometimes get a bit of that

complex, but this crowd can never get past the fact that they know better than everybody. That is not the case.

Then we have this new Premier and he's out there, he thinks he's saying all the right words and he's bouncing around. You know what, that's growing pretty thin too. What do you stand for? He's eventually going to have to sit across there and listen to us ask him point-blank, he's going to have to stand in his place to answer it. Telling everyone that the world is full of butterflies and pots of honey is not going to cut it in this House and not going to cut it in this province, so he better start doing a bit of homework and read up on what people want to hear. Not this the world is so wonderful and look how blue the sky is – and I like that colour blue, Madam Chair.

That's what we don't need. We want someone in here that's going to give answers. Do you know what? They don't have to be popular. Have the guts to give answers. Right now, we're in a time where sometimes hard decisions may be what people are looking for. I know people around who say tough decisions are needed.

If you come out and you give the cold, hard facts – people want honesty and people want facts. I think if you're honest and straight up with the people – my motto is you can never go wrong being honest and straight up. Maybe the Premier needs to stop getting off his platitudes and start speaking facts to the people of the province.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I'd like to remind everybody if you could please keep our conversations down. It is hard to hear and as we know we have the health restrictions in place with regard to speaking moistly. Can I kindly ask everyone to keep those conversations respectful?

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I heard the questions today from the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port about the length of the budget. Yesterday, in teleconference with the Deputy Premier, myself and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands were informed that the average time it takes to do a budget is five to six weeks. So if you go the limit, six weeks, that's 24 days. You take away the six days which are Wednesdays, which you just have Estimates, you're talking about 16, 17 days to do the budget. You can get a budget done in five weeks. This stuff is going to take two, three, four months. It's just not on – not on.

The average time, since I've been in this Legislature, to do a budget is five weeks. I just want to make that clear. I heard all this wrangling today – and I say to the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, you're right; it usually only takes about 20 sitting days to do a budget in this House, because then they'll have Estimates in the morning and the nighttime.

There's another point that's missing out of this about the timelines for a budget. While we're speaking here now, it's taken off the 75 hours. So this idea that the Budget Speech starts when you go with the budget and this is the 75 hours, all this in Interim Supply, this time is –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: Nine gone.

MR. JOYCE: Nine gone. So this time we use for Interim Supply is taken off the budget. So this idea that you need 75 hours, it's just – let's put the facts on the table because if we're going to go with three months, if we're going to go with one month, if we're going to go with two months, but let's put the facts on the table so we can make an informed decision on it.

That's the idea. Is this saying, well, is it going to take three months to do a budget? Is it going to take four months? Is it going to take 70 days? The average time is 20 days to do a budget from when it's put in the House to when it's complete, Estimates included. That's the facts.

The Deputy Premier confirmed that yesterday to us. So for the Member for Stephenville - Port au

Port, you are correct, the average time is about 20 days to do a budget in this House.

MS. COADY: Sitting days.

MR. JOYCE: Exactly what I said: sitting days. Five weeks is 20 sitting days; four a day and you do Estimates.

Anyway, the idea of Interim Supply – and people know, it's not so much the money is in the bank, it's to give the authority to spend the money. I don't think there is any person in this House, Liberal, PC or NDP who wants to see this system shut down. It's not going to happen, so why don't we come to a compromise? Why don't we slice it off and say instead of going three months, we'll go two months, or even go six weeks to get it done?

This idea that we have to have one or we have to have the other – everybody can accuse me of sometimes being a bit roughshod, but I always compromise. There is always a compromise. I go to every Member that I've ever dealt with, there is always a compromise.

There are people out there right now as we speak, and I just use the people that we talk about, the people in health care, the people in long-term care, they want us to move forward with some issues. There are great issues on both sides to this House and here we are wrangling how long is it going to take, should we go for three months, should we go for two months. I mean if we got to split it down the middle and go for a month and a half, two months, let's do it. Let's get it done. Let's get it on the plate so we can sit down and start discussing the budget.

Also, talking about when the budget is going to come down, why September 30? We heard back in March sometime that it would soon be ready; in June, July ready to go, but now we're going to September. Look at the timing for September 30. It's on a Wednesday. The budget is out. Thursday, the minister usually goes off and does speeches in the Chamber of Commerce, then we're going up – the first day we're going to debate the budget is election day. What great timing.

Let's put the cards on the table here. There are a lot of things in the budget and even in Interim

Supply and I'm sure the people in Humber - Bay of Islands are going to appreciate also. There are a lot of things in the past budget, in the first Interim Supply that was approved. I say to the Government House Leader the work that's done on the South Shore 450, Bay of Islands, now that the roads are good and safe, that came from the Interim Supply.

There are other things where money was spent in good ways, but we have to find some way that we're going to work this out so we can get this moving, so we can get back and hopefully the budget, September 30, we can get it in as soon as possible, start debating. Then the budget is only going to be for what, five months, four months? That's it, and then the budget cycle starts again in November.

The process for a budget starts in November this year. I remember one year I think it was March 27 the budget was brought in. So it's not a long time that we're even talking about if we can get Interim Supply.

I look at some of the good things, even from the past two Interim Supplies that has been done. I say to the Minister of Education – I said it this morning on *Open Line* – that I know there's a lot of controversy about the school buses. I know I dealt with the minister personally and Len White, and Dan at the school board has been a great help to get some of the issues taken care of. I have to recognize that was the biggest concern for a lot of us – not all of them are and I told people on many occasions that you can't make any promises but you do your best. I know the minister called me personally the other morning and said what issues do you think we can resolve and with some solutions that I provided to the minister, we found a way to get around. There are even some who have to wait until the 1st of October until the new bus hopefully comes over our way. They're okay with that, as long as they're being heard and as long as they know that there is someone listening and there's a solution to them.

So I just have to recognize the minister with that, because there's a lot of anxiety in the whole school system right now and the busing was a part of it. I hope around the province and other districts also, because when you come to the kids, K to 12, everybody's concerned about that,

that we can find solutions to get them all involved.

I have to say to the former minister of Education that we had a great working relationship also. We were in constant contact about things happening in the school system, and I just have to recognize that to the former minister that we were working a lot for the schools. I was working with a lot of principals and the school board with the former minister of Education. I have to recognize that also because it was a great working relationship and we saw a lot of positive results due to that. I just have to recognize that to the former minister.

In the Humber - Bay of Islands itself, I heard questions today about outside workers coming in. There are outside workers coming in to the hospital in Corner Brook, I can tell you that. The minister said 5 per cent, especially a lot of carpenters. The iron workers are doing well. There are carpenters coming in and doing the work, I can tell you that personally. I mentioned to the carpenters' union that I would bring it up. I can say to the minister I'm asking you to go back and check with the contractors that when you're putting up gyprock and you're doing a bit of construction work there, carpenters in this province can do the work. They are from the area – I don't care where they're from in the province, as long as they're from the province. I agree with the Member that there are more and more creeping in. I can't say anything about Grand Falls and I don't know about St. John's. I heard in St. John's. But I can say in Corner Brook it is happening.

So I ask the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to have a look at that because this is a big project where I presented, I don't know, 40, 50 petitions on local workers and the government finally stepped in and started. They fooled me on the long-term care. They fooled me on John Allan. The former premier, Dwight Ball, fooled me on the long-term care by committing that they're going to do it and after the convention they didn't do it, back in 2018. But they weren't going to fool me on the hospital, because I presented many petitions.

I actually went up and visited the site with the people. So I'll just say to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure that I'll ask

you to visit the – not visit, you can check that there are people creeping in. Carpenters are creeping in from outside the province who are doing the work, the work that can be done in the province. Iron workers and other unions are doing well, but I can tell you that it is creeping in in Corner Brook. A lot of carpenters are coming in from outside. You wouldn't know. You're getting the information in front of you, but the reason why I know is because I know the people who are there, who are looking for work and the iron workers are telling me they've seen people coming in. I just respectfully ask the minister to look into that and see if there's any way.

I'll have another opportunity to speak and I just thank you for your indulgence for my few words.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I also remind the Member to direct his comments to the Chair.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MR. LOVELESS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, I guess, it's to speak to Interim Supply but I would like to thank the constituents of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune for affording me this opportunity to be here. It's always important to recognize that. Also, in this position as minister responsible for Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, Madam Chair, when I told my parents the appointment I was getting, my father was happy with saying praise the Lord and my mother started to cry. And she's probably still praying for me. It indeed is a pleasure and an honour to be in this position.

Madam Chair, I'd like to say thank you as well to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for their efforts during the challenges of COVID-19, in flattening the curve and making it possible for our health officials and everyone else managing the challenges around COVID-19. All the essential workers – we all say it; we all mean it – I say thank you to the essential workers.

Madam Chair, in terms of Interim Supply and what it means or required, I guess, for Fisheries,

Forestry and Agriculture, the Department of FFA, if I can use that term, is committed to sustainable, responsible management of many of the natural, renewable resources that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians hold most dear.

Since my time there, which is a short period of time, I've gotten appreciation certainly for fisheries, agriculture and forestry no doubt. Those three industries leave me excited as minister responsible for that department. From the fishery, forestry and agriculture sectors are resources for our future. With the challenges of COVID-19, my department remains committed to the effective, efficient and streamlined delivery of fiscally responsible programs and services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I reference Crown lands, and I know Crown lands is something that is associated with every issue in this province and I've certainly chatted with a lot of people in my own district, other MHAs on the other side, my colleagues and Crown lands, we can do better I know. We're working to do that.

I'd like to make note that since implementing the 90-business-day standard in April 2018, Crown Lands staff have eliminated a chronic backlog, which is important to mention, I think consisting of more than 6,000 applications and increasing at a rate of approximately 1,000 per year under the previous administration.

A lot of work has been done. Can more be done? Absolutely. Anyone who wishes to bring an issue to me, I'm more than happy to listen to it and, not just to get the criticism, I guess, of the system but also offer solutions that would be certainly welcoming to myself and to the department.

Madam Chair, just some other things to talk about in terms of agriculture – I know this is close to the Member for Mount Pearl North because he is paying very much attention to what I'm saying about the agriculture industry – employment levels in 2019 was 6,500 people. That's a big number. Certainly, as I said before, I'm getting a greater appreciation for the agriculture sector.

A couple of weeks ago I visited a farm in Comfort Cove-Newstead, Triple E, in the great district that is represented by the – I can't say his name but if I can find his –

AN HON. MEMBER: Lewisporte - Twillingate.

MR. LOVELESS: Lewisporte - Twillingate, thank you.

Just history-wise, that farm is a 98-year-old farm, and the 81-year-old gentleman who was there didn't look like a day off 60 years old, was still there on the farm.

MR. LESTER: Still calls him Junior.

MR. LOVELESS: Still calls him Junior, as the Member for Mount Pearl North referenced.

He was showing me the equipment. He took me on the fields growing cabbage, turnips and beets. He said to me: Minister, this farm is 98 years old and you're the first minister who has ever visited the farm.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LOVELESS: I took great pride in that and assured him that we want to work with him and his farm to grow his business. He is certainly interested in developing his business and more land opening up for him and I would be interested in helping him in any way, shape or form.

Madam Chair, Newfoundland and Labrador's agriculture industry, including secondary processing, is valued at \$500 million and employs more than 5,000 people, as I referenced before at 6,500. As some would say, it's nothing to sneeze at.

The Agriculture Sector Work Plan that was released in October of 2017, in partnership with the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture and Food First NL, set targets to increase food self-sufficiency which is very important, secondary processing of food products and employment creation. I'm proud to say we've been making great strides since the Agriculture Sector Work Plan, which was announced, as I said, in 2017, committed to

increasing Newfoundland and Labrador's food self-sufficiency from 10 per cent to 20 per cent by 2022.

Progress to date, I'm pleased to say, has resulted in a steady increase in self-sufficiency from 10 to nearly 15 per cent. My colleague for Lake Melville introduced the PMR that will be discussed tomorrow. I look forward to the discussion and comments from both sides on this very important issue to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Madam Chair, with access to safe, healthy food on everybody's minds, Newfoundland and Labrador's agriculture sector is navigating through challenging times, no doubt. We are working on innovative, practical initiatives that we feel will address real needs in the agriculture sector to help farmers increase markets and profits.

Madam Chair, the department – to talk about supports, we are supporting new and existing farmers, which is very important. Just to give you an example: 67 new first-year farmers to date, since 2017, through programs including the Canadian Agriculture Partnership and Provincial Agrifoods Assistance Program. For 2021, 14 first new entrants have been approved for funding. Those key words of first-time new entrants is very important, whether it's in agriculture, fisheries, forestry or any other industry.

Providing supports for land development – as I referenced in the farm that I visited – Triple E, that was their concern in terms of providing supports for land development. In addition to making more land available for farming, to date approximately 380 hectares of new land has been prepared for fruit and vegetable production with the support of our funding programs. And identifying areas; we identified 59 areas of interest, totalling approximately 62,000 hectares for long-term agricultural use.

Currently, 48 –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. LOVELESS: My turn to speak there.

Currently, 48 AOIs available for application through an open request for proposals process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LOVELESS: I know you have great interest in the industry, I say to the Member for Mount Pearl North, and I look forward to your comments.

Madam Chair, the Member for Exploits, producing vegetable transplants at the Centre for Agriculture and Forestry Development in Wooddale, which is in his district and I'm sure he's proud of that. That's nearly five million in total, with three million vegetable transplants in 2020, and we're going to do more.

Madam Chair, my time is getting near, so I'll leave it at that. I certainly have more to talk about in forestry and in the fishing industry, which I look forward to making some comments on and be a cheerleader for those industries.

Madam Chair, thank you for your time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Member for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and taking the words right out of my mouth.

Congratulations on your appointment of Deputy Chair here in the House. I know you're going to do a great job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Again, it's an absolute privilege to be here today and to be sat in the House of Assembly and represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

Madam Chair, what we're at here today is we're going to address and debate Interim Supply. For

most of the people at home, everyone in this House will make sure that the people in this province, especially our public servants, and people that rely on the money that comes from government will get it. You look at the debate here today and some people say, well, if they don't approve it, there will be no money paid for this. That's too far away from what is actually is the truth.

We're here to do a job. We're here to represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm sure that both sides and everyone in this House of Assembly will do the job that needs to be done to ensure that especially the public servants and people that require the money that's in Interim Supply get it.

I have a concern, and my concern when it comes to Interim Supply is that this is the third one. I've been around this place for a little while. I've gone through 12 budgets and I look at the budget process, and the budget process is a very important process for both sides of this House. It's a very important process that government gives the direction in which it's going and where it's going to spend money, but it's also a very important process where we, as an Opposition – and I've been on both sides of the House – get a chance to question it.

The best part of any budget debate, as far as I'm concerned, is Estimates. It's when we get down to the line to line things that we understand where money is getting spent. There are a lot of questions that are getting asked in Estimates and there are a lot of answers. It's the only place where really you get a lot of answers in when it comes to a budget debate.

Now, this is the third Interim Supply. We'll go through basically almost two-thirds of this year's budget because the budget is part of Interim Supply. It's part of the debate for Interim Supply. We're after spending two-thirds of the money before we even pass a budget, before a question has been answered on how we're spending our money.

I agree with the debate that we have here today. I think the debate over whether it's 30 days, 90 days or 60 days is immaterial. I believe we need to get to the business of this province and to show the people in this province, these are very

difficult times and there's going to have to be some difficult decisions made. I don't know if they'll be made on this budget but I'm sure they'll be made on budgets to come. The people in the province deserve to know where their money is getting spent. They deserve to know what we're doing in here and how we're spending their money.

I'll just go back to Interim Supply to give the people the assurance that Interim Supply will be passed one way or another. There's nobody in this province that, if this bill is not passed, will not be paid tomorrow or the next day. That's not going to happen, and the people in the province – fear mongering and stuff like that, I really don't like it. I really want to assure the people that that's not going to happen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: The people of the province also have to realize and know that, listen, this is part of our budget. I've been here for a lot of years and most times the budgets usually come down the last week of March, the first week in April. We're going to be doing another budget by then. We need to show the people in this province where we spent their money to and how we're spending their money.

Listen, we've done budgets here that have been great budgets. We've done budgets here that I remember in *Budget 2015* – I think it was '16, when the whole government came in, they were all wearing black. It was a hard time. It was a very difficult time in this province but at least people got to know where they were to, how their money was being spent and that's what the people of this province want.

Whether it's 30 days, 60 days or 90 days for Interim Supply, I think that's immaterial. We need to get to the budget process and we need to let the people of the province know where their money is being spent.

I want to congratulate the Minister of – I'm just going to call him Fisheries right now. Your mom and dad will be happy with you, I won't ask you too many hard questions, but the fishery, which I am critic for, is probably one of the brightest spots we had in this province this year. I know especially in the crab fishery

catches were – in some parts of the province – really, really good. I know the inventory levels are way better than most people anticipated and that the fishery overall was caught – well, most people had less trips and the fishery was very successful, so that's a good point and a very positive point in our province.

We all have to realize that the fishing industry, as much as we'll talk, and I'll talk a little bit about the oil and gas now in a few minutes, but the fishing industry is still a major, major, major part of our province's economy. It's a major part of who we are as a people and it's a major part of – and I say it all the time – rural Newfoundland. We always look for diversification and whatnot, but our fishery, if managed right – and I'll still go back to the number of private Members' motions that were brought here to the House of Assembly by both sides of the House of Assembly on joint management. I really believe we should be fighting the federal government for that piece that we do have joint management in our fishery and continue to do it. It's something that we all supported, but it seems like our federal counterparts don't want to get into joint management, which would give us a bit of control over our fishery.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Madam Chair, back to school is probably one of the biggest issues that I had in my district this year. I just say to people, it's a different time. I'm not going to blame anyone or throw any blame. These are different times for our children. It's different times for our parents. It's different times for our teachers. My advice to everybody is be patient; we're going to get through this. We're living in a province where we're fortunate that we don't have the cases that we're seeing right across the country.

I believe yesterday was the highest number of cases that was recorded in the world. So to our people – our parents are showing a lot of patience because there are a lot of issues when it comes to back to school. I know in my district there are a lot of children who don't have a school bus. I've talked to the minister, I've talked to the operators and I'm hoping that in the next few weeks, hopefully, that will be solved,

because all our children deserve a right to go to school.

I know when we were in government and the Opposition put forward petitions, we've continued to put forward petitions about 1.6 kilometres. I think it's a time that we're going to get the buses in the system that we eliminate the 1.6-kilometre busing rule so that every kid has a right to a run to school. And I believe we should do that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: I've only got a couple of minutes, but I'll probably get another chance to speak.

I really want to talk a little bit about our offshore industry today. As you listened to the debate the last couple of days in the House of Assembly, I believe that we need leadership, we need commitment and we need people working for us. I just look at where we are in the province. I know from the small community I'm from and a lot of buddies of mine work in the offshore, some work in Alberta and work in the oil fields there, but I look at this industry as an industry that's given back to our province in a big (inaudible).

We talked today about Husky's contribution to the Easter Seals program. We talked about Trades NL's contribution to Kids Eat Smart, to Daffodil Place, school lunch program. But I can tell you that the offshore industry, which is, someone said, 30 per cent of the revenue that we take in to this province, brings everything to every community. It means a lot to the corner stores. It means a lot to the car dealerships. The number of spin-off jobs that are related to our offshore industry is huge.

And we need government to step up and say, listen, Ottawa, come to bat. We need it; we need demands made. We just can't say we're sitting on the couch and having a cup of tea and talking about it. We're getting to the point that we're going to see the major industry, that's keeping this province going right now, move if we don't act. And we can't just say it's coming soon; we'll hear from somebody maybe in a couple of weeks. We need to show the federal government and the rest of Canada that this is an important

industry. This industry has not just put money in Newfoundland and Labrador's pockets; it has put money in Canadian pockets. It has put money in the Canadian economy like you wouldn't believe.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: There's a lot of money from our offshore industry that's going to the rest of Canada.

We need action and we need people to take the leadership role and get up and fight for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

I just to remind all Members, as nice as it is to be called Mr. Speaker, I am indeed a woman.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Certainly it's a pleasure to speak in the House of Assembly today on this bill. The first thing I want to speak about is what the actual motion is and, of course, that's Interim Supply. I don't want to belabour the points around exactly what Interim Supply is. We all know and it's already been outlined for people who may be watching.

I kind of want to echo some of the comments of my colleague for Humber - Bay of Islands. Surprisingly, to some, he's become the voice of reason on a lot of issues, which some people might laugh at that in this House of Assembly but he has, I have to say. I do want to support him on what he said about the Interim Supply. I've been here now for 10 years and I've been through a number of budget processes. I absolutely agree it does not take three months, so I don't see the requirement for three months.

I will be voting in favour of Interim Supply and I'm sure everybody in the House is going to vote in favour of Interim Supply in the end. Nobody wants to see our province come to a standstill;

nobody wants to see our public servants not get paid. There's always a bit of politics afoot on all sides of the House but the reality of it is I'm confident that it will go through.

Will it go through as three months? I have a sneaking suspicion – and, certainly myself and the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands talked about it. If somebody else over there is not going to put in an amendment, we will. I hope someone is going to bring in an amendment, and I have a feeling that might happen, to maybe reduce it from three months maybe to two months, or six weeks or whatever it may be. If that's what happens then I will support that and after I will support that, I will support Interim Supply. We will make sure that everybody gets paid and we will make sure that we have ample time to debate the budget.

I did want to make those two points clear as to at least where I stand so that people don't have any concern, our public servants don't have any concern about getting paid and the public don't have any concern about services somehow coming to a halt. This is not the opportunity in Interim Supply to – quote, unquote – bring down the government. I won't be having any part of that either. I'll wait until the budget and see what's in the budget. Assuming that the budget is a reasonable budget, then I have no interest in bringing down the government over the budget either, unless it's something that would cause me to think otherwise, but I'll base that on the budget when the budget happens. I make no commitments one way or the other. If the budget is reasonable, I don't think people want us to get into the middle of an election campaign, quite frankly, in the middle of a pandemic.

We know where we are right now. We're seeing some of the other provinces, Ontario in particular and so on, where we're seeing spikes again in COVID-19 cases. We were told a number of months ago there would be a second wave. That was predicted I believe October, November, somewhere around that time. If memory serves me, I believe that's what Dr. Fitzgerald and the Minister of Health and Community Services already sort of predicted. It seems like that has started in other parts of the country. God willing, with the measures we've taken and continue to take, that won't happen here but the risk is always there.

I think the last thing that this province needs at this point in time, in the middle of a pandemic, is an election campaign. I won't be bringing down the government, as I say, on Interim Supply, and as long as the budget is reasonable, I won't be bringing down the government on that either. Hopefully there'll be an election maybe in the spring or something like that after the next budget, and if that happens then we'll all go out and knock on doors in our district and the people of our districts will decide who they want to represent them. That's the way democracy works, that's the way it should be.

That's on the actual Interim Supply. Now the other beauty of Interim Supply, as Members in this House of Assembly would know – perhaps not everybody in the public or who may be watching may or may not know – that Interim Supply is considered a money bill. Of course, when you have money bills that basically leaves the door wide open that a Member of the House of Assembly can speak about any topic they want related to any aspect of government, whether it be core government departments, or agencies, boards and commissions, or any issues impacting government or impacting the people of our province. It does leave it wide open.

There are numerous issues I think are important that need to be discussed. So I'll be taking the opportunity, as I'm sure others will, throughout the course of this Interim Supply debate, which could go on late into the evening and maybe on Thursday. I don't know what's going to happen for sure, but there will be ample opportunity to speak and I have a number of issues I intend to raise.

Certainly, as independent Members, one of the challenges we have, of course, we don't get the Question Period to get a lot of points out that, perhaps, the Official Opposition in particular would have, so this is an opportunity for us to utilize debates such as this to raise issues on behalf of our constituents. I certainly intend on doing that. Even though I have only 10 minutes now, I could stand up 10 times before the night is over at 10-minute intervals, as long as there's an intervening speaker, and speak about whatever I want. That's exactly what I intend on doing until I get the points out that I wish to get out.

Mr. Speaker – or, sorry, Madam Chair; I'm used to saying Mr. Speaker. I apologize for that – due to the time that's remaining, I can really pick only one area. I just want to very quickly talk about the education system, K-to-12 education in particular. I, too, do want to first of all commend the Minister of Education. He's only been in the role a very short time, but I have to give credit where credit is due. He has been very, very co-operative. By the way, the former minister of Education during the whole COVID situation and so on, I had many dealings with his office and his executive assistant. I cannot say anything bad there either. Very co-operative, absolutely.

Again, the current Minister of Education, I had numerous discussions with him on any number of issues. He did listen. In a very short time, I have to say, given the circumstance that he had, he reacted very quickly I feel. I am disappointed by the fact that it seemed like there was this gap where there was this period of time where more could have been done in advance. That didn't happen. I'm not going to hang that on anybody's particular head because I don't know the circumstances around those delays. Part of it, I understand from talking to some people, is perhaps there was a delay in getting the COVID-19 guidelines that were required in order to make a lot of these decisions. I think that could have been part of it, as well as any other number of factors.

I do want to say, though, that one of the most pressing issues I'm hearing now – busing, obviously, is still a concern. I appreciate the fact that it is being addressed, but it's still a concern. But the other one – and the Minister of Health and Community Services would be aware, he has spoken on it. That's the issue now of children with flu-like symptoms.

Of course, what's happening is parents are going through the checklist, their child might have a sniffle and a sore throat or something. They end up calling 811; 811 refers them to a line to have their children COVID-19 tested. They're calling this line and getting no answer, no ability to leave a message. It's very frustrating for parents. Some have gotten through and they've been told it could be two or three days waiting for a test another 24 hours or more after they have the test. Which means they're going to lose a full

week of school just because they had a runny nose and perhaps a scratchy throat or something.

I understand we're in new territory with COVID-19. I understand the challenges. I understand the Minister of Health and Community Services saying they are going to dedicate more resources to try to address this. I certainly hope it happens sooner or later to allay the concerns that many parents of school-aged children have at the moment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

(Inaudible due to technical difficulties.)

MS. HALEY: Will I start over, Madam Chair?

Thank you, and congratulations on your new role as Deputy Speaker of this hon. House. I'm sure you will do great. It's always good to see you there, so congratulations again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. HALEY: It's good to be back in this hon. House after what has been a period of unprecedented uncertainty, not just for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, of course, but for all seven billion of us who share planet earth, Madam Chair.

COVID-19 has been a rude reminder that as human beings we are not yet above even something as minute in size as a virus. However, the pandemic that has become a fixation for us for the past six months has also served to remind us that human beings have more in common than we have ever acknowledged, Madam Chair, and that's the poorest of nations and the richest of nations have come together in a universal battle against a common enemy.

As Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, we can be especially proud of the work that has been done and continues to be done by all of us who fight this pandemic, Madam Chair. Although every citizen didn't fully embrace the proclamation made by Dr. Fitzgerald and her capable team, nonetheless, we have done the things necessary to minimize the impact of the

pandemic on our population. Other locales, I'm sure, could learn from our example.

It has been due to the unbending resolve of those decision-makers that no new cases today have become the common refrain and though none of us can pretend to enjoy the restrictions that have necessarily been imposed, we have bitten the bullet and done what is required of us, Madam Chair.

I also have great admiration for those people who have been on the front lines, whether as a health care workers or someone who is serving in the public as a clerk in a supermarket. As a society, we have been focused to re-examine the whole concept of essential workers and we have looked at what is important in society in a whole new light, Madam Chair. It is now clear that those in food processing are more important than the stars of the NHL. Health care workers trump movie stars. Our first responders deserve the moniker of hero more than do the hottest recording artists, Madam Chair.

I would suggest that we, as Members of this hon. Assembly, might take a backseat to the countless civil servants who day after day after day, whether working from an office in the Confederation Building here or working from home ensuring that the trains run on time, so to speak, or those who work on highways or at airports, or working at any of the hundreds of jobs vital to keep our province on course, we owe them a huge depth of gratitude.

I've been reminded this week of the exceptional job we've done in fighting this pandemic. Seeing students headed back to their classrooms properly prepared is especially encouraging, especially when hearing of so many places where a return to a classroom is not just possible or is being carried out under dubious circumstances.

The pandemic is also a reminder of the frailty of this planet. As we bear witness to the marvellous advances in technology, advances that would have been well beyond our imagination a few years ago, we have come to see humanity as indestructible. We are above everything and there is no real need to live in harmony with the world around us. It is our planet to use and it is our planet to abuse.

Yet, we seem baffled somehow when we see images on TV of the western part of North America all ablaze. We seem baffled when storms of more ferocity than ever previously experienced bear down upon us, destroying everything in their path, Madam Chair. We are baffled by the novel viruses that bring millions to their knees, many of them to never recover. It is time that we took climate change seriously. It is time we get over ourselves as a species, I would say. It is time we learn to treat this planet with respect.

Nevertheless, we will get through this pandemic, not because we wait idly for it to eventually vanish, as some in positions of power would suggest, but we are determined to win this battle, Madam Chair, as we have joined other battles in crises past and done our part to ensure victory.

As I mentioned previously in this hon. House, Madam Chair, this pandemic has not stood in the way of three community-minded individuals bringing some levity and stress relief during the pandemic in my district. Chris and Dallas Emberley and Chantel Clarke already had earned a reputation of spearheading the Frazer Park committee in Grand Bank. And though they were not technically part of any established organization or institution, they followed up on that well-organized, with fun activities to engage youth of the area.

I can't say I was terribly surprised when they organized more activities to engage young and old alike during the pandemic. Practically everything had come to a screeching halt for weeks with never a thing to stimulate our community spirit.

Madam Chair, those activities were a welcome interlude to a blasé attitude that had enveloped the whole peninsula. It was the whole peninsula that answered the call with participants from all over the Boot. Though each contest had a significant loot bag as a prize, with donations coming from business owners and individuals from Grand Bank, and of course beyond Grand Bank, the contests were so much fun that all who took part were truly winners.

I again offer a heartfelt thank you and gratitude to this terrific trio for offering up sunshine on an otherwise cloudy day, Madam Chair.

Since becoming elected some five years ago, I have been proud of the commitment of our government to our people. I can assure the people of Burin - Grand Bank and, indeed, the entire province, that commitment will not diminish as we move ahead under the leadership of our new Premier. I take this opportunity to congratulate our new Premier on his new position. I have known him for many, many years and I am well aware of the passion with which he does everything he takes on. I have no doubt that he will bring that same passion to the Premier's office, Madam Chair.

We have always realized government has a need to diversify the economy, and representing a district on the Burin Peninsula that was something I took to heart. That is not to indicate less than wholehearted support for the industry that brought us here, and that's the fishery. The fishery has always been an integral part of the provincial economy and, in fact, the provincial landscape. Only the foolhardy would ever dismiss its importance, Madam Chair.

My own father was a fisherman who worked hard to provide for us, his family, and for that I would never disparage the fishery, Madam Chair. However, we cannot pretend that the fishery alone can sustain the provincial economy, yet we must support it, yes, we must build it yes, but we must now realize that there are other opportunities. Not everyone in this province can be employed in the fishing industry.

I have spent much of my time working on projects to diversify the economy in Burin - Grand Bank and, indeed, the whole Burin Peninsula, Madam Chair. My first major undertaking was in St. Lawrence. St. Lawrence has always been synonymous with two things: soccer and mining. Although soccer has been alive and well in St. Lawrence for sometime, the same could not be said for the mining industry some five years ago.

There have been several attempts over the years to get the fluorspar mine up and running again – all to no avail. I made it a priority first when I became elected. I am pleased that today some 200 people have been employed at Canada Fluorspar Inc. in St. Lawrence. Those 200 people who do not have to look for seasonal

work and who do not have to head West as rotational workers, Madam Chair, seeing their families not only for just a few days a month, those are workers who can share in family responsibilities at home and who can watch their children grow. This is certainly not a knock against rotational workers, not at all. They are to be admired for the sacrifices they make in providing for their families, but I am sure that all would agree it's a hard lifestyle and one that they wished they didn't have to endure.

I can see my time is running out, Madam Chair, and I look forward to the next opportunity when I can speak in this hon. House.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, congratulate you on your role here today. It's deserved and I know you're going to do a good job, no doubt about it.

CHAIR: Thank you.

MR. P. DINN: I just want to talk to some comments made today. I'll start off with comments made by the Minister of Finance and talking about the three-month Supply and the need for it and to make sure that requirements of government are met and no one loses out in terms of health care, payroll, seniors, education, income support and any program or service offered by government, and I'm sure the intent wasn't to create fear. I'm sure it was to state fact.

I just want to state a fact, and the fact is that on this side of the House we have absolutely no intention of holding the public hostage and not approving an Interim Supply. I just want to put that out there. Because going through this COVID pandemic, if there's one thing we've all realized is there's been a tremendous amount of anxiety over many things that we took for granted. So I just really want to be adamant in saying that no one's going to be left without a payroll cheque or no one's going to be left

without supports. We will all together make sure that there's a continuation of programs and services.

The other comment made by the minister spoke to the 90 days, and we had some good debate on the Interim Supply through Oral Questions. One comment she made, she said there's no real reason not to, other than maybe political. And she's correct, there's no real reason for us not to allow for Interim Supply, but when you get into political, I think of that quote: fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice, shame on me.

We know what happened with the last budget. We know the budget was announced and then we closed shop and there was absolutely no debate. So there is a little bit of a trust issue when we look at this. That's perhaps why there's a lot of thinking around why do you want 90 days, why don't you want 90 days. That's all part of the political game, we'll call it, but at the end of the day people are not going to be left out in the cold on this. We're going to make sure there's funding available to ensure that services and programs continue.

So I did talk about COVID, I mentioned that earlier. The Minister of Finance talked about three months Supply is quite normal, but I think everyone will agree, this year has been anything but normal. A lot of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians need to be commended on the effort they've put in to combat COVID and to keep us all safe, not without some hiccups or bumps along the way.

I certainly, like all of us – a huge, huge thank you to all essential workers for what they have done and what they continue to do. Our world would be much different if we didn't have those workers who are going to work every day to make sure our life is as normal as could be.

We've gone through a lot of things in COVID: the bars, the restaurants, the tourism sector, rotational workers. We're dealing with schools and school bands.

One thing I'm a little disheartened hasn't been addressed or hasn't been looked at – of which I got many, many emails on and I believe everyone in this House got similar emails – was with, I'll call it, the wedding industry. A lot of

young couples, their special day has been totally disrupted because of COVID.

This industry has been totally disrupted because you have caterers, you have facilities that are rented, you have entertainment – there's a whole industry here. You have florists who also are affected by the lack of graduations and funerals. The wedding industry has been one that – I understand the reasoning given by the chief medical officer, but I think we could have looked at other options there and I believe a lot of options have been presented.

I'm attending a family wedding, actually, in two weeks' time. It's going to be quite different, but I'm sure we'll get through it. Again, I think it's somewhere we should be looking at a little closer.

With regard to the schools – and I mentioned to the previous minister of Education when we were out chatting in the hallway, it's a difficult portfolio to take over, there's no doubt about it, and then for the current Minister of Education to jump in and deal with it as well. A lot of things are happening and you're shifting gears, but I can't help but say: why were we not on top of this sooner?

The Minister of Health spoke early on COVID and mentioned about we have an advantage because we're lagging behind the rest of the country and the rest of the provinces. There was an opportunity to learn and an opportunity to plan. A plan, of course, is developing actions and a scheme to deal with something in advance. A plan is not intended to be reactive; a plan is intended to be proactive.

To think that government sitting around the Cabinet table with all the ministers, and especially speaking to Finance and the Department of Education being one of the largest departments – and busing being somewhere in the \$50-million range – it puzzles me that in March or April or May or even June that we were not thinking ahead and saying we have to have a plan in place for busing. To tell us that on August 14 we found out we have two kids to a seat as opposed to three, not acceptable. Again, realizing this is a unique situation, but when it comes to planning I think we need to be ahead of that.

There are many other issues we have to deal with. In Topsail - Paradise, in my district, I have over 4,000 students in the surrounding areas, upwards to 4,500. I've had single parents who can't get their children to school. I've had a single parent with three children in three different schools. I had a parent call me, and their child had to walk home from Mount Pearl to Paradise because she could only get him to school and not back. I've had parents and grandparents dealing with extreme stress and anxiety, some having panic attacks, because they don't know how their child is getting to and from school.

I know we're doing a job there; we're dealing with it. It's not going to happen until the end of September, we will probably have everyone to school, but when I hear that we can't have kids walking – and the Minister of Education said the other day – eight, 10, 12 kilometres, I totally agree. We cannot have them walking to school when they're eight, 10, 12 kilometres from school.

I would take that another step and I would say – and the previous minister of Education spoke to it, about safety – we cannot have any child walking to school in unsafe conditions. We have lobbied and pushed for everyone to be on the bus. We want to eliminate that 1.6 kilometres, because walking 1.6 kilometres in a snowstorm when there's no place to walk is no less unsafe than having to walk eight, 10 or 12 kilometres on sidewalks.

We have to take what we're learning from this. I know it's trying times. I know the ministers dealing with this it is something totally new, but I hope we take this as a learning experience and we start to do some more things that are safe and correct.

CHAIR: Order, please!

Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the –

(Inaudible due to technical difficulties.)

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: That worked. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Actually, thank you for the – the Chair introduced me first as the Member for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde and that's the title actually that I hold dearest when it comes to my job here because no matter what role we play in this Chamber, first and foremost, it's to represent our constituents because without their confidence we wouldn't be here to actually have any other confidence in this place. So thank you, Madam Chair.

It's always a pleasure to speak here in this House, and this would be my first opportunity to speak in my new role as Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Government House Leader. I think before I start, I want to thank – I spent three years in Transportation and Works, now TI, or Transportation and Infrastructure, and it was certainly a pleasure to work with the fine people in that department. I look forward now to working with the people in the Department of Justice and Public Safety, and also the Treasury Board Secretariat and Members of the House itself.

Madam Chair, the debate we're having this afternoon is about providing a steady source of Supply to the people of this province over a three month period. I get the conversation back and forth whether or not we need three months or we don't need three months, but if you think about it – I just want to go back to the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, in his remarks a few minutes ago, actually, talked about why we don't need 90 days, we need 60 days. But in the same remarks, he also said he's not sure yet that he can support a budget. And that's what I've heard. I've heard that from the Leader of the Opposition last Thursday and I've heard it from other Members, and that's fair. I don't think we would ask anybody to support a document they haven't seen, but let's just do a timeline for a minute.

On September 30, we're going to deliver a budget, factoring in – and we've heard all kinds of debate here today on what the actual budget timelines are, and myself and the other House Leaders here have talked about what a fall Parliamentary Calendar would look like. The reality is in all likelihood the earliest we would

pass a budget could be around the last of October. That's when we'd actually vote. So now we have 30 days of that Supply gone.

If there was something in that budget that the Members opposite could not support, if there was a reason they could not support this budget, now we're at November 1. Then you would initiate a 28- to 35-day election campaign.

Now, that gets me somewhere into the first week of December. We have a new government elected in the first week of December. It then takes 14 days for that government to be sworn in. That's what the Chief Electoral Officer requires in order to get a government in place.

Madam Chair, to me, that sounds like the new government, from whomever the people choose, would be in here on December 22, 23, 24 debating an Interim Supply motion. By the way, when you talk about Supply, the important date to remember is the 21st of the month. That's when a lot of our transactions that government has are keyed. So the reality here, if you think about it, is we would be hard pressed to provide Supply to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador under the two month scenario.

It's a very easy calendar: September 30 to the end of October for the budget; a 28- to 35-day election campaign; 14 days for swearing in and we would need Supply by the 21st of December in this scenario.

Nobody in this House is talking about that scenario, but as legislators and people who are in here to represent the people and make sure that there is Supply for the services in our province, whether it's the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program, paying our teachers, paying our nurses, paying all of our front-line workers, just keeping the lights on in these buildings, it's so very important that we have that Supply.

To reiterate what the Minister of Finance said earlier this afternoon, this is not about new spending. We've operated now for six months on Supply. The headings in the Estimates book, as everybody in this Chamber would appreciate, those headings don't change. There is flexibility.

I can tell you being a part of this government this past, I guess, summer and throughout the pandemic, some of the measures we have taken to ensure that we are able to get the appropriations to the Department of Education or the Department of Health and Community Services or other government departments to ensure that we can operate as functional as possible, has been difficult.

I can tell you that coming from the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, one of the challenges we had this summer, if you take TI as an example, our expenditure is not – the expenditure in Transportation and Infrastructure wouldn't be based on a calendar year in lots of cases because our construction season is so short. A lot of the expenditure is in the first six months of the year. So they become very delicate processes for the people in the Department of Finance. I can tell you, if you talk to the officials in the Department of Finance, they would tell you that there's a lot of work that goes into this.

I know the Minister of Finance this afternoon has been back and forth with her officials all afternoon. This is not a simple one, two, three, you cut 33⅓ and it just goes on. It's not that simple. When you think about – and I'll go back to the department I recently left in Transportation and Infrastructure, the spending fluctuates. If you're in Transportation and Infrastructure right now your focus is changing to salt and sand. The workforce in Transportation and Infrastructure grows by 700 people around the 15th of October. So the expenditures in Transportation and Infrastructure are not balanced. It's not like you can say, well, you cut one-third of that, that's fine, things go on. It really becomes challenging.

I can tell you, working with the Minister of Finance and her officials, the work that these people do behind the scenes in preparing a budget is tremendous. What we're doing right now is giving them the ability to go ahead and plan a budget. The Minister of Finance has been clear, in normal years, pre-COVID, what we would find ourselves at right now is practically preparing for the 2021 budget. We'd only be weeks away now from budget 2021.

Madam Chair, my time is running short, but I do want to address another couple of issues that have been subjects or part of the debate here this afternoon, and that's certainly one around the oil industry. I speak as, again now, the MHA for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde. I can tell you I've heard it loud and clear from my constituents, the impacts that the oil industry will have on all of our districts.

I've lived back in the '90s during the Hibernia construction and the benefits that that brought to our communities in Trinity Bay and throughout the province and with the other developments later on. I can assure you the previous minister, today's Deputy Premier and the current minister, and every single one of us on this side of the House understands the value of that industry, and we will fight for that industry. We can have our banter back and forth in here, but at the end of the day every single one of us are here to represent our constituents, and this is about building an economy.

I'm fortunate enough to have two young, adult children, and I want to make sure – we can have our banter in here and we can have our political jabs and all that stuff. Like everybody else in this place, I want to make sure that there's a future for my children, the children of my constituents, the children of my colleagues in this House, every child in Newfoundland and Labrador to have an opportunity to stay here.

For somebody in this House to look at anybody, on either side, and say we're not all here doing what we can for our constituents is a bit disingenuous, in my opinion. Because at the end of the day, we're all here for the right reason and it's important that we remember that sometimes in our cheap shots we take at each other, and I'm known to take my share across the way, but, again, it's important we recognize that the Minister Responsible for Energy today and the Deputy Premier and the Premier himself and all of our caucus, everybody in here has the right things at their heart when it comes to saving this industry because it's a very important industry.

Again, I want to just take a moment to speak to my constituents around the school issues. We're working through them. It's been an enormous challenge. I believe our investment has been over, extra tens and tens of millions of dollars in.

I think the former minister and the current minister are doing a great job given the circumstances. Who would have ever thought last March that we'd find ourselves in the situation we're in today.

Madam Chair, I see my time is expiring, but I have a funny feeling I'll have another chance later this evening.

Thank you.

CHAIR: (Inaudible due to technical difficulties.)

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

Congratulations on your apotheosis to the level of Deputy Speaker.

CHAIR: Thank you.

MR. J. DINN: I just want to talk about, I guess, first of all with regard to education. That's primarily where most of this will be about.

I want to start by acknowledging the recent investments into education in light of COVID-19, the increasing of custodian hours, the hiring of extra custodians, administrative units, guidance counsellors, cleaning supplies and the 10 new teachers and the five new public health nurses. All of these are positive, including the purchasing of laptops which will certainly allow the school system, even when this is over, to seriously talk about 21st-century learning.

I want to go back to the idea of a plan and what Interim Supply is about what a budget is about. It's about a plan. Teachers are notorious planners, I can tell you that right now. Even by the time August comes along they're already looking into what the year is going to look like, come Sunday evening they're looking at what the rest of the week is looking like, when parent-teacher night is coming up and so on and so forth. It's a constant exercise in planning.

When we plan, we don't plan for what the current situation is. As I've heard, it's based on what it will be; we try to do our best prediction. The old adage for teaching is if you don't have a plan for them, the students, they'll have a plan

for you, but you can never predict how it's going to turn out.

It comes down to even here in priorities and investments, but the English School District had a plan, had the framework of a plan and had the report on what was going to come back in May. It had the potential to save a huge amount of money. It had provided options with regard to school opening that would have lessened the impact on parents, on teachers and congestion in the streets; just walk around some of these city streets, especially at school dismissal. It would have resolved the busing issue right off the bat. Even in a staggered approach, in a shift system, it would have meant that every student would have been able to attend a full education on a part-time basis, but they all would have had a bus.

The plan is for the future. There are sprinkler systems in this House of Assembly here and fire extinguishers, not because this building is on fire but in case that it does, that there are protective measures in place. Get into your car – airbags, seat belts, crash avoidance, not because the car is in danger right now but because down the road there could be a situation. You plan for events.

I can tell you that what has happened – and while I appreciate the additions to education, I do believe that if this plan had been put in place or started back in May or June, we could have avoided an awful lot of the confusion. I can tell you, one principal that I have spoken to, in the two days leading up to school, for her, her vice-principal and her two secretaries spent two days straight past the school day emailing 500 parents, letting them know who was going to be on the bus and who wasn't and sending them the various forms they needed. That's two days; that's at one school.

I know in one school that I visited this week, all teachers were deployed on bus duty. That's how they made it work. They'd spent the first week of a principal trying to plan for it, but it took all teachers on duty that week to make it work. They were working well past their half-hour more, as some government officials suggested in a news release.

I do believe a plan could have allowed for more organization and for savings. It is a hard scrabble. We were reactionary, we were not being proactive. Parents are being told right now the transportation will be solved; don't talk to us, go to the forum. Personally speaking, this is not a good use. What's happening is not a good use of our financial resources, it's not a good use of our human resources.

I can tell you that my colleague from Bonavista and I, who are both teachers, we did meet with the former minister as well and we presented a list, and we presented the same list to the current Minister of Education. We asked for a delay, if nothing else, to allow for teachers and schools to do the planning. Not because we are looking for time off, but because we knew what this plan was going to mean for schools. We knew what it would do to the system. It would overload the school system, it would burn out our teachers.

So from that point I can go on with a few others, but – and I will bring them up at later points – there are problems that exist now that really could have been dealt with, with a plan; have been dealt with in a more organized fashion that could've allowed for a smoother transition into the year.

No one can predict what COVID-19 will do, how it will play out. We saw that in March. We shut down, we worked from home, we came up with an economic plan and we did our best in that situation, but from March until September we had six months of valuable time when we could have. And it bothers me to find out that really the plan wasn't – that this task force report wasn't at the Cabinet table before at least July – that there was another plan in July, that this one wasn't brought there. It truly does, because really what we're looking here, as a former teacher myself, as a former president of the Teachers' Association and as the Education critic, I'm looking for something that will make the transition smoother for teachers so that they can do their job and the education experience in schools is going to be positive for our children. That's an investment.

I will say one other point when it comes to the issue around the budget. As we look at savings – actually, Madam Chair, I'm going to stop there; I'll bring these up at another point. I'm going to

stop my speech right now and I'll come back at another time. So I'll turn it over to ...

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll just speak very quickly for a minute or so and then I will be proposing an amendment to the bill that we are debating here now in Interim Supply.

While I understand and appreciate all the conversation we had here today and understanding that everybody comes at it from the different perspectives, but I think in the same perspective that they want to do what's right for the province and to ensure that we do have the financing to provide the services that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve and need and that we ensure that our civil service are taken care of when it comes to being able to meet our payrolls and our suppliers as we move forward in addressing the challenging times that we have.

The debate we're having here is around the length of the time. My colleague, the Government House Leader, outlined a calendar time that, in principle, it does make sense, but it's all based on the principle that there would be an election called after the fact. We're going on another principle here that, at the end of the day, we've acknowledged that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador do not want an election to happen any time this fall. They've got enough challenges now with the COVID virus. They've got challenges with trying to get back to some sense of normality and they would want some sense of stability in what we're doing.

Stability comes when the House of Assembly has its budget in line, that's already approved, it's debated, then each line department would know exactly what their expenditures will be and the ability for them to roll out their programs and services for the people, and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador would then be cognizant of exactly what provided services are coming their way, knowing that

we're talking really, at the end of this whole debate, when we come to a consensus on what would be the appropriate time for Interim Supply, probably four months left from there. A third of the province's financial expenditure is coming in that part of the season as we start planning for a spring election. We all accept this is nobody's doing; this is nobody's fault. This is an unfortunate situation that we find ourselves in. As a result, we're trying to address what we think is in the best interests of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We've clearly heard the message that nobody wants a fall election. So our debate here is around ensuring – and I would hope it's on both sides – that we don't go there, that we find something that's equitable, that's workable and represents the needs of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and still ensures that we can function in the best manner possible fiscally. That means having enough money to meet our bills, while at the same time understanding that it's not a carte blanche blank cheque that can be used in any way, shape or form.

There are schedules outlined here. We like the headings and we think they're appropriate numbers, but the timelines that the discussion here in the Opposition have had is that this can be done in a 60-day term that would then ensure once the budgets are passed, everything is in play, we go back to normality. Not worried about an election being forced or called, depending on what scenario you think could be coming down. Everybody is on the same page, that we ensure the people of Newfoundland and Labrador get back to some normality and some stability.

We need stability. We're going into a winter season again. We had Snowmageddon last year; we don't know what else we'll face. Do we have a second spike? We hope not, but we need some stability across the board here. The House of Assembly needs to be able to have that stability. It can't have that if it's in the midst of an election campaign.

This is about, I would think, both sides figuring out what can we get put in play that would benefit everybody and make sure our fiscal House is in order to be able to meet the needs at

this point, while we look at collectively trying to solve the issues that we're going to face over the next 12, 24, 36 months no doubt, as we start trying to deal with the fallout from COVID.

With that being said, Madam Chair, I'm going to propose an amendment to the bill we have here under amendment one: I move that the resolution be amended by striking out the amount \$1,560,324,100 and substitute instead the amount \$1,040,216,400.

It's seconded by the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

This House will now take a short recess.

Recess

CHAIR: Order, please!

After consideration, it has been determined that the amendment is in order, and now we will continue debate on the amendment.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again, I'm glad to see it's in order. We're trying to move forward on coming up with an equitable agreement on how we can guarantee our financial stability for the next period of time before we pass the general budget that would've been the '19-'20 budget – no, '20-'21, sorry. Years have been lost over the last six months, I think, for people, understanding where we are and what some of the challenges are as part of that.

This is stage one. There will be two other amendments that would reflect exactly how we move this piece of legislation. I'm not going to prolong it, because we need this clause to pass before we can get in to amend the second clause itself.

On that note, I'll thank the Table and thank everybody for the discussion. Hopefully, we can

move it to the next part of the amendment and put things in line and get to a point where we vote on Interim Supply before this evening is done.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MR. WARR: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Like the good wishes that you've received today, I, too, want to pass along my congratulations and best wishes to you in your new portfolio as Deputy Speaker for the House of Assembly.

Before I get into my remarks, Madam Chair, we all take the opportunities to thank the people from our districts for giving us all the all-important support that they do. Not only on election day but, certainly, I'm very blessed in the District of Baie Verte - Green Bay to have a wonderful bunch of supporters. While I have my critics as well, most of it is done constructively and I can certainly appreciate that.

I want to take the opportunity again today – I only want to do it because it's near and dear to me as I sit here in my seat. Madam Chair, I lost my biggest supporter last weekend. It was my best friend growing up, a retired RCMP officer. We joined at different times, but I lost him through an accident at his home in Ottawa last week. I certainly appreciate my good friend, the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, for reaching out last weekend because he was a good friend of his as well.

I just want to recognize him and his support. He always tuned in to this broadcast via some technology supports and certainly reached out to me many, many times. So I thought it would be appropriate for me to recognize him and his passing, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WARR: Thank you very much for that, I appreciate it.

As the newly appointed minister for the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, I am pleased to sit here today to

highlight some of the department's programs and services that support individuals, children, youth, families, seniors and certainly persons with disabilities. As you can see, Madam Chair, I've taken the opportunity in my few minutes today to talk about my department.

There is certainly a lot of great work happening here in my new portfolio. It's been wonderful meeting many of the department staff at the provincial office. I'm starting to meet regional staff, as well as community partners. I want to reach out of the former minister, my good friend from Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, and thank her for the great work that she's done in that department as well. It's certainly evident.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WARR: The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development has eight lines of business: child protection, in care, adoptions, youth services, youth corrections, adult protection, persons with disabilities, and seniors and aging. So it's certainly well rounded, Madam Chair.

While I may not have time to speak to all of these areas today, I'll do my best to cover as many as I can, with a focus on the positive things my department is doing every day and also highlighting some of the efforts during the height of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

The protection and advancement of the interests and well-being of our province's children and youth is a tremendous responsibility. Through the *Children, Youth and Families Act*, which came into effect in June of 2019, the department has strengthened our commitment to being child and youth centred, family focused and culturally responsive.

It is truly a progressive piece of legislation which is having a positive impacts and benefits for children, youth and families throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. This act has enhanced focus on supporting families in an effort to maintain children and youth safely in their family homes and supporting kinship and significant others to provide assistance when children must be outside their families for a period of time.

Earlier on during COVID-19 public health emergency, the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development had to pivot to ensure that our essential services continued to be accessible and available. This included such things as child protection, adult protection and supports to seniors and persons with disabilities on a variety of matters. As well, in an effort to ensure individuals and community groups could best connect with the department as needed, the department implemented a toll-free telephone number. This central line has options for the department's essential services and, most importantly, to report both child and adult abuse and neglect.

Furthermore, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the department temporarily modified the delivery of its essential services and made the difficult decision to temporarily replace in-person visits between children and youth in care and their parents with virtual contact, where person contact could be safely maintained. While not suitable for the importance of in-person, physical contact, this approach enabled some forms of contact to continue. Where necessary, the department provided families with the technology to ensure video-based visits, phone calls, text messages and emails could continue.

As we began to move through the Living with COVID-19 plan, and in consultation with the province's chief medical officer for Health, the department began reinstating in-person family visitation. I am pleased to report that in-person family visits have fully resumed. It is important to note that over 200 children and youth continued to have visits with family during the temporary suspension where it was safe to do so.

The health and safety of children, youth and their families, as well as the health and safety of our foster parents, adoptive applicants and residential care providers and department staff are, and continue to be, paramount, especially during these unprecedented times. The working relationship of myself and my department with our Indigenous partners is of the utmost importance.

We are committed to reducing overrepresentation of Indigenous children in care and strengthen collaboration in the best

interests of families we support. The *Children, Youth And Families Act*, as well as the new federal legislation, An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families have a number of provisions that ensure Indigenous children and youth in care remain connected with their culture, including the requirement for cultural connection plans and providing notification on significant measures to Indigenous representatives.

As part of the improved service delivery, my department maintains a positive working relationship with the Indigenous governments and organizations such as the Nunatsiavut Government, Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation and Mushuau Innu First Nation so we can collectively ensure the overall safety and protection of Indigenous children and youth. I look forward to this collaboration with Indigenous leadership.

The department's legislation has also enhanced the department's youth services programs so that all youth under a youth services agreement can receive services until their 21st birthday. I am pleased to advise that early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, the department temporarily amended its kinship services and youth services programs. This was to ensure that youth whose age would have seen them no longer qualify for services from the department were offered the opportunity to voluntarily receive support from the department during the COVID-19 public health state of emergency.

We felt it was important to ensure our commitment to these youth until proper transition planning could occur. This decision was aligned with the Child Welfare League of Canada's call to action, consistent with the majority of provinces and territories, and well received by the province's Child and Youth Advocate.

As we move through the Living with COVID-19 plan, the department's social workers have begun working with these youth on transition planning.

Madam Chair, rather than going into the other part of my specific programs – and my speaking time, there's only a minute left – but I certainly had the opportunity to reach out to both my

critics in my new position, the critic for Placentia West - Bellevue and the critic for St. John's Centre, and I offered my full support and consultations with them on a daily basis. Certainly, I look forward to my time in this new department.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm just going to take a few minutes again to talk about Humber - Bay of Islands and the Corner Brook area. As we all said, it's great to see that the three parties and the two independents came together to work this out. It would be pretty embarrassing for all of us if we didn't work out a deal here today, that we just move on with the Interim Supply.

I heard the Government House Leader talking about what if, timeline, there's an election and I heard the Opposition House Leader saying, well, there may not be an election. If we were concerned about the election, the budget could have been brought in a bit earlier. There are always ways that if you're worried about elections, you should've thought about that and bring the budget in earlier. I'm glad it all worked out.

Madam Chair, I'm just going to speak about the floods that we had in 2018. There was a lot of damage done to the whole south shore and there was a lot of work that needed to be done. There's still some there on Little Port Road. I know I wrote the minister on this on several occasions, the former minister. I know we were going back and forth for a while, so one day he jumped in the car and said, I'm coming out and see it first-hand, and he did.

I have to recognize that because the work that was done and the bit of extra work that was done makes the road much safer, much better for tourism. I just have to recognize that. Finally, Madam Chair, the people have it done and it was

done in a great way, and then the minister added some extra stuff that needed to be done also. Minister, I just have to recognize and thank you for actually saying, I'm coming out to see and did it. We actually measured things ourselves to make sure. I just have to recognize that.

I know a big thing out in York Harbour and Lark Harbour is cellphone coverage. I know myself and the former minister made the announcement last year, and I just want to let people know that it's a bit delayed because of COVID and other reasons. I know the former minister was working on it and the current minister is working on it, and he said it's going to be late September, early October. I know both ministers pushed for it, to try to speed it up and we know it's coming soon. I just wanted to recognize both ministers for that, and let the people in York Harbour and Lark Harbour know.

The people in Lark Harbour and York Harbour not only want it for convenience, but for tourism. You find a lot of people won't travel in the area, stay overnight or go camping because of safety concerns. There have been a few people that had very bad incidents coming down the trails. Some didn't make it because they had no way to reach anybody. It's a safety concern plus a convenience concern, plus it's great for tourism. It will be coming and it's going to enhance the area.

Another big issue – and we look at it. I know the Member, I think, for Cape St. Francis mentioned the fisheries. The fisheries out in Humber - Bay of Islands this year has been great for the three plants in the area. There's a lot of employment in the area. I just have to recognize also that Bill Barry did and is creating a lot of employment in the area. It's pretty stable in the area with the pelagics and the shellfish.

I know it was mentioned earlier, I think, in a petition. I think the Member for Ferryland mentioned about the first responders. I know a lot of fire departments. I know a lot of nurses. I know a lot of teachers. I know a lot of people in the long-term care facilities that went to work, a lot of people work in a lot of the stores, the grocery stores in the area and a lot are from Humber - Bay of Islands. We have to recognize collectively – and I know we all do and we all appreciate it – all the work that they have done

to keep us safe, to make sure that we have a food supply, to make sure we have all the necessities to carry on with our life.

To all the fire departments who continue with their duties and the nurses, the first responders all over, I know the work that you've done. I've been at a few of the incidents that happened and they were the first ones there – put themselves in harms way because of COVID, unsure of what to expect but they continued to do their work. I just want to echo what the Member for Ferryland said today on the first responders all throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Madam Chair, on the north shore of the Bay of Islands also there's been a lot of great work done with the school this year. I know we mentioned a former minister and this Minister of Education, but there was a lot of work done beforehand. There has been a tremendous amount of work done at schools. I know for the first week it may have been what-if, what-if, but I can assure the people of the province that the dealings with the former minister and the current minister with the schools in the area, there was a lot of preparation done and a lot of consultation done before that.

I don't know if we can do this federally or provincially, but there are a lot of volunteer groups that are struggling: fire departments and a lot of senior groups. We all know the work that the seniors have done for our province and how much they enjoy getting out and how to keep the facilities – a lot of Lions Clubs, a lot of volunteer groups are suffering. I don't have the answer. I just don't know if there's anything there we can collectively try to help out all those groups because they're very vital to our infrastructure and to our way of life in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Just on another note, I know the Deputy Premier gave us a list today about how the contingency fund has been spent. When you look at it, you can see a lot of the improvements that were done. I think there was \$20,000 for the schools. This is why, Madam Chair, you have to go through it: Essential Worker Support Program, \$66,000; there's another program, A Safe Return to Schools, \$26,000. That was reimbursed from the federal government. There are others, like numerous economic recovery programs, \$28,870,000.

Just for the people who are out in the general public, this is why we need Estimates; this is why we need the budget brought in so we can look at where that money was spent. I'm not suggesting that it wasn't spent for good use but to do our due diligence. This is why we need Estimates so that we can go through all the line items and make suggestions on how it could be spent better.

I'm going to close with a few words. I just want to thank the people of Humber - Bay of Islands for all their work they do through this pandemic. I know there are a lot of groups that stepped up to help out the less fortunate and the seniors in the whole area. I know on the North Shore people rallied on many occasions in the communities.

I'm just going to mention a lady that I brought up many times here: Mrs. Wells. She died at 107. She would be 108, I think, December 6. You want to talk about someone who enjoyed life and someone who was so happy. The day before she died, she had her spirit. I happened to be around that morning when she passed away. When I went in and saw the family, she was still laying in her bed and still looking. Just her vibrancy in life and the way she helped so many people, raised such a great family, it's a testament to all of us that there's a way that we all can make a contribution to it. Mrs. Wells, I know she lived a great life. She was 107 talking about her boyfriends when she was 16 years old, with her memory still there.

I remember on her 107th birthday, I went down to her birthday party, of course, and gave her a kiss on the cheek and, with her wit, she said God bless your wife, if that's all you got to give away – 107 years old. Then when Mrs. Wells passed away – and I have to recognize this and it's so peaceful. She was a bit concerned one night; she wasn't feeling well. That night she said good night, I'm going to sleep and then she passed away.

To Mrs. Wells, to her family, you're a testament to the whole North Shore and I just wanted to recognize that for all her family members and what a life she lived.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would suggest that if it's okay with the Members right now, we will take a brief recess until 6:30 p.m.

CHAIR: Is the House in agreement that we take a recess until 6:30 p.m.?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: The House is in recess until 6:30 p.m.