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*Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA*

Monday

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(Night Sitting)

The House resumed sitting at 7:00 p.m.

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

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

At this time I would like to call from the Order Paper, Bill 11, second reading, An Act To Amend The Health and Community Services Act.

So moved by me and seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services that the said bill be now read the second time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 11 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Health And Community Services Act." (Bill 11)

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not start by thanking my hon. colleagues in this House for the warm welcome here this evening. They are so excited to be here in prime time, Mr. Speaker, to participate in democracy in action right here in our Legislature. I also want to say a special hello to the thousands and thousands of people who are tuned in to watch this broadcast tonight. Welcome to all of you, and thanks for the warm welcome.

Mr. Speaker, as I was preparing for this bill, I felt like I was back in Municipal Affairs given the subject matter, but it is an important piece of legislation that I am pleased to be advancing here this evening. I am rising before this hon. House to introduce Bill 11 entitled, An Act To Amend The Health And Community Services Act. That act deals with certain public health issues, such as unsanitary conditions and dwelling places that are unfit for human habitation.

The act also grants authority to make regulations in a number of areas such as the construction

and installation of sewage disposal or septic systems. In order to be able to make regulations, proper authority must be found in the enabling statute. Currently, the sanitation regulations made under the Health and Community Services Act regulate private sewage disposal systems, also known as septic systems, used in many homes and cottages throughout our Province. The regulation of private sewage disposal is a joint responsibility of the Department of Health and Community Services and Service Newfoundland and Labrador as well.

What we are doing here, Bill 11 adds authority to the act to make regulations with respect to the qualification and process of approving those persons who wish to be registered with Service NL as an Approved Designer. Private sewage systems for homes and cottages, or cabins as I like to call them, have been and continue to be an important part of sewage waste management in many communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. Some people have cottages I suppose; I have a cabin.

Safe sewage disposal practices are an important component in the protection of public health and ensure our sources of drinking water and other aspects of our environment are safe from contamination by disease causing micro-organisms. Many rural communities, because of their small size and low population density, cannot provide municipal style sewer services to individual homes and businesses. Where this is the case, private sewage systems have been employed as a practical solution to servicing small developments such as single family homes.

For people in locations where municipal sewer services are not available, private sewage disposal systems are often the only practical solution available. Well designed and properly maintained systems installed on an acceptable building site can provide long-term, safe, and effective treatment of household sewage. So not every proposed building site can be approved for a private sewage disposal system. The systems location, design, installation, operation and maintenance are key factors in ensuring that a private sewage disposal system functions properly over the long term.

A thorough site evaluation is required to determine if a proposed building lot is suitable for a private sewage disposal system. This work is done by Approved Designers. Mr. Speaker, Approved Designers are professional engineers, engineer technicians, public health inspectors, and other individuals who have met the requirements established by Service NL to be certified as an improved designer for the purposes of the sanitation regulations.

For the benefit of my hon. colleagues here this evening, and the thousands of people watching the proceedings online this evening or on cable, I will briefly summarize the approval process for private sewage disposal systems. First, a building lot owner obtains the services of an Approved Designer to determine if the lot is suitable for the installation of a private sewage disposal system. If the lot is suitable, the Approved Designer will design a private sewage disposal system for the building lot.

The building lot owner will then apply to Service NL to install a private sewage disposal system on the lot and submit the Approved Designer's lot evaluation and sewage system design with the application. An environmental health officer with Service NL will review the application and design. If the submission is satisfactory, a certificate of approval allowing for the construction of a system will be issued by the environmental health officer. When the system has been installed the environmental health officer will then carry out an onsite inspection to verify that the system has actually been installed correctly.

Bill 11 is an example of amendments that are required to be consistent with changes that are happening around us, changes in this case in industry practice. That is the Approved Designer element of this bill. The next element relates to fees.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 11 sets out another amendment which authorizes the minister to set fees in established forms for the purpose and administration of the Health and Community Services Act and the regulations. While ministers of the Crown have authority to set fees in accordance with the Executive Council Act, our government, in keeping with its policy of greater transparency and accountability, is

proposing to add specific authority to the Health and Community Services Act to allow for the actual establishment of fees.

In Budget 2015, our government had to make some difficult decisions in reducing government spending and increasing revenue streams to compensate for the reduction in oil prices. As such, in this recent Budget we announced that a number of new fees would be implemented. Two of the new fees are related to the approval of private sewage disposal systems.

One of the fees will be an annual registration fee for Approved Designers. There are approximately 270 persons currently registered as Approved Designers with Service Newfoundland and Labrador. The second fee will be an applications fee for any individual or developer who submits an application to install a private sewage system.

Last year, Service NL received approximately 1,350 applications to install private sewage systems. Currently, the Health and Community Services Act does not give government the specific authority to implement either the annual Approved Designer registration fee or the application fee – the two fees that we are talking about here tonight. To accomplish our commitments in the Budget to introduce these fees, Bill 11 will grant clear authority to establish fees under the act and the regulations that are made under the act.

Mr. Speaker, under Bill 11, the overall mandate for the regulation of private sewage disposal systems for homes and cabins, or cottages, will continue to rest with the Department of Health and Community Services and our partner, Service Newfoundland and Labrador.

Bill 11 permits recognition of the change in practice of relying on building lot assessments and sewage system designs of Approved Designers when reviewing applications for the establishment of septic systems on private land. It also grants authority to set fees for the purpose of the Health and Community Services Act and its regulations.

Mr. Speaker, what I believe to be a fairly straightforward piece of legislation, I am asking my colleagues this evening to support this bill

with me so that the law can reflect the change in the assessment process for the approval of private sewage disposal systems and that the fees announced in the recent Budget can also be implemented.

I look forward to the debate here in second reading. I am happy to answer any questions at the conclusion of second reading, and as well when we move to the Committee stage of the bill process as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

I am happy to stand and speak to this. It sounds like the crowd on the other side are quite excited about this particular piece of legislation. Again, I am glad to see that they are. I am not as excited in one way, given the fact that really – I think the minister explained, in the second part of the discussion, about the fees. That is what is going on here is that this is a way to go after people for more money to make up for the mismanagement that has been occurring on the other side.

I will continue on here and the first thing I want to say is I would like to –

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Again, I am getting heckled now, Mr. Speaker, over the Health and Community Services Act bill. It is amazing. I am going to continue on and talk about this piece of legislation.

I do appreciate the department staff giving us a briefing, sitting down – and it is very straightforward. The minister laid it out very well. There are two basic aspects to this. The first part talks about amending subsection 11(1), which respects the qualifications of and the process of approval for a person to be registered as an approved designer. The fact is everything that has been said here tonight is already happening; it already goes on, on a daily basis.

As the minister said, there are about 1,350 applications on annual basis, or there were last year.

So these applications come in, it falls under Health and Community Services, but Service NL is the department that runs the show on this. It is their workers who come in and deal with the front-line people, whether it is design or people trying to get this done. I see a lot of this out in rural Newfoundland, out in my area. This happens fairly regularly.

What we know is that there are certain people who are the ones who are approved by the department – they can be the designers of these sites. Some people are engineers. I think some people have what is called a CET diploma. A number of individuals – again, they are approved and the department has a list. So if I want to go in and I am not connected to town sewer and water – I am building up in the country, we will say, I have to have the approved septic. An example I am going to use is Kenny Meade out in Port aux Basques. Kenny Meade is an approved designer. So I go to him, get the design, I pay him for that design, and then I move forward.

In this case, though – and again, these people have already been accepted. We are just legislating that particular aspect. It has already done in practice; now it is going to be legislated. I guess what I am coming at is this is probably one of the main thrusts of it, although I think the second part of the bill is the real reason that we are here doing this right now. Again, there is no rush to this, per se. We have been doing this – right now, this probably happened today, so it has been happening without the legislation.

I was concerned that they were going to make it harder for people or make it more onerous for people, but apparently it is not going to change that one bit. The one difference there is that these people now have to pay \$200 annually so they can be an approved designer.

We all know where that cost is going to go. It is going to go on the people out there. That is just one side of the bill that people are going to get. That is one revenue stream that this government is creating now because of the situation that they have gotten us in.

Mr. Speaker, \$200 annually for these 270 designers. That is the money that they are going to pay in so they can be on this list. I want to put this out there now before I forget. I am wondering – and this might be a question for Committee. This is clearly a case of coming up with new revenue streams. There is no cost here that needs to be recovered; there is nothing changing that they need to recover. It is a case of how can we get more money coming in the door. How can we come up with more money? If I am wrong, I am sure the minister will enlighten us all on why I am wrong. That is the first way that they are going to get money off the backs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is create this new fee.

The second part is the application fee for the homeowner. So what is going to happen now, no change, I want to get that approved system. I go to Kenny Meade, I get the plan, I have to pay him for that – it has always been done. Now, when I put my application into Service NL, I have to pay \$200.

I do not think there is any extra layer of red tape that has been created. I do not think there is going to be a change in practice. This is a way for them to say there are 1,350 of these applications on average coming in a year, well let's tack \$200 on each one and let's nickel and dime the people. There is no new service that people are getting. People out our way are still going to wait a long time to get service because there are not enough people within the system. There is a lot of work. Service NL handles a lot of applications in different areas for a number of different departments.

So what is going to happen? We talk about these regulations happen because it is in the interest of the protection of public health, but we know this has been happening all along. There is no change to anything. It is a case of we want to get the money out of them. We have to change it now so we can change the regulations so that the minister can start coming after them for the money, but while we are at it let's legislate this practice that we are already doing.

I have no problem with legislating the approval of designers who are qualified to do this work. I have no problem with that. Let's not stand here and say that we need to do this in the best

interests of the people of the Province because that is not the case. This has nothing to do with the best interests of the people of the Province. The best interests were already met when they said yes, we want to have the right systems in place. That has already been done.

Service NL sends out – and they have great people in their department who I have been dealing with. Sometimes the problem is there are not enough of them to handle the work that comes, but the people there are great, the people who I have dealt with. Thankfully now government has made changes. It used to be you could not talk to these people, you were not allowed; but now we are allowed, and that is good because it means better things happening for the constituents out there, and that is who we should all be thinking about.

Again, the minister said that we are doing this in the interest of greater transparency and accountability, but I think we are doing this in the interest of greater revenue streams off the backs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

On that note, I will sit down and likely have a few questions for the minister during the Committee phase, when we can figure out if there are any other fees that are going to be added on to people later on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale.

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

It is a privilege for me to speak to Bill 11, An Act to Amend the Health and Community Services Act. With respect to the fees in our Province, the fees in our Province vary quite a bit. I would characterize the fees as very low to mid-range compared to similar fees across other jurisdictions. To my knowledge, the Yukon and Saskatchewan have no fees, but other jurisdictions have fees. It could range from a designer fee, it could be zero to \$370, and the other applicant fees could range from zero to \$730.

There are about 270 approved designers currently registered with Service NL, as the minister pointed out. Service NL receives about 1,350 applicants to install private sewage systems throughout the year. Just in case we do not know what we are referring to, Mr. Speaker, with the audience out there, private sewage disposal refers to the on-site disposal and treatment of household sewage waste into subserviced soil. The conventional method for new development is a private sewage disposal system consisting of a septic tank, distribution box, and absorption field.

In a septic system, just to be a little bit more explicit, Mr. Speaker, a septic tank receives all of the household waste, the solids stay in the tank, and the liquid effluent flows into the distribution box. From the tank, the liquid effluent flows into pipes in an area called an absorption field. In the absorption field, the effluent from the tank is distributed into the ground where bacteria and other naturally occurring activities render the effluent safe.

The bottom line, ultimately, the overarching principle of this bill is this: It is all in the best interests of public health and public safety that drinking water has to be safe and not to be contaminated in any way. Safe methods of sewage disposal are something that all residents in this day and age expect in a modern, developed society, Mr. Speaker.

The bottom line, the main thrust of this bill is that the septic system must be well designed and properly maintained systems installed, or on an acceptable building site that can provide long-term, safe and effective treatment of household sewage.

With that, I will conclude my remarks because I think the minister did an eloquent job in explaining the bill.

Thank you very much.

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

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

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this piece of legislation.

I do not think I am going to come out here and dump all over government because they are coming out with new regulations when it comes to the way we are handling our waste. I could say something about the \$270,000 in fees they are projecting to collect, but I think there is probably a necessity for government to be collecting something as they are putting some people under employ, number one, to actually inspect some of these systems as they are coming through.

Mr. Speaker, it is simply a case, I think, where we have to realize what is happening with the mess in our own backyard sometimes. I do not know if any of the other members have ever dealt with it, but when you have a failure of a septic system, it is not very tidy, to say the least.

Some of the systems, the contractors I have talked to over the years certainly have met some horror stories along the way when it comes to the design, particularly, of some of these systems. I can see where government is coming from when it comes to this.

I can also see where government is coming from on another aspect, Mr. Speaker, not only having to do with what is happening in your own house, but certainly in the big picture too when it comes to environmental concerns. Obviously, it is a huge environmental concern when it comes to this.

A failure of a septic system, for example – obviously, if you get human waste and excrement close to water supplies, it is going to present a problem. One need only look at the news stories over the years in order to see what disasters can happen. We all know of course of water testing, for example, the water testing resources that have to go into something like that too.

Mr. Speaker, while we have to question that, there are several aspects of this of the reason why government I think in the long run is certainly going to have to deal with this. We also have to deal now with federal waste water regulations, just to give an example of what kind

of a problem can add up. I think overall federally we are looking at about a \$30 billion ask, I think it is, that municipalities are asking for that they have to deal with some of the waste water regulations in the next couple of years in order to just meet with that.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I can see where government is coming from. Certainly, we will be supporting this piece of legislation. Like I said, the department is dealing with about 1,350 applications in the run of a year, and to make sure your system is going to be lasting for the next thirty or thirty-five years. If you look after a septic system, it can really last that long.

We know several people out there whose systems, of course, have never given them an ounce of trouble because they have the care and maintenance gone into their systems. Again, like I said the contractors I have talked to, absolute horror stories. Some of them have gone to old oil barrels, for example, and then just let the rest of it run off into our environment – and that is the wrong thing to do. So, I think in this particular case we have to agree with government. We will question fees, of that there is no doubt, but at the same time there are personnel within government who are going to be looking at the design of these systems and everything.

Mr. Speaker, right now based on what we were presented with at the briefing, certainly I think in this particular case we will be supporting this piece of legislation.

Thank you very much.

**MR. SPEAKER:** If the hon. Minister of Health and Community Services speaks now he will close the debate.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

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

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

I want to thank my Parliamentary Secretary who is always enthusiastic to speak to legislation in this House when it comes to the health and safety of our citizens. So kudos to the hon.

member. I also want to thank both members for participating in the discussion tonight. I really appreciate the input and the acknowledgement of the briefings that have taken place.

I just want to reiterate quickly in closing that there is no change to current practice. I think both hon. members opposite highlighted that, and I think it is important that our laws reflect current reality in our Province as well. I think everybody would agree that safe drinking water and good sewage disposal practices are really important when we are talking about public health.

This is a sensible piece of legislation. We can have the debate around budget and fees and so on, but this is very much in line with other jurisdictions, and I appreciate the comments expressed by all hon. members here during second reading.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion that Bill 11 be now read a second time?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Health And Community Services Act. (Bill 11)

**MR. SPEAKER:** This bill has now been read a second time, when shall the bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole House?

**MR. KING:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Health And Community Services Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole presently, by leave. (Bill 11)

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that the House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 11, An Act To Amend The Health And Community Services Act.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the House now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 11 and that I now leave the Chair.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

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

### Committee of the Whole

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

We are now considering Bill 11, An Act To Amend The Health and Community Services Act.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Health And Community Services Act." (Bill 11)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to ask the minister one question. So we can confirm that this legislation does absolutely nothing to change the current practice, its goal is to raise another couple of hundred thousand dollars?

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

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

I appreciate the question from the hon. member. We had very difficult decisions to make in this Budget process, as you know. We have made them, we will defend them, we will stand by them, and we will live with those decisions. In taking this approach, to answer the hon. member's question, we did look closely at what is happening across the country and this is not inconsistent with what goes on in other jurisdictions.

We are not talking about a large amount of revenue, but all the funds of the provincial government matter and we need to use those funds as wisely as we can. Not only do we need to find opportunities to save money, we also need to identify opportunities to generate revenue, and this is indeed one of them. Though, admittedly, we are talking about a relatively small amount of money in the grand scheme of things but it is consistent with other jurisdictions in the country and it is something we are prepared to support and also defend.

I thank the member for his question.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for St. John's East.

**MR. MURPHY:** Mr. Chair, I guess now that we have that particular end of it out of the way, I am just wondering from the minister, for the 1,350 applications you get roughly for a year, the estimate here is about \$270,000 to be collected. I am just wondering, how many people in Service NL, for example, are there who are actually doing the approvals of these designs, or is this done also through – you mentioned, as well, this is going through public health, too, a public health matter.

So I am just wondering, is there anybody there from the Department of Health, for example, who would be there to gauge the approval process? Perhaps you can answer those questions.

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

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

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

There are Environmental Health Officers with Service Newfoundland and Labrador who review the applications and the designs, do the inspections, and issue the certificates of approval which is the critical work here.

Our responsibility as a department is to set the regulations and to set the policy related to the system. So we are involved in the policies and the regulations. The actual work of carrying this out rests with my colleague in Service Newfoundland and Labrador.

As I am not the minister responsible, I cannot confirm at the moment how many of those Environmental Health Officers there are, but we can certainly provide the hon. member with that information. I hope that addresses his question.

Thank you.

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

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

**CLERK:** Clause 2.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, clause 2 carried.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

**CLERK:** An Act To Amend The Health And Community Services Act.

**CHAIR:** Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

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

I moved, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that the Committee do now rise and report Bill 11, An Act To Amend The Health And Community Services Act, as presented without amendment.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 11.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

**MR. SPEAKER (Verge):** The hon. the Member for Bonavista North.

**MR. CROSS:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 11 without amendment.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 11 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

**MR. KING:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

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

At this time I would like to call back from the Order Paper, second reading number seven, Bill 13, An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Act.

**MR. SPEAKER:** We are resuming debate on the House Of Assembly Act.

I recognize the hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

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

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

It is certainly a pleasure to rise to have a few comments on Bill 13, An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Act. Mr. Speaker, when the original legislation was proposed, it called for the removal of eight seats throughout the Province.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Ten.

**MR. EDMUNDS:** Or ten, I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. That would reduce the number of seats from forty-eight to thirty-eight. Labrador was a part of that reduction. Everything was on the table I guess I can safely say, with the exception of the district I represent, the District of Torngat Mountains. I will come back to the district.

I would like to just thank my colleagues on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, for the support they gave in recognizing the importance of four seats in Labrador. It was actually the Liberal Opposition that came forward with the amendments, contrary to what a lot of people said. As a matter of fact, I have yet to see an amendment from the Third Party on these four seats in Labrador, so I will give credit where credit is due.

The position our leader has come out on, and our party supported, is the allowance of a free vote from the Liberal caucus, Mr. Speaker. Our leader chose to take that route because it would better bring the views of the constituents we represent throughout the districts in this Province who are going to be affected.

We have heard from almost every district that is affected through individuals. Not all of them are in agreement with how the boundaries were drawn up. They would like to have some say. We are hopeful that the members across the way will take the concerns of their district – or we ask the question: Is everybody being whipped into shape on this bill?

Mr. Speaker, when you talk about a free vote, it shows honesty and integrity. To be criticized for that is something that I am sure we can take exception to. The last time the Third Party had an expression of interest in the free vote, well, we all know what happened back then.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say a few words about the district I represent. I hear hon.

colleagues stand up and speak quite proudly about the district they represent. That has happened on both sides of this hon. House. The district that I represent, and I say this quite proudly, is the largest district in the Province. It has its challenges, but you could take the whole Island portion of this Province and fit it in my district and have room left over. If the boundaries act was divided by geography and by size that would certainly be a large story.

I would like to thank the Member for Bonavista South, Mr. Speaker, who stood up and called it the great land. It is certainly one welcomed comment.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Call it the Big Land.

**MR. EDMUNDS:** We call it the Big Land.

I would like to talk about the diversity in the district that I represent alone, Mr. Speaker. I will actually touch on all four seats in Labrador. In the District of Torngat Mountains we have two ethnic groups; we have an Inuit population and an Innu population.

I was just looking at some of the documentation up through the years. Labrador as a district was actually not represented in this House until 1949 until this Province joined Confederation. As you go up through the representation from Labrador it gradually encompasses more districts. I think this is based on acceptance of the Aboriginal community, respect for their traditions, and respect for their culture.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Lake Melville has Aboriginal populations in his district. He has Innu who live there, the community of Sheshatshiu; you have the Inuit population who lives there; and, you have a population from the South Coast, NunatuKavut, who live in Lake Melville. On the South Coast, my hon. colleague from Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair has an organization called NunatuKavut that she represents.

Mr. Speaker, throughout history, even in Labrador West, you have had the Innu who were once a nomadic people who travelled that country extensively. In later years, in the mid-1700s, 1800s you had trappers who moved up from the coast who trapped in on the height of

the land near Menihek, Menihek Lake, (inaudible). So this area is well used, and certainly well-travelled, and has a lot of history that relates back to the Aboriginal community.

Mr. Speaker, in Labrador we have some comprehensive land claims agreements that are in different stages. I would just like to talk a little bit about them. We have the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement that was signed in 2005. It is a comprehensive agreement that is actually implemented now. We have a new government in our Province, the newest government, called the Nunatsiavut Government.

Mr. Speaker, we also have the Innu Nation that has signed an agreement in principle in terms of their negotiations towards an agreement. Part of that agreement would be what we refer to as the New Dawn. On the South Coast we have NunatuKavut, who have yet to have their claims accepted by the federal government, and, indeed, by the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

When you look at the use of the land and you look at those comprehensive land claims agreements, not so much on the South Coast, but when you get into the North Coast you talk about the claims the Nunatsiavut Government has, that are proposed by the Innu Nation, and you look at where Nunavik stands in Northern Quebec, a major component of those land claims agreements is overlap. Overlap primarily based on land usage.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have gone caribou hunting. I have left Nain, and I was actually in Quebec when I harvested caribou. I have met hunters from Northern Quebec in Ugjuktok Fiord who came across caribou hunting. We have also met Innu, hunting with the Innu. It is an overlap agreement, that we do not recognize the borders on our traditional hunting grounds. So we do overlap. It is actually one of the easiest negotiations that came about when you are looking at the claims of Aboriginal people.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do have some areas of concern in this legislation, and it goes back to the scheduling, how the Premier got his job, and the whole scenario of events that unfolded. Now, Premier Kathy Dunderdale resigned sixteen months ago, and the legislation states

that there should be an election that is over within a year. Now, Mr. Speaker, we had Premiers who wanted to be Premiers who could not be Premiers. We had Premiers who were Premiers who did not want to be Premiers.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Premier designates.

**MR. EDMUNDS:** We have had Premier designates. Eventually, I think in September of last fall there was an election. I think there were some 340 people who elected a new Premier of our Province.

When you apply the legislation it states again that the election shall be over within a year. Mr. Speaker, if I could do the math – and hopefully I am a little better at it than the Minister of Finance – a year from September 25 is September 25 the following year. It is easy math.

This government, through its inability to look after itself and look after its own interests, has manipulated the legislation, Mr. Speaker, and pushed out the election to November 30. It causes some concern. We have heard some concerns from within the districts. We have seen the popular polling within the Province. Everybody agrees with it, that the election should be held early, except the members across the way. They are the only ones who seem to have some issues with it. I think the Third Party might be in acceptance with it.

When you look at the legislation that is coming out, we are happy with the protection of the seats in Labrador. As a matter of fact, I think it was in 1993 that the Mahoney commission ensured that the Torngat Mountains district would be protected.

Incidentally, you talk about the changes to the boundaries act and they say there were no changes in Labrador. Well, there was actually one change, Mr. Speaker, and it happened to be in my district. It states, “Minor changes were made to the boundary description to clarify the delineation of its northern tip.” So there were some issues around what Nunavut had acquired in the past, namely Button Islands at the tip of Labrador, and a small part of the tip of Labrador.

As you come down you get into the Torngat Mountains where the national park is, Mr. Speaker. That takes in roughly the distance from the tip of the Northern Peninsula to Deer Lake. As you go from Lab West over to Natuashish, that takes in the West Coast to the East Coast, and there is still room leftover.

With that, I will take my place. I just ask that when you are looking at the representation of your districts that you take into account what your constituents are saying.

Thank you.

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

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

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

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

It is a privilege to stand up and say a few words tonight on the electoral boundary reform. Mr. Speaker, most speakers on both sides of the House have talked about their apprehension to change. I think we were all apprehensive when we came in and we know we are going to face change. When you lose eight seats, it is inevitable that we are all going to face change. Your boundaries are going to change and all the rest, but as we go along change is inevitable. Change is inevitable in everybody's life. We need to embrace that.

I think my hon. colleague from Bonavista North, who sits next to me here in the House, said this afternoon that you need to sometimes embrace change. In the historic District of Port de Grave it is no different; the boundaries in the District of Port de Grave. I will talk a little bit about the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde and Harbour Main as we go through, and the District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace, because we have all experienced change.

One of the challenges that came out of the boundary reform – and the Commission talked about it – was the fact of keeping historic names, and keeping historic names of districts. That was a challenge to them. Particularly in our area, in my region of the Province along the

north shore of Conception Bay, there are many historic names.

Harbour Main, for example, has been an electoral district in some form since 1885. It is the same with the District of Port de Grave. Port de Grave had been in existence in some form in the name of an electoral district since 1885.

Trinity – Bay de Verde; the name Trinity has been in existence in an electoral district in this Province since 1832. If we go back to the District of Harbour Grace – because at one point we all remember the district was just the District of Harbour Grace – that dates back to 1885. Until 1996, Harbour Grace consistently was in the name of a boundary in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, the District of Port de Grave is steeped in history. Carbonear, I would say to the hon. member, was always part of Trinity – Bay de Verde, or Carbonear – Harbour Grace, and it was part of the name.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Since 1855.

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** Since 1855, the hon. member says. So Carbonear has also been steeped. That only proves my point further, that these districts have been steeped and have been in the electoral boundary name for many, many years.

Mr. Speaker, Ferryland is the oldest, I say to the hon. minister who represents Ferryland, but again, it was a challenge for the boundaries commission. I want to point that out because over the years, the boundaries for all these districts have kind of moved back and forth. I remember a time when the boundaries for the District of Port de Grave ran from Georgetown to Bryant's Cove. Today, at the present – in 2011, when I ran, the District of Port de Grave ran from Upper Island Cove to Makinsons, not including South River.

Prior to the boundaries commission's report the last time, the communities of North River and Clarke's Beach and Makinsons, which are now in my district, were in the District of Harbour Main. If I go down a little further and we go down to Spaniard's Bay and Tilton, years ago in the District of Harbour Grace, many years ago,

the community of Shearstown, which was in the Town of Bay Roberts, was part of the District of Harbour Grace. The District of Harbour Grace took in Shearstown, Upper Island Cove, Spaniard's Bay, Tilton, and I believe Bristol's Hope. I stand to be corrected on that, but I think the old District of Harbour Grace used to take in those names.

Mr. Speaker, in the District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace and Trinity – Bay de Verde, I know those boundaries have changed over the years, but those names have lasted. I know it was a challenge to the boundaries commission and it was important to them to keep some of these historical names.

In reference to my district, the new district's name will be Harbour Grace – Port de Grave. It was a way for the boundaries commission to keep Harbour Grace and Port de Grave in the name of the boundary. Again when that was done, Mr. Speaker, the boundary has moved. I think this is the first time I can honestly say that the boundary is gone, what we refer to in my community, as going down the bay. We have never went down the bay all the way to Harbour Grace. We have normally stopped at Bryant's Cove or we stopped at Upper Island Cove, or Spaniard's Bay-Tilton, but we have never ever encompassed the community of Harbour Grace.

Mr. Speaker, it is breaking new ground and we are going into new ground. Like everybody else, I know members opposite have talked about some of their concerns. I remember the morning after it was announced they were going to do the boundary change, I had a gentleman from the Town of Upper Island Cove call. He was on the phone and I believe we began talking about a housing concern, but we ended up talking about the proposed boundary change. He said: Glenn, the only problem, you should have cut her deeper. He said: It should only be thirty-six of them.

I said: I think everybody has their opinion on how many seats it should be. I think there are members in this House who continue to believe that there should be no reduction in seats, instead have forty-eight. There are members here, Mr. Speaker, who truly believe there should be a reduction in seats. If we came to

that, we probably would all come to different numbers.

Mr. Speaker, I think forty is a good number. I stood here in this House and I supported the boundary change and I support it now at forty seats. If I supported that then, I have to support it now. One of the things about it is that in supporting that I understood that the electoral boundaries that I ran in, in 2011 would not be the electoral boundaries that I would run in, in 2015.

Mr. Speaker, it is always difficult to leave people behind who have supported you. To the people of Makinsons, Clarke's Beach, and North River who have supported me – and I have supported them over the last four years and when I ran in 2007 they supported me then – I want to say thank you for their support. We talk often about we sit in this House because of the people. I appreciated their support.

Mr. Speaker, whether they are PCs, or Liberals, or NDPs, we have worked together to make their life a little bit better no matter what the cause was. I am pleased to do that. Those communities are now going to go back into the District of Harbour Main. Not strange to them, they have been in the District of Harbour Main before and they are going to go back to Harbour Main.

For me, Mr. Speaker, it is moving down the bay, as they say. I know the municipality of Spaniard's Bay – and I know my colleague opposite would agree that the municipality of Spaniard's Bay is very happy about the boundary changes. For now, the municipality of Spaniard's Bay and the community of Tilton will all be in the one district. It is something that they have advocated prior to the last boundary change. They are very pleased. I was at their fiftieth anniversary of incorporation only over the weekend and speaking to the mayor there. They are very pleased that their town is going to be under one MHA. They are looking forward to it.

Mr. Speaker, as we go forward, the boundaries will move in and a couple of new communities that I have not had the privilege to represent in the part of Spaniard's Bay will be Bryant's Cove, Harbour Grace South, Riverhead, and

Harbour Grace itself. I look forward to that. I look forward to meeting those people and working with those people as we move forward.

Harbour Grace is no stranger to myself. I grew up in a minor hockey system where we were the Conception Bay North minor hockey system. There was no arena in Bay Roberts. The Bay Arena did not exist in my day growing up playing minor hockey. I spent many a night, many a morning, travelling the road to Harbour Grace to practice, whether it was for minor hockey with the Conception Bay North Stars or whether it was with our own high school team at Ascension Collegiate.

Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. Member for Bay of Islands today talked about the Humber Hawks and the competition. Well, we had a pretty good rivalry with Harbour Grace and hockey over the years, and it was pretty fierce at times. The only difference, I have to say to the hon. member across, is we were not so successful in our endeavours down the bay playing Harbour Grace as the hon. member across was.

Once again, as the hon. member said today, we made a lot of good friends. I made a lot of good friends. I know a lot of people in Harbour Grace. They are good people. There are good people in Riverhead and Bryant's Cove and Harbour Grace South. I hope I get the opportunity to represent them in the next sitting of this House.

As boundary change comes forward, as I have said, I know the Commission agonized over the boundaries along the area. It was done because of the historical nature of the names on the electoral district. Names like Harbour Main, Port de Grave, Harbour Grace, Carbonear, and Trinity – Bay de Verde. I know that was a challenge.

I know, as well, that the district will become larger. We will have 14,848 citizens in the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave. I look forward to serving all those people come 2016 or 2015 when the election is.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** We are not sure yet.

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** We are not sure yet, but we are moving.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just follow a couple of comments as well. The hon. Member for Torngat stood up and talked about the Big Land and the four seats in the Big Land. I stood in the House in January and I supported the four seats in the Big Land.

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

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** I started my public service career in the Big Land in 1987. I had the opportunity at that time to go from Nain to L'Anse au Loup to Labrador West. I covered all of Labrador. Mr. Speaker, it is a diverse land. I had no trouble standing up in this House and supporting four seats in Labrador.

In closing this evening, Mr. Speaker, I just want to have a few words. I look forward to the change. Change is inevitable. I know it is going to be a challenge. We look forward to the challenge. I support fully the reduction to forty seats.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

I am both happy to stand and speak to this House, and to speak to the second reading of Bill 13, a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Act. I am also saddened, Mr. Speaker, to stand –

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

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

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

I am also saddened to stand this evening and speak to this bill. I do not believe it is a time to celebrate or to even feel that something great has been accomplished.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to start off by thanking all the folks who served on the Electoral Boundaries Commission. They were

given an enormous task. They were given a task that has such weight in terms of the future of our Province. A task that is so incredibly important for our democratic process and a task that I am sure that every member of the Electoral Boundaries Commission –

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

Mr. Speaker, I sat in my chair and I listened to every word that was spoken by the member before me. I would ask for the same kind of consideration. This is a very serious issue that we are talking about here tonight and that we are debating tonight. I believe we all need to be paying heed to it.

Thank you very much.

Again, I would like to thank very much the staff, as well, of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to thank – because I know that staff who were hired to listen to –

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

**MS ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know what to do. Shall I just sit down?

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

It is up to the member if you want to sit down.

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

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

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

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

**MS ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to stand. I would like to continue to speak to this bill, but I would ask for your protection.

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

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

I would like to thank not only the members who served on the Commission, but I would also like

to thank the staff who served on this Commission who worked very hard. I would also like to thank, Mr. Speaker, all the people who made representation to the Commission. I believe that there were a number of presentations, both in person and both written representation, because people saw how important this is

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank all those who feel so passionate about our democratic process. Particularly, the experts in this area in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador who have made it their life goal to study our democratic process, to weigh in on our democratic process, and to ensure that the process is as good as it possibly can be. It is so important. We know that our democratic process is about how we live our lives together, how we share our resources –

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

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

**MS ROGERS:** – and how we plan for our future.

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

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

I ask members for their co-operation please.

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

Not only the political scientists who have made it their goal to study our democratic process, to be advisors on our democratic process, who feel so very passionate about it, I would also like to thank those who study our democratic process, students. There are so many young people who are so excited.

You know so often, Mr. Speaker, people talk about the fact that youth are not engaged. Well in some ways they may not be engaged in some aspects of our democratic process, but there are a number of youth who do care deeply, who care passionately about how we go about our business. I would like to thank all those who weighed in on this bill.

Do we want to modernize? Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, we want to modernize our system because we know how important it is. There is no reason for us not to modernize our system. We want to use every tool to ensure we have the best governances possible. I believe, to an extent, that is what every member in this House wants. We all want to make sure that we have every tool at our disposal to ensure we do have the best governance possible. Again, it is about how we live our lives together.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the way this bill was introduced – and with the direction to the Electoral Boundaries Commission with the very, very narrow time frame to do it – has been divisive. It has been as divisive as Bill 29.

I keep asking, Mr. Speaker, into whose best interest was this bill? To be introduced at the time when it was introduced, to whose best interest? Is this in the best interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? I believe that it is not. I believe when it was introduced that it was introduced because of a type of cynicism and pandering. I do not believe it is in the best interest of the people from the beginning and I do not believe that what we are doing with this bill is in the best interest of the people and in the best interest of our democratic process.

This is not about numbers, it is not about which MHA will lose their seat or who will have a better chance of winning theirs. This, again, is about how we plan for our best governance. Mr. Speaker, we know the role of an MHA is not just in the House of Assembly. All of the talk has been about how many people will we have in this House of Assembly, but we know the role of an MHA is far bigger than that.

We also know that what has been proposed by this bill and the outcome of the Electoral Boundaries Commission is about concentrating power in the system. It is about taking voices away from rural Newfoundland and Labrador. It is not about enhancing our democratic process, it is about shrinking it. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it. If we look simply at the numbers we are going from forty-eight to forty, a reduction of eight seats by about 25 per cent. This is about reducing voices. This is about concentrating power. It is not about the best interest of the people.

If it was cost saving, it is not much in the way of cost saving. We know that. The roll out of the effects of what was done so hastily, so speedily in this House in January, we will see, Mr. Speaker, when election time rolls around November 30. So very close to the federal election.

Mr. Speaker, one has to keep asking why? Why was this done now? If it was for money, I do not believe it saves us a lot of money. If, in fact, our democratic process shrinks –

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

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

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

If our democratic process is tied to the price of oil, boy, are we in trouble. What will happen? If the price of oil skyrockets, will we then have more seats? We are told by the Premier that this was about saving money because of the dire financial situation we are in. Logic then says, well, if the price of oil soars, will we go back to the drawing table and increase the number of seats? I am not so sure that any democracy in this world would want to tie their democratic process to the cost of oil, and that is what is happening here in this House.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing I would like to know, because this was introduced so hastily by a Premier who did not have the mandate of the people of the Newfoundland and Labrador. Let's not forget that. He did not have the mandate of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So who exactly did this Premier consult with before he came up with the number of thirty-eight? That is the number he came up with. I do not know where he got that number. Maybe he pulled it out of thin air, I do not know. Who did he consult with?

He did not consult with the local experts we have in our Province who have made it their life passion to study democratic processes and governance. He did not consult with them. He did not consult with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. He bypassed the democratic

process. He totally bypassed that democratic process.

We have an Electoral Boundaries Act. We had a scheduled review of our democratic process scheduled for 2015. He bypassed that – totally bypassed that. There should have been consultation.

Then the Premier had said he would let the Electoral Boundaries Commission decide if Labrador would keep four districts. That is what he said when he first introduced this legislation. Afterwards, after pressure, he decided, yes, Labrador could keep those seats. Then after a little bit more pressure he decided it would be forty seats instead of thirty-eight seats, all done, Mr. Speaker, in the time of a few days.

I remember walking out of this House at one point when we were here –

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

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

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

I remember walking out of this House at one point, Mr. Speaker, when we were debating all through the night and there was the Premier with a senior bureaucrat rewriting the legislation. That is what this Premier thinks about our democratic process. A democratic process that is so sacrosanct, that is so important on how we live our lives together, how we make our decisions, and how we go forward in our future.

Mr. Speaker, that is what this Premier without the mandate of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador made those decisions, and he was supported. He was supported by the Official Opposition, let's not forget this. The amendments to the bill were presented jointly by the Official Opposition, by the Liberals and by the Conservatives. We know that this was written –

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

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

Once again I ask all members for their co-operation. The Speaker does not want to identify anybody in particular, but I would ask members please to pay attention as the Member for St. John's Centre continues with her debate.

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

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

We know that the process for this legislation was flawed. The legislation in and of itself is flawed. Government succumbed to the pressure in a matter of about forty-eight hours. The process was condemned by some of our most eminent political scientists. It was condemned by them. They were raising the red flags, and it was condemned by the expertise of groups like Democracy Watch.

Mr. Speaker, this is not modernizing our democracy. This is not true electoral reform. This is just about numbers. It is not about how we do our business. It is not about how we conduct our democracy. It is not about, will we have proportional representation? Because we still have that feeble process we use of first past the post.

So, it is not about looking at how we use committee structures in our democracy. This is not about electoral reform; it is not about democratic reform. It is just simply playing numbers. It was a rash decision without consultation that bypassed already existing democratic processes which were supposed to safeguard us from this kind of activity, that was supposed to safeguard us from hyper-partisan approaches to our democratic process, and this government and the Opposition decided to ignore that and to race in.

In 2006, the Electoral Boundaries Commission took six months to analyze, to consult, to come up with their plan – six months, not even including the breaks they took. We had that scheduled for us for next year. Next year's would have been based on a new population statistic, so it would have been based on a much stronger foundation of information. Again, when we keep asking why, there is no rational answer. There is no good answer as to why government decided to do this at this time.

There is no good answer as to why the Official Opposition decided to play along, because that is what they did. They decided to play along.

Who is affected by this? Not so much St. John's and the neighbourhoods close to St. John's. Thank goodness, Labrador has its four seats. At a time when we need stability – we are in a recession – because of the precarious economic times we are in, government chooses to throw it all up in the air and create chaos, to ram it in, to ram it through.

Mr. Speaker, there is no rationale for this. There was no rationale at all. The Minister of Finance said we make strategic decisions. That is what he said in the House. He said we make decisions that affect twelve months down the road. Maybe not decisions that affect us right away, but it is decisions where we will see the outcome twelve months down the road. He said we make decisions that are not just about today, but into the future because we are looking for long-term sustainability. He said we have to make tough decisions and the Minister of Health said we have to make tough decisions.

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure this was a tough decision. This certainly was not a well-thought-out decision. This was not a decision that was done within the directives of our own democratic process. It is rural Newfoundland that will suffer most. I believe what happened as well is that this government was pandering to this myth that people do not like politicians. So they have decided to pander to that, to what they believe people think about politicians.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are in fact smarter than that and they are wiser than that. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador are voting. They are voting for the people in their Province. They want to be involved in their democratic process and we see that more and more.

I believe this is not in the best interest of the people. I do not know whose best interest it is in. It has been absolutely stunning to watch this process, to watch it unfold, to watch this kind of legislation be rammed through. I believe that people in rural Newfoundland and Labrador

realize their voices have been weakened by this kind of legislation.

They know they will have less representation because there will be fewer MHAs. They know their voices will be minimized. Is that a good thing? I think not. I think the people of rural Newfoundland and Labrador will not think this is a good thing, that their voices have been minimized in this House of Assembly.

If we were looking at true electoral reform, we would be looking at the best way and the most effective way to make sure that every voice and every citizen of Newfoundland and Labrador is, in fact, represented here in this House. That is not what this bill does. It does quite the opposite and for no justifiable reason except for abstract numbers.

That is what this was all about. When the Premier introduced it he said thirty-eight seats, and then within no time at all he said forty seats. I wonder what would have happened if there had been a little more pressure? Maybe he would have said forty-two seats. Then with a lot of pressure and a lot of time, maybe he would have said forty-four seats. Who knows?

We do not know because he instructed the Electoral Boundaries Commission for forty seats. He did not say we want you to look at our democratic system; we want you to look at our method of governance across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and out of that come up with a recommendation in terms of the number of possible seats.

No, what he did was just rammed it down and said this is what it is going to be. This is in the best interest of who? He never did say it was in the best interest of the people. He never did say it was in the best interest of our democratic process. He never did say it was in the best interest of our governance. He said it was to save \$2.5 million a year. Which is what? Not even 2 per cent of the deficit that was experienced.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is a sad time in our House of Assembly that this has been done in this way. It did not need to be done in this way. What it has done is that it has bypassed an existing method of democratic reform that was

part of our legislation. It totally ignored that, the same way that Bill 29 was divisive. I think it is unfortunate.

Of course, I will not be supporting this bill because I do not believe it is in the best interest of the people. There has never been one argument to prove that it has been in the best interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

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

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

It is a great honour and a great privilege, as I always say, Mr. Speaker, every time I get on my feet in this honourable House. I always say thank you to the great people of the District of Lake Melville. Thank you so much for your continued support. It is truly my honour to be here.

I will be brief tonight. We heard some back and forth. I tell you one thing I do want to comment on first and foremost; I listened to my two Labrador colleagues from across the way on the Liberals there. Mr. Speaker, I tell you one thing I have the upmost respect for is passion for your districts. We have heard it from people on this side of the House, passion from everybody in this House.

The Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair did talk about us having an obligation, during her talk, about the ability to have a free vote on the other side of the House, which sounds so wonderful and so nice coming from them at this particular time. To me, Mr. Speaker, it simply just speaks to the inconsistencies we have seen over the last number of months from the Opposition.

With that, I will say simple as this: She said we have an obligation as MHAs to come out here and speak for the people and say exactly what the people want us to say. Everyone in this House, every single individual in this House is here for that very reason, Mr. Speaker.

They do not have the market cornered on being the voice of the people they represent. Every single person here shares that same sentiment, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. RUSSELL:** It is something we all take very, very seriously. I recognize the passion.

The Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair talked about the extensive travel in her district. With all due respect, that is what you sign up for. Labrador is the Big Land. We have heard it referred to as such for many, many years, Mr. Speaker.

She has a big district. There are a lot of small communities. They are vast distances apart. That is all part and parcel with what we do here, Mr. Speaker. I can understand the frustrations, I certainly can. I have travelled in her district. I have travelled in the Member for Torngat Mountain's district as well. My bloodline is all up and down that coast.

With that being said, Mr. Speaker, it is not easy in Labrador because of the isolated, and I will say, ultra-rural type of communities that we have in Labrador. It is certainly something to behold in its majesty, the beauty of Labrador. It is difficult when you do not have that interconnectivity by roads.

With small communities, in some cases, Mr. Speaker, 100 and maybe even less people in those communities, you are certainly not going to have all the amenities and the infrastructure that comes with major city centres, bigger towns, populations like, say for example, Lake Melville of 10,000. It is just not going to happen. We have to keep striving to make sure they get what they need as well.

When we are talking about the issue of House reform and why we are here today – and we are talking about the reduction in seats and all that

comes with that, Mr. Speaker. I am standing on one point really and one point alone here tonight, and that is to make a clarification on how this came to be.

If you were to look at exactly where we ended, Mr. Speaker, and I will just read from Hansard right here. When we talked about this in the House the last time, when we all did our speeches, we were here well into the wee hours. I ended by saying, "Labrador, the Big Land, and its unique landscape and geography, its unique people from all walks of life, the beauty of the Aboriginal groups and their cultures, and I am proud to be a native son of Labrador – ultimately, that is one of the greatest things that I have in my life, Mr. Speaker." I went on to say, "Therefore, I would like to say, with my last few seconds, that I would like to announce that in the Committee stage to come in the debate for Bill 42, under the leadership of our Premier, I would just like to say that we will be putting forth an amendment that will protect and maintain the four seats in Labrador."

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

**MR. RUSSELL:** I will just talk about our Premier for a minute here, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about somebody who has leadership. Obviously, he would not be in the position if he does not. Flexibility, Mr. Speaker, is a quality in leadership, approachability too.

When we were prepared to put the bill to the floor, and that was going to apply to – and calling Newfoundland and Labrador, Newfoundland and Labrador, putting them on equal footing there. That was what was going to apply to that. I was able to go to our Premier and I was able to work with my colleague from Lab West. I have had many conversations with my other colleagues from across the way from Labrador as well.

We were able to talk about the Aboriginal groups, some mentioned by both of my colleagues from across the way. We were able to talk geography, distance, resources, and the land mass. The sheer ruggedness and beauty of Labrador came up time and time again. I was able to approach this caucus, this Cabinet, this Premier, this Deputy Premier, and make a case

for simply why we could not have it any other way than four seats, Mr. Speaker.

Do you know what? It is nice to hear – we have heard words from across the way. The Member for Torngat Mountains said: Our Liberal amendment. It came up – even the NDP said it earlier. Do you know what? At that time when we realized everybody had a chance to speak and we could move past this, we could work together and put out a joint amendment, that is great. It does not matter where it comes from as long as it gets done and we had the four seats protected in Labrador. That was the main thing.

What were we willing to do, Mr. Speaker? Leadership; a Premier willing to, right down to the wire, take the time to spend as much time as I needed to make my case and to fight for the four seats in Labrador. As much time as I needed, with the support of other ministers, to just talk about everything. I talked about elders. I talked about culture. I talked about hunting and fishing. I talked about everything that makes us unique in the Big Land.

Do you know what? It was received with open arms from our Premier to the point that he was going to allow a member of his caucus to amend our own legislation that we are putting to the House. Now you think about that. I ask the people at home to just think about that for a second.

Leadership is being flexible and recognizing when something can truly be better than it is. It is the willingness to see that change, the vision to say, Mr. Speaker, that we are going to do whatever it takes to make that change happen for the betterment of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and specifically in this case, for the representation of all the four distinct regions in Labrador which those four seats represent.

Having said that, we were prepared to put our amendment to the floor. Of course, then as we got into the wee hours we had some great debate back and forth. We heard a lot of passion, which I started my few minutes here tonight with. I really appreciate that.

When the Member for Torngat Mountains gets up, he talks about the Innu, he talks about NunatuKavut. He talks about the culture and the

geography of Labrador, the hunting, being in the deep country. I have been there, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. I understand.

I hear people talking about – and they are making some derogatory comments from across the way. That is fine, I do not mind that. You can say whatever you want to try and interrupt me when I am talking about Labrador. You are not going to get it done because when I am talking about Labrador, I am talking about my passion.

The bottom line here is this. I appreciate the Member for Torngat Mountains when he gets up and speaks from the heart. I do, and the same thing for the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair when she does the same. Do you want to know why? Because we are born and raised and we love where we come from, and we are proud to be from there, Mr. Speaker, very much so. I can appreciate that.

Even though we have political philosophical differences, I will still support them in the things they want to do for their districts and for the betterment of Labrador, for the betterment of the people and the next generation of children to come, and out of respect for our elders. As the hon. Member for Torngat references time and time again, and I have referenced it too, we are both beneficiaries of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims that has been implemented.

That agreement, Mr. Speaker, was groundbreaking. The Innu, with the Tshash Petapen, are right behind Nunatsiavut in terms of having an agreement in principle, and NunatuKavut, I wish them all the very best and luck with getting approved at the federal level. We will be right here in short order when that day comes, Mr. Speaker.

Having said that, what we are doing here tonight – I needed a few minutes to get up and clear the air because one, I wanted to commend them for their passion for Labrador because I share it. We share it on this side of the House. Two, when they are talking to all the people in their districts and they are talking about four seats, and how a Liberal amendment, the leadership of their Leader of the Opposition and that is where that came from, I am going to beg to differ, Mr. Speaker.

We arrived at a good place where the four seats were maintained, and I think that is absolutely fabulous, but our Premier was able to see past all that was being said out in the news. People were saying, well, Labrador is not special. There were a few people saying those things, Mr. Speaker. We did not allow that to resonate on this side of the House.

We took the time to have meaningful, open, and honest dialogue about where we thought Labrador should be in this whole process and what we deserve, and that is where we ended up. That is leadership. That is not only leadership to the process here, Mr. Speaker, that speaks to this Premier's leadership to everybody on this side of the House who works with him every single day, ready to reconsider and to look at difference ways of looking at things. I say that is a true sign of leadership.

With that, Mr. Speaker, we heard some mention over across the way with talk of a free vote and all that. We have seen that some wanted certain things over on that side of the House, some do not. What a luxury, Mr. Speaker, to be able to say whatever you like whenever you like and cater to which audience is in front of you at that particular time.

We have said it time and time again on this side of the House, we have a responsibility to do things right. We are always going to do that. We are going to govern on principle, Mr. Speaker. We have and we will.

It is very easy to throw something out there that is pretty sexy, if you will, Mr. Speaker, to make people think you are on another plane when it comes to the way you are thinking. It is simply not the case. I will say it speaks to inconsistency.

When we talk about this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and about what we are trying to do here, yes, there is a cost savings associated with that. Nothing could be further from the truth and we have to embrace that. It is times like this in which we have to be flexible. You have to rein things in from time to time.

We have heard criticism from across the way that we simply did not plan, we did not diversify. Again, I am not going to get into

Muskrat Falls. I have tried to champion that as much as I can every time I get on my feet in this House, Mr. Speaker. It is true diversification.

When it comes to what we are doing here, we are hearing that democracy is falling, the sky is falling. It is simply not true, Mr. Speaker. Just because the NDP say the democratic process is now dead, does not make it so.

I will let everybody at home know that I just wanted to get up – take a few minutes, Mr. Speaker, to get up and tell people that in the event the Liberals did not want to compromise with us, this government was prepared to amend our own legislation.

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

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

**MR. RUSSELL:** No, that is something – Mr. Speaker, I do mind that. I do not mind that.

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

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

**MR. RUSSELL:** I wish people at home could see them, Mr. Speaker. The bottom line here, the ultimate –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** They are laughing at it.

**MR. RUSSELL:** Yes, they are laughing at the four seats in Labrador. They are laughing at the process, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. RUSSELL:** I tell you what; it is not something to be laughed at. The bottom line here is this. As we were prepared to do whatever it took, laugh all you want, but we were prepared to do whatever it took to make sure the four seats in Labrador were maintained.

As I said on the radio the very next morning after we were finished in the House, Mr. Speaker, that was my number one priority throughout the whole process, was making sure we maintained our four seats. Mr. Speaker, I am

proud to say I was a big part of that. I am proud to say we were flexible enough to do it. The fact that people want to take credit over there for the entire process across the way, that only speaks to what they are all about.

I am just going to say the most important thing here is the uniqueness – contrary to what the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair has said. The uniqueness of the four different, separate districts in Labrador was recognized by this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. Today I am very happy to say to anybody watching at home that those districts will be maintained.

I am certainly honoured, privileged, and proud to be the representative for Lake Melville here in this House of Assembly. I would like to wish everybody a good evening. Thank you for allowing me the time to speak.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Member for Humber Valley.

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

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

It is certainly a privilege for me to be able to stand and speak to Bill 13 tonight. I am just going to take a few minutes to go through the bill and I guess the suggested amendments – or not amendments tonight, but this piece of legislation, Bill 13.

The Explanatory Notes speaks to really the changes that will go from forty-eight existing seats to forty districts in our Province. It speaks to the overlap with the federal election being – the election date being set now on November 30. Of course, the by-elections are really not getting a whole lot of discussion, but we will speak just briefly about that.

Now the by-elections – just to get to that for a few minutes because I do want to comment on some of the remarks that were just made by the Member for Lake Melville of course. The by-elections, in this particular case, are something

that – when you look back at it and you sometimes reflect and understand why amendments and we make changes to legislation.

Currently, in most provincial jurisdictions that we see across the country right now, it is not unusual to see by-elections in an election year. In particular, six months or so in front of the provincial election, that you would see by-elections that would occur. In this particular case when asked, and I do believe we will see in the next few weeks – the reason for doing this right now will even become clearer as we get closer to the election and as we move into the summer.

Mr. Speaker, I was part of the House of Assembly back in 2007. I can assure you that changes in districts, boundary changes, and sorts of things are always difficult. They are always difficult decisions that are made. People are impacted because they get used to a particular representative, they get used to their MHA.

Back in 2007, I know the District of Humber Valley which I was representing at the time went through some boundary changes at that time. As a matter of fact, I presented petitions in the House at the time. The community of Pasadena was going to be split, and in the past they were not. They were part of Humber East. Even then the people in Pasadena said they did not want their district split into two parts. One being in Humber Valley and another part being in Humber East, but the changes were made.

Now I heard representatives from that community reach out even and made suggestions that they like the idea of having two members because for them it was two voices in this House of Assembly. At one point, as a matter of fact, I think it was the mayor who said they were very comfortable having even the Leader of the Opposition, an Opposition member, and indeed a member from the government side at that particular time, but we must always remember and not forget that there is a statutory requirement to do this every ten years. That would have happened next year. The decision was made by the Premier to advance this one year.

I want to also clarify that I was in a very unique position back in March last year when the Leader of the Third Party – and it was very clear at that point, even then, that the reduction in the number of seats, without the number given, but indeed agreeing there would be a reduction in seats would be okay and believed that we could have a functioning Legislature at that point. I agreed with that too.

I made a comment that I could see that number – when pressed by the person who was doing the interview with CBC On Point, I did say: well, I can see forty or so; but, at that point thinking the decision would be made in 2016 with consultations around the Province. Did I agree – as Leader of the Official Opposition – that we could do with a lesser number of seats in this Legislature? I did, because I believe in legislative reform.

We must always be aware that things evolve, things change. A part of change, sometimes people get negatively impacted, but to have a functioning Legislature, I was a firm believe that it could be less. We have often heard people talk about, you lead by example. If you want to downsize and make changes in the Legislature, well then as a leader I did support that I say, Mr. Speaker. That was part of the interview that I did, which is over a year ago now and really one of the first leaders, as well as the Leader of the Third Party at that point in time, to agree with that.

Now, under normal circumstances this would have been reviewed in 2016, as I said. This would have been the changes that would have been reflected in the 2019 election. In January, of course, the Premier made a decision that he was going to put forward a piece of legislation to bring it back into 2015 and have the seat reductions to be reflective in the next provincial election. At that time the Premier clearly was on record as saying – because the legislation we talked about, that was introduced, had thirty-eight seats at that time. That would have been a reduction from forty-eight seats to thirty-eight seats. That, in our opinion, Mr. Speaker, would have been very difficult to do.

It was very ironic to listen to the Member for Lake Melville because clearly it was the Premier's wishes and the will of government not

to protect the four seats in Labrador. They were not committed to that. I think the question for the Member for Lake Melville, based on the comments he just made, it is almost as if the point – there was an amendment they were willing to make but they were going to bring it to the floor of the House of Assembly. So clearly –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** In Cabinet?

**MR. BALL:** Yes, this member was in Cabinet.

Clearly, if you agreed with this, why would you need to amend your own legislation? If you wanted to protect the seats in Labrador, well a government member, especially a Cabinet member I would say, would not have to amend their own legislation. It would not have been in the legislation, Mr. Speaker, in the beginning.

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

**MR. BALL:** Now, there could be one issue. There could be another issue around this, because I know members of the Official Opposition, we get together on a regular basis. We discuss issues and we have very open discussions at our caucus table. So if the legislation that was put forward in January did not carve out the four seats in Labrador, it is very clear to me they had zero input into what the legislation was.

You cannot have it both ways. You cannot say you are going to make the amendment, and pleased to make the amendment on your own legislation. You clearly had zero input into the legislation in the beginning. You cannot have it both ways.

Around this particular point when the discussion was ongoing in January, there was also some certainty around when the election would be. There were many people in the Province suggesting that this was a way of getting the election pushed out into 2016.

Now when you look at the fixed election laws that we have in our Province, the election was supposed to be in October 2015. What really complicated this, at this particular point in time, was the fact that the fixed election date also talks about a new Premier coming in and that the

election should occur within a year. The intention, the spirit of the election laws with a new Premier – keeping in mind that Premier Dunderdale resigned her seat back in January. We went through a series of leadership test runs, or test drives and so on. Then eventually the PCs decided to get their new leader in place in September.

There was a message that went out from the current Premier that said: well, obviously this election will happen on or before September 26. It was very clear to us, and to people who were concerned about this, that we did not want this to be an opportunity to push the election out into 2016.

One thing we did as the Official Opposition, and I am very proud to be a part of this, is that we actually did not wait for the legislation to come to the floor of the House of Assembly. We put our amendments out there in advance. It is something that is very unusual in this Legislature. We held a press conference. We put out three amendments that we thought would be appropriate for this piece of legislation. At that point, I reached out and asked the other two parties if there was any input. We were certainly made available. This was all part of what I would consider to be legislative reform, given the circumstances that we were faced with as an Opposition, knowing that this government was coming with this piece of legislation, Bill 42, in January of 2015.

Mr. Speaker, to think that there were secretive meetings – keep in mind, I just said that we put our amendments out there in advance of this legislation. So there was actually nothing secretive about this. The amendments were out there, three amendments that we had put in place to this piece of legislation.

Thirty eight seats would go to – one amendment would be forty or forty-two seats. The second would be carving out, protecting Labrador. The Member for Lake Melville said this was an amendment that he was going to bring forward, and very pleased to do so. The bill was not even in then when we made our suggestion that this was an amendment we would be bringing forward.

The other thing we wanted in place to put some certainty around a 2015 election was for this to be a sunset clause. So the Commission would have 120 days to do their work. There is a recommendation, when you look at this report, the Commission put in. They felt this was indeed a very aggressive timeline and something in an election year that they would recommend we not do again. This is in place now, as I said, Mr. Speaker, as part of a statutory review every ten years.

So these were the three recommendations. Not thirty-eight seats. We felt it was too deep a cut – forty to forty-two. Protect Labrador; that was a critical piece for us. We wanted to make sure that the Labrador seats were protected. Keep in mind when you look at the vastness of Labrador, just the land mass of Labrador with all the activity that is going on up there, it was important for us to send a message to the people of Labrador that we were very concerned, and indeed we wanted to protect the four seats for Labrador.

Contrary to what the Member for Lake Melville will say, this is really not about taking credit for this. This is about respecting the people of that part of our Province, I say, Mr. Speaker. Indeed the amendment was something that we are very proud to be part of. We put it out there early so that everyone could clearly understand what it is. The sunset clause, 120 days, was part of it. There was really nothing secretive about this. This was clearly out there well in advance of the legislation being debated on this floor.

At no point, I say, Mr. Speaker, did the members from the Third Party reach out to us for any clarification on any of this. So to think that this was done without them being included is really disingenuous, I say, in this particular overall debate. We have often had discussions with all Members of this House of Assembly on legislation. So there was really nothing mysterious about any of this.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, when you put it in the context of the discussion on how this all unfolded this week in January – there were members from the Department of Justice. This was not just secret meetings in the hallways or in some dark room somewhere, there were members from the Department of Justice

included in this. The deputy minister was there. So this was a very good discussion, the way things should unfold in this Legislature, I say.

Our three amendments that we had put forward were there. They were discussed and eventually made it to the floor of this House of Assembly.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Legislative writers.

**MR. BALL:** That is right, Mr. Speaker, legislative writers involved in all of this making sure that the language was there as we had agreed to in the amendment.

Mr. Speaker, what came out of the discussions is that there were two districts. When you think about the importance of this particular piece here, there was not a whole lot of discussion on this.

When you look at the variances, when you look at the number, the population in each of the districts, there is an average just around 13,500. That is kind of the average quotient in terms of representation. Keep in mind part of the Constitution is that every vote should carry similar weight. That is what is important. That is kind of the foundation, the fundamental piece of all of this. So you determine what this average quotient is, somewhere around 13,500 in terms of population, and then you allow for certain variances to occur around the Province.

Mr. Speaker, constitutionally, you cannot have a Province of exceptions, therefore, it is important that you get as close to this average as possible. It was also important for us to – there were certain areas within the Province where there would be a community of interest that would be created. Indeed you need to apply some of the variances, just like we did in protecting the seats in Labrador. We felt, during the discussions we had, that there would potentially be two seats in the Province where we would give the Commission the authority and the direction to be able to establish those variances.

Mr. Speaker, eventually when you see the final draft from the Commission's work, you will see that those two districts in Burgeo – La Poile and Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune have been considered to be exemptions in that particular 25 per cent difference. The weight of the vote,

regardless of where you live in the Province, is really important and is certainly part of the Constitution that we have within our Province and within our country.

Mr. Speaker, there is always a discussion that occurs between access to MHA services and representation which occurs in this particular Legislature. There is no question, for those of us who work in rural districts access to MHA services can be very different than you would see in a more concentrated population.

I would say the new district – as I have seen change as being the MHA for Humber Valley – now includes Gros Morne, which goes from Jackson's Arm into White Bay, right to Bellburns on the Northern Peninsula. I would say when you look at the land mass of any particular district in the Province, that district is probably – if not, I think it is – the largest district that we would see on the Island portion of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, it is not about me as the MHA. When you consider the services, how we apply those services to that district, we are going to have to be creative in how we determine and how we service that. In terms of the representation, that being the weight of the vote, then the forty districts in my opinion will have to be done, and indeed I think with finding new ways to connect. In some cases, maybe resources will be required, but this is where I think we need to have the flexibility to be able to make those changes along the way.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is worthwhile when we look at this as an election year. I certainly made public comments that I felt there was a window of opportunity to get the 2015 election – it would be very aggressive to get this done – in September of this year. It is a very aggressive timeline I would say, but it would have given us the ability to actually move away from the federal election being in mid-October of this year.

Mr. Speaker, the reason why, of course, this did not happen, if you go back to last year and you think about the number of tries, missed opportunities I guess of actually finding a – I am just trying to be kind here as I pick my words, I say to my members behind me. Indeed we all

know there were some failed attempts at actually determining a leader. I do not think it should be lost on us that by the time this election is over on November 30, it will be twenty-two months before the people of Newfoundland and Labrador will have a say in determining who the Premier of this Province is – twenty-two months.

When you look back at fixed election dates in our Province, that was not the spirit and that was not the intent of the election laws that were put in place back in 2005 I say, Mr. Speaker. There is no doubt that the selection of a leader for the PC Party has had an influence on when the date of this election is because if their first run at it had been successful, indeed, the election would have been over right now. June 2015, the election would have been over right now and people in our Province would have had a say in who their Premier would be.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, there was a window for a September provincial election. One of the reasons why that was important to me was because that was the only way to clearly get us away, completely away, from the federal election.

One thing that is very unique in our Province is that we put in place a special ballot process. So if you look at a twenty-one-day election campaign, well then thirty days prior to that is the special ballot time frame. Under the November 30 time frame, there is going to be an overlap with the federal election on October 19. Having an election in September clearly would have distanced us from the federal election.

Considering the impact this would have had on the Chief Electoral Office and Elections NL – them saying that this would have been very difficult to pull off – we have to respect the work that office is doing. We do respect the work that they do. Mr. Speaker, I was on record as saying we would not quibble over the date; therefore, the November 30 provincial election is something we obviously support.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the work of this Commission, they have done a tremendous amount of work under a very tight timeline under Judge Stack, Shawn Skinner, Bill Matthews, Allan Goulding, and our

representative there Bern Coffey. I want to thank those individuals for the great work they have done through this spring. They went through a number of public consultations. Added to that, the work of the staff who was engaged in this process supporting them along the way, I think has been just an absolute remarkable achievement by the work that was done by all those who were involved in this.

Mr. Speaker, being very cognizant about this whole process, I want to make one thing clear here. As I stand here as Leader of the Official Opposition I can honestly say that our representative on this Commission, Mr. Bern Coffey, was really the first appointment as leader that I had the privilege of making. I can honestly tell people in Newfoundland and Labrador, beyond a shadow of a doubt, I was not aware of any of the changes that would be suggested. As a matter of fact, we did not communicate during this whole process.

That was the integrity, I can tell you, of the appointment that we had. There was no idea at all. We read the report when it was tabled here. That is when we first found out about any of the changes. There was absolutely no advance information and no involvement from our point of view, as Leader of the Official Opposition, and our members.

I did encourage our members. I encouraged everyone in our Province to get involved in the process. It was part of the democratic progress in our Province that I have a lot of respect for, I say, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. BALL:** I really want to thank the Commission and thank the staff for the work they have done. We are very proud of our members, as I say.

As the Member for Lake Melville, as I close up my comments I want to talk a little bit about the free vote on this piece of legislation. Keep in mind this is a decision that we are making, not for four years, not for the mandate of any government; this is a decision we are making that will last ten years, Mr. Speaker.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Eleven years.

**MR. BALL:** Yes, it will last eleven years as my colleague reminds me. So this will be a decision that will really go beyond the mandate of any next government.

I am very proud, as the Leader. We have had great discussions. I have encouraged our members to go back, speak to their constituents, and bring their concerns forward. They are very free to represent the constituents in their districts and vote as they wish, I say, Mr. Speaker. It is just part of the philosophy that I believe in. It is a personal decision for me to be able to say to our members – and I am very proud to do so – that you can speak freely on behalf of our constituents.

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

**MR. BALL:** Mr. Speaker, I can say being elected as the MHA for Humber Valley back in 2011, I have been very proud to be their MHA. There are communities under this current new distribution – Pasadena as an example and Pynn’s Brook are communities in my district right now that will no longer be part of the new district.

I did meet with the Town of Pasadena yesterday morning. I can tell you they are very concerned about some of the changes they have seen with those boundary changes. With that said, Mr. Speaker, I have also been very proud to represent that community over the years, the support amongst the residents there. I have certainly told them that I would bring their concerns to this debate.

They obviously feel that right now, as a community, they have been through three changes in the last seven or eight years. They were changed, as I said, in 2007, and changed again now in 2015. So it is a community that has seen a number of changes. They are concerned about that. I understand why they would ask questions and feel that the representation – and why it is they are excluded from this particular electoral boundary.

Mr. Speaker, with that said I will finish up. I am looking forward to continued debate and to the vote, when it occurs, in this House. I am very proud to be able to say that our members – not because there are any distractions or that we are

not a united party, I say, but simply because they are allowed to represent the people who they were elected by, their constituents.

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

**MR. BALL:** Mr. Speaker, with that, I will my finish remarks on Bill 13. As I said, I will look forward to debate and the eventual vote in this House of Assembly.

Regardless of where we all land in a few days, I look forward to participating in the next provincial election, November 30. For me, I would be happy if it is in the old District of Humber Valley or in the new district of wherever it is, in Gros Morne. I am certainly proud to be able to lead the Liberal Party into that election and looking –

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

**MR. BALL:** (Inaudible) and meeting people across the Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

It is certainly a pleasure for me to rise in the House tonight and speak to Bill 13, Mr. Speaker. I am going to start out with a little bit of humour because I have always believed that the number thirteen was a lucky number, me, being the thirteenth child in the family. I love the number thirteen.

So I certainly look forward to the successful passing, Mr. Speaker, of this bill in the House of Assembly. I am proud to say that I am going to be supporting this bill and I strongly believe in this bill. I think this bill makes a lot of sense for a whole lot of reasons.

As I like to do when I stand in this House of Assembly, I want to also start out by thanking my constituents once again for the privilege and

honour of representing them here in the House of Assembly, and bringing forth the views that matter so much to the people of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune to the forefront and the table where decisions are being made right here in the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Commission for the outstanding work they have done. It was certainly a large task that they had to undertake. They did it, I think, remarkably well in a remarkably short period of time, so hats off to the Commission, as well, for their work.

As has been previously alluded to by several speakers prior to me, there are the four seats in Labrador remaining the same. There are two seats on the Island portion of the Province that will not be seeing any changes, Mr. Speaker. They are Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune and Burgeo – La Poile, both districts of which, of course, border on the Southwest Coast of Newfoundland and Labrador. Back in the day, when the steamer was on the go, it was a coastal run and a beautiful coastal run that a lot of tourists still like to undertake to this day.

In those days that was our only mode of transportation. That was how we kept in constant contact with one another, was along the coast. I know I, myself, and my family, a lot of my relatives actually moved to Ramea because Ramea was where the fish plant was. Ramea was where all the work was. So in those days there was a lot of back and forth, up and down the coast, and a lot of people marrying each other from neighboring communities. There were a lot of connections if you go back in time, Mr. Speaker, up along the entire Southwest Coast, and a lot of relatives along the way.

Certainly the Commission, in doing its work, recognized the unique geography of districts like mine and that of Burgeo – La Poile, Mr. Speaker. If I can provide a little bit more information on my district, it is fifteen kilometres square. I do not know if there any other members in the House besides me who have three ferries they are responsible for. In my district there are four isolated communities and three ferries which service these communities. In particular, we have a ferry that runs to Rencontre East. Bay L'Argent and we have a ferry run to Gaultois, McCallum. We

have another ferry that runs from Burgeo to François.

Just to give some perspective in terms of travelling the district, for me to get to the community of François, I have to drive to Burgeo, which is about an eight or nine-hour drive from where I live in St. Alban's, and then take a ferry which is a three-hour run. It takes me a day or a day-and-a-half to get to François if I go the ferry route, Mr. Speaker.

In recognition of the unique geographic challenges of my district there is an allowance, both in my district and in Burgeo – La Poile, for helicopter that enables us to get there in short notice if our constituents so request, Mr. Speaker. We certainly thank the Management Commission for recognition of that as well.

I am a very strong believer that it is the constituent's right and the constituents are entitled to have access to their member. From that point of view anything and everything that we as a government can do to support us as members in accessing our communities is certainly very, very important. Everyone should have equal access to their MHAs.

Here we are, we have been here in the House of Assembly now this year since March, as we usually are. The Standing Orders say that we typically conclude the House around May 24. That has never happened in my years since I have been in here.

One of the things I really do miss, when the House of Assembly is open, is the ability to get out and about in my district, as I do during the months when I am able to actually reside in the district. I do have twenty-one communities. As I said, they are scattered over a very diverse geography. If I were to travel my entire district within a week, it would take at least three to four days to do so.

I often ponder about what it would be like to be an urban MHA. My colleague from St. John's South and his predecessor before him – and I think I can use his name now because he is no longer in the House – Dave Denine, we would often sit and chat about the differences in our district. Using the District of Mount Pearl South, it is a district that can be walked from one

end to the other within an hour or so, whereas with mine, you cannot drive it in two or three days. So there are vast geographic differences, Mr. Speaker, in the geographies of some of the districts.

I, for one, would like to applaud our leader, our Premier, for having the initiative to advance the boundary review in advance of this year's election. I think it is a very responsible and prudent thing to do. As I said earlier when I started out, I am happy to support this bill.

I think some previous speakers have also spoken to the fact that constitutionally – and it is enshrined in the federal Constitution – one person equals one vote is kind of how boundaries are broken down, both on a federal and a provincial level. There are times when some of us as rural members would probably argue, well, maybe we should look at it maybe more on a basis of workload, but of course that contravenes the Constitution. That is not where the boundaries are. It would be a much larger debate at a provincial and national level if anything were to change in that regard, Mr. Speaker.

Looking at the differences in what an urban MHA does versus a rural MHA – and I will use the Coast of Bays as an example, we are a rural, remote area. Unlike an urban area which has the Confederation Building, which has every department of government, which has arms of government agencies, which has not-for-profit groups that work in tandem with government, all of these resources right here in one central location, not quite so in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

A rural MHA often acts – and members from all parties on all sides of the House who are rural members would agree that sometimes you are all departments to all people. So as a rural MHA you are the inquiry base for the Department of Health, for the department of social services, for Advanced Education and Skills, for tourism, and for municipal affairs. You are it. You are the only government person around for miles and miles and miles in some cases, Mr. Speaker. So the job we do and the tasks we undertake, I would argue, are vastly different from a rural area to an urban area.

I certainly thank the Commission for recognition of the Southwest Coast for its unique geography. I am very, very pleased, Mr. Speaker, that Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune will be remaining exactly the same as it was in 2007. Now, I do believe during the last boundary review prior to that, the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune also encompassed the community of Ramea. The community of Ramea was included and I have a lot of family there. I would not mind representing them in any case, but that did change in 2007 and the boundary remains intact with this review. I am pleased to be running again in this district.

For the record, as many of my colleagues have done, I will read into the record of Hansard what communities Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune will continue to represent post-Bill 13. They are: St. Alban's, Swanger Cove, St. Veronica's, St. Joseph's Cove, Milltown-Head of Bay d'Espoir, Morrisville, Conne River, Hermitage-Sandyville, Seal Cove, Gaultois, McCallum, François, Harbour Breton, Boxey, St. Jacques-Coomb's Cove.

I am going to tell a little story about St. Jacques-Coomb's Cove. It is one municipality but it has five communities. They have been that way for well on a couple of decades. They recognized a long time ago there was economies of scale in them merging. So that would be English Harbour West, Boxey, Coomb's Cove, Wreck Cove, and St. Jacques. Then we also have Belleoram, we have Pool's Cove, and we have Rencontre East. So these would be the communities of the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune that I proudly represent and I hope I continue to represent for a very long time to come, Mr. Speaker.

I am very pleased the district is remaining the same in size because I could not imagine the challenges with trying to be as available to constituents as you need to be with a district that is quite so large.

Again, going back to how much time we spend in the House of Assembly, which is certainly a very important part of our job, but it means I am out of the district often for five to six months a year. When you have twenty-one or twenty-two communities that are so geographically dispersed, it takes a while to get around, Mr.

Speaker. You would like to be able to spend more time in them than what you physically can sometimes.

It is an honour for me to speak to this bill and to say that I strongly support this bill. I look forward to its passing and to the election on November 30.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East.

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

It is good to have an opportunity to get up and speak to this piece of legislation today. It is a very important piece of legislation and we are having a very important debate here today.

It is important for a number of reasons. It impacts every member of this House in some way or other. Some more than others, but it impacts us all. More importantly, it impacts the people in this Province, the people we represent. That is why this piece of legislation is so important, Mr. Speaker.

I want to take a few minutes now to talk about this process that we have gone through and what I see has happened here with this process in the House. First, back in January government came forward with a number of amendments, a number of changes they were proposing to the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. It is interesting that these sort of changes came about all of a sudden, Mr. Speaker. They were thrown at the media one day, floated around, and before we knew it we were back here in this House for a special session to deal with a piece of legislation that we had no idea was coming. The process was sort of flawed from the beginning.

What we should be aware of is this was not a process that needed to be pushed forward. It was a process we had to go through, a natural process that we have set up in legislation that we go through every ten years, Mr. Speaker. The population patterns in this Province change. Some people move into new areas, like Southlands and Mount Pearl. The population is

growing. In CBS the population is growing. In other parts of the Province you see the population contracting.

The Legislature set up this process that every ten years they set up an independent commission to review how the boundaries are designed. When they do this process, they look at a few things. I guess the first principle they look at is the concept of equality of votes, Mr. Speaker, that a vote in one part of the Province is worth as much as a vote in another part of the Province. That concept of equality of the vote leads us to have districts that are sort of equal in size.

There is another principle that the Commission takes into account when they do this as well, Mr. Speaker. That is the principle of the right of constituents to have equal representation, equal opportunity to be represented in the House, to have access to their members. Certain geographic considerations are taken into account when the Commission looks at how they establish the boundaries. That is the second principle.

There are formulas in the piece of legislation, the electoral boundaries legislation that guides the Electoral Boundaries Commission as they go out and do their work, Mr. Speaker. The Electoral Boundaries Commission are guided by aspects in the legislation that encompass these two principles, equality of the vote and also equality of representation and the difficulty of people getting to their members, different sizes in the districts, urban and rural differences. That was the case in this situation.

Government interfered with that normal process, Mr. Speaker. They rushed ahead to make changes. That is sort of a very drastic act. Not only did they rush that process forward to achieve some political advantage, they also legislated in that act a reduction in the number of seats down to thirty-eight from forty-eight.

The government opposite has a majority. So they could ram this piece of legislation through the House, and they did. The Liberal Party had a little bit of influence. They were able to amend the legislation in ways that protected seats in Labrador and modified it a little bit. The point is the members opposite, the government, have a majority in this House and they were

intent on ramming that piece of legislation through, and they did for their politically motivated means.

The Commission was appointed and it had very tight timelines, Mr. Speaker. Usually when a commission of this nature is appointed they are appointed shortly after an election. That is the way it is set up; that is the way it is encompassed. It is set up so they have the newest census data. They did not have it this time because the process was pushed forward, the process was rushed.

Usually there is a process that is followed, and the Commission has a lot of time to do its work because they do not have an impending election coming at them. They have time to do the process, to travel around the Province, to talk to people in person, to have an opportunity to talk to people face to face, to listen to them, and to have an opportunity sometimes to go back and do that a second time, Mr. Speaker.

Governments have said we do not like these boundaries. They have sent it back to the Commission again and said: do it again, have another talk to people. Sometimes these consultations have taken as long as two years to do. This process was really rushed I think.

Mr. Speaker, I presented to the Commission, and I talked to people in the district before I presented to the Commission. I talked to the mayors; I talked to the joint councils in the area. I talked to various community representatives and organizations such as the chamber of commerce, rotary clubs and things like that. They did not want their district to change. They felt if the district changed, they would lose the closeness they had in being represented.

The legislation, after it goes through that commission, is not automatically accepted. It comes back to this House, and this House has an opportunity to look at it. It comes to government first and then government brings it to the House. This House has a responsibility to look at that legislation again and say, does that fit with what we want? It is a second vote. We have another opportunity to look at it and see if it right for this Province, Mr. Speaker.

That is what we are doing here right now. We are looking at the report of the Commission and what they recommend to us as members. We have a responsibility to debate it, to talk about it, and to see if it is right for the people we represent, Mr. Speaker.

I started by saying this is an important piece of legislation. It is important because it impacts how we govern ourselves. It sets out how we set up this House, how we make decisions, and the rules about how we pass the legislation, Mr. Speaker.

It impacts on things like the type of House reform that we can make possible in this House. The number of people we have in this House impacts the type of committee systems we can have here in this House, it impacts things like the size of Cabinet that we can have, and issues like that. The size of our House has an impact on those things as well. It is important that we look at those aspects.

I think the fact that it is so important in these aspects sort of emphasizes the fault, that this process was rushed. Especially when you are reducing seats by that number, the process being rushed in that instance does not give us time to consider all the aspects and all the impacts of this kind of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

It is also important because this is something that we are going to have for a while. These boundaries that we are going to have are going to be around for ten years before we can go back and have another look at it, Mr. Speaker. Ten years they are going to be around for.

Also, it is important because once you cut seats like this legislation is cutting seats, it is very difficult to find the political will to put them back, Mr. Speaker. If we made a mistake to put them back, is it possible? I think it would be very difficult to do that if we have made a mistake. We should have had enough time to consider what we are doing here and to consider the impacts of what we are doing here on the way we are governed, and on the governance of the Province. Those are some issues that I have with it.

Mr. Speaker, another series of issues that I have with it is the way that this came about, the

process, how it was initiated, and what were the motives behind it. When I talked on the Electoral Boundaries Act, I talked about the concept of a level playing field and how important that is to the legitimacy of our government.

The concept of a level playing field is used in political science, but it is also familiar with people who have played sports. It is the idea of fairness and the idea of fair play. The idea that everyone has an opportunity to participate in a game where they know the rules, where they know how things are going to operate, and where they know this is how the rules of the game are going to be played. The rules are not going to be changed to benefit one team or the other. It is not like at the end of the hockey game, you say, okay, rather than have the normal three periods we are going to have a fourth period this time because our team is behind. You have rules and you follow them, Mr. Speaker.

When you do not follow the rules, when you do not follow the normal process, when you rush it through this House, then you begin to draw into question the legitimacy of the system. You begin to draw into question the fairness of the process and the legitimacy of the government, Mr. Speaker. So that is a very important issue as well.

Many places in the world look to Canada and look to places like Newfoundland and Labrador that have stable governments as ideals, as places that they would like to be like, Mr. Speaker. I think when we begin to chip away at the legitimacy of our government and the sort of system that we have, with these types of politically motivated moves, then we really begin to start on a slide that we do not know where it is going to end.

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

**MR. REID:** Yes. Some people have been talking about the politically motivated, the fact that it is heavy handed, the fact that it is not well-thought-through. Other people have told me they thought it is a desperate act of a dying government, Mr. Speaker. I think there is a lot to be said for that.

I want to talk about a few impacts on the district that I represent, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk about St. George's – Stephenville East.

When I was campaigning in the election less than a year ago, in August of last year, I was going around the district and many people were telling me they feel they are left out. They are feeling their voice was not being heard in government, that they were not being heard. There is lots of evidence there, when you look at the issues in the district, that their voice is not being heard, Mr. Speaker.

You look at the doctor situation in Jeffrey's and St. George's, and health care in Stephenville. There is lots of evidence that their voice is not being heard now, Mr. Speaker. The situation in Jeffrey's is they have not had a doctor for about a year-and-a-half. In St. George's, they have not had a doctor there for about half-a-year. That is not good enough. That is shameful. If you look at the road conditions –

**MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn):** I remind the hon. member to speak to the bill please.

**MR. REID:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am talking about representation and the importance of voice in the House, and the closeness of representatives, the number of representatives, and access to their representatives. I am linking that to these issues in the district.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit more. There are other issues like road conditions in the district. One instance we had a case where a fire truck – about \$5,000 damage to the fire truck because the roads were so bad.

So there are lots of issues. I will not talk about all of them here, Mr. Speaker. I think when we change the size of our districts, when we make them so big that representatives become distant from the people they represent, we lose something. We lose something about the way this House operates and the way people in this Province are governed.

Mr. Speaker, there are many people – I go to many events as the MHA, people who would not send me an email, they would not give me a call, they would not write a letter to me, but if I am there they will come up to me and they will talk

to me about their concerns. They will talk to me about an issue, something that is happening in government or a concern that they have. I know other members do the same thing.

When we make our districts so big that people do not have the same access to us, we are losing something, Mr. Speaker. It impacts on the type of government we have and the type of decisions that are being made. I think it is not good for this Province. So, I think it is important that we listen to the people. It is important that we have a close connection to the people.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to conclude by saying that I have outlined that I think the objectives of the process are flawed. I think the process that we followed is flawed. I have outlined why I think the motives behind the process are flawed. I have heard from constituents who say that they do not want these changes. I have outlined the disagreements that people have had with the reports that have come out.

I think for those reasons I will not be voting for this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker. I will not be voting for this piece of legislation. I do not think it is in the interest of the constituents I represent. I do not think the process is what it should have been, and I think we are selling ourselves short when we do this legislation.

I notice the member opposite from my neighbouring district in Port au Port – Stephenville – I have a few minutes. I was not going to respond to his comments but I think I will, Mr. Speaker.

He should stand up because the people in his district have some of the same concerns. I have talked to the people in his district and they have some of the same concerns. They are wondering why he is not speaking up for them, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. REID:** Mr. Speaker, with that, I will conclude my comments.

Thank you.

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

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

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

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

If that is not a flip-flop, I never ever heard one.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand in my place as the Member for the District of Bellevue and speak on Bill 13, the bill that would amend the House of Assembly Act.

My district is probably one of the hardest hit districts maybe in the amendments that are being done. When it came to a vote in our caucus, Mr. Speaker, I voted in favour of going ahead with reducing the seats from forty-eight down to forty. I am certainly not going to go back and say well, you know, I thought it all over – because I knew what I was getting into. I am not going to flip-flop like the people on the other side.

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

**MR. PEACH:** I lost some good people in this reduction of seats, Mr. Speaker, and the reorganizing of the district. I lost some really good people. I lost some good people from New Harbour to Blaketown in my district, and also on the Burin Peninsula from Harbour Mille up to St. Bernard's – Jacques Fontaine. I had many emails from them, not objecting to the change but objecting that they were losing their MHA as a member.

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

**MR. PEACH:** We had sessions in Whitbourne. I do not think there was anybody from the district that I represent, Bellevue district – I do not think there was anybody who made a submission to the Commission on the change. Nobody disputed the changes. They were just sitting back, listening, and watching what was going on. They did not like it, but because of the geographical areas of four MHAs, I knew there was something that was going to come out of it.

As a matter of fact, there were five MHAs that I was a bit scared of in the beginning, that maybe

I would not have a district at all because it could have split three ways. It could have gone from New Harbour to Goobies, or the Clarendville district could have been taken into that area. It could have gone different ways than it went, but I am certainly pleased with the way it did go.

I certainly welcome the people who are coming into the District of Placentia West – Bellevue. Even though myself and the Member for Placentia West are still working out the details to see what is going on with the districts, but I am not the only one. There are others in this House who are working out the details as well to see what is going on with the districts.

We have decisions to make. We all have decisions to make as to what we are going to be doing in the election coming up in November, but, Mr. Speaker, I did not go into it with a blind eye. I went into voting on this, to accept this, because it was what the people wanted.

If everybody listened to the people – and the people on the other side say: Why don't you listen to the people in your districts? Well, if you listen to the Open Line shows and the different places you have been and listen to people talking, they always said: you have too many members in the House of Assembly. You need to reduce the seats in the House of Assembly. You need to get rid of some people. That is what I heard for the last four or five years. For the last four or five years I have heard that.

I think this might have all started when a member of the Opposition said he would reduce the seats in the House of Assembly. So I guess the people then took hold of that and started going with that too, and they demanded it more and more.

Mr. Speaker, our Premier took care of that and now the change has happened. I will live with that. I will own that. As a Member for the District of Bellevue, I will own that. I am sure the people are quite satisfied in my district as to how that is going to go and how it is going to change.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** They are pleased with your work.

**MR. PEACH:** Yes, they are very pleased with the work I have done as an MHA over the years. I have worked hard for the people of that district.

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

**MR. PEACH:** I have worked hard for the people in that district, Mr. Speaker, and if I am successful in the election in the fall, in the nomination for Placentia West – Bellevue, I will work hard in that district too.

I know it is going to be a bigger district; it is going to be a bigger challenge from one end of the district to the other. It starts off in Chapel Arm in Trinity Bay and I think it goes up so far as, past Marystown to Creston South and Creston North. It is a very big area.

The ones I lost in the Fortune Bay area I picked up from South East Bight near Monkstown right on up to Marystown and Creston North, Creston South. I am very pleased, like I said earlier, to be accepting a nomination for that area and running in that area as well as the MHA.

I talked to quite a few people over the last weekend. A lot of people had a lot of questions to ask, but it was more or less common questions as to how I felt about it – not how they felt about it. They did not really have any objection to any of it. They just wanted to know how I felt about it as a member and if I was okay with the district that I was getting. I told them yes I was. We know what we are running for; we know the districts we are going to be running in now. Like I said earlier, we have to own that now. We just have to move on as far as I am concerned as an MHA.

Some of the people will now have to probably look at new members coming in. It is going to be different for some of them. Some have to wonder how they are going to fit in with the other districts, other parts of the districts, but most of them know the representation they had from the MHA they had there before. Most of them know how they did with the representation they had there from this government. Most of them know the projects and the monies that have been put into those districts from this government and they are quite pleased with the way things are going.

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

**MR. PEACH:** It is taxpayers' money but it is good money. It is good money.

I met a Liberal on Saturday night, Mr. Speaker, and he looked at me and said: Oh, it is time for a change. There were seven of us there, I said: Oh, it is time for a change. Tell me what our government has done. Tell me what our government has not done for you, a man who works in Bull Arm, a man who has lots of things around him, his family is all working in Bull Arm and in Long Harbour. It is all through the big negotiations of this government, all through the negotiations of this government to get those mining companies in there and provide work for those people.

At the end of our conversation he looked at me and said you may not be all that wrong. He said a lot of things you are saying are right. So I said you are starting to agree with me. He said, well, I cannot disagree with you because there have been a lot of things done.

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

**MR. PEACH:** Now that was a Liberal. I know the guy. He was a staunch Liberal, and probably still is. He might never change, but, Mr. Speaker, he did admit that our government has done a lot for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. When you get a discussion going like that in your district, you can see that people will look at what is happening.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to touch on the dates of the election. I think the date of the election to November 30 after coming out of a federal election is the right thing to do. I think it is the right thing to do. I honestly think if we went ahead with an election earlier or right at the time of the federal election, the people out there would not want that. The people do not want that. I think the election in November right now takes away the confusion from people and certainly would be a better time to have that election.

Mr. Speaker, I represent right now in the district the communities of New Harbour, Dildo, South Dildo, Old Shop, and Blaketown. I know those areas are going from my district that is being

recommended right now. I was very proud and very pleased, and I want to thank them for the support they gave me over the last seven, eight years.

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

**MR. PEACH:** My district now will consist from Chapel Arm, Norman's Cove-Long Cove, Thornlea, and Bellevue Beach. Then I go across into Placentia Bay from Fairhaven to Little Harbour, to Southern Harbour, and to Arnold's Cove. Then I go on up to North Harbour in Placentia Bay, and also up so far as – well Garden Cove as well, Mr. Speaker.

I also take in Goobies and Swift Current, and on the other side in Trinity Bay I also go as far as Sunnyside. Then it crosses over – well, before that it goes through Terrenceville, Grand Le Pierre, and English Harbour East. Then it crosses over into Placentia Bay and it takes in Monkstown. The new proposal will take in Monkstown, Southeast Bight; we have Petit Forte, going on up the shore right up to Marystown, a lot of small communities, some of the small communities that I know very, very well.

I have family in a lot of those communities. I moved in myself back in 1966 from Placentia Bay, on a little island out in Placentia Bay. Most of the people in those communities resettled back at the same time that I did, that our family did. Mr. Speaker, we all knew each other. We were almost like a family in Placentia Bay. I can go into almost every house in Placentia Bay and they will call me by name and I can call them, in the communities. That is in the small communities.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I have quite a few family in Marystown too I might say. I represented the Burin Peninsula several times in the past. They know where I stand and they know where I will stand. They know me as the Member for the District of Bellevue and what I have done in the District of Bellevue. I talk to a lot of people from Marystown all of the time. I was getting emails long before these boundaries were even proposed. I was getting emails from different people on the Burin Peninsula.

If anybody followed me on Facebook, I update my Facebook all the time. I let people know where I travel every day. I let people know where their money is going. I let people know that I just do not sit back on my ass – excuse the language, Mr. Speaker, it might be unparliamentary.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I remind the hon. member – I ask him to withdraw, please.

**MR. PEACH:** I apologize. I take that back.

Mr. Speaker, I do not sit back and just get a paycheque. I like to let people know that I work hard for them in the district and I will continue to do so.

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

**MR. PEACH:** Mr. Speaker, I guess right now we have to wait to see where this bill goes. Some over there say they are not supporting it. On this side of the House here, I have to say that I am going to support it. I am not going to flip-flop like some of them. I am not going to hide behind a free vote, Mr. Speaker. I vote as I see it. I voted for these changes. I will stay with that decision that I made and I will live with that decision that I made. I guess when we knock on the doors the people will decide if we did right or wrong. I want to thank you for the time.

Thank you very much.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

**MS C. BENNETT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am certainly honoured to stand tonight and speak to Bill 13, on what is an important conversation and debate that we are having in the House of Assembly tonight. Like many of the members in this House, I want to say a thank you on behalf of the House to the members of the Commission, and in particular, Judge Stack.

The amount of work this Committee had to do was very significant. When you look at the recommendations they made as part of their submission to the Minister of Justice, they

actually indicated that the timeline was very tight. So I think it is certainly responsible of us as Members of this House of Assembly to thank them.

Mr. Speaker, as I sat here and listened to debate over the last number of hours, there are a couple of things I would certainly like to call out. In particular, I found it interesting that the Member for Lake Melville earlier talked about – I think he used the term, leadership, to define what happened inside his caucus during the January discussions around the original piece of legislation that initiated the work that the boundaries commission did. I found that quite ironic. The member opposite –

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

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

Order, please!

Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

**MS C. BENNETT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I found it quite ironic that the Member for Lake Melville, who would be a member of a caucus and certainly a member of Cabinet that would be bringing in legislation that was designed to cut the seats in Labrador from four to three – that he was part of that group that brought in that legislation.

It was not, quite frankly, until our leader publicly said we were going to make some changes and make some amendments to the legislation that the members opposite, I am assuming – I have not been around this House of Assembly for more than a year. There are lots of other people in this House who are more experienced than me. I would assume there were some caucus conflicts about those conversations.

Certainly, on this side of the House I think we recognized very early that the challenges, the issues, the land mass, the geography and many, many of the issues in Labrador needed to be represented with respect as part of this piece of legislation.

I find it ironic that the Member for Lake Melville took credit for a piece of legislation that actually came into this House to shrink the representation for Labrador. He takes credit for expanding that when it was this side of the House that actually brought the amendment in.

You know what, Mr. Speaker, I have a tremendous amount of respect for, not only the people of Newfoundland and the Island, but I have a lot of respect for the people in Labrador. I am sure that they are going to see those comments for exactly what they were, shallow and political.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing I would like to talk about is that as the –

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

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

**MS C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, the other item I would mention is that the Boundaries Commission report also indicated they were very pleased with how they used technology to seek feedback. One of the things that were very evident and concerning in some of the places in the Province is that individuals did not have a chance to present face to face with the Commission. Certainly some of the members on this side of the House have heard from their constituents that – one of the things they heard was that they did not have the chance to present face to face.

What I found ironic is when the Boundaries Commission started its work, one of the things that we were certainly encouraged to do on this side of the House was to let our constituents know through social media, through our contacts, through our newsletters, through debate here in the House to participate in the hearings, to provide emails, and to provide feedback. It was interesting because when you looked at the communication from the forty-eight members in the House, there was certainly a skewed activity around encouraging response from our constituents.

We stand here today and we make decisions about how representation is going to change in this Province. There has been lots of conversation about where the number forty came

from and why the government was motivated in an election year to bring in this legislation as they did. What is the real purpose? Was it about saving money? Was it about political fortunes? Was it about trying to extend their ability to campaign because they needed more time?

Ultimately, what they are really debating tonight and what we are debating about this legislation is the representation. Let's just think about for a minute the why. Mr. Speaker, why is it that we are having a conversation about moving from forty-eight to forty seats?

Sadly, the reality is that the population in this Province has declined in the last nine years and it has declined significantly. As a result, when you look at the numbers of people who each of us are going to represent, and you take into account the quotients that are used to determine fair representation depending on geography, the reality is that we have seen a significant shift in our population. I think, Mr. Speaker, that piece of this debate has been lost in the last several months.

I do not think anybody in this House, on any side, should be proud of the fact that as a population we now require fewer representatives because we are a smaller population. I would suspect that many people who are listening at home and are watching this tonight understand. As they have seen their community shrink and they have seen young people leave our Province, they understand why that population has changed.

Mr. Speaker, during the debate, as well, I listened to the members from the Third Party talk about their perception of what happened in January. They also talked about when they found out about the amendments or when they heard about the amendments. One of the things the Leader of the Official Opposition spoke about earlier was that we had a press conference where the leader spoke about the amendments, and let the entire Province know that in order for us to come into this House and have a discussion about this piece of legislation, these were the things that we were going to put on the table.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the members in the Third Party were sitting next to us those couple

of days as we had the debate. I am sure they were aware of that press conference. I think the Member for St. John's East, one of the things that he forgot to tell the people of the Province when he was performing – or doing his debate, speech, was that his leader at the time actually was also very supportive of reductions in the representation here in the House of Assembly, and had been on record publicly about that.

Mr. Speaker, I think one of the things that have been very eye opening for me as we have gone through this process, especially as one of the seven new – there are seven new, I think. Seven new Members of the House of Assembly on this side anyway. One of the things that was certainly interesting for me as we went through this debate is the more I understood the difference between a whipped vote and a not-whipped vote. I think there has been a lot of discussion throughout the debate in the last few hours about what that is. For those listening at home the reality is that in a whipped vote – my understanding is that if a member of the opposite side, for example, if somebody on the government side chose to stand up and represent the people of their district in this important discussion and they felt that they could not support this, they, in fact, would risk being kicked out of caucus.

Mr. Speaker, I think there is a very big difference between supporting the idea of the fact that we need to readjust the seats in this Province based on population because we have seen an economy that has not respected all parts of the Province, and has not been led by a government that has been able to improve the lot for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. What we have now is our leader has said it is important that each of the members of our party –

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

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

**MS C. BENNETT:** – that each member on this side of the House has the ability to vote based on what they are hearing from their constituents.

I want to be clear to those people, I am proud to stand here tonight and currently represent the constituents of the District of Virginia Waters.

During the Boundaries Commission there was a discussion that the district was going to be changed and there was going to be a new name. It was going to be the district of Pippy Park. Now the district that I will, hopefully, be the candidate in, once we go through our nominations, will be the District of Windsor Lake. I look forward to continuing to earn the respect of those constituents and representing them here in this House of Assembly should they choose to elect me.

My responsibility to them is just like the responsibility of my colleagues here, and that is to represent what their wishes are. I think the fact that our leader has been able to understand the importance of an individual person in this House voting based on what the constituents are saying is very important.

In my particular district, the issue of boundary changes certainly has not had the same amount of feedback from my constituents. I would think that there are members on that side of the House who have had tremendous feedback from their constituents around the impacts on their particular communities.

When we come back to the issue of an open vote, I am very proud to be a member of a party that recognizes there are discussions that we are going to have in this House of Assembly that transcend politics and, quite frankly, require us to allow people and encourage people to represent the constituents who elected them here, as opposed to the party or the institution they may happen to be a member of.

Our representation here is to the people of the Province. It is not to a political party. I think there are members on the opposite side of the House who, just like other members on this side of the House, may have had feedback from their constituents. It is unfortunate that they are not able to vote in a situation that releases them from the possibility of being extracted from their caucus.

Mr. Speaker, the other item I would like to speak to, with regard to the Boundaries Commission report and certainly this legislation under Bill 13, are the changes with regard to the by-elections. For those listening at home and who have been following debate, you will understand

that this piece of legislation now will mean that any seats that are vacant, I believe it is six months before an election date – there will not be a by-election held.

I guess one of the things that many people have asked me is: How many people in this House of Assembly are in fact intending to come back? How many retirements from public office, public life will we see over the next coming months?

Those constituents from those districts that will not have representation in this House certainly will be at a disadvantage. I think the changes in the by-election rules, particularly in this piece of legislation, certainly will cause some people in our Province to be questioning and honestly asking what the intentions of the members on the opposite side of the House are when it comes to their future here in the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that I would like to mention just really quickly is that I listened interestingly to the Member for St. John's Centre earlier talk about how this activity was taking voices away from rural Newfoundland and Labrador. One of the things that are certainly going to be very important, as the voting happens here over the next while on Bill 13, is that those members in this House of Assembly who represent rural districts are going to have to make sure that they stand up and support their constituents in the way their constituents want them to.

I think that is going to be challenging for government's side, considering it is a whipped vote. I think it is important they consider that their responsibility in this House of Assembly is, in fact, to the people who elected them and not necessarily to a Premier who is in the position because of a failed leadership race and 320-something votes.

Mr. Speaker, when I am given my opportunity to stand up I will look forward to voting on behalf of the constituents from the district that I represent now, which is Virginia Waters; a district that will be renamed Windsor Lake, a district that will have some minor changes. I look forward to the portions of the district that will be added to the one I have now; pieces of the District of Cape St. Francis, St. John's East,

and St. John's North that will be joining the district that I already represent. I look forward to meeting those constituents at the doorsteps and in their homes in the community in the very near future. In the meantime, I will continue to work – as I am sure every member in this House of Assembly will – very diligently and very focussed on the needs of the constituents who have elected us here at this time.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that I do want to say one last item. When you stand in this House to vote on legislation and vote on laws it is a very important decision. When I heard the Leader of the Opposition mention earlier that this legislation is going to make changes to democracy and changes to representation for the next ten years, it certainly does require us to take a deep pause.

Ten years is a long time. It is a significant decision that we have to make here as legislators to represent our constituents in a way that is true to what their wishes are. I am very proud of the work that our leader has done throughout this process, and his integrity and commitment to making sure that the individuals we represent are represented in a way that is respectful.

Mr. Speaker, with that I will take my seat. I thank you for your time tonight.

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

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

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

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

It gives me great pleasure to be able to stand here this evening and speak to this bill. With modern technology today – I had a text a little while ago, while my colleague was speaking, from one of my constituents saying you look a little bit tired, I guess it has been a long day. For those who are still watching out there in TV land, it has been a long day, but those long days are very important when it comes to getting legislation to pass here. So, I am pleased that there are still people watching us here in the House of Assembly even though the game is on

now. I am sure we are losing some of our audience to that.

This certainly, Mr. Speaker, is an important piece of legislation that we are debating here today. I have listened to the debate. I guess in one sense – I do not know if it is fair to say it or not – I am sort of sitting in a neutral area because I am one of the four fortunate MHAs from Labrador who got through our debate early as to what would happen with the boundaries within our electoral districts. We knew they were not going to be changing. I am sure the other three MHAs from Labrador would agree that it was a sort of a sigh of relief because you knew back then what your district was going to be and what you would be representing.

I am very proud over the last almost four years as to how I have represented my district. I have worked hard as I am sure every MHA in this House of Assembly has in representing the districts.

I remember a while ago when I stood on my feet, somebody had commented about this being an election year and when you will start campaigning. I remember my comment to that. I started campaigning back on October 12, 2011 for the next election. I think it is very important that we constantly be representing our constituents, and more importantly, we need to be letting our constituents know that we are representing them.

We all have our different styles of how we do politics. I have listened to quite a few people here tonight and I do want to comment. In listening to some of the Opposition as they spoke – and I will not say this as a negative against their philosophy because I respect their philosophy. They are certainly entitled to their philosophy of how they deal with politics. Several members, including the Leader of the Opposition, and I just heard the Member for Virginia Waters spend quite a bit of time talking about it – an open vote and a free vote. I find that a little bit confusing,

I have been involved in many, many organizations. I have been involved in municipal politics and I have been involved in provincial politics. As every party in politics – for people who are following politics and for

people who are listening, when you sit in your caucus and you are debating within your caucus different pieces of legislation, the debates are done back there, but you have to reach consensus. You always have a free vote. You always have an open vote. It is your choice.

I did hear the Member for Virginia Waters say the chance of being reprimanded or being kicked out of your caucus is there. That is a chance and a choice that we as politicians – we all make that choice. At some point we may take that chance, but you always have – and I think it is very important that the general public know. You always have the choice of voting whatever way you want. As an MHA, you have that choice. If you decide to vote against your government after debates are done, that is entirely up to you. It is still free and it is open.

I think people need to understand that you are not dictated to, or certainly I can only speak for this side. That you are not dictated to as to how you have to vote, but you certainly do within your caucus, within meetings you have in different committees, different briefings you have, and that is the purpose of the caucus meetings, the purpose of committee meetings, the purpose of meeting with and getting briefings from ministers and their staff, is that you can debate where you stand on it, but then hopefully you reach a consensus as a party. I think that is very important.

What we are debating now is Bill 13. Bill 13 is, An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Act around the electoral boundaries. I have listened to most of the speakers. I have listened to what they have talked about in the difference in the electoral boundaries, in the geography of different districts now, the effect it is going to have on certain members and the elimination of certain districts.

I have colleagues within all three parties. I have had discussions with colleagues in all three parties. We have talked about different things they have to face now and how are they going to approach it. If their district is affected, are they going to move on? Are they going to move on to another career? Are they going to seek nomination in another district? Some districts have been split and divided. Many members are

faced with having to answer those questions, and they are not easy questions to answer.

I remember the Member for Bay of Islands back in January made a comment, and he made the same comment a couple of days ago when he stood and spoke on this debate. He said there is going to be difficult decisions made between friends and there are going to be riffs. I am not saying verbatim what he said, but he talked about some of the arguing that is going to be done between members on the same sides and members on different sides.

There are friendships that are going to be tested because of decisions that are being made, but again – and I agree with the Member for Bay of Islands – that is all part of a process. I would hope at the end of the day, that we as professionals in our fields and as politicians representing the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, when we leave this House of Assembly at the end of the debate we can still be friends and we can still be, for lack of a better word, humane to one another.

I think that is very important, because whether I am representing the people in Labrador West or the people in Conception Bay South, as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, all of those people collectively are important to all of us as politicians. They are the people who have put us here to represent them. So I think that is really important.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Commission for the hard work they have done. Certainly, the hon. Robert Stack for taking on the responsibilities of being the Chair, Shawn Skinner as the Deputy Chair, Bernard Coffey, Allan Golding, and Bill Matthews. These five people took on a tremendous task when they took on the task of rearranging the electoral boundaries within the Province, and in a very short time.

I have heard other members, as they have stood in debate here in the House, also compliment the Commission. I think it is very important that we recognize the work they have done in a very short time, how important it is to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I certainly commend them for the amount of time and effort they put into that.

The Member for Port de Grave spoke of the importance of history of names. I know how important that is because I go back to many, many years ago when I first moved to Labrador. The district that I now represent had a different name. It was called the District of Menihek. Menihek is an Indian word, and it had a huge piece of history. Menihek had a great meaning for that particular district because of its Aboriginal roots.

I heard the Member for Torngat Mountains talk of the Nomads and how they were in Labrador West. Menihek is an Indian word that refers to the nomads. To me, losing that name – at the time when it was changed from Menihek to Labrador West it meant very little to me, but as a former Aboriginal minister and as an MHA representing a district that does have a representation of Aboriginals within my district, a very active Aboriginal presence, that word today means something different to me. So when I heard the Member for Port de Grave talk of the importance of the history and name recognition, that came back to me.

I was in a meeting with the Premier the other day and I was very pleased that when we sat with the President of the Iron Ore Company of Canada, he reminded the Premier and I that 10 per cent of the workforce at IOC, which is the largest mine in North America – 10 per cent of the workforce there is Aboriginal. I did not realize that 10 per cent of their working force right now has Aboriginal roots. I think that is great to see.

Should it be higher? I certainly agree. I think it should, but just to see the progress of where we are going, to me, I think that is good progress. I was pleased to see that. When he talked about the history of the names – because I do not want the Member for St. John's South to get upset over there going with his hands telling me to move, but we will get there eventually.

The other thing that quite a few MHAs have talked about when they stood in debate was the geography and the size of districts. I almost feel guilty. I have 10,000 people in my district, but my district is very contained. I heard many of the members stand up and start naming off the communities in their districts. I looked at my colleague from Bellevue and I said I wonder

would I be allowed to stand up and name the streets in my district because I only have two communities. I still have 10,000 constituents in my district. Even though your size is smaller, your work is just as much. You still have to get out and represent those people.

I certainly empathize with some members, such as the Member for Torngat Mountains, the Member for Bellevue, the size of their districts, getting to speak to your constituents because of the geography certainly is not easy. I know I have been in most every district over the past four years, so I understand the size of the districts and the geography of the districts. That is something we are all aware of and we understand the difficulties of it.

I also heard a member – I think it was the Member for Lake Melville who made a comment, you knew what you were getting into. When you put your name on that ballot, you knew what you were doing and you knew the size of your district. So I empathize, but it is not a legitimate complaint to be able to complain about it.

Having the House of Assembly move from forty-eight to forty, I agree with that. As some members spoke earlier, we all talk to our constituents. I think every one of us have heard that constituents in your district will all say we need to make the House of Assembly smaller. The representation in the House of Assembly needs to be smaller. So we listened to that.

I think the important thing with doing it now versus waiting until after the next election – or doing it now, or waiting until next year when the review is due. The difference is by doing it now we are actually saving about \$10 million right there in that alone. If we waited until after the next election and that piece of legislation went in, it does not come into effect then for another four years. I think the people need to understand that.

We were very prudent. When the decision was made, this government was looking at cost savings and saying just by making that small move it has nothing to do with politics, it has to do with saving money. You are saving \$10 million just there alone. That is not counting all of the sidebars.

I agree with making the House of Assembly smaller, going from forty-eight to forty. We will find out after November 30 who will be sitting in the House. Those forty people will have to then decide how they are going to run the Province with forty people versus forty-eight. Hopefully, it will be done diligently.

Like every other member sitting in this House now, I do not mind it being read into Hansard that I plan on seeking re-election. That is not a secret. I certainly hope that after November 30, I will be here representing the people of Labrador West.

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

**MR. MCGRATH:** The reorganization is another piece. That is something that this bill is going to do, the reorganization of the boundaries. Again, I just want to thank the Commission. I think that was a very important piece on how they did the reorganization.

I did hear the Member for Virginia Waters. I was listening as she was speaking. She made a comment that there was not enough time for consultation. I watched, as I am sure every other member in this House did, the process of the consultation when it was happening. It would have been great for everybody to be able to get out and do a presentation face to face with the Commission. With social media the way it is today and technology the way it is today, there were so many different opportunities to do presentations to that Commission.

I thank again the general public that came out and made presentations, those who submitted presentations. I am very pleased they were involved with the process. I think it was a fair process that was done. I think the Commission worked well with that.

The other thing I would like to just touch on is the six months before an election. I think that is a very, very important amendment. You take today, if there were a resignation today – and I do not mind saying it because it is now public. The Member for Gander, for example, has put his name forward for the nomination in the federal election. If he gets that nomination he has to resign his seat in the House of Assembly – if he wins that nomination.

This is an example, if you were to get – and it is not uncommon for politicians to leave municipal politics and to move into provincial. Quite often from provincial politics, some politicians will go into federal politics. It is not uncommon when you have a federal election looming that some provincial politicians make the decision. They quite often wait until the last minute to make that decision, until the nomination is actually called.

I think putting that six months in there – and when you look across the country, it is sort of in the middle of the rest of the country. I agree with the six months. If somebody resigns six months before the date of a provincial election, there will not be a by-election. That is just good governance and good prudence.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that I was able to stand up and be part of this debate tonight. I look forward to the vote and listening to the rest of the debate.

Thank you very much.

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

**MR. SPEAKER (Verge):** The hon. the Member for Humber East.

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

It is indeed an honour to get up tonight and speak on this Bill 13. On Saturday, after I got back in the district, and me with my supporters, I took the time to travel from one end of the district to the other. Nowhere did I hear such condemnation and frustration as I did, not only from the people of Pasadena, but right down to the Codroy Valley. I cannot stand here tonight with a good heart and say thank you to the Commission for the work that was completed on the electoral District of St. George's – Grand Lake. It was, as far as I am concerned, flawed.

The people were presented with one scenario. When the report came back a completely different scenario was laid before them. Make no mistake, tonight, as I stand here, I will be voting against this legislation for that reason. It is not because of Stelman Flynn, it does not matter. This is what I heard from the people. I will read into the record some of the

correspondence that I had from the people who elected me to this House.

Philosophically I am not opposed to the idea of reviewing representation in the House of Assembly. It should be done. We have done a process that was established, that was in place, and that we should not have changed. This legislation was brought to this House, four days of me – my fourth day sitting in the House this legislation was brought forward. There is something flawed with this, I think for the simple reason they just rushed through this process. Those are not my words. Those are the Premier's words that this process was, indeed, very tight on timeline.

So it is not about me. It is about the people who elected me to this House. I would feel more comfortable if I did not think that government's early request for a seat reduction was not a self-serving and a desperate attempt to hold onto power as long as possible, because purely in my view, that is what this was all about. It was for the people to cling to power. You have to change two laws just to get to where we are today: one on the election date, maybe that is two; and the other one on the boundaries. Truly and honestly, this was a rush to get into or to be able to hold onto power. We are basically using statistics that are indeed four years old.

In the initial incidents I had no problem with the format that was set out for the review of the seat reduction, but I feel the people of the new District of St. George's – Grand Lake, the 12,000-plus people have now been robbed of their democratic right to be able to speak on the changes that are put forward in this new legislation. It is absolutely gross, Mr. Speaker, that we should treat the people that way.

The Commission would be appointed and draw up a framework for commentary and submissions to be given by groups and individuals. There is nothing wrong with that. Except the flawed process was when they brought back the second report they had completely changed the district all together.

Listen, I have no problem going to the Codroy Valley. My wife has relatives there. I have gone down and met with them. I have no problem speaking to the people in the Codroy

Valley and, indeed, throughout the whole district, Mr. Speaker.

I grew up in a rural area of this Province. I moved to Corner Brook by choice some years back. My family and I have invested heavily there and I feel obligated to run in the district that I represent.

It would have been better if the Commission could have visited more of the communities and done so in person, but there were constraints. That is where the flaw happened here. There were constraints and the people on that commission, I really do not feel, understood the geography of the district. As a result, we are now stuck with a bad law that we are going to have to live with for the next eleven years. The Commission completed their initial work and submitted its first proposal sometime in May.

Those wishing to submit had an opportunity to do so at one of the hearings, or could submit in writing. In the initial proposal, the District of Humber East, which I have proudly served for the past few months, has been changed significantly and it went on without the input from the people.

The North Shore of the Bay of Islands and the remainder of Pasadena and Pynn's Brook were added to form a new District of Humber North. I will read the letter for the members present here this evening because, as I said, this is not about me. This is about the people in the district that I serve. I want to read into the records parts of that letter which was actually sent to the Premier last week.

From the communications that I have received there really is a lot of opposition in my district, in particular, against this proposal – a significant amount of opposition. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I have found no one, zero, no one, who will actually support the present proposal as it stands. It would be hypocritical of me to stand up here and say this is a good proposal for the people of this new proposed district. Indeed, it is not what some people thought was best but it seemed in the initial proposal that came out in May, that they would accept what the boundary commission had recommended.

I have no choice but to stand here tonight and say that when they went back they radically changed the district from what the original proposal was and they did not give the people in that district an opportunity to have input into it. I think that is a sad day in democracy in this Province. I suspect this was the reason some of the individuals from those communities did not present to the Commission in Corner Brook because they were relatively pleased with the initial recommendations that were brought forth in that proposal. They were agreeable to the proposed boundary changes that were made in the first proposal and chose not to report after.

So, as mentioned, some members of the House did present to the Commission, but I decided not to, based on the facts of the feedback I had received in the original proposal. I applaud those MHAs on either side of the House. It was their democratic right to get up and speak to the proposal. Some chose – but what the Commission did and what I was led to believe is that there would be minor tweaks made to the proposal after the initial proposal came in, but in the case of the new District of Bay St. George – Grand Lake, it was a massive change. Almost 50 per cent of it is now totally different from what the original proposal was. So I cannot stand here and defend that.

As I mentioned previously, there were some big changes in the District of Humber East. Actually, the whole West Coast was affected with the changes to all the district boundaries and the loss of two seats. When the second and final report was released on June 8, there were substantial changes made for some districts from the first report. Too many significant changes were made and I feel the people in that area have not been given the proper input as a democratic society that they should have and record their objections to this.

These changes affected the Districts of Humber North, Humber South – St. George's, Bay of Islands, and Burgeo – La Poile. In its decision to maintain the Bay of Islands with the addition of a part of Corner Brook, this obviously had huge ramifications for the other districts in the area. Most notably, a new district was created that did not look anything like what was proposed and presented in the first report. This new district extends from Pynn's Brook to the

Codroy Valley, jumping over – just imagine – three other districts that you travel to. This is ludicrous.

I do not know if the Commission just took community names and threw them at the wall to see which ones stuck on, because that sure seems like the planning that went into this. It was not long after the final report had been released that I began to get phone calls and emails from concerned citizens around the district. I received calls not only from the area of the present district that I represent but also –

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

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

**MR. FLYNN:** – from areas outside such as Stephenville Crossing and the Codroy Valley.

I would like to read part of an email that I have here: The purpose of this email is to convey my complete and utter disgust with the new Humber East boundaries. Never have I seen such a radical change from proposed to final boundary changes with no consultation and with no commonality or historical connections between its two different parts. Frankly, it stinks to the high heavens.

One of the issues that concern many of those that was expressed – and I think the Mayor of Pasadena was quite forceful in his letter to the Premier about these changes. I would like to read that into the record here this evening, or at least part of it because it is a three-page letter. I am going to read part of the letter so it is documented in this House to show the disgust, not that Stelman Flynn has, that the people of the district has.

It says, “Dear Premier Davis;

“On behalf of the Pasadena Town Council, I would like to express our strong objections to the 2015 Newfoundland and Labrador Electoral Districts Boundaries Report release on June 9, 2015.

“In the past, Pasadena’s electoral district has always been associated within the Humber Valley, either Corner Brook or Deer Lake or

both, as is the current structure, and this has served us really well.

“In the proposed districts released by the Commission on April 10, 2015, Pasadena was included in a district called Humber North which includes Pasadena, portions of Corner Brook and the North Shore of the Bay of Islands. Our council reviewed this proposal and, although we preferred to remain in Humber East, we agreed that this new configuration would also serve our needs. Consequently we did not make a presentation to the Commission.

“On June 8, 2015, when the final report was released, Pasadena was included in a district called St. George’s – Grand Lake, a district that covers an area from Pynn’s Brook to Cape Ray, just east of Port aux Basques. The Town Council of Pasadena was totally shocked. Not in our wildest dreams did we think we would be included in such a district. In our opinion, there is no rationale for this district to exist.

“It has been suggested to us that we should have objected, however, it should be noted that we did not have the opportunity because we were not told by the Commission that we would be in a district called St. George’s – Grand Lake until the final report was released.

“In the final report, the Commission indicates that one of their guiding principles is that they did not wish to ‘split’ districts, whereby it would be necessary for residents to cross through another district to get to another part of the district. This is exactly what has been done with this new district. In order for residents of Pasadena to get to the western part of the new district, they have to pass by/through districts in Corner Brook, which we were formally associated with, to get to the western part of the new district. Truly a bizarre situation!

“Mr. Premier, in view of all the irregularities that have taken place during the Commission hearings we are asking that the proposed electoral boundary changes be postponed until after the next election so that a proper and thorough review can be completed. A secondary option would be to approve the Commissions initial proposal of districts in the Bay of Island/Humber Valley/Bay St. George area that we as a Council had agreed was reasonable.

Clearly, because of limited time available to the commission to do a proper report, towns such as Pasadena, have been treated unfairly.

“I respectfully wait for your response.”

If these changes had been proposed in the first draft, most certainly submissions would have been made by municipalities such as Pasadena, Little Rapids, Steady Brook, Codroy Valley, and so on. So no one in that district is happy with these changes. You have left out, as far as I am concerned, 12,500 people from a due democratic process that every Newfoundlander and Labradorian in this Province is entitled to. At this point, these communities, which I presently serve as MHA for Humber East, are not pleased with the boundary changes in the final report. I believe these changes are substantially different from what was proposed in the first draft.

I ask all of the hon. members in the House to take a look at what was proposed the first time and what came back the second time. I think we would be ashamed to approve the proposed first draft. They should have given the same opportunity to make a presentation to the Commission as was afforded in the initial draft. Unfortunately, given the significance of that change, the people in that area from Pynn’s Brook down through the Codroy Valley never had that opportunity.

Rightly or wrongly, it was at least my understanding, changes from the first draft would be minimal and not of the nature that has happened. I was told that changes would be minor and there would be a street adjusted here or there to accommodate these changes. Mr. Speaker, that did not happen. The Commission did not treat the people fairly in the new district.

As the Member of Humber East – and I represent many of these constituents who will be dramatically affected by these changes – I am urging this House to take a second sober look at what has been put forward. I totally agree with them that their voice has not been heard. In many respects the process has failed them and their concerns. We are talking 12,000 people here. I thought the motto of democracy was to leave no one behind.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, while I voted in favour of the initial bill, I cannot support what has occurred in the final report. It is an injustice to the people of that district. It is totally, totally injustice. I am asking the members to take a look at that book and see from the original proposal to what came back to us a week ago today, and see the changes that were made, especially where the constituents that I represent did not have the opportunity to hear their concerns for such dramatic changes.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here and I feel that – as the people of that district – their voice has not been heard. I totally understand that. I totally feel that the people of that district have been neglected in the Commission’s report. I cannot stand here and say congratulations to that Commission for the great work they did because we have failed. The Commission has failed the people in that district. They have totally changed what was originally laid out. The people had no opportunity to have input into it, Mr. Speaker, and I think it is a disaster for the region.

In regard to whether Stelman Flynn can represent that district; I grew up, Mr. Speaker, in a rural area and I feel quite comfortable, but I still believe that given the significant changes that were made, they had every right to request to this House that their voice be heard. Hopefully, tonight I have been able to express in some small way their voice, because up until this point it has been missing. I feel terrible for that, and I apologize to the people in that district for what I think is an injustice to democracy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It certainly is a pleasure to have my first opportunity to speak to Bill 13, An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Act. I guess the bad news for me, I suppose, is I only have twenty minutes, but the good news is that Committee is coming and we will have many opportunities to get up as many times as we

want at ten-minute intervals to speak to this legislation. Guess what? I have every intention of doing so, as I know a lot of my other colleagues do as well. I am sure the members opposite are looking forward to that.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of aspects to this bill and it is a fairly thick piece of legislation. Although, really it comes down to four key areas. One area, of course, is the number of boundaries itself, moving from forty-eight to forty seats. We have the name changes of the districts. We have the election date change, and we have the new by-election rule. We can speak to all four of those at significant length, I would suspect. We probably will as we have time to do so.

I just wanted to speak for a moment, Mr. Speaker, on my district as it currently exists, and my district as is proposed. Currently, I represent the District of Mount Pearl South. Traditionally, Mount Pearl had two districts, if you will, Mount Pearl South and Mount Pearl North. At one point in time we had Waterford – Kenmount. Mount Pearl North was called Waterford – Kenmount. Then it was changed to Waterford Valley. Then it was changed to Mount Pearl North. Mount Pearl South has pretty much been, to my knowledge, a constant.

The general boundary has changed to some degree. Generally we have had two members, although as it currently stands we have three. The last time there was a boundary change done, they added Topsail. They took a portion of Power's Pond, the upper end of Power's Pond and then they put that into Topsail district. I am not sure how that worked in terms of the communities of interest and so on, nonetheless that was done. Now we are basically going back to two districts, Mount Pearl North and Mount Pearl South, with the general boundary line being Ruth Avenue and Commonwealth Avenue.

Mr. Speaker, after the Commission was formed and they had the boundary hearings, I did make a presentation to the Boundaries Commission down at the Airport Inn. Quite frankly, there were not many submissions made, I think, on that particular day, and that was to cover the whole St. John's metro area. I think there were

only three presentations and mine was one of them, of the three.

At the time the only issue I had – of course the proposal was to change Mount Pearl South to Mount Pearl – Southlands. That would see the addition of Southlands to my district, as well as the other area, which is sort of adjacent to Southlands, which is known as South Brook. Then, there are a few houses on Heavy Tree Road. Basically, everything to the north or west – whatever way you want to look at it, I guess northwest of the arterial, the Robert E. Howlett, including that area. Beyond that, there was no change in the Mount Pearl portion.

I did make a representation at the time to the Commission because there was a little anomaly there. There was a confusing area between Mount Pearl North and Mount Pearl South. That was in the area of Roosevelt Avenue and Second Street. While Ruth Avenue was generally one of the main border lines, when you got so far down Ruth Avenue, down to Roosevelt, you kind of went south on Roosevelt Avenue. Then, of course, you had Mount Pearl North on one side of the street and Mount Pearl South on the other side of the street.

Then it went east on St. Andrew's Avenue. As you went east on St. Andrew's Avenue there were maybe ten or twelve houses there that would be in Mount Pearl North, while the bulk of St. Andrew's Avenue was in Mount Pearl South. Then you got into some other anomalies around Second Street and Sunrise Avenue where, I think, Mount Pearl North had four houses on Sunrise and the rest of Sunrise was Mount Pearl South, and then similar anomalies over on Second Street.

Basically what I had requested to the Commission at the time was really that you need to draw that line straight down the middle of Ruth Avenue to Commonwealth Avenue and then proceed down Commonwealth Avenue to Brookfield Road. That would basically capture the area of the entirety of Roosevelt Avenue, Second Street, First Street, Edinburgh, the entirety of St. Andrew's Avenue, Teasdale, the entirety of Sunrise Avenue, and St. David's Avenue.

I thought that made perfect sense to do so because there was confusion in that neighborhood, as I said, where you would have two members, and they would be divided by portions of streets or different sides of the street. It was very confusing.

I was very pleased that the Commission actually did take that into account. I have to say they were very receptive to the idea when I made my presentation. I was suspecting that they would make that change and they actually did make that change. I thought that was a positive change. It cleared up the confusion. It really cleaned up that area.

What happened though, which I did not realize at the time – when the report came out the first thing I looked for was the change I requested and they had made it. So I said, okay, great the change is made, perfect. What I did not realize at the time was that in exchange for fixing that portion they actually took another little section out of my district at the top of Ruth Avenue, which would be the Lindburgh Crescent neighbourhood which would include Lindburgh Crescent, Wellington through Nelson and Marconi Place, and also took out the Scammell Crescent, and Glendening Place as well.

Basically they fixed up one end, but then they took another portion out. Now, I suppose it made some sense – from the perspective of taking out that section up around Lindburgh and Scammell – that they took out an entire neighbourhood. That entire neighbourhood is now moved into Mount Pearl North, so at least there will not be confusion.

I have to say I was very disappointed to lose that section of my district as I am sure any member, who has seen any changes to their district, would be disappointed. You have represented a particular area. You get to know the people. You work on their issues. You build relationships, and now, all of a sudden, you see that disappear. There is no doubt I was disappointed by that particular change, but from an overall perspective I have no issue with the change at all.

In terms of the Southlands, South Brook part – and as I told the Commission at the time, obviously when we were reducing the number of

seats we knew that the districts had to grow. Some districts were going to be lost because we were going from forty-eight to forty, so we know some would be lost. We knew in order to accomplish that, the other remaining districts would have to grow, with the exception of the Labrador seats and of course any areas that, because of geography, could not be expanded, like Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

We knew that was going to happen. I suspected at the time – before these boundaries were even drawn, I was asked: How do you think the Commission is going to make this division in the Mount Pearl area? I said at the time, I suspected that Southlands would be added in and that is exactly what happened.

Like I said, when I presented to the Commission I certainly spoke in favour of that because Southlands and South Brook have an affinity to Mount Pearl in terms of the whole concept of communities of interest, Mr. Speaker. Really, many of the people who live in Southlands are former Mount Pearl residents, people who grew up in Mount Pearl. A lot of them are people who, perhaps, had their starter home in Mount Pearl. Then they wanted to build a newer home, but because of the geographic challenges in Mount Pearl in terms of the actual area available to build new homes, they decided they would do the next best thing, stay close to Mount Pearl and move into Southlands.

Many of the people who are living there I would sort of deem as Mount Pearl people; people who have an affinity to Mount Pearl. Even those who may not have been from Mount Pearl or moved there from Mount Pearl, certainly anyone who is living in that area in terms of the schools, their children would actually be going to school in Mount Pearl. They would be going to St. Peter's Primary, they would be going to Newtown Elementary, they would be going to St. Peter's Junior High, and they would be going to O'Donel High School.

All the kids would be going up through school in Mount Pearl. Consequently, they would also for the most part be involved in sports and activities in Mount Pearl, whether that be the Show Choir, the O'Donel Jazz Band, whether that be Mount Pearl Minor Hockey, Mount Pearl Minor Baseball, basketball, the Mount Pearl

Marlins Swim Team, Campia gymnastics, and what have you.

The children are obviously not just going to school in Mount Pearl; they are participating in sports in Mount Pearl. Consequently, the parents are involved in terms of being volunteers with all of these organizations in Mount Pearl. Generally, they would be going to church, in many cases I would suggest in Mount Pearl, shopping in Mount Pearl and so on.

The reality of it is that there was a strong affinity to Mount Pearl. That connection is definitely there. The community of interest is definitely there so I think it is a natural fit. Of course we know that Southlands – which we are not going to get into that story. I could. Southlands was actually once part of Mount Pearl. It actually was in the municipal boundary of Mount Pearl and it was removed.

It made a whole lot of sense that Southlands and South Brook would be brought into that district. I certainly will be very proud to represent the people of South Brook and to represent the people of Southlands. I have already made contact with a number of them. I know many of them and I will continue to make contact with them.

I will be seeking their support in the next provincial election in the District of Mount Pearl – Southlands assuming that it goes through as is being suggested. I guess we are going to assume that it is going to happen, although it does not have to happen. As members have said, these are recommendations. These are recommendations that have been made by the Commission. Just because they are recommendations does not mean it all has to be rubber stamped.

We could see changes made, if we wanted to, if the will was there, to some of the districts. We could see name changes of districts. We could see a whole bunch of changes if the will was there. Whether the government is prepared to do anything like that, well, who knows? We will see what happens as time goes on for sure.

At the end of the day, I voted for the seat reduction. I knew there would be changes to my district. I knew my district would be expanded.

I suspected it would be expanded to where it is, and it is. I had hoped to clean up that section down at the bottom of Ruth which I was successful in getting done. Like I said, I am disappointed in losing the Lindburgh and Scammell area because I have an affinity with that and work with those people.

At the end of the day, I am satisfied and will be very proud to represent the people in that particular district to the best of my ability, as I represent the people of my current district to the best of my ability. In that regard, I do not have any real issue with it.

I understand, I think we all understand, that there are definitely differences between districts, whether they be Labrador districts, whether they be urban districts, or whether they be rural districts. We understand that there are geographic considerations. We understand there are issues around communities of interest and so on. That is why even though I am in favour, and I believe the people of my district are in favour, or have no issue with at least the change, I realize that there will be districts in the Province where the people may not be satisfied. That is why I am very glad that our leader has given the opportunity for our members to represent the wishes of the people who they represent. I think that is a good thing.

As a matter of fact, when the boundaries thing came up I had only one email – that is it, one – from a constituent around the whole issue of the reduction of seats. That was: Paul, I hope you are going to vote in favour of reducing the seats. I know that since the change has come out, I have not heard any complaints from anybody around that particular change. I communicated the change to the people of Southlands at the time about the proposed change before the final report and I never received any objections. Based on that I can only assume the people who I represent now, and the people I will be representing – if the changes come to fruition, and if I am successful in the next general election, I can only assume that they are okay with that change.

From that perspective, I will be voting in favour of the legislation. I totally understand and appreciate that there are members in our caucus, as I said a few minutes ago, in representing the

people of their districts and proposed districts, that they have to represent them and they have to vote their conscience. They have to vote based on what those people have suggested that they would do so. I totally respect them for doing just that.

Mr. Speaker, as I had indicated earlier, there are so many areas that we can speak to as it relates to this. Unfortunately, I have less than two minutes so I am not going to get even close to touching on them all now, but I certainly will when we get to Committee of the Whole.

I do want to pick up on one point while I have a minute or so. My colleague here for Humber East – and I think it was a valid point. When the Commission came out and drew the original map they shrunk the districts from forty-eight to forty, and there were some big changes there. People had the opportunity to make representation because there were big changes.

Whether they got enough opportunity, and whether doing it by Skype in some areas and video conferences is acceptable, and whether all the communities or every region got to have an opportunity, that is another issue which I am going to talk about when we get to Committee perhaps. Certainly there was a big change made. People had an opportunity to speak to those changes. In the second and so-called final report, we have also seen huge changes.

It was also my thought that you would have a proposal, and once that proposal was made they would get feedback. Then if there were changes after that, it may be somewhat minor changes, boundary issues and so on, but somewhat minor perhaps. We have seen areas where we have seen huge changes in the second draft from what was in the first draft. For those huge changes, the people never had any opportunity to have any say whatsoever. I think that is a flaw. That is a flaw, there is no doubt about it. I recognize what my colleague said. I certainly think he has a valid concern there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to speaking again in Committee on a number of other things.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde.

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

Thank you for the opportunity this evening to stand and take a few minutes to talk about Bill 13 and represent the views of the people of my District of Trinity – Bay de Verde.

Mr. Speaker, I want to look at the time frame or the piece of work of what has happened here in the last twenty-two months I guess, or a little less than twenty-two months. It will be twenty-two months by the time we get to election day on November 30.

Mr. Speaker, you go back to – I think really all this started with DarkNL. The power went out. This is where all this started. It was a year ago in January the lights went out and things started to change. It started off in January 2014 with the resignation of Premier Dunderdale.

The first PC leadership race starts. Wayne Bennett gets kicked out of the race. Bill Barry quits the race. Frank Coleman assumes the role. We have a massive turnover in the Premier's Office costing hundreds of thousands of dollars in severance. The Premier-elect Coleman, all but assumes office.

I believe actually, Mr. Speaker, a year ago today – if my memory serves me correctly. I think a year ago today was the day that Mr. Coleman pulled out of the PC leadership race. Check your facts, but I think –

**MR. FORSEY:** Relevance.

**MR. CROCKER:** The Member for Exploits is calling relevance, but you know –

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

I would ask the member to make his comments relevant to the legislation.

The hon. the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde.

**MR. FORSEY:** I am running in the next election (inaudible).

**MR. CROCKER:** I say to the Member for Exploits, I will certainly be running, I say to the member. I also say to the member, the people of Trinity – Bay de Verde spoke very clearly on November 25 on who they wanted to represent them.

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

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

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

**MR. CROCKER:** Very, very clearly, Sir – very clearly.

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

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

**MR. CROCKER:** Again, I will come back to Bill 13 and I will come back to the Commission – Mr. Speaker, can I have some protection please? The member talks about protection all the time.

Mr. Speaker, the Commission's timelines were restrained. It is interesting, if you go to 12.0 of the report and you look at what the Commission actually says when it brings the report back to the House, "The Commission recommends that more than 120 days be allocated for any future commission, particularly one mandated to propose changes to the number of electoral districts." That is their number one recommendation in the recommendations of the report.

They go on to say technology, like video conferencing, was good. They managed to hold twelve public sittings. I disagree with the twelve public sittings, Mr. Speaker. I attended the public sitting in Carbonear and I also attended the public sitting in Whitbourne. There were two different types of public sittings I witnessed in that process.

I went to the Carbonear public sitting and the Commission was there in video, sort of like the Jetsons. Mr. Speaker, a week later I made my presentation in Whitbourne and the Commission

was actually present in the room. I think the Commission got a greater feel of what was being said, or the emotion that was in the room that day in Whitbourne than they did the afternoon in Carbonear.

In Trinity – Bay de Verde, Mr. Speaker, from day one, when we started talking about Bill 42, then what brings it back today as Bill 13, there was a very keen interest. I had representation from the joint mayors and joint firefighters association. I was actually invited to attend, and attended, three public meetings throughout the consultation process of people planning how they were going to have their views heard. I attended a public meeting in Whiteway, one in Hant's Harbour, and one also in Old Perlican. Mr. Speaker, everybody at those meetings shared their concerns, and their concerns were very much valid.

The day I made my presentation in Whitbourne there were also presentations made by Whiteway Mayor Craig Whelan, Dr. David Prior, Heart's Content Mayor Fred Cumby, and Joy Dobbie, the chair of the local service district in Cavendish as well.

Mr. Speaker, they all spoke passionately about why their portion of the district – because in the original proposal Trinity South, communities that were south of Cavendish to Hopeall, were excluded from the new district. They felt very much slighted by that and opposed to that change. They made a strong representation. They presented a petition that day in Whitbourne with over 700 names that were collected in four days of people from the district who were not satisfied with the current proposal. They wanted to stay a part of a district that they were accustomed to being a part of.

I do give some credit to the Commission. The Commission did recognize in their final report, Mr. Speaker, and placed Cavendish and Whiteway back in the new District of Carbonear-Trinity-Bay de Verde. The people in Cavendish and Whiteway were very much pleased to be a part of the new district, and I thank the Commission for hearing what the people from Cavendish and Whiteway had to say. I am, Mr. Speaker, disappointed for the people of Green's Harbour and Hopeall. They also wanted to be a part of the new district, and I

guess the population cap created the issue for them not being able to come back into the new district.

Mr. Speaker, just to go back momentarily to the presentations that were made, I will go back to the presentation in Carbonear. Seventeen-year-old Blake Potter, Mr. Speaker, presented that day in Carbonear. I am going to go out on a limb and guess that Blake was probably the youngest presenter in the hearings that were held on the boundaries commission. Blake, being a Grade 12 student – graduating from Baccalieu Collegiate, I guess next week, and future political aspirations – presented on two things that day. It was very interesting.

Blake is very much a history buff. Blake's first part of his presentation, he gave everybody present a history lesson. Blake brought us back to 1855. When Blake brought us back to 1855, he talked about the name Bay de Verde remaining in a district. Bay de Verde dates back to 1855. So, it was a seventeen-year-old young man, Mr. Speaker, who pointed that out to the Commission. Because the original report when it came back, it had the district called Trinity – Carbonear, I think, was the original proposal.

Blake presented, and myself in my submission in Whitbourne, also suggested that Bay de Verde be put back in the name. Much to our surprise, when the final report came back, Mr. Speaker, the Commission did change the name. They changed it back to simply Trinity – Bay de Verde.

As my colleague from Carbonear – Harbour Grace and I have chatted about, we both totally support the idea of Carbonear being a part of that district. Carbonear has been historically a name –

**MR. SLADE:** Since 1855.

**MR. CROCKER:** Since 1855.

The Member for Port de Grave eloquently pointed out earlier this evening about the history of names. No matter what the configurations are, if you look at the Bay de Verde Peninsula over history and over the last 250 years, you will always find the words Port de Grave, Carbonear, Harbour Grace, Bay de Verde, and Trinity. You

always find those names. It is really good to see that by the time this report finally makes it through the House we are going to see all those names back again, I would hope.

Mr. Speaker, that brings us to the public sittings and the input that I heard from my constituents. I want to come back to the bill again now for a second. I want to move away from the boundaries for a minute and I want to look at two or three other pieces of this legislation that I think if we are not careful they are going to get overshadowed by all of the talk about the boundaries. No doubt, Mr. Speaker, the boundaries are the most important piece of this legislation, but there are other pieces of this legislation that I think led to the boundaries. There is a piece of this legislation that actually put us in the situation we are in today. There are pieces of this legislation that are, I guess, the creator of the boundary changes.

We look at the general election date being moved to avoid the federal election. Mr. Speaker, it is a timeline that I outlined earlier about the twenty-two months of the governing party not being able to get a leadership race right. Without that, this election would be long over and we would be looking at a government at least with a fresh mandate.

Mr. Speaker, it was quite clear about ten days ago that this election could have been held in September. I believe the letter back from the Chief Electoral Office said that, yes, even though the timelines were tight we could have an election in September.

Mr. Speaker, we have to realize one thing, the Premier at any day can call an election. So it is not up to Elections NL to say, well, we need certain periods to have an election. In the past, before we had fixed election dates, a Premier called an election by going down to Government House, walking up the driveway and saying to the Lieutenant Governor please dissolve Parliament. He dissolved the Assembly, the Assembly went on, and we had an election.

Elections NL did what they had to do to facilitate that election. That could actually happen. Last week we could have had an election. If the government would have fallen on their Budget, we would have had an election

last week, and Elections NL would have had no choice but to facilitate an election.

Mr. Speaker, then when we go down and we look at the by-election change, the six-month change. This is sort of like the O'Brien clause. This is not an uncommon piece of legislation to see in jurisdictions throughout the country of not having by-elections within six months of a general election. The funny thing is we wrote this – or sorry, we did not write it. The government wrote this fixed-date legislation back in the early 2000s. In their jurisdiction scans back in the early 2000s we did not see them putting in a six-month law then. There was no six-month law, it was sixty, ninety.

**MR. FLYNN:** So why didn't they put it in?

**MR. CROCKER:** I say to the Member for Humber East the reason it is put in now is because we are going to see one resignation very shortly, and my prediction is we will see others. The government has had a bad track record when it comes to by-elections, so they have a little bit of adversity to by-elections. The people in the last seven by-elections in this Province had spoken pretty clearly – Mr. Speaker, that as well when you want to talk about this bill.

The other law – and I guess something overrides something here that I do not see – is the 365-day rule. On September 25 down at the Delta or the Convention Centre, a little over 300 people picked the Premier. There is a law that Premier Williams brought in back in 2002, 2003, whenever that was. I think at that time they called it the Grimes bill.

The reason for this change was former Premier Grimes became Leader of the Liberal Party in 2002, or winter 2001 or 2002 at the Glacier. I happened to be there. Premier Williams stood up and said we are never going to let this happen again. We are never going to let the Premier stay more than a year after he is elected by his party – never going to let this happen again.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Is it going to happen again?

**MR. CROCKER:** It has happened. It has happened again.

The first time we get to test this rule or this law, the first test, and it is just thrown out the window. So it has never been applied. So this is a law that Premier Williams and his government passed in 2003, 2004 that has never been applied. The first opportunity to apply it and here we are tonight debating changing it because it is convenient to the government. The government found it convenient. It is convenient and expeditious for the government right now to make these changes.

If this government were serious about reforming elections and reforming assemblies, why are we not in this whole process debating special ballots? We know we have some issues in this Province with special ballots. There is an ongoing court case today in this Province. There is a court case now about special ballots and we are not addressing that issue, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier talks so much about his need to reform the House of Assembly and cut the number of MHAs. If the Premier were serious about reforming the House of Assembly and saving money, well, here are a few steps. The first one; he cut his Cabinet. After public pressure encouraged him to cut his Cabinet size, he cuts the size of his Cabinet, but first he had us back in here for \$60,000 to debate Bill 42.

There are other things the Premier could do to reform Parliament and I will come back to this. We had a private member's motion a while back to eliminate salaries for Parliamentary Secretaries and Parliamentary Assistants. We are the only Province in Atlantic Canada that pays our Parliamentary Secretaries and Parliamentary Assistants.

That day, Mr. Speaker, the government and the Third Party stood and voted to continue the expenditure of \$150,000 a year of public money. The next day, the Member for St. John's Centre got up and brought in a petition calling upon government to reinstate the Family Violence Intervention Court. Thankfully, the government did see fit to reinstate the Family Violence Intervention Court, but at the end of the day –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** It was a lot of work.

**MR. CROCKER:** Yes, I say to the member, it was a lot of work.

Mr. Speaker, it all comes back to the fact that if we are reforming Parliament with Bill 13 and the size of the House of Assembly, we have to get it right.

There are other issues in this House, Mr. Speaker. We are one of the only jurisdictions in Atlantic Canada that does not have a committee structure. Why are we not talking about a committee structure? There are so many things that we could be doing in this House to reform it and we are not doing it.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** We are just rushing it.

**MR. CROCKER:** It is. It is just a rush job. I will go back to the report again and Recommendation 1 in the report. Mr. Speaker, 12.0 Recommendations and the first recommendation, “The Commission recommends that more than 120 days be allocated for any future commission, particularly one mandated to propose changes to the number of electoral districts.” “The Commission recommends that the places and number of public sittings be at the commission’s discretion.”

Is what the Commission saying here is that it was not at their discretion? Who told the Commission where they were sitting? Why did the Commission not sit? I think, Mr. Speaker, this was one of the lowest numbers of public hearings we have seen in the history of commissions.

I will just go to number 4 of the recommendations, “The Commission recommends that future electoral boundary revisions be undertaken closer to the publication of census data.” Do you know what we are getting in 2016, Mr. Speaker? We are getting a new census. So we are getting a new census and we will have up-to-date data. So already we are going to pass boundaries on four-year-old data.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Older than that.

**MR. CROCKER:** Older than that. Okay, older than four years. Yes, ten.

So when you look at the idea that we are using data, Mr. Speaker, that is old and flawed, I would fear to guess that the Member for CBS,

whose district is one of the largest in the Province tonight population-wise, is actually thousands of people larger than it really is.

Ironically enough, Mr. Speaker, with the changes to the boundaries, the new district of – tonight it is Trinity – Bay de Verde, but I hope in a day or so it will be Carbonear – Trinity – Bay de Verde or some other version of the name. It would be the largest population in the Province. It would become the largest district. That being said, I am fine with that. If the people of that district choose me to be their member after November 30, I have no issue representing them to the best of my ability.

Mr. Speaker, that brings me to the end of my remarks tonight. I heard loud and clear throughout the time period. From when we were here in January and passed Bill 42, I heard loud and clear from the people in the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde. Whether it be the joint mayors, whether it be the 700 people who signed the petition, whether it was the three public meetings that I attended, the emails, the phone calls, and the people I talked to throughout the district.

Since I was elected there is hardly a weekend goes by that I do not travel the entirety of the district. I am lucky in that way. I know there are members like the members from Labrador and the Member for Burgeo – La Poile who cannot do that. I have been lucky enough to pretty much encompass my entire district almost once a week.

I have had the opportunity to talk to a lot of people, Mr. Speaker, about these changes. I can assure you they do not support these changes. I have collected lots of data and lots of information to that point. That is why I will stand and vote against Bill 13 when the time comes later this week, or whenever the said time will be.

Mr. Speaker, again, thank you very much for the time this evening.

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

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

**MR. HILLIER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 13. As the evening moves on, as you get further and further down the batting order a lot of the things have been said, and I guess a lot of the things need to be reiterated as we move along.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 13 deals with a bunch of issues. There are four basic issues that I would like to deal with this evening: one is the boundary change and the reduction from forty-eight down to forty seats; the second one is the extended election date; the third one is the by-elections; and the fourth deals with the names of the districts. I will take some time, as we move along here, to talk a little bit about Conception Bay South and the impact that this has had on Conception Bay South.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague from St. John's Centre, when she spoke, one of the things she emphasized was why did this happen? Why did we have to come back here on January 19 and spend a week in the House for no apparent reason? It was all a surprise. Nobody had been in the House. The House had never been open in January in recent memory. Her question was why.

Mr. Speaker, there are a whole bunch of surmises as to why. We know that the Premier's reason was we had to get back here and get this done so that we could save money. He talks about \$2.5 million that he would save on an annual basis. We know that it cost us \$60,000 to run the session for that week so we are already behind in that respect.

Mr. Speaker, some people would say \$2 million is insignificant in the greater scheme of things- I worked it out, played with all the zeroes, and I think it comes to 0.025 per cent of our current Budget. As I said, some people would talk about that as being insignificant, but it is not insignificant. Two million dollars would give me a couple of years for my seniors' advocate office that I have wanted and that we have tried to promote here on many occasions. That \$2.5 million would allow us to put the swimming rates back in the provincial pools so that our seniors do not have to pay the high rates and continue with their healthy living and their swimming and exercise.

Mr. Speaker, \$2.5 million is not the issue. The issue is that this government changed its spots just like that. We had just come out of collecting \$20 billion. This government collected \$20 billion in oil money. My colleague from Bay of Islands off the top of his head named \$400 million that was wasted. All of a sudden on January 19, we had to come back in here so that we could save \$2 million.

Mr. Speaker, a government does not change its spots overnight. It is no coincidence that we came in here that week to debate this issue. It is all about putting off the election date. I do not believe in coincidence.

Mr. Speaker, our current Premier, Premier-elect or Premier not elected, goes back to September 25. On September 25 he promised that he would do four things in 120 days. He talked about a health care symposium. He talked about a new youth council. He talked about a committee on crime. He talked of House of Assembly reform.

Mr. Speaker, if we take September 25 and add 120 days we come to January 24, two days after we finished this piece of legislation. That is no coincidence. The Premier was moving down the road. We got into January and it was, oh my God, I have not done anything with House of Assembly reform. We better get everybody back, punch in a week. He just got it in time to be able to say that in his first 120 days he did something with House of Assembly reform. Coincidence, no, I do not believe in coincidences.

Mr. Speaker, the first we saw it, it was all about eliminating an early election. That was the first thing that came to our minds. If we are going through this we have to make sure that there is an election this year. We thought there should have been one this past spring, but no, as a result of bringing in this piece of legislation, putting a commission to work a year or two years before it is due, this government was able to delay an early election. No coincidence – no coincidence.

Mr. Speaker, the next one, I thought a little bit about using it, and I just entitled the topic slowing down the Liberals. I was not sure if I was going to use it or not until the Minister of Transportation let the cat out of the bag, or the

genie out of the bottle on Thursday when he said, “We foiled their master plan.” To quote the Minister of Transportation: “We foiled their master plan. Their master plan was to take over the world. They had it all worked out. They were putting people in place in the last number of years.”

Mr. Speaker, “We foiled their master plan.” The Minister of Transportation admits that the reason why we came back here on January 19 was to slow down the Liberals. They had to slow down the Liberals because of where we were at that time, and we are still there. I am not concerned about the minister being concerned about slowing down the Liberals.

Mr. Speaker, let’s go to the second piece, the election date. As my colleague from Trinity – Bay de Verde spoke to a few moments ago it all goes back to the leadership woes. Dunderdale resigns, Wayne Bennett was deemed unacceptable. I see that he is acceptable for the NDP now according to his tweets. You guys have taken him right into your bosom. Bill Barry made some comments that not everyone disagreed with. Then Frank Coleman came in on his white horse. That was last spring.

With Coleman coming in and nobody else in the race, it was about the time that me and my group decided let’s seek the nomination for Conception Bay South. At that point in time, the leadership was to have been the middle of July. Frank Coleman was going to be crowned and our thought was if Frank Coleman is crowned in July, we need to be ready for an election in the fall. That is the way we ran our nomination.

Of course we know what happened with Frank Coleman. He got cold feet and he moved on. Then we had a couple of people run for the nomination who really did not want to have anything to do with it when Franke Coleman was involved.

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

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

**MR. HILLIER:** We get into September; the Premier becomes Premier based on 350 votes and a kiss on the cheek from the Deputy Premier

to say who he was supporting. Now, Mr. Speaker, we are saying we have a Premier. They finally have their house in order to some degree, so I guess there will be an election in the spring.

Mr. Speaker, it did not happen. The Premier kept taking one foot out of his mouth so there would be room to put the other one in, and he had a rough fall. He had a rough fall. They went down in the polls, called us back in January so that we make sure there is no election in the spring.

Then there came a window to hold one in September. The polls in Newfoundland were saying everybody in Newfoundland wants – 60 per cent of the population wants an election in September. No, the government again did not listen to the people in Newfoundland. Why, Mr. Speaker? Everybody wanted an election so they could toss this crowd out. So where are we? Now we are pushing it to November 30. They finally said their date.

Mr. Speaker, the third piece are the by-elections. I realize that in most jurisdictions across Canada holding no by-elections within six months of an election is the norm. Obviously, we can see exactly why. You are running into a nomination. We ran by-elections last year and you are running up against a general election. People do not want to be holding a by-election several months before going into the general election, so we can see where it is happening.

Mr. Speaker, is it just a coincidence that this government decides at this time that they are going to put this piece of legislation in the bill?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** No.

**MR. HILLIER:** No. My colleague says no. I do not believe in coincidences.

We know that this Premier has an aversion to by-elections; Virginia Waters, Carbonear, Cartwright – L’Anse au Clair, and then we have the boys back here, the four of us. We have been a little bit rambunctious, Mr. Speaker, moving in, but I thank you for your firm hand and your colleagues firm hand in guiding us in terms of the proper etiquette for being here in the House.

We had – there we go, one, two, three, and no by-elections coming up. Then we know there are members opposite who want to get out of here. They want to get out of here. I can understand that. There are people there who have punched their time. They just want to move on. We need this piece of legislation so we do not get people walking out and then having to have by-elections this particular summer.

Mr. Speaker, I will move on now to my district. My district, I guess of all those that had changed, probably had the least amount of change in the Province. We knew going in that we had to lose about 1,000. My concern is we knew before the boundary change that we had about 15,000 people in my district.

I go back to the debate on Bill 49 back in January, and I dig out this piece of information. Mr. Speaker, we are using 2011 data. In the Town of Conception Bay South in 2011, we had 517 active building lots. There were eighty-four developments – not eighty-four building lots, eighty-four different developments. So 517 active lots, 412 proposed lots. That was in 2011.

Mr. Speaker, that is over 900 lots, almost 1,000 lots. If we put three people in each of those houses, that is about 3,000 people. I know right now that if I get 300 more people in my district, then I am over the limit. So what are the chances, with knowing there are 3,000 extra people in my district, that I am not over the limit right now? I figure I am over the limit by 1,000 or 2,000 people. I do not mind because I know it is less work than some of the people who have to travel.

My colleague from Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair talked about it this afternoon, and all the work in travelling around the district. My concern is that in Conception Bay South one vote is not equal to the one vote that we talk about in the rest of the Province. There is certainly the possibility here, Mr. Speaker, of a legal case in that the District of Conception Bay South is not represented.

Mr. Speaker, we have three pieces here, and we voted in favour of it back in January. I will be voting in favour of it now. We have the cutback to forty-eight seats. As I said, cutting back the

forty-eight seats will have little impact on my district. It is still eighty-five kilometres square, 7.4 per cent of the population being represented. So, it is really not a big deal there.

Mr. Speaker, pushing off the date; well, at least now we have a permanent date. I do not agree with it. We should have had an election this past spring, if it had not been for this scheme that this government put together, well-planned scheme.

They arrived back here on January 19. The Premier was all spit and polish. In fact, when we walked into our caucus room that evening we did not know what hit us, the Premier was so spit and polished, but the shine wore off him as the week went on and so on. This was a very, very much fabricated scheme right from the get-go to move this election to November 30.

Mr. Speaker, then we are into, as I said, the by-elections and the names of the districts. I had some of my colleagues here this evening talking about the history of their districts. Some go back to 1832, which was the first Legislature in our Province. Some go back to the 1850s and so on.

My district, Mr. Speaker, is a relatively new district going back to the 1990s. The Town of Conception Bay South in itself is only fifty years old. While we do not have the historical record that is represented by Trinity – Bay de Verde and Port de Grave, we certainly have within our district places such as Chamberlains, Topsail, Manuels, Kelligrews, Long Pond, Upper Gullies, and Foxtrap that are very much involved with the history and the political history of this Province.

Mr. Speaker, earlier today the Member for Bonavista South stood and talked very eloquently about his team. It is great to see a man stand and be proud of his team and talk about how strong his team is. On Thursday, the Minister of Transportation stood and questioned the integrity of our team. Mr. Speaker, I take offence to when anybody questions the integrity of my team. I know a little bit about teams, being involved with it just a little bit.

Mr. Speaker, it was wishful thinking on the Minister of Transportation's part that maybe there was an issue with the integrity of our team.

This is one of the strongest teams that I have been involved with. We have veterans here. We have rookies here. We have stars here. We have role players. We have people with diverse backgrounds. We have a game plan –

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

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

**MR. HILLIER:** Mr. Speaker, we have a game plan and we have bought into that game plan. Besides that, we are having fun with it.

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

**MR. HILLIER:** I say to the Minister of Transportation if he plans on taking on this team in November, he had better bring his game face and wear your helmet too sonny.

Thank you very much.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was not going to get up and speak at this point, but I always enjoy listening to the Member for CBS and the many great points he uses. I try not to roll my eyes when I say that.

He brings up some interesting comments. I do not know if anybody has been keeping score over here. I had a little scorecard because I was wondering. Of course when we discussed this bill and we voted on the bill, as I recall – now my memory is getting shoddy in my older age, but I am pretty sure – every single person over on the Opposition side, save the NDP, all the Liberals, stood and voted for it, I think.

So that is fine. They all voted for it, as did we. That was fine and that was good. I also remember shortly thereafter, after the vote, the well-spoken Member for CBS was on, On Point. David Cochrane, the host, asked him something to the effect: well, sure, you voted for it. He was on there saying this is terrible. He said, well, you voted for it. Yes, but, he said, it was going

to pass anyway so I figured I would vote for it. Now I kid you not.

In recent days we have seen some pretty funny interviews from Liberal candidates, but that was one of the better ones.

**MR. HILLIER:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South on a point of order.

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

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

**MR. HILLIER:** Mr. Speaker, that is a direct quote that the Premier fabricated on March 25.

Mr. Speaker, I ask –

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

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

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

There is no point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Thank you.

Again, Mr. Speaker, he speaks –

**MR. KIRBY:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for St. John's North on a point of order.

**MR. KIRBY:** The Member for Humber West just yelled, idiot, across the way. I say, Mr. Speaker, that is unparliamentary. I ask the member to withdraw that comment. It is unparliamentary, clearly.

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

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

There is no point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Mr. Speaker, I am starting to take it personal. Every time I get up, get to my feet, and say a few words, I have point of orders coming up, flat out. Anyway, that is fine. It is growing late in the hour.

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

I would ask the hon. member to keep his comments relevant to the debate.

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, getting back to – if I can finish my thought I cannot remember what the previous point of order was. Not the last one, but the one before that. The Member for CBS got up and talked about fabricating. I am only telling them what I saw on CBCs On Point with regard to the discussion around this bill and around the –

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

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The Speaker is having trouble hearing the speaker. There is really no need for the encounters that are happening across the House.

I recognize the hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the fact you want to hear what I have to say. I want to continue down the track on what I was talking about with regard to the discussion that happened on CBC. The member says we fabricated it. Well, I do not know if there were voice-overs – because I watched that program. After I saw his comment, I watched it again because I wanted to make sure his thoughts on the –

**MR. SPEAKER:** I remind the minister to keep his comments relevant to the debate.

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

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to draw people's attention to the fact that the members across the way all stood unanimously behind their leader, and for a short time sold it as their idea; this was our idea, electoral reform was our idea. That is why we are standing and supporting it.

I just bring your attention to moments later – it must have been a day later, whatever the case was – when the member was asked why he voted for it, well, because it was going to pass anyways. Now I will note, Mr. Speaker, it is very important – as someone who has done many shows of On Point, I was invited back many times and sent by my party – that was his only appearance on, On Point. His only, so obviously –

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

The Speaker has been very patient with the minister. I would request that he return his comments to those relevant to this debate.

The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is unfortunate that it took me five minutes to get that thought out, but I was being interrupted across the way. I will continue because I want to talk a little bit about my district as it currently stands.

I heard the Member for Bellevue get up earlier and talk about how this affects him immensely. Certainly, I am in the same boat, if I can use that pun. I would love to share a boat with you by the way.

My district is essentially split into four pieces. I am perhaps one of the most affected. I just want to go through, because I have been asked by a number of constituents, particularly as of late, with regard to how it is going to affect the current District of Terra Nova.

If you look at it, Mr. Speaker, you are affected by this as well. With regard to the district as it stands now we have the communities of Hare Bay and Dover moving down to Bonavista North. Then we have the Town of Gambo moving with Gander. Then we have Glovertown and the Eastport Peninsula, Traytown, Culls Harbour, Port Blandford, Terra Nova, Charlottetown, St. Brendan's – we have those communities going towards Clarendville. Then we have the other part of the district, the fourth part that is going to be moved. It is going to be Musgravetown, Bunyan's Cove, Cannings Cove, Bloomfield and they are going to be going with the District of Bonavista South.

Mr. Speaker, I stood on my feet initially and voted for this because I believe in electoral reform, even though it affects my hide to this point greatly, and it may lead to the demise of my career. That is fine, because I stood on the principle of electoral reform and that is what I voted for.

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** I had confidence that all members who would stand and vote for it would do so because it is bigger than just one person. Electoral reform is bigger than me. It is bigger than you, Mr. Speaker. It is bigger than the Member for CBS. It is a Province-wide issue. It is something that affects obviously the entire Province.

I believe they were sincere when they stood behind their leader. At that point they were trying to sell it as their own idea. When they stood and they said, absolutely, we vote for this and we agree with it, that was done sincerely, I truly believe.

Now, when I look at my scorecard and see who is going, well, there was a free vote so someone is not – so they liked it, but now they do not like it. Why don't you like it? Well, it affects me, and then they try to sell it. They are very cute, Mr. Speaker. They try to sell it as it is going to affect my district.

Mr. Speaker, districts change. They have changed historically. When I look at the District of Terra Nova and how that has changed over the number of years, every time change happens

there is resistance to change sometimes. Everybody is a little bit wary of change sometimes, but it continues on. You get different representation, equally as good and sometimes better. I do not think it is any different this time as well.

My district, as I said, currently, the Terra Nova district, will be dissected into four pieces. I have every confidence that the people of the Province, the people, in particular in that district, will vote for four representatives who will provide representation to them as good as they have now, even though I feel as though I have provided great representation over the last six years.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** There was only one of you.

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Mr. Speaker, and there is only one.

Mr. Speaker, I have great faith in the people of what will become the Gander District, the Terra Nova District, Bonavista South, and Bonavista North. I have every bit of confidence in them. They will select people they feel they can be represented by. Nothing changes with regard to that. Numbers will grow. Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? Not all districts are equal as well, with regard to the workload.

The Member for CBS talked about members on the Avalon have a little bit of an easier time. I have a wife and children out in Glovertown. I have to travel in every week and leave them. It is a difficult time, and being able to go to events. There are members here who live in the Avalon region who can skip out and go to an event tonight for an hour and come back again, whatever the case. That is great, but all districts are not equal, and we recognize that.

Certainly, being a member from rural Newfoundland and Labrador, it adds a little bit. With that being said, I would not have it any other way. I would not want to be anywhere else, but it adds another layer of challenges to it. Like I said, I have every confidence – however they are represented, they will choose the person who can best represent them. Like I said, the Terra Nova district will be separated into four pieces.

As it relates to myself; again, I have been asked by many people, as everyone here – because any time things change you build relationships. The Member for Mount Pearl South, I believe, was talking about the relationships you build with your communities, whether it be the organizations, the residents, the churches. Whatever the case is, you build relationships with all those people. They want to continue those relationships so they have questions. So where are you running?

I have always said, a number of times, I have every intention of running – provincially, I should say, because there has been other talk, but provincially is where I am. Really, what is left up to me now is the Gander District, which will take in Gambo. I have a lot of family in Gambo. My wife is from Gambo. That would be a comfortable move for me; however, I live in Glovertown, reside in Glovertown. I have a lot of support there and family and whatnot. That is going with the Terra Nova district, which will include Clarenville.

So we have to have talks with our colleagues here. I have not had those conversations yet, but I look across the way at my colleagues. I only seen a news conference earlier today that a couple of my colleagues and friends across the way are going to have to have a nomination. That is what it comes down to. Again, may the best man or woman win. That is really what it has to be. It is all about representation.

It is fine worrying about your own hide, and I guess there is some self-serving in everyone. It is human nature I suppose, but at the end of the day I think everybody took on this job and they are in this House for the right reason, that is to serve people. Whether you are under a district named Terra Nova, whether you are under a district named Gander, or whatever the case is, I think you can still provide that service. Again, you do it for all the right reasons.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to use all of my time. I just want to say if there is anybody in the Terra Nova district watching tonight, which I am not entirely sure there is, but I want to be realistic. I stood here, I voted for electoral reform, and I agreed with it right from the very beginning.

**MS ROGERS:** (Inaudible).

**MR. S. COLLINS:** If I can finish, please. The Member for St. John's Centre, if she has something to add she can stand but I want to finish my thought if I could, please.

Thank you.

I voted for electoral reform. I believe in electoral reform. I think all three leaders in this House have said they believe in electoral reform. There has been some talk about the time frames and when to do that, but I think everyone here agrees with the principles of electoral reform. I did the day I voted for it. I do now after having found out what the proposed districts are. That affects, I think, me as much as anybody, or perhaps more than most anybody here but I remain committed to it.

At the end of the day, if it means I cannot run for this House, that is fine. I will live by my decision, that is fine. The fact is we all have an opportunity to run in the district if we wish to do so. What is even more important than that is being able to provide the right representation, the proper representation to the people you are trying to serve. I think we can do that as well. Even though the numbers are going to be a little bit larger in the new proposed districts, I think people can work that much harder.

I have every faith in members on both sides of the House that they can perform the same duties they are performing now to a larger group of people. It just means you have to work a little bit harder. I think every person in this House is cut out for that because you would not be in the job you are in if you were not.

I just want to take a few moments to say thank you for the support over the past six years. It has been a humbling experience. Hopefully I will be able to continue, whether it be under the Terra Nova district, Gander district, or wherever the case may be. I want to thank the people of the district for the support.

I will make a decision soon. It is fine talking about you are going to talk to your residents, your constituents, your associations, but the biggest factor in the decision that I will make will be my family. I have a wife and two small

girls. That is obviously the center of my universe and that will guide my decisions.

**MR. FORSEY:** Do not forget Selleck.

**MR. S. COLLINS:** I do, I have a dog as well named Selleck, which the Member for Exploits is very fond of.

I am going to consult with my family. I think that is the biggest piece to all of this. Mr. Speaker, as you know, this is more than a job, it is a lifestyle. It is something that you live and sleep.

In order to be successful, you do not need a family there but I think it certainly helps. I appreciate all the support I have gotten from my family. So before I make these decisions, huge decisions, I am going to certainly consult with them and do what is best for not only my district, but me and my family as well.

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat with regard to that. I appreciate the time to be able to speak to this. Hopefully we are going to see the same result as we have seen when we voted on this initially, and people are not going to be starting to cherry-pick and go away from what they had committed to in the beginning. At the end of the day I think we all agreed to electoral reform, so let's get it done.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to be able to stand to speak to Bill 13 on behalf of the people of the District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace.

I have heard from many people in the district who have voiced their concerns about the process which was undertaken by the Electoral Districts Boundaries Commission. Today, I

have the support of the Official Liberal caucus to stand here on behalf of the people of Carbonear – Harbour Grace and speak freely to their concerns. Our Leader, the MHA for Humber Valley, has encouraged me and other members of caucus to speak freely to what we have been hearing around our great Province. Mr. Speaker, this is the true test of democracy.

With this opportunity today I will speak on behalf of the people in my district; however, this is not about me. This is about the people I represent, just as it is for other members of the Official Opposition. I am not here to defend my own self-interest, instead I am here because the people of Carbonear – Harbour Grace put their faith into me to represent their interests. Mr. Speaker, I am honoured and humbled to be able to do that today and every day in this House.

Mr. Speaker, in January, this government broke with tradition and abruptly opened this House to make changes in representation. They did it to save money. They did it because of the falling price of oil, because of a terrible Budget they had predicted was coming; however, we know the savings will be less than half of 1 per cent of the Budget. I also expect the sheer size of the new districts will result in costs to MHAs that will make any cost savings pointless.

In January, we were forced into a debate on Bill 42 that would see ten districts cut from this Province; ten districts and no guarantees of a provincial election this year. It was our leader, the MHA for Humber Valley, who took the initiative for change and asked for input from my colleagues in the Opposition.

At the end of the day we presented three amendments. We gave the public thorough openness, and we asked government and the Third Party to consider them. When given an impossible situation, our caucus voted to make the best out of the worst, Mr. Speaker.

In January, I supported reducing the number of districts in the Province. I supported forty seats then and I support forty seats today. Mr. Speaker, that has not changed. We do need better representation. We need an equal stand for all areas of the Province.

The action of Bill 42 saw government start a process that led us here today. The process started with the appointment of a five-person commission to oversee the way the new districts would unfold. As an MHA, I was hopeful about that process, and the people in the Carbonear – Harbour Grace District were curious and cautious.

Just as almost every area of Newfoundland, the people in the district were looking for a chance to have their say. The people I have spoken to were upset and bothered by the process. They were disappointed that the Commission did not hold a public hearing in the district.

Mr. Speaker, just to elaborate on that a small bit we had to do it by webcam. I thought to myself when I went in there that day to make a presentation on behalf of the people in the Carbonear – Harbour Grace District, how disrespectful. How disrespectful on such an important issue that the Commission did not see fit to come into that district. It was unbelievable.

Mr. Speaker, they were looking for reassurances that they would be given fair treatment and consideration when it came to drawing up the maps with the new boundaries. They do not feel that this happened. The majority of the people I have spoken with in the district cannot understand how many possible factors were dismissed, and that the population was given priority in this case.

When the first proposed map came out people were very concerned and many wanted to have their say. They were hoping for a hearing in person so that the Commission could travel to the district and meet with residents. Instead, Mr. Speaker, the public hearing took place by video link from St. John's. As I told you, I took part in that hearing and spoke to the Commission about the concerns I had been hearing from so many in the district.

Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde told you, that presentation was very disappointing. I am sure the member for that district had much better success up in Whitbourne. I am sure of that. There is nothing like looking them in the whites of the eyes and presenting your case, I tell you that.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many concerns that I could not just sit back and let the process unfold. I would have done the people in the district wrong if I had not used my voice to be their voice. Aside from the population of the district and the quotient that the Commission had to consider, there were many other factors that came into play. One of the concerns I heard most often was the communities interested in shared services.

Mr. Speaker, just to elaborate a small bit on that, the Commission had said – and every member across the way and every member on this side knows – if there were any towns there that had anything in common with one another they would not split them. That is not what happened in the Carbonear – Harbour Grace district. Harbour Grace and Carbonear shared many things together. We shared the 2012 Summer Games and the Summer Games before that. We have done it as a cohesive unit.

Mr. Speaker, the kids in the school, some go to Harbour Grace. When they go through that school they come into Carbonear. I will say that the Commission certainly did not do their homework on that when they split those two towns apart. I know, because when I was Mayor of Carbonear and Mayor Coombs was in Harbour Grace, we did many things together as two communities.

There are so many concerns that I could not just sit back and let this process unfold. Mr. Speaker, aside from the population addition and the quotient that the Commissioner had to consider, there were so many factors that came into play.

One of the concerns, Mr. Speaker, I heard of course was the interest in shared services. The communities of Carbonear and Harbour Grace have shared public services for decades. The neighbouring communities rely on each other for economic growth, tourism, education, and health care services. I also heard from many people about the size of the proposed new district and how the geography of the area will leave people feeling unrepresented.

With the boundary stretching so far, many of the communities feel they will not be given a fair shot at representation just having a single MHA

to service the area. Mr. Speaker, that proposed new district – and I am sure the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde would agree with me – is a huge district. It needs service, it deserves service. I am very concerned indeed on how that process will unfold and whether people will be actually able to get service from their MHA because it is a large district.

There are many other concerns that I heard from the district and I shared them with the Commission, as did people in the region. Yet, of all the input, all the feedback and concerns, it is clear the only thing the Commission saw as the most important part of their decision was the population of the district. They had to make a choice on it in this case, Mr. Speaker. I have been told they made the wrong choice.

Mr. Speaker, the people in Carbonear – Harbour Grace have told me that decisions made by the Commission were the wrong decisions. I have heard from hundreds of people who still feel that the population should not have been the most important factor. I have heard from communities, businesses, and families who think the process was flawed and the outcome is a mistake.

As I said earlier, I agree with fewer districts. I support the Leader of the Opposition and our caucus in that choice to support forty districts instead of forty-eight, Mr. Speaker. If we had to go along with the government it would have been far worse because it would have been only thirty-eight. So of course at that point in time we made a good thing out of a bad thing.

However, Mr. Speaker, I cannot support the outcome of the Commission. I do not think they made the right decisions. I have heard from too many people in my district who feel they have been let down by the Commission. They feel there was another choice the Commission could have made. Instead of making a choice based on the population, the geographic size and natural boundaries should have taken top priority.

Mr. Speaker, if the Commission had to look at the geography as the most important factor, I believe the boundaries now proposed by the Commission would be very different. Instead, right now we are debating removing seven seats from rural Newfoundland and Labrador. By

cutting those seven seats off the Avalon Peninsula, the Commission has suggested making some of the largest districts ever seen on the Island. The size of these districts will make it challenging to provide fair and equal representation. I cannot fault the work of the Commission because I know they were put in a tight spot.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you it would have been much, much better if government at that time had to turn around and say to the Commission here are forty-eight seats, we want you to go down, we need seats reduced, and let the Commission come back to this hon. House with a solution or a recommendation that we could live with. When the government said forty seats, well, guess what? What you did is you just took the ability away from the Commission to do what was right and proper here.

Mr. Speaker, the circumstances of redrawing district boundaries just months before general elections are unusual and questionable. There are many, many people in the Province who still today cannot understand why government decided to rush the process. The boundaries review was scheduled to be held in 2016, just twelve months from now.

Mr. Speaker, we could have been dealing with some census populations that would have made more sense because now we are operating on four or five – I do not know. How old is the census, 2011?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** 2011.

**MR. SLADE:** Yes, 2011. So, Mr. Speaker, we are still operating off the old. We are here trying to fix something and still working with old tools.

Mr. Speaker, that undoubtedly would have given the Commission more time to review its current boundaries, hold public consultations, and report back to the House – if you had to hold it in 2016. The last time there were boundaries reviews it took nine months. This year it is happening in an unprecedented 120 days. The final boundary changes will last for ten years. This is a very serious matter which sits at the foundation of our democracy.

As an MHA, it is my duty to listen to the people of this Province. I respect that obligation and I know my colleagues here in the Official Opposition respect it as well. I am humbled to be here to represent the interests of the people who elected me; however, this is not about me. This is not about my colleagues and this is not about saving money.

The decisions being made in this House are about people of the Province who trust us to listen to their concerns and give them fair and equal representation. It is the reason why we are all here today. It is the reason why the people of Carbonear – Harbour Grace deserve to have their concerns heard. I will support the people of the district, and they cannot support this legislation. They cannot support the final proposal of the boundaries as delivered by the Commission.

Mr. Speaker, I just heard the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services and I want to say one thing to him. He is over there and said, well, they all supported it. Mr. Speaker, I tell you, I did support Bill 42, but I will tell you this, with the understanding there was going to be an election in September. The window was there, the opportunity was there to have that election, but now we have to go out and change the legislation so the Premier of this Province can sit there until November. Shame! Shame, I say, Mr. Speaker! Shame on them!

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

**MR. SLADE:** Mr. Speaker, there are parts in that bill – it is absolutely unbelievable what that group over there will do to cling on to power. I tell you, it is absolutely unbelievable what they do to cling on to that power.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the people from Harbour Grace. I would like to thank the people in Spaniard's Bay. I would like to thank the people in the Tilton area. I would like to thank the people in Bryant's Cove and also Upper Island Cove. It has indeed been a pleasure for me to serve those people.

As well, Mr. Speaker, it will also be a pleasure for me to represent, if it is the will of the people, the districts of Whiteway, Cavendish, Islington, Heart's Delight, Heart's Desire, Heart's Content,

New Perlican, Turks Cove, Winterton, Hant's Harbour, New Chelsea, New Melbourne, Brownsdale, Sibley's Cove, Lead Cove, Old Perlican, Grates Cove, Red Head Cove, Bay de Verde –

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

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

**MR. SLADE:** Low Point, Caplin Cove, Lower Island Cove, Job's Cove, Burnt Point, Gull Island, Northern Bay, Ochre Pit Cove, Western Bay, Adams Cove, Blackhead, Broad Cove, Small Point, Kingston, Perry's Cove, Salmon Cove, Blow Me Down, Clowns Cove, Freshwater, Victoria, Carbonear, and Bristol's Hope. It will be indeed a pleasure for me to represent that district, if it is the wish of the people.

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

**MR. SLADE:** Mr. Speaker, I want to end this here now. I have another few minutes, though, just the same. I hate to sit down to tell you the truth.

I would just like to say a couple of things here now. I will tell you, I have been here since November 26, 2013 and I have learned plenty since I came here. It is a learning experience here every day. All due respect to every member in this House who stands in the House and speaks for the people, Mr. Speaker, that is what is most important here. We have to stay here every day and speak about the people in our districts. Without them, we would not have that honour or we would not have that privilege.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing wrong with standing to your feet and saying if you did something wrong here. Those fellows over there still have not apologized to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador for Bill 29. Well, I am satisfied to stand to my feet here tonight and tell you guys over there one thing. I have no problem when somebody says you are wrong. I have no problem accepting that responsibility. I will apologize to the people on Bill 42 for the simple fact how much you guys had changed that bill to your advantage.

Mr. Speaker, I tell you what, I am so proud to stand here tonight and tell you, and tell this hon. House, that I will not be supporting this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The hon. the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

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

It is a great opportunity to speak to Bill 13, especially following my colleague, the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace, and his passion that he exhibits for the people he represents.

As he highlighted, this very bill that we have here before the floor is basically the Premier's cling-to-power bill. That is exactly it. I want to read a quote: There's a requirement to go to the polls within one year of having a new leader, so we will obviously follow the legislation, obviously.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Who said that?

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** The Premier, the Member for Topsail, said this on September 30, 2014.

The members opposite can talk about a flip-flop or whatnot but there is no bigger flip-flop than what is stated right there. That is certainly not the case when you talk about going to the polls and following the legislation when we have Bill 13, which is completely amending the legislation, changing the date of the election to November 30, some twenty-two months after Premier Dunderdale resigned. When they had a botched PC leadership race with Frank Coleman, and Wayne Bennett getting expelled, and Bill Barry leaving the race.

Then the reluctant Premier in Premier Marshall. He did not want to be; he did not want to lead the party but he was the reluctant Premier. Then you have the current Premier who said they were going to go to the polls within one year of having a new leader. Twenty-two months later,

we are going to still be here in the House of Assembly and here we are debating this particular piece of legislation.

I find it very rich from the other side making such commentary because we were called back into the House of Assembly –

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

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** – and I stood up here after midnight on Monday now having the opportunity to speak to the Premier's power bill. The reason why we were all brought back to the House in January was because it was claimed the falling price of oil was a reason to save \$10 million over four years. Now it is \$8 million, because the seats are gone from ten –

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

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

The Speaker has recognized the Member for The Straits – White Bay North. I think everyone else has not been recognized, so The Straits – White Bay North, please speak. Everyone else be quiet.

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

As the youngest Member of the House of Assembly I certainly bring a viewpoint of youth and of my constituents to the House. I would hope that the members opposite would respect the views of my constituents as I am raising them here in the House of Assembly.

We talked about the reason; it was \$10 million over four years in savings. Now, that is \$8 million and we can thank the Official Opposition for that.

As the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services gets up talking about what my colleague, the Member for Conception Bay South said, well, I am very proud of the Official Opposition and what we were able to do in an open and transparent way of putting forward the amendments before the legislation was presented in the House of Assembly to ensure that this

piece of work would be done within 120 days. Or else it would go back to the forty-eight districts and an election would take place in the fall. There would be protection for Labrador.

We called on a range between thirty-eight and forty-two seats. At the end of the day what the Premier had proposed was thirty-eight seats. That would have meant a reduction of seats. So there are two additional seats coming into the fall election that would not have been there otherwise. That is a protection when you look at rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

I will point out that when we look at the savings – because that was a big reason why we got to this particular bill – it does not really factor into a lot of the other variable costs when it comes to the larger districts and travel, the changing of all the signage and names, and everything that comes into that. It is just a straight-line approach to come up with a number, of saving \$10 million over four years, now \$8 million over four years. That is not really an accurate reflection of what the savings will be. I believe it will be much less than that.

This is PC math and there has been a real problem with that. It is not just the falling price of oil. The Budget has grown. The Budget has ballooned. There has been increased spending. Now the Premier is saying that if oil goes up we are going to take the HST hike off the table.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I would ask the hon. member to speak to the principle of this bill.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, absolutely.

I consult with my constituents and I have had the opportunity to speak with them about this particular bill. As a Member of the House of Assembly I represent The Straits – White Bay North. It is the second-smallest population on the Island outside of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune. It represents one of the oldest populations in the Province.

With the current population, thirty-five communities, if you look at basically what the options would have been when you look at the overall mandate of what was put forward by the Commission and what it would look at, it would

look at the community aspect, look at the economic aspect, and social ties that communities would have. They basically had three particular options in the district that I represent. One would be to keep it the same, which would be the Anchor Point to the north area; 8,200 people, but a significant variance would have to be used. We do recognize that the committee did have various tools to do such a thing.

Then it could have gone a little further to about Castor River North. That represents about 10,000 people. What it would do is it would take in an additional school, and it would also ensure that the Labrador-Grenfell Health board was covered under one particular region.

It has gone further than that to the River of Ponds north area, which is 12,241 people. It is still a variance of almost 10 per cent, almost the maximum without having to use an additional amount. The River of Ponds north area, if we look at the dynamics it is quite unique. River of Ponds north has always been an area where there has been a working relationship. It is the Rural Secretariat region. It is the region of the Great Northern Peninsula Joint Council where the mayors and municipalities have been working together for quite some time.

It is also the Northern Peninsula Regional Services Board region which looks after waste disposal service, the solid waste in the area. It also looks at providing regional fire services and doing it quite successfully in The Straits region. There is opportunity to get into other avenues of regional services under this board.

I have a very strong relationship in working with these entities of the Rural Secretariat of the Great Northern Peninsula Joint Council and with NorPen, and many others because I worked in economic development and community economic development. My region, when I worked in that field, was the whole Great Northern Peninsula from Trout River to Goose Cove to L'Anse aux Meadows. It was from tip to tip on that peninsula which represents about 16,500 people.

For me, I welcome the opportunity to represent this region because there is an affinity there. There really is. There is a real affinity when it

comes to the fishing economy that is there. There are four shrimp plants that are on the Great Northern Peninsula that fall within that region in Port au Choix, in Black Duck Cove, in Anchor Point, and in St. Anthony.

When it comes to looking at tourism and the economy that is there, you have the Viking Trail Tourism Association, Petit Nord. You have the French Shore. You have that cultural aspect so that really brings things together.

There is also a great opportunity to look at bringing together the economic philosophy that is there because no doubt this will present additional challenges. You have a bigger area; you have fifty-three communities. That is quite a lot. You also have a ferry service that is in that district that now connects Newfoundland to Labrador. That could be an opportunity for one of the greatest economic pieces by looking at a tunnel.

You have that direct link for transportation services. You also have an airport in the particular district in St. Anthony. You also have great ports and port facilities, and access to international shipping opportunities. If one area and one region of the Province has tremendous economic opportunity to capitalize for growth it would be the district that is proposed for St. Barbe – L'Anse aux Meadows.

Actually, if you look at the historical context of L'Anse aux Meadows, this particular district is where the world came full circle. It was an event that was 100,000 years in the making. It is basically when the continent broke up, those who went left and those who went right – they got all the way to Europe to that point, but the Atlantic Ocean stuck.

Those who went the other way came across from Russia, got into North America, and ended up in Bird Cove about 5,000 years ago. The artifacts are there. The documentation is there. They made it. So it was not until the Vikings came 1,000 years ago where they met the recent Indians on the Great Northern Peninsula. That is the first time where those who went left met those who went right. We are not telling that story enough.

My point is we have an incredible opportunity when you look at co-operation and collaboration, and looking at the representation. No doubt, I think on some levels representation and change is a positive thing. You have two health authorities, you have that economic development. You also have, in this particular district, over 600 kilometres of road. You have 8,600 square kilometres of land mass. It is a very large, large district that has been pointed forward. Just a little bit smaller than the Leader of the Official Opposition when he talks about a district that he currently represents that would extend to the Gros Morne area.

The St. Barbe name goes back to 1885 and the White Bay name would go to 1882. I somewhat like the concept of what the committee has put forward because of the 100,000-year piece of history that exists within L'Anse aux Meadows and being the most northerly point. That is an incredible piece.

I want to point out and I want to say for the record in a district such as St. Barbe – L'Anse aux Meadows – I want to read into the record the names of the communities that would be represented, which would be: River of Ponds; Hawke's Bay; Port Saunders; Port au Choix; Eddies Cove West; Castor River North; Castor River South; Bartletts Harbour; Shoal Cove West; New Ferolle; Reefs Harbour; Bird Cove; Brig Bay; Plum Point, which was known as Old Ferolle; Blue Cove; Pond Cove; Forrester's Point; Pidgeon Cove; St. Barbe; Black Duck Cove. These are the communities that are currently outside of the district that I represent.

In the district that I represent are thirty-five communities that include: Anchor Point; Bear Cove; Deadman's Cove; Flower's Cove; Nameless Cove; Shoal Cove East; Savage Cove; Sandy Cove; Pines Cove; my hometown of Green Island Cove; Green Island Brook; Eddies Cove – on the map it says Eddies Cove, but everybody locally wants it called Eddies Cove East because that is what it was – Main Brook; Croque; Grandois; St. Julien's; Conche; Roddickton; Bide Arm; Englee; Goose Cove East; St. Anthony; St. Carol's; St. Anthony Bight; Great Brehat; St. Lunaire-Griquet; Quirpon; L'Anse aux Meadows; Straits View; Noddy Bay; Hay Cove; Ship Cove; Cape Onion;

Raleigh; Cook's Harbour; Wild Bight; North Boat Harbour.

There are also a few resettled communities as well, when you look at Big Brook, Great Harbour Deep, Williams Port, Hooping Harbour, Canada Harbour. They fall within that realm. There are still cemeteries. There is still historical context within there. So you have to look at everything that is in a particular district.

Members opposite have talked about, not every district – I guess in terms of what an MHAs role and responsibility and –

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

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** When you look at a district as large as the one that is proposed for St. Barbe – L'Anse aux Meadows, no doubt, a representative like myself, who currently represents The Straits – White Bay North, spends a lot of time driving and commuting. It is vastly different than some of my colleagues in caucus, but the workload of what we do as MHAs, we represent people. We are here in the Legislature debating valuable pieces of legislation.

We have different roles and responsibilities when it comes to committee work, when it comes to what we do. It is a broad spectrum of how we serve constituents and deal with issues. What people see in the visibility is quite different, and the approach based on individual members and MHAs and their style. I am very pleased of how I get out there on the ground and connect with my constituents and have that feedback, because I really want to know. I want to know what their opinion is and how they feel about things.

You certainly get a bit of feedback on both sides when it comes to the district and when it comes to the rapport in general. Clearly, from the consultation, what I heard more often is that this is the Premier's cling-to-power bill. It is the power bill. It is a means to delay an election. It is a means to hang on. It is a means to do various things in terms of desperation.

One of the things I am very proud of is that – and I probably will not get everything that I want to say out in my twenty minutes because I certainly love debating. I certainly love getting my points across. I am so happy that we have a committee where you can get up time and time again, ten minute intervals, ten minute intervals, ten minute intervals and raise your point over and over and over again if you have a particular issue.

I am so glad the Government House Leader has said that the House will not adjourn at 5:30, not adjourn at 10:00 o'clock, so that we can be here in this House of Assembly after midnight and debate legislation, and debate, debate, debate, because that is what we get paid to do. That is what we get paid to do, to make sure that we have effective legislation, that we have an effective House of Assembly, and I am very pleased we have that opportunity. I will take the opportunity whenever I can to speak to particular pieces of legislation, such as Bill 13.

When it comes to the Official Opposition, the leader spoke very passionately, very clearly, and pointed out a real understanding of what it takes to lead by example. What it takes to look at the original bill and point out that what the commentary was put forward up-front was just plain wrong. That is did not work for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and that changes would have to made.

That is the role of the Official Opposition, to put forward amendments to strengthen legislation, to make a bad piece of legislation better. The amendments that are put forward are not always accepted by government. Government can always use their majority, if they have a majority government, to put whatever piece of legislation they want before this House and pass it. We have seen it. This government has used it for Bill 29. They used it for the monopoly bill of 61, and Bill 62.

**MR. SPEAKER (Verge):** I ask the hon. member to speak to the bill, please.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** So this is a point that is being made, is that government will use a majority, if it wants, to get what it needs. This is why when you put forward amendments, you do

the best you can in the legislation that is being put forward.

Clearly, the legislation that we have here highlights a variety of changes from the proposed legislation. There are some people who are, no doubt, not happy with the – constituents who are not happy with the makeup of particular districts. There may be MHAs; there may be people on both sides of the House who are not particularly happy.

I certainly welcome the change. I have worked in the Plum Point area prior to this. I have served the Great Northern Peninsula. I hope the people of the Great Northern Peninsula, in this particular district – I certainly will be seeking nomination for this particular district, and look to represent the Liberal Party in 2015 in November, and look forward to continuing my work, even going forward now on the ground connecting with constituents and people and hearing their issues and wanting to make change.

That is what this is all about. It is about making positive change and having an impact on your community. The ability of what the Leader of the Official Opposition showed by having and allowing a free vote, by listening to people, by being engaged and having that willingness of listening to the people we represent, and to make sure their voices are clearly heard is something that is certainly very, very important. It is relevant. It is very relevant, I would say Mr. Speaker.

I am very thankful for all of my colleagues who made presentations, who had the ability to put input throughout that process, to give feedback to municipalities, that provided feedback to the committee and the Commission, and all of those who provided and got involved in that process, the volunteers who served, the Commissioners, and everybody who had a role in this particular process. I would say the people are not fooled. They are not fooled by the Premier's cling on-to-power bill.

With leave of the House, I would love to continue my conversation.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I remind the hon. member his speaking time has expired.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Do I have particular leave?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** No leave.

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

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

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, the House do now adjourn.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

The House stands adjourned until 1:30 o'clock, tomorrow, Tuesday.

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