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Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have members' statements from the Member for the District of Humber Valley; the Member for the District of Virginia Waters; the Member for the District St. Barbe; the Member for the District of Baie Verte – Springdale; the Member for the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde; and the Member for the District of Bonavista North.

The hon. the Member for the District of Humber Valley.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Angie Parsons of Deer Lake on being named the 2014 Community Impact Award winner by the Newfoundland and Labrador Organization of Women Entrepreneurs – NLOWE. The award is given annually to an entrepreneur whose business has had a significant social and economic impact on their local community.

Mr. Speaker, Angie Parsons is the owner and operator of Royal K-9 Spa, Resort and Training Facility in Deer Lake; her business offers grooming, training classes and boarding for dogs, as well as a retail store.

Angie is a devout advocate for pets and pet owners throughout the Province. Along with her business, she is involved with the local SPCA, the Deer Lake Chamber of Commerce, and Junior Achievement.

Mr. Speaker, NLOWE continues to support and encourage women entrepreneurs to pursue growth opportunities, with programs and services which are offered all across the Province. Small businesses continue to be the backbone of many local economies in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Angie Parsons on her Community

Impact Award and wish her success in her future endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Virginia Waters.

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

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the recent recipients of the Silver Level of the Duke of Edinburgh Awards in December 2014. In December, seven students from the District of Virginia Waters were presented their award by the Hon. Frank Fagan, Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador.

To achieve this, participants completed a balanced program of leisure-time activities and met the prescribed standards in four important areas of self-development, including community service, adventurous journey, physical recreation, and skill development.

I extend congratulations to Bobbi-Glenn Butler, Nicholas Henderson, Leslie Jamieson, Mark Oake, Logan Slade, Clare Snow, and Zhang Zhipu on their achievement.

This program helps to shape the lives of young Canadians as they take on new challenges, giving back to their communities and achieving success while developing self-confidence, motivation, and life-long friendships. The Duke of Edinburgh Award began as a program to help young people develop a sense of responsibility to themselves and their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating these individuals who are making a difference in the lives of their communities, and to the many young Canadians who achieve milestones through personal discovery, self-reliance, and perseverance in a non-competitive format.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to commend and thank all members of Come Home Year committees for the committed effort they make to organizing, fundraising, and carrying out Come Home Year celebrations in their respective communities.

The degree of effort and the lengths to which these often unrecognized people, who still live in our rural communities, go to host family and friends who have moved away is remarkable. The efforts they expend to keep alive our traditions, as well as our friendships, deserve commendation. Come Home Year celebrations do more than just bring our people together, they also inject badly-needed private money into our rural communities, many of which have limited economic bases.

Come Home Year celebrations for 2015 and 2016 are planned in many of the three dozen communities in the District of St. Barbe, as well as throughout our Province. I thank all volunteers for their work, and I look forward to attending several Come Home Year celebrations, just as other members will be attending in theirs.

Mr. Speaker, I also ask all members of this hon. House to join me in recognizing Come Home Year committees on the commitment they make to their respective communities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a teen she wanted to be a missionary, but due to World War II, chose instead to become a Salvation Army Officer. Stationed in many small communities, she performed both clergy and teaching duties in one-room schools. Over the years she added town clerk, President of the local Women's Institute, running a homeless shelter in Toronto, volunteer chaplain at the Valley Vista in Springdale, and an author to her long list of leadership roles and achievements.

Upon her official retirement, Dr. Gladys Osmond turned to writing. From a few letters to a young member of the Armed Forces, her efforts grew to writing over 500,000 letters to soldiers wherever they were stationed all around the world. Her home was filled with letters and photos from the men and women serving on land, sea, and air.

She has received numerous awards for her efforts, including the Caring Award, the Canadian Forces Medallion for Distinguished Service, Honorary Doctor of Laws from Memorial University, and the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador.

On Wednesday, January 14, 2015 Gladys passed away suddenly at the age of ninety-one. Without the advantages of power, position, or money, Gladys truly made a lasting impact.

Honourable members, please help me celebrate the life of Dr. Gladys Osmond.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize two members of the Pharmacists' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador who are residents of the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde.

Mr. Kevin Banton is a pharmacist who lives in the Town of Heart's Delight – Islington where he owns and operates Welsh's Pharmacy.

At this year's PANL Annual Conference, Mr. Banton was presented with the 2014 Pharmacist of the Year Award. The nominees for this award come from the public and are given to pharmacists who go above and beyond their regular roles in providing extraordinary services.

At the same conference, an Honorary Lifetime Membership Award was presented to Mr. Dave Dawe in recognition for his long service to the pharmacy profession. Mr. Dawe is a resident of

Heart's Content where he owned and operated Dawe's Pharmacy until retiring in October 2014.

While Mr. Dawe is now retired, Mr. Banton continues to exhibit the qualities that earned him this award in providing admirable service to local residents.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Mr. Banton and Mr. Dawe on these well-deserved awards and wish them all the best in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSS: I am very proud to rise today, Mr. Speaker, to recognize Blake Welcher, a remarkable young man of thirteen years from Valleyfield, Bonavista North and commend him for his very thoughtful and humanitarian action. If I may, Mr. Speaker, I would like to use Blake's words in a letter to a young girl, Abigail Winter, who is afflicted with Cerebral Palsy. His short letter is self-explanatory and his words are more appropriate than mine.

Merry Christmas Abigail, I have collected squares from all over the world to make a blanket for you! I mentioned you to some of my online friends and they wanted to help do something special for you, and so it began. We started a project called "Let's make Abigail a blanket." They were so happy to make blanket squares and send them to me to make your blanket. We hope you enjoy the blanket and know that it was made with love.

He identifies squares from Massachusetts, England, Texas, Missouri and Michigan among other places.

Blake Welcher, you are proving that a spirit of compassion, love and respect is alive in our next generation, and I am sure all members will join me in saying you are and will be an inspiration for others.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I would like to take a minute to welcome to the gallery, the former Deputy Premier of the Government of New Brunswick, Ms Aldéa Landry.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to recognize the important contributions of people working on coastal management area committees throughout the Province. Earlier this week, these talented and dedicated individuals came together for a workshop in Corner Brook to share ideas and generate new initiatives, and their efforts are greatly appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, these valued volunteers have played a key role in advancing our government's Coastal and Ocean Management Strategy and Policy Framework from the time it was established in 2011. Our collaborative efforts fall under six main areas of activity: maintaining healthy marine environments; promoting social, cultural and economic sustainability; monitoring coastal land use; balancing competing needs and interests; managing coastal and marine infrastructure; and addressing climate change.

Our government is very pleased to partner with members of the five coastal management area committees located throughout the Province. These individuals work with government representatives to increase knowledge and public engagement on issues that affect their local coasts. Examples of initiatives supported by these coastal management area committees include community beach cleanups, youth

education projects, and World Oceans Day celebrations.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to extend special thanks to the Humber Arm Environmental Association, known regionally as ACAP Humber Arm, for hosting the coastal management area committee workshop I mentioned earlier in my statement. Led by Executive Director Sheldon Peddle, this group has spearheaded many important projects. They have supported our government's efforts to monitor and mitigate the impact of green crab. They have also created unique youth engagement initiatives like Trading Books for Boats, which gives junior high students an opportunity to take to the open water to learn about coastal and ocean ecosystems. This work is a fine example of how our coastal management area committees are using creative approaches to increase public awareness about the importance of ocean environments off our coasts.

Mr. Speaker, our government has made coastal management a priority because we appreciate the fact that the ocean environment is deeply linked to our Province's culture, heritage, history, recreational enjoyment, and economic prosperity. On behalf of the provincial government, I thank everyone playing a role in advancing the importance of marine stewardship, and look forward to continued collaboration in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace.

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. More than ever, proper coastal and ocean management is needed to ensure our waters and ecosystem is safeguarded. I express gratitude to all of those in our Province who have shared their ideas on how to achieve a balanced approach to responsibly sharing our shores and our waters.

Mr. Speaker, I have no confidence that this government is dealing with the more serious issues which affect our coastal areas. I think of the *Manolis L*, the purpose of changes to the Placentia Bay pilotage requirements, and even the aquaculture challenges faced on the Province's South Coast. No leadership by this government.

Also, I remind the minister that a core part of managing our coastal areas is to safeguard our wild fish, which has dropped of this government's agenda long ago.

I call upon this government to step up its game on the coastal ocean management and, since it has been over five years, it is time government produce a strategy report on the coastal and ocean strategy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Of course I agree that marine stewardship and coastal management are vital to the interests of this Province, and I congratulate the commitment of the many volunteers working on the coastal management area committees.

I would like to point out to the minister, however, that towns on the South Coast of the Island portion of the Province have waited for years to set up a marine conservation area. Three years ago, government refused to approve a feasibility study that the federal government was willing to pay for.

Government made this decision without consulting with interested groups; another example that although this government talks a lot about consultation, they do not understand what real consultation entails. I also question their commitment to the coastal preservation when they would not do that study.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today as the Minister Responsible for the Office of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency to provide my hon. colleagues with an update on the excellent progress made as part of the HotShots initiative.

Mr. Speaker, our government launched the HotShots initiative in October 2014 to raise awareness about the importance of energy conservation among students in Newfoundland and Labrador. I am delighted to confirm that this initiative has been rolled out to all 263 public schools in the Province.

As part of the initiative, resource packs have been provided to all schools, including French versions to schools within the French school district. This resource includes facts about where energy comes from in Newfoundland and Labrador, the benefits of saving energy, and how students can reduce the amount of energy they use. All of these resources are also available for download online.

We have also launched a new curriculum-based Web site as part of the HotShots initiative. Mr. Speaker, this Web site provides teachers of Grade 6 and 9 science with links to online resources about energy conservation. These resources link directly to curriculum outcomes for these courses, equipping teachers with exciting new tools to teach students about the importance of saving energy.

Mr. Speaker, through an innovative partnership with Newfoundland Power and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, we are also delivering presentations to primary and elementary schools. These presentations provide students with tips to save energy and empower them to take action within their homes. Over 140 classes have received these presentations since October.

Our partnership with Newfoundland Power and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro also

includes two contests for students to communicate the importance of energy conservation, through which they can win prizes for their schools. Mr. Speaker, I would like to encourage students through our Province to enter these contests and help raise awareness about saving energy.

More information on this initiative, including the resource packs, presentations and contests, can be found at HotShotNL.ca.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. Incorporating this into the grade school curriculum is crucial to raising young people to become engaged and responsible citizens.

I wonder, though, if they are telling these students about all the vacant schools throughout the Province with the heat and lights left on. This government has done a woefully inadequate job of securing buy-in from the public at large in energy conservation. Incentives are needed to encourage homeowners to make energy efficient choices.

It is ironic the minister is not standing in the House to read a statement of how the ENERGY STAR window rebate program was cancelled as of just three weeks ago. It is shameful I say, Mr. Speaker. As per usual, this government's failure to lead by example is evident in their piecemeal and inconsistent approach to tackling climate change.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement here today. It is good to see government promoting the conservation of energy. The reality is, though, that this government cut financial initiatives like the EnerGuide for Houses Program that would have allowed people to conserve energy rather than just talk about it.

We do not know the future, Mr. Speaker. Energy efficiency was cut before. Programs like REEP may be at risk of government cuts again, considering the fiscal situation we find ourselves in as a Province here today.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before Question Period, I would just like to take a moment to also recognize the Mayor of Grand le Pierre. His Worship Paul Bolt is in the gallery today.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The federal government has said that the Budget is delayed until at least April, 2015.

I ask the Premier: Does this mean that you will not bring down this year's Budget until the end of April at the earliest?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The timing of a Budget on the calendar is not as important as ensuring that the Budget is informed. There are a number of things that impact our Budget in a big way. One of them is obviously the price of oil. There is a high degree of uncertainty of what that will look like for the next twelve months.

The second thing, Mr. Speaker, in as much as we no longer receive equalization payments from the federal government, there are significant transfer payments from the federal government that still comes into our revenues. Obviously, whatever the federal government does in their Budget forecasting will have a huge impact on us.

Some of the commentary that they may have about the economy moving into next year and other financial implications for the current spot we find ourselves in as a nation, that all of that will have an impact on our Budget process. So, being informed, Mr. Speaker, is much more important than the calendar date.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I doubt any of the variables that you just mentioned to the minister, not much of that is going to change. Keep in mind in last year's Budget we forecasted over a \$500 million deficit, and at that point, right up until September, the price of oil was fairly stable.

Mr. Speaker, with the required time to debate a Budget in this House, it is likely that this year's Budget will not be passed until June. Meanwhile, the Premier refuses to immediately cut the size of his Cabinet and his five parliamentary secretaries; a move that would save almost \$500,000 over the next five months, something that this Premier can do right away.

I ask the Premier: Why do you not have the courage to cut your Cabinet and cut those parliamentary secretaries today?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the minister has referenced, and I have referenced myself throughout the last number of days in the House here, and publicly as well, and as they have thrown back at me many times. So I know they are getting it, because I have said that everything is on the table, Mr. Speaker. I can continue to say that.

There are positions that are held by members of my government and my caucus that include that review. Mr. Speaker, I would trust that the member opposite would be supportive of looking at their own positions in their own party, in their own Opposition, as the opposition group of Opposition House leaders and Whips and so on. I would expect all of us to have a review of all those positions, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know the Premier understands or should understand the role of the House Management Commission in this House of Assembly, and of course the Green Report that will review compensation, benefits for all MHAs, which comes after the next provincial election. I am sure the Premier understands all that. Probably what he does not understand is he does not need any permission from either of those groups to do the right thing. Cut the size of Cabinet; reduce your parliamentary secretaries like all other Maritime Provinces have done. They have none at all, yet our Province continues to have five.

Mr. Speaker, with everything on the table, I ask the Premier: With everything on the table, is the Muskrat Falls Project on the table?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To his point on positions in the House, I think it is important that we identify that there are number of roles within the House that both parties have that give them opportunities. They do extra functions and roles in the House, but they also receive extra compensation. For example, House Leaders receive extra compensation, caucus chairs –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: – party Whips, Deputy House Leaders, all receive extra compensation, have to –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: I have struck a chord over there, Mr. Speaker.

So, members of their own caucus –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: – all receive extra compensation for some of their roles –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier, to continue.

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Members opposite have roles and functions that they carry out while they are in the House that they receive compensation for in their roles throughout the year that they receive extra compensation for.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, my point is that when we are going to do a full and complete review – I have said I am willing to review the

roles and functions and additional duties that members of my caucus have and have been assigned to them, and I would certainly expect members opposite to do the same thing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, the Management Commission is a great group of people, controlled right now by government. The cutting of Cabinet members is not controlled by people in the Opposition, so I would expect the Premier to stop really dodging the issue here; that is all you are doing. The issue at hand is reduce the size of your Cabinet; do the right thing. Have the courage that you say it takes to make those tough decisions. Cut those parliamentary secretaries, I say Premier. Why aren't you doing this?

Mr. Speaker, the Province has also several equity investments in our Province right now. These range from offshore oil developments to aquaculture initiatives.

I ask the Premier: Are the Province's equity investments on the table?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Mr. Speaker, I hate repeating myself and I do not always like quoting other people either frequently, but let me try it again. The Premier has said numerous times in this House and outside the House, I myself have said outside this House and here in Question Period, that as we go through the Budget process we are examining all aspects of government's operation, all aspects of the boards and agencies that do work on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are examining all of the revenue streams. We are examining all of the expenditure items. We are looking at how we are going to manage our way through this difficult time we find ourselves in as a result of world oil prices.

We need to map out a way forward to get us through not just this year, but we need to map out a plan to get us through the next five years, Mr. Speaker. That is what the Budget process will be involving itself in this year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I agree with the Minister of Finance; no one likes to repeat themselves. So, this is a question you will not have to repeat the Premier; because the Premier did not answer this question when I asked is Muskrat Falls on the table.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Mr. Speaker, as we examine all the aspects of government's operations together with its boards and agencies, as I have just described, one of the things that we need to make sure that we do is we make strategic decisions, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WISEMAN: We look at the kinds of investments we have made into our future because we need to be careful, Mr. Speaker. Whatever we do today, recognize this is just not going to have an impact on the next twelve months because that is the Budget cycle. We make decisions in this House and as a government we make decisions every day that affects the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, not just today but well into the future.

So, any decision we made during this Budget process will be of the view – not just look at this year's fiscal cycle, but for the long-term sustainability of programs and services, all in the best interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for the long term.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I asked that question to the Premier. I asked that question to the Minister of Finance. Now I am going to ask this question to the Minister of Natural Resources because he likes hat tricks. I know this guy likes hat tricks.

I ask the Minister of Natural Resources: Is Muskrat Falls on the table?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I never like to interfere with a good hockey game, I can tell you that.

Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite is asking this question, it comes to mind a very important consideration that we are making that I think it is valuable in discussing here today. It has to do with infrastructure investments because we have made commitments on projects.

We have plans that are at various stages in projects. There are projects that are very, very early in concept and thought and idea. There are projects which have had an amount of engineering and design work completed on them. There are projects where tenders have been issued, inviting tenders. There are projects where tenders have been awarded and waiting for the work to get underway. There are projects that are in some stage of completion. Some, where the current contracts have been completed and where more need to be done.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be cognizant of all of those factors as we made our decisions and move forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I guess I got the hat trick all right; the hat trick was there was no answer by either one.

Mr. Speaker, the Province is a 4.9 per cent equity shareholder in Hebron. The project has seen its budget balloon to \$14 billion.

I ask the Premier: How much money will there be in next year's Budget for the equity position in Hebron?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: The process has already started, Mr. Speaker, for the Budget process. Every year in the House, regardless of what government is here and what time the House sits, every year the Opposition stands well in advance of the Budget and starts asking questions: What will be in the Budget? What will not be in the Budget? It is standard. Go to Hansard. It has been there for decades. We are now starting the process again. I suspect over the next while as we sit in this House, members of the Opposition will raise and lobby for things to be in the Budget and will ask questions about what will be in the Budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WISEMAN: As always, Mr. Speaker, the Budget is read into the House of Assembly by the Minister of Finance.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WISEMAN: It then provides a proposal as to what is going to happen over the next twelve months. The only thing different this year is we are going to lay out what it is going to be in this Province and what the fiscal position will be over the next five years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I really find that question very difficult to take. I asked about a Budget process. Prior to that Budget process there is a construction schedule that would outline well in advance of this project how much money would be required. All I did was ask the Finance Minister, does he know that answer.

Do you know how much you have to put into Hebron this year as part of the Budget process to meet the construction schedule for Hebron?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Mr. Speaker, Nalcor, as a corporate entity, has many interests. They have interest in oil and gas. They have revenue generation from its power generation. It has an investment in Muskrat Falls. It creates an opportunity to return dividends to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

What we are trying to do, Mr. Speaker, given what has happened with oil and gas – because they have a revenue stream, because they have an interest already in an oil position in the Province. They have a revenue stream from their equity. What we are trying to do is to understand clearly over the next five years what Nalcor's earnings will be from its revenue-generating operations, what an equity requirement will be, whether it is Muskrat Falls or oil and gas. That will factor into our forecast.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister has said that he will release his Budget after the feds release theirs in April because of the uncertainty about transfers; however, it is not necessary to wait. Last year, New Brunswick released their Budget before the federal government.

I ask the minister: Why can't we do the same?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Mr. Speaker, just think for a moment. Just look at the world global economic position today versus twelve months ago. Look at where we were as a Province. Look at where we were as a nation. Look at the stability that existed last year and some degree of predictability that existed last year, and look at where we are today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WISEMAN: Let me quote from the Governor of the Bank of Canada a couple of days ago, "Given the speed and magnitude of the oil-price decline, there is substantial uncertainty around the likely level for oil prices and their impact on the economic outlook for Canada."

You could not quote him last year for saying that because there was a lot of stability. We have a very different time today. Circumstances in this Nation, circumstances in this country are very different. So the degree of predictability is different today than it was yesterday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

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

I realize that the minister has admitted to an issue with math, so let me help him. Last year, for every dollar the federal government gave Newfoundland, they gave New Brunswick \$4. New Brunswick got millions more than us, yet they do not have to wait for the feds.

I ask the minister: Why can't you release a Budget on what the Premier called yesterday his government's financial crises?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: I think the member finally gets it. I think she finally gets it. What she is finally recognizing and acknowledging, if you are a province that is receiving a lot of equalization payments, then you have a stable income.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WISEMAN: We have, however, graduated to a point where we are now generating most of our own source revenues. As she would know, as an entrepreneur who has had some degree of success, there are risks when you rely on your own revenue generation and not relying on handouts from somebody else.

Mr. Speaker, we will reap the benefit of having high oil prices like we have and we will get the value of that, but there is a risk associated with that. When oil prices drop, we find ourselves in a spot we are now, but when you are receiving continuous payments from the federal government, there is no risk.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, let me make this really simple for the minister. Muskrat Falls is the biggest capital investment this Province has ever made. When people make the biggest purchase of their lives, a house for example, they have to put away money to make sure they can pay the bills. This government did not, and now you want to do a five-year plan, now you want to be accountable.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: What are you trying to hide by not releasing this Budget?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: As she is making it abundantly clear to all of us, who obviously in her mind do not understand anything, let me try to slow down a bit. Let me try to be very deliberate in my explanation, because clearly, Mr. Speaker, if you think about what has happened in this Province in the last ten years, when she says about putting money away, we have put money away. We have put \$6 billion into infrastructure.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Six billion dollars into infrastructure, critical investments for the future, and have not had to borrow for it. We have returned, on average, \$700 million a year in tax returns back to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: – contributing \$3 billion to the economy. That is what we have done, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: I ask the minister: What is our deficit this year?

Mr. Speaker, we asked yesterday for public Mahoney Commission documents that are relevant to the Bill 42 debate. The Government House Leader said he would look into it.

I ask the Government House Leader: Where are they?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Mahoney Commission in 1993 was a commission that looked at electoral boundaries, and as I looked into this yesterday, I learned that the government of the day, which

happened to be a Liberal government, did not disclose the documents that had been directed by Mr. Mahoney.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: In fact, when we went searching for the documents, we found that they had been transferred to a long-term storage facility outside of Confederation Building. I can tell you the minister worked very hard with officials to find those as quickly as possible.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, all this happened –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: All this happened, Mr. Speaker, the first request was made, as I understand, around 10:00 a.m. yesterday. By 12:30 the documents were located and they had to be transferred here to Confederation Building. They arrived around 2:00 p.m. Just a few minutes before, the members opposite went on the attack as if we were trying to do something to protect those documents, Mr. Speaker. It is a large number of files –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the first thing I would say is that the Premier is factually incorrect in much of the answer that he just gave.

The second question is: Where are the documents now?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was yesterday morning, as I understand, the first request was made. I do not know if I can say if I am factually incorrect that efforts were made yesterday. I could tell the member opposite efforts were made yesterday to locate them as quickly as possible. The documents were brought here to Confederation Building around 2:00 p.m. yesterday. I can tell you that the Government House Leader is in a position today to be able to table some of those documents, and he will be doing so this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that they will be tabling some of the documents. I wonder what will happen to the rest of the documents.

Mr. Speaker, there are some serious rumours about significant cuts coming to health care boards in this Province. There are thousands of people working in our health care system and they are worried about their future.

I ask the minister: Will he confirm that each of the health care boards is being notified that significant cuts are coming?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, it does not come as any surprise that members of the Opposition will be trying to instill fear in public servants and the public as well. Of course we are having ongoing Budget discussions with the four regional health authorities.

We are into a Budget process that is clearly a tough Budget process, given the financial situation that we face. That is going to require tough decisions. It means that we are going to have to make tough choices, and I am working

closely and my officials are working closely with our regional health authorities as we work through that process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance said that the Budget is going to be delayed; however, people within the health care system know now that the cuts are coming.

I ask the minister: Will you be keeping these health care workers in limbo until after you introduce the Budget, or will you be making the cuts earlier?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can assure the member opposite and I can assure the public that no decisions have been made about any potential changes or cuts to any of our services within health care. Clearly, we are going to have to do things differently. Our level of spending around health care in this Province is not sustainable; forty cents of every dollar is being spent on the delivery of health care services and they are important services that impact everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador, but we have to find new ways forward. We have to find better ways to deliver services. We are going to work closely with staff within the health care system to find some of those solutions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, in this time of fiscal restraint, the Premier says everything is on the table; yet we see a former Premier who was in the office for only eight months, can pay his secretary for three years at a cost of approximately \$275,000 to review his files as a

minister, and that he will keep as his personal collection – his quote.

I ask the Premier: How can you justify keeping Tom Marshall in a suite of offices while the current Member for Humber East has to rent office space in Corner Brook?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There has been a long-standing policy in government –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER DAVIS: – whereby certain benefits were afforded to Premiers once they left office, Mr. Speaker. They have been around for a number of years, but I can assure you and I can assure the member opposite that even that is under review, and that is on the table as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: I hear the Premier saying it has been around a long time, but you are the one saying this is a crisis, so it is time to look at every possible avenue.

Mr. Speaker, government members are paying rent in Corner Brook – myself included. The Member for Humber East is renting office space in Corner Brook, who was not allowed to move into the office of the Member from Humber East who just resigned. A former Premier for eight months now has a three-year option for suites in Corner Brook.

I ask the Premier: Do you think the former Premier requires a suite of offices for one secretary, costing taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Mr. Speaker, the Premier, I think, answered the first question, which was all aspects of government's operations are under review. Whether it is the benefits that are being paid out to former Premiers – and as the Premier said, this is a benefit. It is nothing new. There is nothing cynical about this.

Former Liberal Premiers have had this. I suspect that all Premiers since the beginning of time have had this. I remember going back to comments in the media when Premier Moores left, Premier Peckford left, and Premier Wells left. Every Premier who has left has had this same benefit. Premier Grimes was the last Liberal Premier to leave –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WISEMAN: – and those benefits have been extended to all former Premiers, but this is the first Premier who has ever said that it is under review and we are going to give it a very sharp scrutiny in this Budget process, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: I say to the minister, this is the first Premier who has ever been in the office less than a year to receive it, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Premier: If you want to save money, why don't you ask the minister to get something less affordable and let the Member for Humber East move into a suite of offices, which was renovated for the member himself in Corner Brook, so that you save taxpayers' money in the interim?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Mr. Speaker, I would not stand in the House and say this was the first – I

assume that the member opposite has checked to ensure that Premier Tulk did not get this benefit when he left. I am sure he has checked that. He would not get in this House and say something unless he had verified it; I am certain.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WISEMAN: I say, Mr. Speaker, he is obviously speaking with some confidence and that is all the more reason why the Premier is adamant and has been clear that he is prepared to look at everything and all things that we do including the size of Cabinet, including the members who have extra pay in this House, whether it Committee Chairs and other sorts of stipends they get paid in the House. He has put everything on the table for review, including what Premiers get when they leave office.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

In the last few weeks we have seen in the media and heard from constituents about problems with the care of residents at the new St. John's long-term care facility. We are hearing about residents being bedridden or not receiving adequate personal care due to lack of staff and supplies.

I ask the minister: Is his department doing a study of all the staffing needs at this facility?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, we are certainly proud of the investments we have made to improve long-term care in Newfoundland and Labrador and we recognize there is still more work to do. The facility in Pleasantville is a beautiful new facility and we believe that residents are getting excellent care there.

However, the concerns that have been raised recently are of great concern to us. I have spoken personally with the CEO of Eastern Health who has taken it upon himself to arrange meetings with people involved to investigate all of the concerns that have been raised. He does also intend to meet with the resident council, which contains family members and residents, to ensure that any concerns about patient care are adequately addressed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I ask the minister: Is he going to get a full report from the CEO about these consultations?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I am in constant communication with our regional health authorities, as are officials at the Department of Health and Community Services. We will ensure that any concerns that have been raised here are followed up.

In terms of the staffing shortages, I have spoken to those issues in this House on several occasions. We have plans in place to ensure that we attract the staff we need. We are pleased that new LPNs have arrived and are completing their orientation and training. We look forward to opening up even more beds at the facility.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister has just now given me the answer to my two questions – one is, give us an update on how many vacancies are still there in staffing, and tell us how many beds are still empty?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A number of the beds have already been opened. There may be several more that still will open in the weeks ahead. I will get the exact numbers and certainly provide them to the hon. member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are still hearing of patients lying in hallways because hospital beds are not available. Much of the backlog is due to patients waiting for long-term care.

I would like the minister to tell me: What is the current wait-list for long-term care under Eastern Health?

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the precise numbers on the wait-list, I would certainly be happy to provide to the hon. member. I know that the opening of the new facility in Pleasantville has made a positive difference.

We are exploring other solutions as well to address the waitlists, because the reality is in every one of our hospitals in Newfoundland and Labrador we have long-term care patients who are tying up acute care beds. That is a concern for government; it is a concern for our regional health authorities. We are striving to find solutions, because it is not just a problem in Eastern Region. In fact, one of the longest waitlists we have in the Province is actually in the Central Region. So we are working to explore solutions for each region of the Province when it comes to long-term care.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, government has taken the position that a reduction in the number of sitting MHAs can address part of the dire fiscal situation in the Province.

Is the Premier telling the people of the Province that democracy is tied directly to the price of a barrel of oil?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: That is a ludicrous question when you stop and think of it for a moment. There is no price on democracy, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WISEMAN: Men and women have given their lives for democracy, and to try to trivialize that by talking about a democracy and the cost of democracy and what we are trying to do as a government to ensure that the size of this House of Assembly needs to be appropriate given the population that we have. We look at that in relation to other parts of the country and the representatives that they have in their Legislatures.

Mr. Speaker, we support the notion that every person in Newfoundland and Labrador needs to be appropriately represented in this Legislature. Leaders of all parties – well, except the Leader of the Third Party –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for St. John's East has time for a quick question.

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This House used to have fifty-two seats before a drop in oil revenue hit the provincial piggy bank,

and now we find ourselves in this situation all of a sudden.

What makes the Premier think that less representation is going to be better representation in this case?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance has time for a quick reply.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: I will be quick, Mr. Speaker.

The fifty-two seats had more to do with the 560,000 people than it had to do with the price of oil, and today we are talking about Newfoundland and Labrador with about 515,000 people. It is a very big difference, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

MR. WISEMAN: Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance on a point of order.

MR. WISEMAN: Mr. Speaker, as a former Speaker, I am somewhat sensitive to this.

During Question Period, the Leader of the Official Opposition, in standing in preparing for a question, indicated to the Premier that the Management Commission was controlled by government. I just want, for the record, to clarify and ask the member to stand and apologize to you. Because clearly, the Management Commission is made up of equal representation from the Opposition and from government, and you, as the Chair, are the other person on that. So, to suggest that government controls the Management Commission is to suggest that you are not independent and you are controlled by the government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WISEMAN: I say, Mr. Speaker, your seat, your position in this House is as an independent. You are elected by this Assembly and you have that independence. I ask the member to stand and withdraw.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services standing on a point of order.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Very quickly, just to the question the hon. Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi raised in Question Period. The number of beds currently not open is thirty and they will be open in April.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to section 8 and section 10 of the Public Tender Act, I hereby table the report of Public Tender Act exceptions for the month of October, 2014, as presented by the Chief Operating Officer of the Government Purchasing Agency.

Further tabling of documents?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Members would recall, yesterday I was asked in Question Period, by the Leader of the Opposition, a number of questions around the request for documentation relative to a previous review of electoral boundaries. I am pleased today to be able to table a number of documents for members to peruse at their leisure. There are two boxes here which represent presentations and audio tapes. Further documentation should

be available within a couple of hours, later this afternoon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

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

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned residents of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS the electoral boundaries commission was legislated to be appointed in 2016 to determine any changes to electoral districts in the Province; and

WHEREAS the undersigned agree with a reduction in the number of electoral seats; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed the time necessary to properly carry out the necessary public consultations; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed sufficient time necessary to properly evaluate the population and demographics of each district and properly calculate the necessary adjustments for the change in the numbers of electoral districts; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed sufficient time necessary to properly evaluate the geographical implications of the change in the number of electoral districts; and

WHEREAS the government is attempting to change legislation to appoint the electoral boundaries commission early;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to ensure that, with or without the completion of work of the electoral boundaries commission as a result of appointing a commission early, it will not interfere with the legislated and mandated requirements to hold a provincial election in 2015.

Mr. Speaker, earlier the Finance Minister said being informed is much more important than a calendar date. Mr. Speaker, in the Province of PEI it took 970 days from the completion of the report to the general election. In the Province of Nova Scotia it took 380 days. In the Province of New Brunswick it took 517 days. In the Province of Quebec it took 791 days. That is just from the end of the report to the election.

In Ontario it took 1,050 days from the completion of the report to the general election. In Manitoba it took 1,418 days from the end of the report to the general election. In Alberta it took 665 days until the end of the report to the election; 551 days in British Columbia; 627 days in the Northwest Territories, and 870 days in Nunavut.

Mr. Speaker, today is January 22, and we have 246 days before this government has to complete a report and get the work done to get an election called on September 25. Mr. Speaker, the people of the Province do not want this legislation to delay a general election.

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned residents of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS people with disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador especially those who have mobility issues or use wheelchairs

face particular difficulties during times of significant winter snowfall; and

WHEREAS persons with disabilities who have low incomes, who have no one to help clear their snow and no opportunities for assistance face isolation and frequently are prevented from going to work, attending school, keeping medical appointments, shopping for groceries and carrying out other necessary responsibilities because accumulated snow at their place of residence impedes pedestrian and wheelchair access; and

WHEREAS the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador supports access, full participation, and equal opportunity for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, regardless of ability;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to work with the City of St. John's and other municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador, as needed, to create a volunteer matching service or other low-cost solution to snow-clearing problems faced by persons with disabilities.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by constituents of mine in the District of St. John's North. I had a call from a constituent just after the Christmas holiday, as I have had every year since I got elected in 2011, about her difficulty getting out of her home as a result of the snowfall. My constituent is an amputee who has other health issues, and she basically has significant disability and significant mobility problems.

I looked around, searched the Internet, looked at what other jurisdictions were doing across Canada and a lot of municipalities in Canada have services that are volunteer services. Some of them are called Snow Angels. There is a similar service that is co-ordinated by the Seniors Resource Centre here in the Province, but there is really nothing in this Province and in the City of St. John's in particular, at least, for persons with disabilities, to help them pair up with somebody to help them clear their snow.

In this instance, my constituent's nine-year-old son was out trying to get the snow cleared out so his mother could get out of the house. I do not think that is sensible at all in this day and age.

I urge the minister responsible to take a leadership role here, to be proactive and not reactive to the problems faced by persons with disabilities, to reach out to the City of St. John's and to see if something cannot be done in co-ordination with the city, through the Province, to help these people who clearly need help with snow clearing.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We, the citizens serviced by Curtis Hospital located in St. Anthony, Newfoundland and Labrador, petition the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and Labrador-Grenfell Health to retain the midwives and allow them to continue to perform all of their duties at Curtis Hospital.

Our midwives offer services that cannot be duplicated and which cannot be replaced. The level of care they offer and the knowledge and training they have in the area of obstetrics is immense. It will be a great disservice to the people of this area if our midwives are no longer available to care for the people here. Privatizing midwifery or waiting five to seven years for regulation, as stated by government, is unacceptable. We have an operational model of midwifery here in St. Anthony that has been delivering outstanding care for over ninety years.

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and Labrador-Grenfell Health to preserve our midwifery services at Curtis Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by residents of Savage Cove, Green Island Brook, Flower's

Cove, Green Island Cove, Bird Cove, and Plum Point. This is a matter that when we look at primary care and we look at a number of issues of where we are moving forward with health care – because I know the minister had talked about spending forty cents for every dollar on health care in the Province. If we look at the health care professionals and allowing them to practice the full scope, there are ways of which we can have smarter spending in health care and providing better health care outcomes for the people of the Province.

In St. Anthony, this hospital is providing midwifery services for almost 100 years. For over ninety years this service has existed. If we look at where the service could be expanded when you look at the recruitment and retention of obstetricians, general practitioners, there are ways in the system of which, with the proper regulations, we could offer midwives not only in St. Anthony but in other areas in a publicly-funded setting. We could also have private midwifery in larger metro areas.

The safe delivery of health care can be provided, but also all the other work that midwives do in terms of the prenatal and postnatal services that they offer families, not just the women who are pregnant but the whole family in terms of helping and making sure that those who are pregnant get the proper adequate care and that we are able to meet the health care needs of people. This could be done in an efficient way and it should be done. This is something that the Minister of Health should focus on in making sure that those regulations are in play and that we do not lose midwifery in St. Anthony on the Great Northern Peninsula.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to present this petition on behalf of my constituents.

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned residents of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS the Family Violence Intervention Court provided a comprehensive approach to domestic violence in a court setting that fully understood and dealt with the complex issues of domestic violence; and

WHEREAS domestic violence continues to be one of the most serious issues facing our Province today, and the cost of the impact of domestic violence is both great economically and in human suffering; and

WHEREAS the Family Violence Intervention Court was welcomed and endorsed by all aspects of the justice system including the police, the courts, prosecutors, defence counsel, Child, Youth and Family Services, as well as victims, offenders, community agencies, and women's groups; and

WHEREAS the recidivism rate for the offenders going through the court was 10 per cent compared to 40 per cent for those who did not; and

WHEREAS a budget for the court was only 0.2 per cent of the entire budget of the Department of Justice;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reinstate the Family Violence Intervention Court.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I am not exactly sure how long I have been presenting this petition. It is pretty well close to two years now. With our new Premier, whose background is policing, if anybody in this House should know the effects of domestic violence, if anybody in this House should know how important the court system is, how important the police system is, how important the support systems are in the area of domestic violence, it should be our current Premier.

Mr. Speaker, the police fully endorsed the Family Violence Intervention Court, because often they are the first responders and they know, they see, the devastating effects of family

violence. The Family Violence Intervention Court was a court that really fully dealt with the root causes of domestic violence.

It reduced recidivism – which is exactly what we want to see happen. We want to see the rate of recidivism reduced, and that means that people will not reoffend. That is exactly what we wanted to see happen, and that is exactly what this court did. For \$500,000, that is what this court did, and it did it protecting the people, the women and children of this Province.

Mr. Speaker, the current House Leader, he will go down in history to be known as the one who cut this court for no good reason, for \$500,000, when it served such a vital function in terms of addressing the root cause of domestic violence in this Province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS most communities in the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair do not have adequate broadband services; and

WHEREAS residents –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: – businesses, students, nurses, and teachers rely heavily on the Internet to conduct their work and cannot afford to wait until 2016 or longer to access a potential plan in partnership with the Muskrat Falls development; and

WHEREAS there are a number of world-class tourism sites in the region, including a UNESCO site at Red Bay, Battle Harbour Historic Site, and the Mealy Mountains National Park;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to work with the appropriate agencies to provide adequate broadband services in communities along the Labrador Coast.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I have presented numerous petitions in this House on the need for an increase to the broadband service in the district and I will continue to do that. We have twenty-two communities in the area and we have at least half, or more than half of these communities that have exceeded capacity. They are closed to sales, several of them with major tourism sites.

Mr. Speaker, as we look at this technological age that we are now living in, everybody likes to be connected. We certainly see indications of that here in the House every day. I do not think there are too many who go without their devices for very long periods of time, unless they are sleeping.

Mr. Speaker, even for fisher people in the district, they are more and more having to rely upon Internet to renew applications and licences. Professionals who are there, schools, the streamlining is very, very slow. Every single day I receive e-mails, or posts to my social media, people are not able to access until after midnight or before 5:00 a.m. I would urge the government to continue to work with service providers. There was \$305 million in the federal budget. I am not sure what portion of that was coming to Newfoundland and what it was earmarked for.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about a fiscal crisis here a lot. Sometimes with a tiny investment – and when you are drawing tourists to the area, 450,000, I believe it was in this Province who visited National Historic Sites last year. Sometimes we have to put a little bit of money in to expect a whole lot of money back.

I will continue to stand and petition and draw attention to the serious broadband need in an area where, I might add, there already is a very, very small cell service. These people are left in

a very difficult situation. Businesses to do their work are hurting, individuals, and students. I hope we will hear some news that some improvement is coming very soon.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I have a petition to the hon. House of Assembly.

The petition of the undersigned residents of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS the electoral boundaries commission was legislated to be appointed in 2016 to determine any changes to electoral districts in the Province; and

WHEREAS the undersigned agree with a reduction in the number of electoral seats; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed the time necessary to properly carry out the necessary public consultations; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed sufficient time necessary to properly evaluate the population and demographics of each district and properly calculate the necessary adjustments for a change in the number of electoral districts; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed sufficient time necessary to properly evaluate the geographical implications of a change in the number of electoral districts; and

WHEREAS the government is attempting to change legislation to appoint the electoral boundaries commission early;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House to urge the government to ensure that, with or without the completion of the work of

the commission as a result of appointing a commission early, it will not interfere with the legislated and mandated requirement to hold a provincial general election in 2015.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand here for the first time this week and enter a petition on this matter, and happy to enter one that is signed by members of my constituency who have some concerns about this whole thing that was sprung on this Province roughly a week ago. It was very quick, and a lot of people – it is taking them back, and we are back here in an emergency session to talk about it.

They have no problem with a reduction in seats in general. That is not their issue, but they are worried about the possibility that this stretches out an election which this government made legislation to ensure would happen this year in the fall. It was the will of the people. That is what they want to make sure happens. They do not want this commission to be done as a means of delaying that election.

Again, that is what is out there. That is what people think, and that is their concern. We have to ensure that does not happen because that is not what people want. That is the purpose of this House, to ensure that we do the people's will. That is why we were elected here.

I am happy to stand here and present this petition on behalf of my constituents. We hope this matter which we are about to debate today is done properly. I also look forward to having the rest of the documents we requested to ensure that we have an adequate, full and informed debate. We have asked for documents that probably should be considered when we get into this matter. We look forward to hopefully getting them and that the minister did not redact them too much along the way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HILLIER: To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned residents of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS the electoral boundaries commission was legislated to be appointed in 2016 to determine any changes to electoral districts in the Province; and

WHEREAS the undersigned agree with a reduction in the number of electoral seats; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed the time necessary to properly carry out the necessary public consultations; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the electoral boundaries commission in 2016 would have allowed sufficient time necessary to properly evaluate the geographical implications of a change in the number of electoral districts; and

WHEREAS the government is attempting to change legislation to appoint the electoral boundaries commission early;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to ensure that, with or without the completion of the work of the electoral boundaries commission as a result of appointing the commission early, it will not interfere with the legislated and mandated requirement to hold a provincial general election in 2015.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I, too, am proud to stand here this afternoon and bring forward this petition on behalf of people from the beautiful District of Conception Bay South, all signed, the correct address and properly indicated.

Article 3.1 of the House of Assembly Act talks about, the resignation of a Premier indicates that within a year we should have a general election. Mr. Speaker, there are people in this Province now who feel that we should be having a general election based on that article. The Official Opposition has not taken that stand.

Mr. Speaker, last winter and spring with the non-crisis of DarkNL and the Humber Valley Paving fiasco, we had a large portion of the population of this Province demanding that we hold an election. Mr. Speaker, at that time the Official Opposition took the stand that we would not be expecting a provincial election.

Mr. Speaker, in the fall, when we ended up with a new Premier and the fiasco that went with his appointments and so on, there was a significant portion of the population of this Province calling for a provincial election. The Official Opposition at that time did not take that stand.

Four, five, six, seven resignations and subsequent by-elections, Mr. Speaker, a significant portion of the population of this Province was calling for a general election. The Official Opposition at that time chose not to.

Mr. Speaker, I have a petition, my colleague has a petition. My colleague earlier had a petition. We are supporting the people of this Province who are now calling for an election.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, that we move to Orders of the Day.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that we move to Orders of the Day.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, Motion 3 of our Order Paper for today, under Standing Order 11, that the House not adjourn at 5:30 this afternoon, Thursday, January 22, 2015.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that this House not adjourn at 5:30 o'clock today.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, pursuant to Standing Order 11, the House not adjourn at 10:00 o'clock this evening, Thursday, January 22, 2015.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that this House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice, under Standing Order 11, I shall move that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, January 26, 2015.

I further give notice, under Standing Order 11, I shall move that the House now adjourn at 10:00 p.m. on Monday, January 26, 2015.

Mr. Speaker, as per Standing Orders, I would like to inform the House that the –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was about to say, as per our Standing Orders I would like to inform members of the House that the Striking Committee has met and the following members will be appointed to the Standing Orders Committee of the House: the Member for Trinity North; the Member for Grand Bank; the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi; and the Member for St. John's South.

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure of the procedure if I need to make a motion or just inform the House of that. Perhaps you could advise.

MR. SPEAKER: Just give the Speaker a minute. I am just going to check that.

MR. KING: Do you want a motion?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader, yes, a motion will be in order to that effect.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is so moved by myself as Government House Leader, seconded by the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the Standing Orders Committee is to be comprised of the members mentioned by the Government House Leader.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time I would like to go back to our Order Paper and call Order 3, second reading of a bill, An Act To Amend The Electoral Boundaries Act, Bill 42.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 42.

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed another privilege to get up here today. First of all, I know on behalf of a lot of people on this side of the House, and I am sure everyone in the House, it is nice to see the Member for St. John's East back here. My condolences to you and your family. I know it is a hard time to be going through, but I am sure all of our prayers and thoughts are with your family. It is nice to see you back here.

Mr. Speaker, I always get up and I always start off my speech by saying the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis. I do not know, if I get elected the next time, if I will be using the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis. It may be some other name. I saw a couple of ones out the other day when people had it done up, it was called Torbay and some other names that they had there also. Whatever it is, it will be.

I do believe in the amendments that we are bringing here today. I am going to give you the reasons why I believe it is important for us to do this. I look back and I look at my district and the historic years of my district, I look back at the people who represented it and I always get up and I always speak about it because I am pretty fortunate. I know there are some other members here in the House who had their fathers represented in certain districts.

When I look at the people who came before me, I get the privilege every now and then to speak to Mr. Tom Hickey who represented the area. Tommy is an interesting character. He is a hard fellow. I always see him; I meet him at a lot of funerals. If he can get a hold to you and hold onto you, he will talk about politics, the district, what it meant, how it was years ago, how things have changed, what they were like in his times,

and what they were like today. When I do speak to him, Mr. Hickey is a wonderful man. I am proud to be able to be the fellow who followed him.

Then I go back and I look at when I first started in politics. When I first started in politics the district that I represented was called St. John's East Extern. St. John's East Extern took in, I think, almost nearly all of Virginia Waters. It went right up to Airport Heights, it went right down to Wedgewood Park, and it went right around the whole area. It went down as far as Virginia Park and that area. It was a huge, huge area.

I can remember being a young fellow from Flatrock not knowing many townies at the time and it was a new area for me. It was a new area for my father actually too when he first got involved. Back then I think a lot of it, PCs, Liberals, NDP, everyone had their thing. As the election came forward, people came out and we met wonderful people.

I remember one gentleman in particular – he is deceased now – was Mr. Paul Reynolds who happened to be the Mayor of Wedgewood Park. He was the mayor at the time and that was part of St. John's East Extern. He became a very good friend of mine, a very good friend of our families and everything else, but that was all through politics. When I look at being a politician, I look at the responsibilities of what it takes to be a politician. I really believe every person in this room here – it is a privilege. It is something that people gave us a privilege to be here.

I listened to the Open Line host and one day I him talking. He said those bums in there do not want to be in there. If they do not want to do the work, then get rid of them. Yes, you get rid of us. If you do not want it, get rid of us. If we are not doing what you elected us to do, that is what you are supposed to do. Do you know what? We should all take the privilege that they gave us and make sure we do our work.

Mr. Speaker, I look at an MHA like myself, I came into this fully aware of everything was in front of me because I was fortunate enough to be in a family who had a father who was an MHA and I saw what he did over the years. We, as

MHAs – and I am sure that there is nobody in here who wants to lose their district; nobody in here wants to say I am going to lose a certain part of my district or whatever. I know in my area I enjoy the events that I go to. Since I was elected, I have been here now probably six-and-a-half years, I would say I am after meeting more people – in Bauline, for example, the smallest community in my area, I would say in Bauline before I was elected I might have known twenty people.

Bauline has a population of 400; I know over 200 of them and call them by name now because of this job that I have. That is a privilege to me to be able to know these people, know that I am working for these people. I do not want to lose Bauline. I do not want to lose Pouch Cove. I do not want to lose Flat Rock. I do not want to lose any of them, but that is not my choice. That is not my choice.

It will be a commission that is going to be set up that is going to be independent, that is going to look at everything, and it is not going to be about Kevin Parsons. It is not going to be what Kevin Parsons wants. It is going to be what is best for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: That is what this is all about. This is not about – and I heard members get up here and they talk about their districts and they talk about everything else and how they want to maintain what they have, and I respect it. I do not want to lose anything that I have now. I figure I have a bond down there with the people who elected me.

Now, they can get rid of me. That is no problem at all. I have no problem, but I can assure them that I am doing the best I can for them. I think that at the end of the day when they come down and mark their X or whatever they have to do that hopefully they will see the same thing, and that is why we are all here.

If someone says to me listen, we do not want to bother you; I say, do not be so foolish. What are you bothering me about? You are not bothering me. You are my boss. You are the person who put me where I am. As long as we all keep that

in the mind that we are here, that our bosses are the people that elected us.

It is not what we want. It is not what I want. It has nothing to do with everybody in this place. This is for the betterment of Newfoundland and Labrador. I listened to the Member for Cartwright – L' Anse au Clair today when she talked about technology and I look at her over there today and she is on her device, and we all are – do you know what? When my father was the MHA for St. John's East Extern, he had one of those bag phones. I do not know you if remember them. They were the big old phone; it was like you took it out of your – that is what he used.

Technology today, he never had that. When he went down in the district and he had to go get a letter off somebody or a picture that somebody had, he had to go get it right to their houses. I received more messages yesterday on Facebook than I did on anything else, than I did by e-mail, by text or anything else. There were messages given to me on Facebook.

Technology has changed, everything has changed, and the way we do our jobs has changed. I answered all of them on Facebook. A friend of mine he calls it 'bookface'. He does not call it Facebook. Are you on that 'bookface', he says. I say, I do not know. Do you know what? He texted me about three weeks ago, and I never ever thought he had a cellphone. I did not know he had a cellphone.

So, as times change, we have to change. That is my whole point here today. Technology is a fantastic thing. Sometimes I think it is a little bit too much sometimes, because I like to do the personal thing myself. I like to be able to go to the person and talk to them. A lot of times when people send me this big, old long e-mail, I will just send it back to them and say give me your number. I would just as soon talk to them as get into the – and that is the way I like doing things. Now, some other people like doing it in different ways.

Today, technology has changed. When you look at forty-eight members for 500,000 people – and listen, I am not going to get up here today and tell the commission, or the people who are on this commission, how to cut things up. That is

not me; that is not the way I am. I think if there is a judge who is appointed to this, I am sure he will have the best technologies in the world to be able to do what he can do, and he will have the people on the commission who will do it properly.

I am not going to question them, and I am not going to question – but the only thing I do question. I heard today, and a lot of times you get up and people are, oh, you cannot do it in time. Well, do you know what? Let's give them a chance to do it in time. I am going to state here today in the House of Assembly that I want to see an election in 2015. I do not want to wait until 2016. I want an election this year, and so does everybody here.

All we heard today on the petitions, a couple of them: You cannot do it in time. The rest of them: oh, they are going to try to drag it out to 2016. I spoke to a lot of constituents this weekend, talked to a lot of people in my area, and that is the one thing they do not want. Honestly, they do not want to see an election in 2016. They want an election in 2015, and so do I, and so does our Premier, and so does this government; and I am sure, so does everybody on the other side of the House. It is not about us trying to drag anything out here. This is all about one thing, doing the right thing, and this is the right thing to do. There are a couple of reasons why it is the right thing to do.

I listened to the Minister of Finance the other day as he stood up and spoke. He said, okay, we will wait until 2016 to do this. So it gets done in 2016, and we are all in the House. Everybody here is in agreement that it should be reduced. It should be reduced, no doubt about it. There is nobody in this House who does not believe that this Assembly should be reduced to a certain number of seats.

We have different values, but they are pretty close. I heard the Leader of the Opposition say forty; I heard our leader say thirty-eight. That is not too far off, as far as I am concerned. We all agree to that. We all agree that it has – but if we wait until 2016, Mr. Speaker, we are waiting until 2019, at the end of 2019, almost to 2020. We are waiting too long. If this is done in 2016 and we cut this back to thirty-eight seats, what

do you do? What do you do with the ten other seats that are left there?

Cape St. Francis is gone. I am joined with my friend from Conception Bay East – Bell Island, say for example. We have one district there, and he is representing that district. That is the district he is going to represent. We are wasting people's money, and we will be wasting people's money. This job should be done before the election. It should be done so we do not wait three or four years for it to get done after an election. I believe it should be done now. All I am saying here today is give the commission that is going to be set up time to do it. They will have the time to do it. We all want an election in 2015.

Today's technology is amazing. I was looking at a Crown land issue with a guy. He came into my office and we just went on Google map, went in and googled. The piece of land stood out, and we even went down as much to see where the boundary lines and everything else was on the piece of land. Technology has changed.

This process can be done in the time frame that we are allowing. It can be done, and it will be done. We will have an election in 2015. That is what the people want, and that is what we want in this House. It is so important.

Another thing that people say to me all the time is, why are you doing it? Well, the number one reason is because it is the right thing to do. Number two is I look at the financial situation of the Province today. Yesterday, the big shocker was the interest rate dropped by a percentage in the Bank of Canada. Nobody saw it coming. This time last year nobody saw the price of oil at \$47 a barrel. We never saw it coming.

We have economists all over the world looking at the situations. They are in Alberta, Canada, Russia, you name it. Any oil producing country in the world is really scrambling now because of the revenue they are losing. We are no different. We have to have a look at what we are doing.

Mr. Speaker, I explained to a guy on the weekend a reason why you do it. Sometimes we all get in situations – some of us now, not all of us – where your family, probably it could be a

layoff, it could be a death, it could be a divorce, it could be anything, and the household income changes. When the household income changes, you cannot expect – if I am in my household and I am used to driving the biggest truck, burning all the gas and everything else, and all of a sudden the money that I had in my household has shrunk by a large margin, I cannot expect my children to take all of the cuts and cut it down. I have to lead by example, and that is what our Premier is doing.

People say, oh, everything is on the table. Yes, it is all on the table. Why are you doing it now? It has to be done now. In order for us to be able to do this before the next election, this is the time we have to do it. This is not a rush. This is just saying listen, we had better get back in the House. This is what we want done and this is the reason why we are doing it. It is the same thing as your family. It is the same thing as what you do in your family. You have to make decisions that will affect your family because you want the best for the Province. That is what we are doing here.

I laugh; it really, really gets to me when people say it is only \$2.5 million. Wow, \$2.5 million. Okay, if you do not do it – how about if a person gets laid off, that is only \$50,000? Is that what you say to the person who is getting laid off? If there is something that we have to do as a government to all the different organizations that we help, okay, last year we gave you \$10,000, this year we may only be able to give you \$5,000. Do we say it is only \$5,000? It is not \$5,000 to those groups; \$2.4 million, \$10 million savings is huge. It is huge.

Whatever the deficit is this year, if it is \$1 billion, you are not going to find \$1 billion in one smack just like that. There are going to have to be different things. That is like the Premier stated in this House day after day since we got here. Everything has to be on the table. Everything has to be looked at. That is the reason why we have to start with this. This is a start.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Cross): Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: This is what this is, a start. It is pretty amazing when you think about it. Here we are, we are in here voting to eliminate ten jobs among ourselves. I do not think there are many organizations where everybody would sit down and think about eliminating ten jobs. Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? It is the right thing to do.

The reason why it is the right thing to do is because we are responsible to the people who elected us. They are our bosses. Like I said earlier, my boss is the people from the District of Cape St. Francis, the people who elected me. My job every day is to serve the people from Cape St. Francis, the people who elected me. I believe this is the right decision to take. I think we have to do it. I think it is important that we do it.

Do I want to lose a part of my district? Like I said earlier, I love the community of Pouch Cove. I always tell everyone – and they all know this anyway down our way. Everything you do in Pouch Cove is about a grub job, about a feed. Every time I go down there they want to feed me. You can tell by looking at me that I enjoy it a lot.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Do you know what? I do not want to lose any of my communities, but I have no say in that. That will be up to the commission. That will be up to them.

I am sure everybody in this House has people who they have met through politics that means a lot to them. I have a lot of seniors. I love going to seniors' functions. I think they are the people who did so much for us; it is time for us to do it for them.

There are so many different programs that you can help people out with. That is what we are about as politicians. We should be here for the right reason. The right reason is to help the people who elected us. That is why this is important.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to talk about the reasons why we have to do this. It is important. I know everyone, as they got up today, were talking about time. Let's give the commission – I do

not mean to take my full twenty minutes here today, but I probably will. Let's give them the time to do their work. I am sure they can come back, with the technologies of the day, and they will be able to do it.

The last time I heard it took about nine months to do it. I am sure with what we have today and the technology, we can cut that down because technology has changed like you would not believe.

I have watched, a couple of people are after sending me – I have done it myself, looking down at different districts, looking at the population of districts and everything else. I know everyone has their own conclusion of how this is going to work. I am not saying take seats away from anyone. No one wants to see their district lose, but my point today is it is something that needs to be done; it is the right thing to do, and give the people who are going to do it the opportunity to try to do it. Do not just cut it down right off the bat. Let's see if this can be done.

Everyone in this House, like I stated earlier, I have heard it so many times and you hear it in the media, they are only trying to drag themselves on. They are trying to keep themselves in power more. Not so, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you right now, Kevin Parsons, the Member for Cape St. Francis, wants an election in 2015. So does everybody else on this side. So does the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, by eliminating whatever number of seats, ten seats or whatever we are going to do here, it not only takes members. There are people we feel loyal to. It is the loyalty you have to your staff who work for you. It is not only ten members in here who will lose their jobs. It is also the CAs from everyone.

I know the Member for Torngat Mountains stated the other night, he said, it will affect you more than it will affect us. Obviously, there are twenty-nine of us over here on this side of the House and there is a less number over there. This move is going to affect a lot of people. I personally do not like to see anybody lose their job. I hate to see anybody lose their job. I

would rather see taxes go up or whatever, but I do not want to see job losses.

Do you know what? Reality is not what you want sometimes. Reality is do the right thing. You have to make sure that whatever is happening, that you are the person who is leading.

I have to give our Premier – he is pretty strong on this. For him to come into the House and do this, it shows great leadership on his behalf. I must say, as a new Premier, he is not here very long, but I have to say I support him 100 per cent. I think he is doing a great job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Yesterday was a great example in this House of Assembly. I applaud the Member for St. John's Centre. This was a great day in the House of Assembly yesterday. I was very proud to be here, as to be part of what we did here yesterday.

Mental health is a huge issue all over this Province and we, as parliamentarians, came together yesterday and we made a decision that will affect them for years to come. It will affect all of us, because one in five – but that is what we are here for. We are here to make the right decisions. Mr. Speaker, the right decision is to have the number of MHAs reduced before the next election, and the right decision will be to have the election in 2015.

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 happy to stand today to speak to Bill 42. I did have the opportunity to speak to the hoist amendment that was introduced by our leader in a previous debate on Tuesday, and now this is my first opportunity to speak to the entire bill.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that in some ways the direction of the debate in this House has been

skewed, and that in fact what we should be talking about is not the number ten, not how many seats will be cut, not about our economic situation due to the price of oil, but what we should be talking about in this House is how do we achieve the best possible governance for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is the main question. That should be the directive to the electoral boundaries commission.

We do not know, Mr. Speaker – I am very, very disappointed in the Premier for (a) having just pulled – what it seems to be – the number ten out of the air, because he still cannot explain to us, or refuses to explain to us, or is unable to explain to us how he reached the number of ten. He has admitted that there was no consultation outside of his own, perhaps, Cabinet, or his own caucus.

Mr. Speaker, the decision on how we govern ourselves as a people is one of the most fundamental decisions that we can make as a legislators. Our governance does not belong to the forty-eight members here in this House of Assembly. Who we are, as a people, and how we decide to govern ourselves, is a decision that is made by the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The results often of those decisions result in elections and the choosing of the representatives who come and do the work on behalf of the people in this House. I am very concerned, extremely concerned that this Premier has, again without any sense of transparency or accountability, decided that ten seats must be cut. Maybe he is right; I do not know. Maybe he is wrong, I do not know – but to have pulled that number somewhere and then he will be giving instruction to the electoral boundaries commission to cut ten seats from this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting to see what the possible ramifications of this are. Before I get into that, the Premier himself and his Minister of Finance has stood up in this House in the past week and several times talked about how vulnerable we are right now in our Budget, how precarious our economic situation is, yet he has also said that Newfoundland and Labrador has a strong economy. I am not quite sure how we make sense of all that. They seem to be

conflicting messages. Perhaps they are not, but they seem to be in some ways.

If, in fact, we are in such a precarious economic time because of the price of oil, then one would think what we need most is stability. What we need most is to know that we have the people we need in order to do the governance that we need, particularly in a time of precarious economic times.

The other issue is that we know that the government has said repeatedly in the past three days, the Premier has said in this House, he has said it in the media, he has said it in public meetings that everything is on the table, and what he is signalling is that we are going to see cuts. The Minister of Finance said here today we must make strategic decisions, and the Minister of Health said we must make tough decisions.

In this time again of economic vulnerability, precarious economic times, where tough decisions supposedly will have to be made, now more than ever do the people of Newfoundland and Labrador need to have ample representation in this House because if tough decisions are to be made, we need to make sure that everybody is represented in this House.

I am not so sure that is going to happen in an adequate fashion with the time frame that government has laid out for an electoral boundaries commission and in order for all of the work that has to be done to reduce this House by ten seats.

The issue is not about whether ten MHAs are going to lose their jobs. The issue is not about whether or not ten constituency assistants who work really hard, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the constituents – that is not the issue about who is going to lose their jobs.

Again, I believe that what should be foremost in any direction from this government to an electoral boundaries commission is how we can best achieve governance in our Province in this particular time in our history. Particularly, keeping in mind our precarious economic situation, the tough decisions that have to be made. Tough decisions which the Minister of Finance said he will make strategic decisions

that will affect people twelve months down the road – decisions that will not just affect people today, but decisions that have long-term sustainability.

To rush into something like this in this time when we need stability seems foolhardy to me and to our caucus here. I think many of the MHAs who have stood up, many of my colleagues who have stood up today and in the past three days have shared similar concerns. Not only do we hear those concerns here in this House, we also hear concerns from experts in the area of constitutional law, experts in the area of legislative laws, and in governance. They also are raising red flags and saying this is not the way to do it.

Mr. Speaker, we have had a history with this government of rash decisions, tough decisions that they have had to reverse. Decisions, for instance, in 2012-2013, rash Budget decisions that affected particularly the Department of Justice, where the Crown experienced deep cuts, where the sheriff's office experienced deep cuts and many of those cuts had to be reversed.

We also saw the knee-jerk reaction, the decision to name the Department of Justice the Department of Public Safety and that decision had to be reversed. Decisions that seem to come out of the blue. If we actually used our legislated committee structure, this kind of legislation would have gone to committee. It would have been much more thought out. There would have been discussion which would have affected the quality of debate in this House as well.

This is a major decision. This is just not a tough Budget decision. This decision should not be about a deficit. Again, it should be about what is the best possible governance that we have. I believe, in fact, what is happening today is a decision about communications. It is a decision that is pandering. It is decision that is pandering in the same way by changing the name of the Department of Justice to the Department of Public Safety. It is that same kind of decision. It is a decision that government hopes will pander to a notion that government is overblown and that MHAs are overpaid.

I believe that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador will not be fooled by this. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador have been forewarned that we are in such tough economic times. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador know how important, particularly at this time, it is to be fully represented, to have their voices in the House of Assembly.

When I did speak to the hoist motion, Mr. Speaker, I talked about the possibility of looking at a reality check. What I was looking at was, really, how possible is it to do the work that government is going to task the electoral boundaries commission with? I have found my papers here and I would like to take a look at that again.

Mr. Speaker, before going there, I believe that some of the decisions that are going to be made here, possibly tonight – maybe we will have to go at this again next week; I do not know. If, in fact, the Premier directs the electoral boundaries commission to cut ten seats that will violate our elections act in some cases. We may see court cases. We may see people of Newfoundland and Labrador bringing the government to court because they are not adequately represented.

In our current electoral act it says that there is a tolerance for a 10 per cent variance in population rates in the city areas, in more municipal areas, and a tolerance for up to 25 per cent variance rates in coastal communities that are not connected by roads. The possibility of fulfilling the directive by this government will violate those variances, which may enable districts to go to court and to challenge the decisions that this government is making about electoral boundaries.

For those reasons I think that this cannot be done as quickly as government thinks that it can be done. The process of governing this Province does not belong to elected officials. The process of governance and how we live our lives together as a people belongs to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. To do this process without extensive consultation would be a violation of that principle.

Mr. Speaker, I am not so sure that the directive this government is giving to the potential electoral boundaries commission is in the best

interests of democracy. This directive has to be in the best interest of democracy and it has to be in the best interest of good governance. Those must be the guiding principles, not about saving money by cutting ten seats.

Perhaps that is what the commission will come up with. For the commission to truly be an independent commission whose sole purpose is to ensure the best possible governance that we have, then they must be unfettered and they must be allowed to do their work from their seats of expertise. To do anything else is tying the hands of the commission.

I think it would be very interesting to see in fact, once the commission is appointed, whether they accept that they will do this within the time frame given, and whether they will accept the directive and the number ten. They may not. They may refuse to do that. One would hope that what they would take as their guiding principle is to ensure that we have the best possible governance available to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We all know that our governance is about how we live our lives together, how we make our laws, how we use our resources, how we plan our resources, how we ensure that our economy is strong and vibrant, how we make sure that we have proper health care, that we teach our children, that we care for our seniors, and that everybody has a place to live. That is what our governance is all about.

The reality check, Mr. Speaker – I would like to take a few minutes to go back over that again. January 19-22 – this week – we in the House of Assembly will debate and possibly the changes to the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act will be passed. January 13, the Chief Justice has thirty days to appoint the Chair of the commission. Government has already said that the Chief Justice said he can do it faster.

So, say, that appoints somebody by January 30. There are then five days for the Speaker of the House of Assembly – no more than five days after the Chair is in place – to appoint a Chair. Then by May 31, the commission will submit the report to the Department of Justice and Public Safety – 120 days. Four months after

they are appointed, they will submit their report to the Department of Justice and Public Safety.

The month of June, the minister presents the report to Cabinet, tables it in the House of Assembly, which will pass or not the amendments to the House of Assembly Act specifying thirty-eight districts, if, in fact, the commission follows the directive from the government. That gives from June to September. Elections Newfoundland and Labrador says it must have four months in order to prepare the maps, the districts – in order to prepare everything for an election.

That brings us to the end of September. That is if there is no glitch in the system, that is if the commission can, in fact – and again I said a few days ago, Mr. Speaker, just as sure as the sun rises every day, just as sure as the sun sets every day, commissions take longer than their allotted time.

I also spoke with an expert in this area of political science and he said never, ever has this ever been done in under a year in the history of the country. It has never, ever been done in under a year, particularly because the public, the people of the Province, have to be consulted – and they have to be thoroughly consulted. He said this was never, ever done under a year. We are talking about a few months here, Mr. Speaker.

So, the last legal date to drop the writ for our election is September 25, because of the election of a new Premier. So it is not possible; the days are simply not there. We know, unless the process is even more truncated than what it is, that it is not possible to meet the date of September 25, the last legal date to drop the writ.

Mr. Speaker, I find it astonishing that this government would do this at this time. They have been in power for how many years, ten years? The current Premier has been the Premier for how long, six months? Has it been that long? I am not exactly sure. To do this now, to put everything under the gun, to put everything up against the wall on one of the most important decisions we can make as to how we govern ourselves as a people, I believe this to

be foolhardy. I believe this to be a travesty in many ways.

Perhaps what will happen because of the directive to change the boundaries, to reduce representation by ten seats – again, which the commission may find is an appropriate thing to do; I do not know. Perhaps this government will become known by the people – perhaps in The Straits – White Bay North and St. Barbe, will they become one district? Perhaps this government will become known as the government who took away representation from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I dare say that many, many people of Newfoundland and Labrador will see that.

All of us, every MHA in this House, was sent a paper from Professor Russell Williams about his understanding and the possible scenarios of what will happen if, in fact, ten seats were cut. He looks at the legal acceptable variances and he is forewarning what may happen and I encourage – I am sure every one of my colleagues here in this House has looked at his paper and looked at the graphs that he has presented for us. I am sure people will have questions about it. Again, I feel that it is unfortunate what this government has done. I do believe that it is the same kind of pandering as naming the Department of Justice, the Department of Public Safety.

I do not believe that this is in the best interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The member's time has expired.

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am always amazed when I listen to, I will not say all members of the NDP, but some of the members of Third Party, Mr. Speaker. There is always a tone that we are tearing the world

apart, or we are making decisions that are going to be totally detrimental to the world. There is never enough of anything. There never seems to be anything right.

I have been here now for going on eleven years and I do not think I have heard – there might have been one or two occasions, but, my gosh, it is demoralizing. I find it just demoralizing. Just listen to some of the words that the Member for St. John's Centre just talked about: that we are making a decision that is foolhardy; this is a travesty that we are taking away representation of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, does she think that any of us on this side as members are going to sit and support a decision that takes away the representation of people in the Province? That we are going to, somehow or another, take away democratic rights of the people of this Province? I, for one, would not ever sit as part of a decision that is going to take away the democratic rights of my constituents.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Never. We will debate – and there is no doubt about it, I have gotten some e-mails from those who are in political science fields. Some people are going to offer opinions. Democracy, Mr. Speaker, that is what that is. That is democracy, that we have the right to send something on these, or to send something in writing. We will make those decisions.

If you look at other jurisdictions in the country that have decided, based on the numbers, these are the numbers that an MHA or an MLA represents, and if the geography comes into play and the numbers are a little higher than we have in the Province, is she saying then that democracy may not be working in Nova Scotia, or New Brunswick, or Ontario, or Quebec? That is what she seems to be saying.

Another one that has bothered me, Mr. Speaker, she is saying that we retain the number of seats. Somebody mentioned here earlier today, I believe, there was a population of 560,000 people in the Province and there were fifty-two. What she is professing is that no matter if the numbers drop or not, Mr. Speaker, we maintain. That is what she is saying, it does not matter. If

the numbers go down, no matter what the dollars are that we spend, we maintain status quo. Mr. Speaker, the logic of what she is saying in any case –

MS ROGERS: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre on a point of order.

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the hon. member across the floor is actually misrepresenting what I said. I said that the commission should decide the number. I did not say what he said I said, Mr. Speaker, no way.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development.

MR. JACKMAN: There is no point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I am actually impressed she got up. I am actually impressed. The logic, Mr. Speaker, just escapes me.

Mr. Speaker, we look at the numbers. We look at the dollars, and the dollar savings that have been talked about is \$2 million or \$2.5 million. I do not want to misrepresent the NDP, but I thought the issue was raised the other day, this is minimal savings.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask them to go and speak to some group who is looking for \$3,000, some group who is looking for \$100,000, or some senior or some low-income person to say that a savings of \$2 million is somehow trivial. It is not in my books, Mr. Speaker, and not in a lot of the constituents that I speak to and the groups who are seeking dollars.

Anything, Mr. Speaker, that we can do to save dollars we should be looking at, and where should we start? We should start with ourselves first. We start with ourselves. Mr. Speaker, we can come in this House and we can get up and say, well –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JACKMAN: We can get up in this House and say, when is the right time? We can go and set up consultations, go for the next while, talk about it, and we are often accused of doing that, Mr. Speaker, time and time again.

Mr. Speaker, we as a party, this Premier is making a decision that is in, yes, dollars, but he is not an individual who is going to compromise democracy, as the Member for St. John's Centre has been saying on several occasions when she has gotten up to speak. I am going to use a word now. I think it is absolutely ludicrous what she is saying, that we as members of this House will debate. We will debate, Mr. Speaker, but there is no one on this side who is willing to sit in their seats and come in here day after day and say that we are going to compromise the democratic rights of the people in this Province, Mr. Speaker, absolutely not.

Mr. Speaker, I have been following some of the e-mails that have been coming, and I have to tell you, I have not – I have been in, like I said, for almost eleven years. We have had many issues that have come to this House, and I have had representation on many occasions from my constituents about issues we have made decisions on, numerous ones, and I can go back to the first or second year I came into the House, some of the challenges we faced and the decisions we had to make around public service and fishing and everything else, and I have gotten e-mails and calls and requests for meetings. Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you, I have not been swamped from my constituents to say that this is not the right thing to do; I have not.

I have gotten e-mails from some people, as was mentioned, from a professor who sent us and another individual who said these are the recommendations I would give to you on dividing the boundaries. Of course, Mr. Speaker, they have taken my district and reconfigured it in different ways. I do not know, Mr. Speaker, I might have to run against the Member for Grand Bank. I would not mind that myself, to tell you the truth.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am only joking, but if I look at how my district might be structured or restructured and coming down the peninsula, if things are changed, I can assure you that the representation of the people who will be in that new revamped district, on my part, will not be any less.

If they increase my numbers by, I do not know, a couple of thousand or whatever, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you, and I can assure any of those, that the representation they would get is the same that I have always provided in this House and on behalf of my constituents. I can assure you, and I think I speak for the people across the way, you are going to give them the same representation, Mr. Speaker.

The numbers in other jurisdictions across the country, someone said in the House here yesterday, we are on the lower end of the scale. Should we take a look at it? Certainly we should. Is a decision being made? Yes, it is. It is a decision that is being made by this government, this Premier, and it is one I think that people think it is the things that we should be looking at. The time is right to do it now, Mr. Speaker.

I can get into speaking about the composition of the committee, the chief justice from among the judges in Supreme Court, the four other members who are going to be in there, and the resources that these members are going to need. We have set a timeline on it. Why shouldn't we, Mr. Speaker?

We are often accused of lingering things out. Maybe the time is right that we put in place and we set the time that this decision be made, and that we go into the election this coming fall, in 2015, with fewer seats, and that the people of the Province know that coming out of the next election, yes, there will be fewer members. We will assure them that the representation will still be good, but there will be savings.

As I have said before, go and speak to some of the seniors groups that I have submitting applications to me on a regular basis. To the groups, the 50 Plus Clubs, the people on low income, the sport and rec groups, the people from the disabilities community, Mr. Speaker, all looking for money. We may not sometimes

look at it that yes, we are dealing with millions and millions of dollars, but when it comes to divvying up \$2 million between groups within the Province, that is a substantial amount of money. Accumulate that over the number of years, it turns out to representation we can give to various groups and community organizations across the Province that benefits them. That is democracy at work, and those are decisions being made.

I know I have eight minutes, Mr. Speaker. I am not one who intends to get up here and ramble on, but I have to point out – I am going to take my seat a bit early. I would ask the people not to take the doom and gloom world that I often hear from the Third Party. I have never been a part of it, Mr. Speaker. I cannot operate that way. There is always the positive side to look at.

Mr. Speaker, I will end by saying this. We on this side are never going to make decisions that will compromise the democratic right of the people of the Province. No matter how much the NDP profess that, it will never happen.

We are elected here. As the Member for Cape St. Francis said, do not forget who put us here and they will decide whether we get back here again or not. Mr. Speaker, our decisions are always made in the best interests of democracy in this Province.

Thank you.

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

MR. HILLIER: Yes, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this bill.

Before I get started, I sat here this afternoon and we have listened to three people speak. I will not get into all three at this point in time, but they impressed me or they impressed upon me in different ways. I go back to the first speaker this afternoon, the Member for Cape St. Francis. It is almost like he is throwing in the towel and he is ready to give it all up.

He said three times, Mr. Speaker, I know I have no say in all of this. Things are going to come out as they are and I have no say in it. Well, I

am going to have my say this afternoon. I had a class of geography in 1983. The same thing worked for them as worked for these people this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, I find it surreal just to be here this afternoon. You can only say you are new for so long, but I still call myself relatively new. When we broke in December, I said to somebody who had been around a little bit longer, now what can I expect as the winter goes on? You have your Christmas holidays, then you take January and February to do some work in your constituency, get your feet under you, and get your office set up and so on. In March we are back in the House again.

I will tell you a story, Mr. Speaker. As you are aware I have been wearing a sling for the last couple of days. Knowing my schedule for the winter I elected to have elective surgery on Friday. I went under at the Health Sciences knowing that I had two months to recuperate. When I came out of recovery, my wife was with me – and if anybody has every come out of anesthesia you will know that you are a little bit confused.

I went in knowing that I had two months and when I came out the first thing she said to me was you are back in the House on Monday morning. I said no, don't you be so stunned. I am not reading this correctly because it is not possible for us to be back in the House on Monday morning. It is like the Premier woke up last week at one point in time and somebody said the sky is falling, the sky is falling so he put a piece of paper over his head to protect himself and said I have to cut ten seats.

It has been like that as we move forward all week. We had, we are going to cut the seats, we are going to cut to thirty-eight seats, and we are going to move this forward as quickly as we can. Mr. Speaker, why did we need to be called back in two days? Is it a political piece to catch us off guard, or it is just another example of this government not being able to plan more than two days in advance?

I was just one person who was put out. We had people out of Province; we had people out of country. We had people getting on planes to be

called back in here to do this on a two-day notice.

Mr. Speaker, this is Bill 42, An Act To Amend The Electoral Boundaries Act. Our take on this, as we have said in recent days we are looking at three amendments: one in the range of seats, one dealing with the 120 days and that if it is not done it will trigger an election, and of course then the other issue are the seats in Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, it is almost like a rush-in government, alright, it is almost like a rush-in government. They rush here, they rush there, and they rush everywhere. I want to take a minute and go back over some of the issues that this government has rushed through. I will start with the expropriation of the Abitibi mill in Grand Falls. They rushed in to the House, the sky is falling, the sky is falling. We have to expropriate the mill in Corner Brook. Everybody has to vote for it before the sky falls in. What do we know is that we own a mill.

We lost two court cases to NAFTA. Currently the Department of Finance has recognized potential environmental contingent liability of \$265 million.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The Government House Leader on a point of order.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, we have called from the Order Paper Bill 42 to talk about electoral reform. There is absolutely no connection to previous decisions around the Abitibi mill in Grand Falls-Windsor, or any environmental issues.

MR. SPEAKER: The Opposition House Leader to the point of order.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I certainly see the relevance when we talk about previous rushed legislation in this House. This is what the member is referencing. I certainly think that is relevant, even though the other side might not want to hear it.

MR. SPEAKER: To the point of order, there is no point of order. I would declare that in a debate in this House, what is relevant may be a

personal issue. The Speaker at some point extends that level of discretion, but at some point the members do need to speak to the general intent of the bill.

MR. HILLIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I did not realize we would get things stirred up this early and I still have thirteen minutes left.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HILLIER: Obviously, Bill 29, which will lead to relevance again –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HILLIER: We rushed in. We have to get this straightened out before we close in June. Now, two years later, we are waiting for an inquiry to come in to say exactly what went on with Bill 29.

How many do you want me to give? Mr. Speaker? We can go into cuts in the Justice Department, sheriffs. We had nobody to lead people into the courthouse, brought them back in.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Order, please!

I would remind the member that we are speaking to this bill. The general intent of this bill is what we should be at. I would ask to speak with relevance.

MR. HILLIER: Mr. Speaker, getting back to Bill 42, we have been given 120 days for a commission to do a piece of work where nowhere in Canada has it been done in less than 185, and most have gone over one year. My colleague from Virginia Waters in her petition this afternoon talked about how long it took for all of these other commissions on boundary issues in other provinces and in other

jurisdictions in this country to come back with their decisions.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I really have a concern with this government giving the commission 120 days when we have so many of these examples where they have done it wrong in the last two years.

Mr. Speaker, let us move on to a little more benign maybe, topic, and that is Labrador. Since I retired as an educator I have had the opportunity to do some tour work with a local tour company. Labrador is a big place. Each of the last three years I have taken a group of people from out of Province into Southern Labrador. I just wanted to take you through a little bit of our experience, first of all, on the one-day tour of the section of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair that we did.

We get up at 5:30 in the morning in Plum Point. Mr. Speaker, right away you realize there is something wrong with the ferry service when you get up at 5:30 in the morning and you drag thirty-five people, average age seventy-five to ninety, out of bed and put them on a bus to catch a ferry to Labrador.

You pick up your tickets at 7:00 o'clock and you realize there is an issue with the ferry in Labrador. When I walk in, I have my reservations because my company has been working on this since last February. I have my reservations. I walk in and I get the evil eye from fifty local people sitting there with their numbers on a wait-list trying to get on the ferry. It is a typical day in Labrador.

It is not all doom and gloom as the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development seems to think. We cross on the ferry and there is no doubt that Southern Labrador is a unique part of this Province. We stop at the Northern Lights hotel, we have breakfast, and then we are on down towards Red Bay.

Mr. Speaker, it is unique, one of the biggest tourist areas in our Province is at L'Anse Amour. Has anybody been to L'Anse Amour? There are a few people who have been to L'Anse Amour. L'Anse Amour has a population of eight people. In L'Anse Amour you have the oldest lighthouse in Canada on that

coast, you have the wreck of a British frigate right there in the harbour, and you have a National Historic Site of an indigenous teenager going back 7,500 years, maybe the oldest native burial ground in the country.

As you move on down the coast, Mr. Speaker, it continues that way. It is a fabulous part of this Province. We get down to the Pinware River and everybody has to stop for pictures obviously of the gorge. Then it is up over the hill into Red Bay which is a World Heritage Site. My tour group, I guess the most impressive part of that is the interpretation which is done by the local people of Red Bay. Then it is back on the bus, beat it back to L'Anse au Clair.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) get to Battle Harbour.

MR. HILLIER: No, we are not even going to Battle Harbour. We get back to L'Anse au Clair. The next morning we are up at 5:30 again. That is two mornings in a row that I have dragged a group of eighty-year-old people out of bed to get them back across on this ferry. I go through the gauntlet again of the evil eye of the local people looking at this guy from St. John's, dragging a crowd of Mainlanders going ahead of him on the bus, because they are sitting there with their waiting list. Mr. Speaker, that is Southern Labrador.

I spent time in Western Labrador. I have been there a couple of times as an athlete and as a coach. The people of Western Labrador are fabulous people, but what impressed me there obviously are the mines and the impact that these mines have on the rest of this Province. The people who I met there – I met one lady and she sent me a Christmas card in 1971, and we are still exchanging Christmas cards.

I have never been to Lake Melville. I have landed at Goose Bay. I have landed at Churchill Falls, but I am aware of what goes on there and the impact that these areas make on the rest of the Province. I have never been to my colleague in Torngat Mountains – I have never been to that district. I know of Voisey's Bay. I listen to him talk about the size of his district and having to campaign in boat and on ski-doo and being probably the only politician in the country who campaigns with a .22 on his back.

The reason I am going there, Mr. Speaker, is people talk about going to Labrador or people talk about sitting here and understanding Labrador. I had a gentleman from Alberta visit me here. We came to St. John's. He looked down at St. John's Harbour and he said: I am okay now I have seen the Atlantic Ocean. As if to say that looking at St. John's Harbour is the same as seeing the Atlantic Ocean.

I had a friend of mine who drove to Holyrood on the four-lane highway and said: Boy, your roads are some good in Newfoundland. I had a gentleman come to my house in Conception Bay South and said: Boy, it is sunny here every day. Newfoundland's weather must be fabulous. Mr. Speaker, that is the same as me going to any place in Labrador or you going to any place in Labrador or either one of these people going to either place in Labrador and understanding Labrador, because we do not.

Now that we move on from something that I do not understand, let me talk a little bit about something I do understand and that is beautiful Town of Conception Bay South. The Member for Cape St. Francis, the Member for Gander yesterday and several others have talked about technology and the difference now than it was in 2006, and the fact that we can do things quicker now because we have the technology to do things – and there is no doubt. We have talked about Facebook and we kid each other and so on; but, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about computers and we talk about technology, there is always one pure fact: that garbage in, means garbage out.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to use the census data from 2011. We are going to use the census data from 2011 in 2015, and that data is going to establish our electoral boundaries until 2026. That is a fifteen-year fallback on data. That is garbage. Let me show you some garbage. Mr. Speaker, I have here from the Conception Bay South Town Plan, which was approved maybe by the Member for Gander in his day – I am not sure if you were there at the time –

MR. O'BRIEN: (Inaudible).

MR. HILLIER: You were never there, okay.

Anyway, it was approved in June 2012. The piece of information I have here now goes back to April 2011, which was after the last census. This is what has happened in the Town of Conception Bay South, demographically, since. In April, 2011, in the Town of Conception Bay South there were 517 active building lots. There were eighty-four developments. Not eighty-four building lots, not eighty-four houses being built, but eighty-four developments for 517 active lots.

Proposed lots, there were 412. That is a total of over 900 lots – almost 1,000 lots. Let us put three people in each of those houses since 2011, since the census was done, that is 3,000 people. That is the garbage that is going to go into the system to create these boundaries. It is not only Conception Bay South, it is Paradise, it is Torbay, it is Mount Pearl, and it is St. John's, and I cannot speak for those outside of the metro area because I am not as familiar with that. I am familiar with this because of my time on council in Conception Bay South.

I will give you an example of the impact of that. I ran a by-election in November. We had a new voter's list. Invariably, I knocked on the door with my voter's list and I said: Mr. Granter, my name is Rex Hillier, I wonder if I could count on your support?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HILLIER: We have Mr. Granter's in Conception Bay South.

Mr. Granter said, I am not Mr. Granter, I am Mr. Kent. I finally found Mr. Granter somewhere up the street. That went on over and over and over again.

Mr. Speaker, on Middle Bight Road – and a lot of the people here helped me in my campaign. They know where Middle Bight Road is, where you had a bunch of large lots, traditionally. So you go to number eight Middle Bight Road and your next spot is number ten Middle Bight Road, but there is a house in between. That is the garbage you are going to have if you select the census data from 2011 instead of the census data from 2015.

We went on streets that did not exist at that point in time, full streets, Tangier Place, Peacock Place. They all exist, but they do not exist on the voter's list and they will not exist in this census data. That is the garbage in and the garbage out that you are going to expect.

Mr. Speaker, people of this Province are tired of this fiasco. You fed the fuel earlier this week when you had three members from government petition the House of Assembly to urge the government to get this done. It is ludicrous to see this done. Two hours after those petitions were presented, I had five pages of petitions.

AN HON. MEMBER: From where?

MR. HILLIER: From Hermitage, from the fish plant in Hermitage, from the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune. They are not happy down there, and the people are not happy across this Province.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 42.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved that we adjourn debate on Bill 42.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, debate adjourned.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier today I gave notice to the House of the formation of a striking committee, seconded by my colleague, the Member for Burgeo – La Poile. With his consent, I would like to update.

We left a member off that committee, and that would be the Member for Lewisporte, the Speaker of the House of Assembly. So with your concurrence.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes.

MR. KING: So moved by me, seconded by the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, that member –

MR. SPEAKER: Moved by the Government House Leader, seconded by the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

MR. KING: Thank you.

I say to the Member for Conception Bay, there was no rush, no intent to deal there, hon. member. The Clerk outlined to us that it was procedurally something they would prefer for the record. There is no rush, and I do not appreciate the comment, to be fair.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I committed earlier today that I would table documents for my colleague, the hon. Opposition House Leader, who is going give up his salary, I understand, as a gesture of good faith. I would like to table documents today now for the House from the previous boundary commission. I will do so right here.

Consider the documents tabled, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to now call from the Order Paper, Bill 42.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand in the House today to speak to the amendments to the Electoral Boundaries Act, Bill 42.

Before I get into that, I have been listening attentively this afternoon, and first I want to speak to a couple of points that were brought to the floor of the House by the Member for St. John's Centre. I was very pleased in this House yesterday to support her private member's motion. I think it was a very valuable motion, Mr. Speaker, that all members of this House thought that we should support and we did, but I heard from her today talking about the election of 2015, or the election of 2016, and wanting to do things right.

Just a couple of days ago in this House, there was a hoist motion that was tabled in this House and it was defeated by the members of the Opposition; it was also defeated by us. She stood in the House today, Mr. Speaker, talking about doing things right, but as the Opposition said a few days ago, and as our members said a couple of days ago as well, by approving that hoist motion in the House it would have potentially guaranteed that the election of 2015 would have been moved into 2016. That is why it was defeated here in the House.

Mr. Speaker, I want to stand on my feet, just as my colleague did today, as my colleagues here on this side of the House, and I want to say categorically that as the Member for the District of Humber West, I, too, look forward to the election of 2015. We want the election of 2015 on this side of the House. We will have an election in 2015 on this side of the House as well.

Before I get into some of the crux of the debate here this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, in the twenty minutes or eighteen minutes I have left, I do have to address one of the points by my colleague from Conception Bay South. I know

he is only new in the House, and we all talk about things in the House. We all make mistakes from time to time.

I want to remind the Member for Conception Bay South that when you knock on the doors of residents in your district, when you take on the role and the responsibilities to represent the people in the district that you proudly represent, when you knock on those doors and you campaign in an election, you take on the responsibility twenty-four hours a day to represent the people of the district who so proudly elected you to the House of Assembly.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): On a point of order, the hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. HILLIER: Mr. Speaker, I understand everything the hon. member is saying, he just still has not gotten to the point of my mistake.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: I would say to the Member for Conception Bay South, just give me a couple of seconds and I will get there.

Mr. Speaker, I said to him when I met him on the elevator the other day, I wished him well with the surgery that he had on his arm. I know coming out of surgery you are a little bit under anaesthesia, that you are a little bit in and out and you do not understand. He also said that – talking about times that you have to get back to the House, whether it is one day, or one hour, or two days, or three days. The point is, when we sign on as MHAs to represent the people in the districts who elect us, we are with them twenty-four hours a day. It is important that many of us – I heard my colleague from Southern Labrador, L'Anse au Clair, talking about the distance and time.

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

MR. SPEAKER: On a point of order, the hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. HILLIER: In the preamble here, the hon. member stood up and said that I had made a mistake. I am still not sure where that mistake is.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, as I was about to say, the hon. Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair talked about the time that it is to get about her district. It is so real, and it is so true.

AN HON. MEMBER: The Northern Peninsula.

MR. GRANTER: And the Northern Peninsula, I say to my colleague.

We have colleagues on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, who have driving distance as well. I look at Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, I look at my colleague from the other side of the House as well from the Port aux Basques area, the vast distances that they have to travel.

We commit ourselves in this House when we get elected by the people. We knock on their doors, and we commit ourselves twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, to represent them the best that we can do on the floor of this House for all of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, that is the crux of this debate in the amendments to Bill 42. I am going to take a few minutes this afternoon to try to put it as best I can in the perspective that I have. I want to talk a little bit in the beginning about motivation. So that people do not stand up and talk about whether it is a valid point or not a valid point, I am going to talk a little bit about motivation, what motivates us as members in this House of Assembly, and what motivates us as representatives for the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I know every member in this House of Assembly. I have known some of them on my side of the House for many years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. GRANTER: I have known some of them for a few years, and I have only known some here in the House, Mr. Speaker, just for a few months. Our paths have crossed down through the years, as with my colleague from Conception Bay South, who I have known for years. We have crossed our paths as professionals in similar circumstances, or through engagements in social and community networking across this beautiful Province.

I can say to the people of this Province, like all of them who sit on that side of the House, and us who sit on this side of the House, I believe we are motivated with the proper directions to do for the people of this Province what is the right, and as former premier used to say, the responsible thing to do – to do what is right and the responsible thing to do, Mr. Speaker.

Let's not fall short, I say to the people of this Province. Let's not fall short of that valuable instinct that we all must need to step up to, Mr. Speaker. That is the goal from all of us on this side of the House, as I know it is from those on the other side of the House as well. That is what we do when we knock on the doors, and that is what we do when we get elected and asked to come and sit in the seats in this House.

Mr. Speaker, every one of us sitting in this House comes from all over the Province. They come from beautiful towns, beautiful valleys, bays, coves, inlets, and the Big Land of Labrador, too. Prior to coming here we all held different positions in the workplace. Some held positions with unions, some are educators, some here were in the field of health care, some here worked in industry, some held positions in private business, some were involved in forestry, some were involved in the fishery, and others were entrepreneurs.

One thing I can say for sure is that many of us in this House were mothers and fathers. Make no mistake about it, Mr. Speaker, no matter what

our background, no matter what our cultural upbringing, no matter what part of the Province we are from, no matter the years of experience we had in professional lives or in our workforce, we all come to this place with a capacity to embark upon change.

The ability to use our talents that we fostered down through the years, no matter what kind of life we led before we came here, the ability to take those talents that we have fostered, we have learned and we have grown down through the years to invoke our beliefs, our understandings, debate across the floor of this House, and to accept things they say and try to convince people what we say is the right thing and the most appropriate thing to do, Mr. Speaker, that is democracy in action. That is what we are doing today and this week as we debate the amendments to the Electoral Boundaries Act, Bill 42.

Mr. Speaker, the ability to listen to others and learn from them as well, that is what this place can do. That is the important thing about this place, the ability to listen to others, to change opinions, and to try and have other people to come on side with your beliefs. We saw a good example of that yesterday when all of us here in the House came together to support the private member's motion from the member opposite.

Mr. Speaker, it will be four years since the good people of Humber West elected me to come to this House. Since it is early in the new year still, it is still in the month of January, I want to take this ten-second spot of my twenty minutes to wish everyone in my District of Humber West the very best that 2015 can offer. I wish them very well in 2015, as I know all of the colleagues will do to the representatives in their districts as well.

For the benefit of those listening at home, in this House when we are not on our feet, Mr. Speaker, speaking to a particular bill, we get a chance to do a whole lot of observing how the system of democracy works. We get a chance to look across the way, as they are doing right now and as members from my side of the House are doing, looking at me speaking. Or at least some of them are looking at me speaking and listening to what I have to say. We get a chance to look across the way at the Opposition. The opposite

parties, Mr. Speaker, they do the same to us. It is a chance to see really what motivates us, really what motivates parliamentarians when we are in this particular place.

Mr. Speaker, there has been much said and written about motivation. Journals of scholarly research have been written on that topic. Articles down through the years have been bound in magazines on that particular topic on motivation.

I do not plan on getting into a debate here on all of the theories, or the motivational theories that exist out there in research, but just to say that every decision we make in life is preceded or proceeded by a motivation or a motivational thought. In simplest terms, Mr. Speaker, let's put it out there the way it is, motivation is characterized by a need. There is a need there for something. It is followed by a behaviour and equates or is followed by some form of satisfaction. That is the basic principle of what motivation is all about.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, a person or an organization has certain needs or wants. It causes a person or an organization to do certain things. That is the behaviour that satisfies those needs which is a satisfaction.

Mr. Speaker, whether we are talking about someone in a personal life, whether we are talking about a business or a corporation, governments are no different, provinces are no different, and governing a nation or governing in a province is no different at that. We are all motivated by doing something to satisfy that particular need.

Mr. Speaker, I believe all of us who put our names forward to serve in one of the current forty-eight districts throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, who get elected to this Chamber, who come in here to represent the people, all of us, all forty-eight of us sitting on this side of the House and that side of the House representing three parties in this Province, do so to the best of their ability. Do so to the best of their ability and make sure that they do things well for the residents in which they represent.

Mr. Speaker, this is the highest and most fundamental principle that should motivate all of

us and one that I and the members of this House take very seriously. I do not think we would get any argument with that. Motivation is the force that initiates. It guides and maintains goal-orientated behaviours. It is what causes us to take action.

Mr. Speaker, as I said a few minutes ago there are many theories of motivation, but I believe the forces of motivation in Legislatures like this make it better for the people we represent. It is not about the worth of one's self but about the value of those who place their trust in you. It is a responsibility that I take very seriously. It is the responsibility placed on the legislators of this country and the people who represent the people of the Province in this Legislature in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, over the past four years we have been called upon as a government to make many decisions. Some of them have been pretty easy to make, some of them have been very tough to make, and some of them have been very perplexing. We tackle it as a government. The pension liability issue and the pundits out there, when we tackled or leading up to tackling the pension liability issue, said it was a ball that kept being kicked down the road, that no government would ever tackle the issue of pensions in the Province.

This government stood strong with the unions and worked with the unions, collaboratively, Mr. Speaker. We delivered and we moved the pension issue and dealt with the pension issue. This is the same thing today. We are charged today to look at the Electoral Boundaries Act, and that is what we are doing in a debate in January month in 2015 in this House of Assembly in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is not about an individual who represents a district, Mr. Speaker. It is not about you and you and you and you or me. It is about the collective population of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. This is what electoral boundary amendments are all about. As my colleague from Cape St. Francis so eloquently said today earlier, and I guess it was referenced by others, it is about representing the people of the Province. It is not about me from Humber West or my colleague from Cape St. Francis. It is not about that. It is not about you

and you and you and you or me. It is about representing the people of the Province in every region of the Province. That is what these boundary changes are all about.

Each day we walk down this corridor coming to the House of Assembly – and I say to the people at home who have never been in the Confederation Building, outside the wall right here behind me there is an old list of frames right back prior to Confederation. There are all kinds of names on the lists. The names on the lists as you go from frame to frame to frame are different. On some lists there might be ten or twelve or fourteen, some might be twenty-five or thirty, leading right up to today, Mr. Speaker. They all represent the number of members who sat in this House, elected members who sat in this House down through the years because they were the ones who represented the people in the districts of Newfoundland and Labrador in a time that was different then. Now, Mr. Speaker, we are moving into a time that is very, very different. Our population has decreased.

We are here today to make amendments to the Electoral Boundaries Act. I listened to my colleagues. I sat attentively today to listen to the colleagues opposite. I have had numerous conversations, both formal and informal, with my colleagues from Labrador West and Lake Melville, Mr. Speaker, over the last number of days. I sat listening to what they have to say. I have listened this afternoon to my colleagues on the opposite side of the House and I intend this evening, and as we move into debate tonight and continue to move into debate, to listen to the valuable information that my colleagues on both sides of the House have to say.

I do not think there is one person in this House who believes we cannot have boundary changes and a reduction in the overall number of representatives in this House of Assembly. I do not think there is one person in this House who would stand on their feet on the floor of this House and would say such a thing. I believe we are fundamentally there together. I also believe that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians also believe that the overall numbers should be changed, that the overall numbers should be reduced.

Mr. Speaker, I was in my district last weekend and I chatted as I was out and about in the community at the grocery stores last Saturday listening to what some of the people had to say in my district. They also said it is time to make changes and let's do it in 2015, let's move on with it. That is what I heard in my district as I went about my district last week.

AN HON. MEMBER: Were you talking at Coleman's?

MR. GRANTER: Yes, indeed. My colleague opposite just referenced the fact that would I have been at Coleman's? In actual fact, I was at Coleman's. I was also at Dominion, Mr. Speaker. I might be campaigning in a larger geographical region come later in 2015.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, for the benefit in the last two or three minutes for the people listening at home, I just want to talk for a few minutes about what is actually in the act. The act establishes a mechanism, in other words, a means for the review and amendment of electoral boundaries of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The act, as we all know, sets out the particulars for the establishment of a commission to be comprised of a chairperson who is appointed by the chief justice of Newfoundland and Labrador, an office I would put out there that for the sake of a better word I would say it is sacred. It is an office that is sacred for sake of a better word, the chief justice of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The act also goes on to state that the chief justice shall select a chairperson from among the judges of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal, and the Trial Division. The act also states as well that four other members shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Assembly from among the residents of the Province. Four other members will be chosen by the Speaker of the House from all of the residents of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is customary that the Speaker gets co-operation from the Opposition parties. They put names forward. The governing party puts names forward as well. The Speaker of the House

chooses from the entire population of Newfoundland and Labrador to choose those four. From the very beginning, it is a very independent look at the boundaries. It is an independent commission from the chief justice to the four representatives who are appointed by the Speaker of the House.

Mr. Speaker, in order for the independent commission to do its work –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. GRANTER: I know there are people over there heckling. I hear them over there heckling. Remember a few minutes ago I was talking about people paying attention, listening to what is happening. We get a chance to see what motivates one person and what motivates another person. Oh, Mr. Speaker, a lot of different motivations in this House. I see some very active over there this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, in order for the independent commission to do its work the act gives the commission the power to employ such resources as may be required, including the employment of technical and professional staff as considered necessary.

I can go on in length about this particular act, and I am down to about forty-five seconds, but I may get an opportunity again in the debate tonight or tomorrow morning, or whenever next week, to come to my feet again, but I will say this: As the Minister of Finance said when he brought in the bill a few days ago, resources, if needed, will be made available, Mr. Speaker.

I know in the private industry in the Province we have the technology today in the Province, we have the skillset, we have industrious people in the Province who can provide the resources to this commission as they go about to do their work over the next 120 or so days to deliver that particular report to you, Mr. Speaker, in the House of Assembly so that we can move on with the amendments and have an election in 2015 with new boundaries for the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Just before I recognize the next speaker, I want to remind all members on both sides of the House the Speaker has heard much over the last number of days in regard to relevance. I want to remind all members that we are speaking to amendments to the Electoral Boundaries Act and I would ask all members, the Speaker is more than prepared to give some leeway but at some point, you need to tie in where you are going back to the Explanatory Notes. I ask that members try to stick to that. It is an important debate and in no way, shape, or form is the Speaker trying to stifle debate because this is a very important discussion.

Thank you very much, and I ask all hon. members for their co-operation.

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

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

I would be remiss today if I did not recognize the role of members. This is a little bit upsetting. I want to recognize you all first of all for the kind words that you had to say for my father and on his passing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MURPHY: The cards and the comments were literally in the hundreds and they will be long remembered by my family. I do know that it was a very emotional time this past week, but I guess as dad would probably have told me: Boy, it is time to get on with it. He was a man who was very direct sometimes. I guess the TV movie of the week has yet to be screened, but he led a very interesting life.

I just wanted to pass along to all members here it is very important to me, because I treat you as family too, that your comments and your cards and your handshakes did not go unnoticed. They meant a lot to me and family, my brothers, and my sister, as everybody else who was there, and I want to thank you for all that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MURPHY: Anyway, be that as it may, Mr. Speaker, in that spirit I rise today to speak to Bill 42. This is my first time speaking since dad was sick, so excuse me if I am off a little bit on my timing, but I did have to come out and say those comments. In spite of what has been happening over the last week, like I said, it meant so much.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today again, like I said, to speak to Bill 42, and this is a bit of surprise to be back in the House in January. I want to welcome all members back, I wish them all a happy new year, and at the same time as wishing my constituents a happy new year as well. It is going to be a good year, an election year, and hopefully we will get on with in 2015.

Mr. Speaker, when I first got a look at the bill, I thought to myself that the situation that is unfolding in the Province fiscally had a lot to do with government pushing this piece of legislation this way; and I thought that, number one, the first word that popped into my head when I was looking at the piece of legislation was panic. There has been an awful lot of talk since the price of oil has slipped the way it has that we are into a panic mode, and we are looking at making cuts everywhere.

The least, I think, that we have a right to actually be talking about is the number of seats that this House of Assembly should have. I get to thinking sometimes that I do not have the right to talk about that at the same time as regards to fixing a number. Do I agree that something has to be done? Yes, Mr. Speaker, I do, because there is a process that is already in place. The pertinence of having that particular commission in place, it has a role already. It already has a fixed timeline, and there is a reason why it has a fixed timeline.

If I can go into that a little bit, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to that, because this piece of legislation talks about changing that timeline – government is talking about changing that timeline and moving it ahead of the scheduled 2016 time frame. Just to quote the federal act, Mr. Speaker, if I can touch on that for a minute, because the federal act also deals with changes to electoral districts. Of course, they just finished their process. Now that they are finished their process, we find that the federal

government is getting ready to call a federal election.

We also have something else that is ingrained in our minds, everybody here in this House, and ingrained in federal legislation. It is called the Terms of Union between Newfoundland and Labrador and the Government of Canada. It guarantees us something. It guarantees us a minimum number of seats in the federal Parliament of Canada. It guarantees us seven.

Mr. Speaker, the whole point about that is let's just imagine for a second that the federal government wanted to change that piece of legislation because the population dropped a little bit, because there was something happening within the country of Canada because the price of oil was slipping, and all of a sudden the bottom was falling out of the population, for example, of Alberta. Let's go to the Province of Alberta now that they have lost about 150,000 people because all of a sudden everybody is gone, the price of oil has collapsed and what do we see? We do not have to have the need for those two particular seats now in Alberta so we are going to redraw the lines. We are going to reduce the number of seats that are actually in the House of Commons.

Let's imagine, Mr. Speaker, that because the price of oil is gone and all of a sudden the population is on decline here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, that for every 75,000 people here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador because we have lost 75,000 people since the mid-1990s that the representation that we have in the House of Commons is all of a sudden going to be reduced by one member. What does that mean for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and representation when it comes into the House of Commons? It means a heck of a lot less. That is something we can do without when we are asking for better and more representation in our own House of Commons; we look at getting more seats in there so that we can have a stronger voice within our own House of Commons. That deserves thinking.

What does the federal act say? Let me read it to you. It is much the same as the Newfoundland and Labrador act as it is now: "For each decennial census, the Governor in Council shall

establish by proclamation, published in the Canada Gazette, an electoral boundaries commission for each province before the earlier of (a) the expiry period of 60 days after the day on which the Minister receives a return certified by the Chief Statistician under subsection 13(1), and (b) the expiry of a period of six months after the first day of the month that is fixed by the Governor in Council under subsection 19(1) of the Statistics Act as the month in which the census is to be taken."

That is very important. They do not do this without having a solid statistic around them for changing the law. In other words, Mr. Speaker, my interpretation of that is if they go past the most recent census and they do it within sixty- to ninety-day time frame, they start their work after the census and then their work carries on between elections, but it happens very quickly.

We have known now for I guess probably about a year-and-a-half or over the last year certainly that redistribution in this country was happening. We knew that there was going to be an addition to thirty-eight extra seats in the House of Commons – I think it was thirty-eight. One of the members across the way could probably correct me on that.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. MURPHY: Well, somewhere in the thirties anyway. We knew it was happening, particularly in BC and in Ontario.

Either way, Mr. Speaker, this Province here is guaranteed a minimum amount of representation under the federal House of Commons, under federal Parliament. Here in Newfoundland and Labrador we are talking about changing that number. The arbitrary number that government has picked out is ten. They are proposing to reduce it from forty-eight seats down to thirty-eight seats. It is not my call as regards to the number of seats that the commission should be reducing things by.

The commission may very well come back under the right auspices when it has the proper statistics in hand in 2016 and say listen, we are looking at –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Thank you.

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The simple fact is that the committee could go and end up doing its work and say listen, in spite of the drop in population we find out at the same time that there are more people scattered in further regions of the Province. Let's look at Labrador. Labrador is the stark, staring example of the possibility of what could happen because we have all seen – and I do not agree with any cuts to Labrador, by the way, by the number of the members who are there; let me get that one perfectly straight and it is out there now. Under the plan that was put out by one particular political activist out there, it shows one area, one district, that would go pretty much from Cape Chidley down as far as the ferry in Blanc Sablon.

You are talking about an absolutely huge district that is going to have very poor representation, because it is simple; based on geography and the possibility of bad weather or anything, you are going to have problems getting around that district, and it is going to cost the taxpayer as a result of that. It is going to cost dearly.

I wanted to bring that out. The simple fact is that this has to be given careful thought under what government is asking here right now. Government is footing a number here that the federal government will not even dream of lowering for the simple fact that, number one, we have an agreement; and number two, I think the federal government believes in effective representation.

If we are going to affect representation from the people who are out there and put more of a workload on some of the members – it is great, for example, when they look at it and they say that the City of St. John's or the City of Mount Pearl might have less numbers because of less distance travelled. That is not the only consideration that you have to make.

Let's go to Mount Pearl. Does Mount Pearl need two members? For example, if the

commission suddenly decided to come back and say that Mount Pearl only needs one. Mr. Speaker, the simple fact is everybody has a right to equal access to an MHA. We cannot say that modern times and the use of the Internet are going to speed things up. We have areas of this Province that are not even close to getting Internet capability yet. They do not even have access.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government already set an example here where there are additions made. We have a fixed number that is guaranteed under the Terms of Union here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We do not want to see that lowered, do we? Do we really want to see that lowered? The answer is no.

I do not think that when the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, think about the number of seats that could be potentially lost and effective representation affected – I think they will probably think twice and say I do not think thirty-eight is a good number, maybe two, maybe three. It is going to be up to the commission to decide.

Right now we are affecting the commission's work in itself by basically taking the most modern tool away. One of the most modern fixations that they would have, one of the most modern tools that they would have in making a decision is the Statistics Branch and the statistical numbers of what is going to be coming out in 2016 that would form the basis of their work. That is what we are doing.

We do not know how many people. We have rough estimates right now over the last couple of years from 2011 to right now 2014-2015. Sure, we have rough estimates on how many people have actually left the Province or how many people have come in. That is a basis to work by but it is not a solid statistic. It gives you better demographic numbers, for example, from Statistics Canada than what we have in just bare rough estimates from the Newfoundland and Labrador government's Statistical Branch, for example.

I think we have to wait. We have to wait and let this commission do its work on its proper set timelines. There is a reason why they have

proper set timelines. One of it right now is in the federal act when it comes to that. I do not see why we have to deviate from that.

We know that if the next election happens this fall of 2015, right off the bat the first thing that could be done by the commission that is going to be put in place – the commission that will be agreed to of course by, not only the Speaker, but I guess from all parties concerned. One of the first things they are going to have to do is population. They are going to have to do that by accurate numbers and they are not going to have those until 2016. That is one of the reasons why we should wait. I think the census will be done in the spring of 2016. We will have the first accurate numbers from Statistics Canada that are released usually in the fall of 2016.

Mr. Speaker, do we have that right here to determine what democracy is going to be? Do we have that right? Does government have the right to determine that thirty-eight seats is the proper number to have in the House of Assembly? To me it is picking a number out of a hat. It was an arbitrary number. There has been no evidence placed on the part of this House of Assembly or in the media of why thirty-eight is the right number. We do not have that evidence yet. It has not been presented to the public in this Province. It has not been presented to the voter yet.

Is less more? Are we going to have a better democracy because we have less representation in the House of Assembly? Now that is an interesting question. We still have not heard that from government as regards to what our roles are going to be in the House of Assembly.

If you would simply look at the electoral process, if we are going to have thirty-eight seats in the House of Assembly, you have less varied thinking, for example, when it comes to speaking on a piece of legislation. You do not get all points of view. You have thirty-eight legislators who are in here, fine and dandy. One would be the Speaker. He would be impartial. You have thirty-seven others. That is great. How about the mixture and the dichotomy of views that are out there? How about the views of the fisherman versus the views of the lawyer, or the views of the teacher versus the views of the doctor?

We are going to be missing something here by not having that difference of opinion that is out there. I would ask that government would consider that in their thinking and in their further deliberations on this. Of course, that will come out later on.

Like I said, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to what we are talking about here, I believe this is coming out of a notion of panic out there because everything is on the table. We have been told that a thousand times now. Everything is on the table. Democracy should never be put on anybody's table. Not at a price that it might cost us in representation. Let's let somebody outside determine what that democracy is going to look like in the House of Assembly when they do the report in 2016 and have it out for 2017. There will be plenty of time to repair.

Government has already fallen down. Even on things like basic addressing for voters, Mr. Speaker, or basic addressing, for example, when it comes to 911. Look at 911. We are so far behind now on 911 it is not going to be ready to be set for the next phase, for example, because we do not have proper addressing. How is Elections Newfoundland and Labrador going to look at that particular challenge if we have not addressed the challenge yet when it comes to simple addressing? I will say that to government.

We are not ready for even something as simple as an address change and getting a notification out from Elections Newfoundland and Labrador, out to the voter who is out there. It simply cannot be done. The challenges are too great so they need to reconsider that. Besides the simple aspect, of course, of special ballots and that sort of thing, we need to look at it all.

You look at recognizing the role of the MHA in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, for example, Mr. Speaker. It has changed greatly. It has changed greatly on their part simply as a reason that in some ways government has cut other things too on the outside.

Let us look at the example of a rural MHA. Does he have a role, for example, in economic development? Hey, he sure does. He absolutely does. Do you know why? His role has been laid on. His work has been laid on a little bit more

heavily because government decided to cut RED boards a number of years ago, and somebody has to pursue economic development opportunities in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Part of that work is usually done by an MHA when he identifies an opportunity and lobbies, maybe, for government money for the set-up of a business in rural Newfoundland, for example. That is there. He or she is the one who is recognizing the opportunities here in Newfoundland and Labrador, in rural Newfoundland. Our responsibility as legislators is to try to grow the Province, not put it in decline. It is an important point to remember.

Everybody in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador has the right to vote. They have the right to go and support a business or call an MHA and have them on the line. Not to have to travel a huge, long distance to be able to do it, to have access. I will leave that with the government to think about. That is something else; they are going to have to.

Simply put, like I said, they cut RED boards. The role of an MHA in rural Newfoundland and Labrador has expanded an awful lot. They are also economic development officers, like I said. They have severe challenges. When districts become bigger, access becomes not so easy.

I look again at the case of Labrador. I know, for example in Torngat Mountains there might be about 3,500 people up there in the district. You cannot tell me that the Member for Torngat Mountains does not hop into a speedboat to go from community to community. If he has to manage a district such as is being presented in one of the proposals that I have seen as regards to electoral and district changes, he is not going to be hopping into a boat. He is going to be hopping into a helicopter, and his work is going to be times three for the population that they have in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is necessary that we keep the number of seats in Labrador as to what we have right now.

There are also economic development opportunities coming up in the future for Newfoundland and Labrador. Everybody believes that in Labrador, Labrador is one of the most promised pieces in our economic pie that

we have. We are depending on growth in Labrador in the future. With the drop in the Canadian dollar, those opportunities, all of a sudden it makes it a little bit more attractive for some of the resources that we have up there because the Canadian dollar is after sinking a bit more.

It is a very volatile marketplace that is out there, I know. Things can change overnight. Already the economic conditions are changing as such to the Province that if we are going to see people stay in Labrador at the same time, we also have to have effective representation.

Mr. Speaker, I hope to stand on my feet again later on to talk more about this bill. I presented some of my views. I am not finished with this one yet.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Placentia – St. Mary's.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. F. COLLINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure today to be able to offer some comments on Bill 42.

During our tenures as MHAs, and sitting in this Legislature, we get the opportunity to participate in the making of laws for the Province. We have had an opportunity to participate in numerous debates regarding issues that affect this Province. A lot of them, the issues or bills are routine. A lot are really only housekeeping items, but there are several very significant bills and some very significant debates that occur in this House.

They are not all significant debates. Some of them are political. Some of them drag on. Some of them will get through rather quickly. Some really are not even very contentious. All parties agree on a lot of them, and it does not take very long to get them through.

There are others where, while the Opposition members might agree with the basic tenet of the

bill, they will attempt to amend in some way, or change or modify. Sometimes these amendments are legitimate, and sometimes they are accepted, sometimes they are not. Not all of the time are they controversial. Sometimes they can be very controversial, and we have been involved in these debates and opportunities for discussions over the years. That is the responsibility we take on as MHAs. Some of them can drag out, we have had filibusters in this House.

Regardless of the significance of the bill or the issues, this is the place where the laws of the land are made. For that reason, when we are elected, we are elected as lawmakers. If you think about that, that is a significant responsibility. We are in this House as lawmakers. It is not only an honour and a privilege, but a tremendous responsibility as well.

As I said several times, not all debates are significant, but some stand out more than others. Some are more important than others. Some are more significant in terms of the issue and the future of the Province. This is a debate we are in today. This bill is one of the most significant debates we will have in this House for some time. That is why it is such an honour and a privilege to be part of it. That is why we are elected as MHAs, to take part and participate in that discussion. We are lawmakers and we make these decisions. That is why this House is such an hon. House for us all to be into.

This is an important bill and an important debate. I do not intend to take up a full twenty minutes, unless I get carried away. I do have a few points I want to make with respect to this particular bill. We are not reinventing the wheel here. We are not doing anything drastically different. This is going to happen anyway. In 2016, this is going to happen.

In 2019, the boundaries are going to be changed and the election is going to be determined accordingly. All we are doing is moving it up a year so that it can take place in this election. That is all we are doing. The only difference is in this case we are dictating the number of seats or a range of seats, whatever the amendments show that is going to happen in the boundary changes, and we are giving the commission 120

days to do the job. Nobody objects and nobody has any difficulty with the numbers. Opposition has no difficulty with the numbers, so that is not an issue. The 120 days has been raised as an issue.

The Member for Virginia Waters mentioned in Question Period today a whole list of statistics with regard to provinces where this was done before and the length of time it took. For example, she mentioned New Brunswick, Quebec, and Ontario. PEI, she mentioned it took over 900 days I believe for the commission to do its work. My God, what was the commission doing in PEI, 900 days? If you give a commission open-ended time, take all the time you want. Sure, take 900 days. Take nine years if they wanted to.

MR. CRUMMELL: Send the bills.

MR. F. COLLINS: Yes, send the invoices back to us.

If the parameters are set, and we are setting the parameters at 120 days, you do not have eight months, you do not have six months, and you do not have a year. You have 120 days to do this work. The parameters are set. It can be done, and it will be done. Commissions can drag things out. This happens all the time for any number of reasons, but the parameter is set. We have four months to do it. It can be done.

The Member for Virginia Waters also mentioned in Question Period today that the New Brunswick government is bringing down its budget at a certain date, and why can't we do the same thing. We are not bound by New Brunswick. We are not bound by PEI or Quebec, or any other province. We are not leading from behind. We are not chasing these provinces. We are setting a precedent here that we think can be done. It is reachable and attainable. It is a gutsy move by the Premier to do it, and I think everybody in the Province wants it.

The Member for CBS, by the way, also suggested that time was an issue here. I should mention here with regard to the Member for CBS. He mentioned he had some surgery prior to the opening of the House. You will see he had his arm in a sling for a few days. He was

called in the House in a hurry, I believe. It must have done him a world of good, Mr. Speaker, because the sling is gone, all the movement is back in his arm. He is waving his arms over there and hitting his desk. The best thing that ever happened to him was to come in the House in a hurry.

We are not bound by what happens in other provinces. We do our own thing here.

The big argument that the Opposition is putting up here, Mr. Speaker, and the only argument they are putting up, they think we have an ulterior motive in doing this. We want to delay an election until 2016. That is what they are talking about. That is the only argument, because there is no argument for anything else. This is what they are saying, we want to push out an election.

Well, here is one fellow who does not want an election in 2016. I want an election in 2015. So does the Member for Cape St. Francis, so does the Member for Humber East, and so does every member on this side of the House, so does every member on that side of the House, so do the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and so does the Premier. They do not want an election in 2016. So that is a silly argument.

This can be done, Mr. Speaker. It should be done, and it will be done so we can have this election in 2015 in accordance with the new determination by the boundaries commission. I want it, everybody here wants it. The Opposition wants it.

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

MR. SPEAKER: On a point of order, the hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: I have been listening to the hon. member talk about one move, but we have two moves, Mr. Speaker. We have three moves. We have four seats in Labrador involved. I just point that out to the hon. member.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for Placentia – St. Mary's.

MR. F. COLLINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, I have every appreciation for the needs and concerns of the people of Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. F. COLLINS: Not to do this now, Mr. Speaker, drags us into 2019. Not next year, not 2016, but 2019. You have to wait five years to get this done. It makes sense to do it now. In the interest of good fiscal management, in the interest of fairness and courage on the part of the Premier let's do it now. There is no reason why we should not.

Mr. Speaker, when I was elected to this House in February 2006 as the Member for Placentia – St. Mary's, it was a winter campaign. When I was elected I took my seat right there, the last seat in the House, because I was the last one to be elected, right next to the Member for Exploits who had been elected only months before me. We cut our eyeteeth together back there. My district at that time went from St. Shotts on the Southern Shore to Ship Harbour in Placentia Bay, taking all of St. Mary's Bay, all the Cape Shore down to Placentia, Ship Harbour and Long Harbour – Ship Harbour to Fox Harbour.

I thought that was a gargantuan district. How in the name of God do you ever represent a district this size? I remember my first trip to St. Shotts. I thought at the time I would never get there. I said if this is what my tenure is going to be, I have my work cut out for me.

I had my hands full obviously, but that is what I was elected for. I took it on and I said there are only two years left in the by-election, and if I like this well then I will run again in the next election. Anyhow, before the next election came up in 2006-2007 the new electoral boundaries came out. The commission at that time was chaired by Mr. Roger Grimes.

AN HON. MEMBER: A good fellow.

MR. F. COLLINS: A good fellow, a friend of mine from way back. The changes that were made in my area dropped off St. Shotts, which I most graciously gave to the Member for Ferryland who has represented it very well I

might say ever sense, although I miss the good people out there.

Then it was extended to take in Long Harbour, Mount Arlington Heights, Whitbourne, and all the cottage communities along the Trans Canada from Long Harbour to the Salmonier Line. I asked myself, my God how am I going to do this? I already have my hands full as it is. How am I going to represent this area? It is just not possible.

I was not a happy camper let me tell you. I did everything to influence people not to do this. I did everything to put my two cents worth in there that this cannot be done, it is too big. It is just not manageable, cannot handle it.

Do you know something, Mr. Speaker? I am delighted now that it happened. I picked up a couple of great areas, great people, and made some great relationships, great contacts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. F. COLLINS: They are the best parts of my district. I would not want to lose them for the world.

Long Harbour has grown as an industrial hub as a result of the Vale project. It is a very prosperous place. I knew nothing about Whitbourne. I knew Long Harbour. I knew something about Long Harbour because, as someone living in Placentia and being a school board official, I visited Long Harbour on a regular basis. I had not been there for twenty-five years.

I recall driving down there – because I had moved out of the area – for the first time to get used to the new part of my district before the election came up. The roads were so bad going into Long Harbour, I said holy mackerel, what do I have myself into? I had my priorities set for my roadwork in my district, and now that I am taking on Long Harbour they all changed in a hurry. They had the potholes circled with luminous paint so you would not run into them in the night. Incidentally, their previous representative was the Minister of Transportation in the Liberal government. That

was the Long Harbour that I took over. The Long Harbour today is a different Long Harbour than it was then.

Whitbourne on the other hand, I knew nothing about. Most people, I learned after, know very little about Whitbourne. You pass by Whitbourne on the Trans Canada and you stop for gas or a snack, but Whitbourne is inside. You have to go in Whitbourne to see it. I had not been in there in my life. I did not know what was in there.

Mr. Speaker, Whitbourne today is one of the most rapidly growing municipalities in Newfoundland. It is a great town, great governance, and great amenities and services that the town gives. It is growing like a weed. Subdivisions are all over the place and strategically located to grow even more. It is a half an hour from Argentia. It is a half an hour from Long Harbour. It is three-quarters of an hour from Bull Arm and three-quarters of an hour from St. John's. It is an half an hour from everywhere, I like to say. It is strategically located to grow even more. It is a great community with all kinds of potential.

Mr. Speaker, looking back now I am absolutely delighted that the boundaries commission change was made and I took them. I would not want to give up Whitbourne now, today. Although, I am sure with the new boundary changes that will come this year, my district will change again. It might even disappear. It might be split between other districts. It certainly will change. If we are going to find ten seats or eight seats or nine seats, it is going to change. The point I am making is we should not be afraid of change.

Change does not mean we cannot represent the people any more. Change did not mean that in the last electoral boundaries, and change will not mean it this time. With today's technology, with today's advancements, we can represent districts in different ways. We do not have to be on the scene all the time, although as the Member for Cape St. Francis said – and I agree with him completely – he likes to be there, personally, face to face with people because that is what politics is all about.

Mr. Speaker, today in hindsight, having gone through boundary changes, I have no problem facing boundary changes again, no problem whatsoever. I miss the good people from St. John's, but as I mentioned, they are well-represented by the Member for Ferryland. I am delighted with the relationships that I have made and I will always remember and always cherish any new sections of the district.

Mr. Speaker, I have experienced change in electoral boundaries. I had no choice but accept it in the beginning, but I am absolutely delighted now that we did. It is a great district, Placentia – St. Mary's, but undoubtedly the face of it will change again sometime this year.

As the Member for Humber East said –

AN HON. MEMBER: West.

MR. F. COLLINS: Was it Humber East or West?

AN HON. MEMBER: West.

MR. F. COLLINS: Humber West. The Member for Bay of Islands gets confused about it so I can too. The Member for Humber West has said this is not about us; this is not about me or any member of this House. It is not about that at all. It is not about us. It is not about you. It is about dividing up this Province and districts so that it adequately represents the people of this Province, as I mentioned, instead of waiting for 2019.

In the interest of good fiscal management the Premier has made a gutsy move here in suggesting this. There is absolutely no reason why it cannot be done. The government wants it. The Opposition wants it. The people want it. Let's do it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is good to be back in my place again and to have an opportunity to speak on legislation. I wanted to comment first on the speech given by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development when she was up speaking. I guess that was the day before yesterday.

She talked about what a privilege it is for us to have seats, to get elected to seats in this House of Assembly, and to be able to be here and represent constituents. I completely agree. It is also a great responsibility to sit here, to stand here, to work in this House of Assembly, and take on the role that we have all chosen freely to do.

I think I might have mentioned one time before, but I think it is particularly important with this debate, several years ago I had the good fortune to go to Belgium and France to visit World War I battlefields at Ypres and Beaumont Hamel. The one thing, every Remembrance Day and every Memorial Day in the Province, it always comes back to me when I look at all the images on TV, those hundreds and hundreds and thousands of white headstones in Flanders Fields, but also the headstones in Beaumont Hamel as well. It is an image that will stick with me for the rest of my life.

We all realize that more or less the battlefields of Europe, and battlefields around the world where Canadian men and women, servicemen and women, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who wore the uniform, those battlefields are stained with the blood of our youth, of our young people – and I guess, in some cases, our not so young.

It really brings it back to the importance of the positions we hold, because people died. It is not rhetoric, and it is not overly dramatic to say that people died so that we would have the opportunity to sit here and make the sorts of decisions that we are going to make before the next few days are up. I know we all agree on that.

With this privilege comes great responsibility, that we have the power in this House of Assembly to shape our democracy. To form it and determine what it looks like for the next decade – and that is very, very significant. So, I wanted to say that off the top.

So, it is funny, I was joking with my colleague, the Member for Torngat Mountains, about what word jumped into your mind first when we all heard that this was coming, because I guess it was really Monday last that the trial balloon was sent up by the Premier's office about this particular legislation, Bill 42, to redraw the boundaries now instead of waiting until the legislated time frame, which is next year.

It is interesting, because I know that the Premier had already been nominated in Topsail, the Deputy Premier had already been nominated in Mount Pearl North, and the gentleman who has the misfortune of running against the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Leader of the Liberal Party in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Member for Humber Valley, that he is already nominated. So it seemed, up until the Christmas holiday, at least, that everything was moving along on the established time frame that is already in the statutes as the government is to abide by as the government of the Province.

The thing that came to me – it was not one word; it was two words. It was: Why now? Why is this coming forward now? There has really been only one rationale – I say to the people who are watching – only one rationale that has been provided to date. I have not heard any other argument yet. We have a long time left to go before we are finished with this. One argument, and that is about money. That this is somehow going to save money.

There have been sort of general arguments made but no real specifics I think, nothing that is really solid. As the Leader of the Official Opposition has said if everything is on the table, if everything is on the chopping block, one way to save money would be for the Premier to reduce the size of his Cabinet, to follow the lead of other Premiers of the shade of the government across the way, like Danny Williams, and reduce the size of the Cabinet back down to what it was before, and to eliminate these five parliamentary secretary positions. Those are two ways to save money and to, if you will, stop wasting money, if that is what you believe you are doing, by having additional members in legislative roles and other roles in government.

It is interesting because the Premier has talked about going from forty-eight to thirty-eight, but

it was only a few months ago after he assumed his duties as Premier of the Province when he was elected by 381 people at the PC Convention here in St. John's that he increased it from forty-eight to forty-nine because he added an additional member: the unelected Minister of Justice. He went from forty-eight to forty-nine, so he has shown no inclination previously.

I think, really, we could reduce the size of this Cabinet very easily. When the Premier came in, he created this new Department of Seniors, Wellness and so on. It sounded great, but do seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador really feel any better off today than they did six months ago after adding this position?

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: There is no statement on the hon. minister who has this position.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I would ask the member to make his comments relevant to Bill 42.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, the members across the way, all of them when they have gotten up and spoken, and they have all talked about how this is going to save the Province money. That is the only argument that has been put forward so far, that this is somehow going to save the Province money. If the Premier saw fit to eliminate the five parliamentary secretary positions, we do not have any of those in the other Atlantic –

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

I would remind the member that his digression on ways in which he figures the Province might save money is not part of Bill 42. You will make your comments relevant to the bill.

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will take that under advisement. I will certainly be paying attention to the government members when they are speaking to see if –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: Just because maybe I misunderstood the direction that they were going in.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, you would say that this is not really that much of a significant change at all. Really, it is tinkering at the margins, if you will. If we are in such financial trouble, last year when oil was at \$100 a barrel or so, or whatever the exact figure was, we are in a whole lot more trouble now when it is down to \$60 and going lower.

One of the other things, as I was saying about this interest in saving money, I have said in the House of Assembly time and again that there are vacant schools. I do not know how many there are across the Province that are vacant. The lights are on. It reminds me of this government in terms of the lights are on, but nobody is home. We are spending over \$1 million a year to keep schools going and there is another way that we could save a significant amount of money.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I will remind the member for the final time to make his comments relevant to the bill.

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Basically, the Leader of the Opposition has been on record now I think a number of times. Everybody across the way has had an opportunity to hear what he has had to say. There are basically three problems with this legislation that is supposedly intended to save money, and that is the only reason we have heard from members opposite so far.

One of them is the whole question of timing and whether or not this can be done within the time frame that the legislation suggests. What we

have said is that we really do not believe it is possible that you are going to be able to forge ahead with this and ram this through in the time frame that you have suggested. If you think you can, we will give you the opportunity to prove that that is possible; though, no jurisdiction in the country and I would hazard a guess no jurisdiction south of the border has ever been able to achieve this sort of work in that time frame. There are a number of very good reasons for saying that, Mr. Speaker. Because seat redistribution, the redrawing of the boundaries, is a considerable undertaking. It is a considerable undertaking; it takes a lot of time.

I know one of the members for Placentia – St. Mary's just said that they took 900 days and maybe that was excessive in Prince Edward Island, but it takes significant time. It is difficult to do and also to then call an election. Elections Newfoundland and Labrador has very clearly said that they need about a four-month window to get things done.

The boundaries need to be drawn, all the polling areas need to be cut out, all the logistics of that need to be worked out. The public needs to be informed of what the boundaries are. Somebody said to me the other day, my parents do not even know what district they are in half the time, because half the time they are getting junk mail, at least in the Northeast Avalon, from MHAs who are adjacent to their district, so you have to make sure that the whole public education angle is done.

Then there is a whole question of the timing of the federal election and all of the confusion that goes along with that. This is not something that is incredibly easy to do. If you think it can be done in 120 days, that is fine. We will go along with that, but the cherished fixed election date that this government brought in shortly after the 2003 election I believe, that fixed election date they have harped on and harped on and harped on, that should be adhered to. How many laws do we really need to change to suit this government to get a timing of a general election that is good for you?

So, I think that is one thing. Now, another thing that we have talked about is the whole question of Labrador. It has been interesting sitting here hearing a Cabinet minister who is responsible

for major financial decisions, or at least advising on that in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, to stand there and say: I do not know Labrador. What a thing to say: I do not know Labrador.

To have another member stand up and say: Well, there is nothing unique about Labrador. What is unique about Labrador? I thought it was very interesting when the Member for Torngat Mountains got up and spoke in his native tongue and demonstrated just one way that Labrador is uniquely different and separate in a lot of ways from the rest of the Province.

Labrador has been protected in this legislation in previous years, but now they want to open it up for some reason. Now they want to open it up, and I would certainly be interested to know how the two members for Labrador, the Member for Lake Melville, and the Member for Labrador West, how they feel about that, and what they are hearing from their constituents in Labrador about that. It is an incredibly important aspect of what we are doing here. It is a significant departure from what we have seen in the past.

The other thing that is of significant consequence here is that we have been given a number, we have been provided a number, the number is ten. That is the number of seats that the Premier, and his Cabinet, and his caucus, his government, his party wants to cut. Cut ten seats. On no occasion since the trial balloon went up last Monday has there been any explanation given as to why.

It is not sufficient enough to punt it back over here and ask questions about well, where are you – look, you are the government, you make those decisions, you make those recommendations, you draft this legislation, it is our responsibility to ask questions about it. That is our role. We ask the questions, and every now and then we get something approximating an answer from the other side. Not very often – occasionally we do.

So we do not know where the number came from – ten, but that is the number we have. We believe that that unnecessarily hamstrings, boxes in, the independent boundary commission when they are going to be making determinations about what we really need here. We have all

said we agree that we can get this work done with a smaller House of Assembly. I agree with that, our caucus has said that, and our leader has said that. Our leader said that almost two years ago. It certainly adds fuel to the fire, Mr. Speaker, that there are no new ideas, because there is nothing new about this idea.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: Two years ago the Leader of the Official Opposition said we could have a smaller House of Assembly. Now, the Deputy Premier and the Premier, when they were busily trying to get themselves elected to the positions they hold today, there was nary a word, not a word about this ten. We never heard a word about it, not a thing. They travelled the Province, Mount Pearl and what have you, we never heard a word about this ten. We never heard a whole lot about parliamentary reform, democratic reform, not a whole lot about anything. We certainly never heard about this ten.

The one thing we are suggesting we do, instead of this ten, the number that was pulled out of the air somewhere over the Christmas holidays, that we give the commission a bit of leeway. Give them some flexibility in determining what number of members we should have in the House of Assembly, whether it is ten fewer, nine fewer, a different number. They are an independent commission. They are going to have terms of reference to deal with. Give them a bit of flexibility to make the determinations that they need to make.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. KIRBY: More or less. Give them some flexibility. They may come back with a decision that is not entirely consistent with the ten the Premier wants to cut out of here, but give them an opportunity to make that decision independently. Because if you do not do that, in the end it is really not an independent commission at all. It is something that has been set up from the beginning. It is a sham, and we do not need a sham. We want something that is credible.

The other point in all of this that I see, when I saw the trial balloon going up over the Confederation Building Monday last was, why now? This government does not want an election this year. I heard members get up and say I want an election this year.

We had one member get up and say he has no problem changing the boundaries at all. He has already been on the record saying he is not going to run. So, of course he has no problem with it. He has no problem with it at all. He is not even going to run in the election. It is inconsequential to him.

AN HON. MEMBER: What about the other member?

MR. KIRBY: The other member, we do not know what she thinks because she does not speak in here.

I have not heard anybody say anything to the effect of, well, I will definitely run in the next election with these redrawn boundaries. We never heard anybody say anything like that at this point. We never heard anybody really say anything about what they think it should be. Here is some advice. Here is the research we have done. We have thought about this for some time and here are the reasons why we are doing it, not a word. It is like this number was pulled out of thin air, something that is purposely restrictive, and for what reason?

On the surface, the immediate thing that people are thinking – and it is not me. Certainly, that is what I was thinking, but I have been talking to people about this. I have been talking to my constituents. People are saying, sure, they are only doing that because they do not want an election. They do not want an election. They will do anything they can to prolong the period in which they have to govern between now and the next election.

We know – well, some of us know – they know, constitutionally, they can continue to sit there and actually deliver a budget in 2016 if they like. That is entirely possible. That appears to be the plan, to delay everything as long as possible so they can continue to be there until, please God, the polls come around and they have

some opportunity, because the writing is on the wall.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: The writing is on the wall. They just have not gotten it yet, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With agreement from the Opposition House Leader and the Leader of the Third Party, we will break for supper now and resume at 7:00 o'clock.

MR. SPEAKER: This House stands in recess until 7:00 p.m.