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Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

We welcome to our public gallery today Mark Brown, Weston Bennett, Constable Bill Day and Corporal David Smyth who will be the subject of a Ministerial Statement today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: As well, we would like to welcome to the public gallery Patrick Foran, Ane Christensen and Sharon King-Campbell who will be the subject of a Member's statement today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I would also like to introduce and welcome two new Pages, Ms. Carmen Thiessen and Ms. Catherine Bennett.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Ms. Thiessen is a student at Memorial University majoring in political science and communications studies. Ms. Bennett is also a student at Memorial University and is currently studying commerce.

As well, we welcome back our returning Pages, Ms. Crystal Snelgrove, Tresha Moorhouse and Mohammed Ali Bakhshi.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today we have the Member for the District of St. John's Centre, Baie Verte – Green Bay, Lewisporte – Twillingate, Fogo Island – Cape Freels, Conception Bay East – Bell Island, and Placentia West – Bellevue.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great joy to celebrate Artistic Fraud of Newfoundland as it marks its 20th

anniversary season with a sold-out run of *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*. *Colony* was based on the best-selling novel by Wayne Johnston, adapted for stage by award-winning Robert Chafe and directed by award-winning Jillian Keiley.

Colony tells the story of Smallwood's rise to power, the final years of Newfoundland as a country and the completion of Canada from coast to coast. The material is of unchallenged relevance within the sphere of 20th century Canadian history.

To mark Canada's 150th anniversary, Artistic Fraud's *Colony* is on tour. Last month it played at Canada's National Arts Centre in Ottawa earning rave reviews in *The Globe*, the *Ottawa Citizen* and other national media. The tour continues this month to Halifax's Neptune Theatre and then onto The Grand Theatre in London. And there will be more.

Twenty-six Newfoundland artists are employed in the production and *Colony* will be seen by more than 30,000 theatre goers. Artistic Fraud is supported by sustaining funds from the crucial Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council and the market access component of the Cultural Economic Development Program.

Bravo Artistic Fraud, you make us proud!
Spectacular!

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to pay tribute to an outstanding organization: the Springdale branch of the Women's Institute. This year, the organization is celebrating its 80th anniversary of community service, and celebrations are planned for a full year.

I'm pretty sure the original founders, back in 1937, had no idea that this organization would survive through a World War, a worldwide economic depression and a vote on

Confederation that made us all Canadian 12 years after they formed.

In addition to benefiting its own members, the Women's Institute is a pillar in our community. The institute makes donations to hospitals, schools and charity groups across the province. Originally called the Jubilee Guild because of its focus on craft developments like weaving and leather work, the name didn't change until 1968.

Working out of their home at the town hall in Springdale, the Women's Institute continues to improve the lives of their members and their community. They have been awarding scholarships to local schools since 1963 and, today, they assist with the breakfast program at a local school as well.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the Women's Institute of Springdale on their 80th anniversary. Here's to the next 80 years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lewisporte – Twillingate.

MR. D. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House to recognize an outstanding volunteer and outdoor enthusiast from my District of Lewisporte – Twillingate: Mr. Chris Vincent.

Chris devoted his career as being a physical education teacher and retired from the Lewisporte Academy as vice-principal in 2006. During his career, he was a strong advocate for promoting physical activity and healthy living, especially to his students. He served on the Public Library Board, Lewisporte Age-Friendly Committee and is a founding member of the O2 Athletic Club in Lewisporte.

Chris is also a devoted kayaker and instructor. This past year, he was recognized by Paddle Newfoundland and Labrador with the Austin Anthony Making Waves Award for his dedicated work and promoting safe paddling within the province. Mr. Vincent's efforts in

kayaking and canoeing include organizing the Central Newfoundland Safety Day, instructing kayaking courses for schools and at the Women in the Outdoors session, along with delivering presentations to youth at Loon Bay United Church Camp.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Mr. Chris Vincent on his award, and thanking him for all his years of volunteer service.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels.

MR. BRAGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's always a pleasure to rise in this hon. House and inform my colleagues of great things that happen in my district. February 13 to 19 was winter festival week in Centreville-Wareham-Trinity in Indian Bay.

Lorraine Ackerman and her dedicated group of volunteers hosted the 24th annual event. The naming of their mascot, a snowman, was the buzz lead-up to the event. Willie Melt will lead the festival for years to come.

Good fellowship and community spirit was on the menu every day. The week was filled with good food, good music and an exceptional snowmobile ride through the back country – and I almost forgot, the bingo.

A couple of weeks ago, the main topic on a local call-in show was: Will rural Newfoundland and Labrador survive? To that, I say, ask the people of my district who dedicate their time and very hard work to make every event a success.

I ask all Members to join me in thanking the Centreville-Wareham-Trinity Indian Bay festival committee for another successful winter carnival.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I had the honour to attend an event in my district this past fall that was about celebrating the accomplishments of students of St. Michaels high on Bell Island. Only a short few years ago, St. Michaels was labelled as the least successful high school in Atlantic Canada as it related to academic achievement, community engagement and social development.

I'm happy to announce that, as of this school year, St. Michaels has the distinction of being the most improved high school in Atlantic Canada, a testament to the administration, teachers, school council, the community, but most importantly, the students.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: The night saw a great celebration that included all sectors of the community with a slideshow outlining the school's accomplishments, speeches by dignitaries congratulating the school, a musical evening that had music for all ages. The entertainment included country music star Craig Young, Irish traditional band the Punters and local rock band Beacon Point. A special note of thanks to Bell Island resident Kelly Russell for organizing this event.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating all involved with St. Michaels high on their accomplishments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today once again to recognize the outstanding success of Canada's national figure skating champion Katelyn Osmond. I have stood in my place before this hon. House to celebrate her success before and, today, I do so again and with good

reason. Her career has been remarkable, going from a young figure skater in Marystown to a strong, young woman receiving professional training in Montreal and Edmonton. She is a silver Olympic medalist and, as of January, now a three-time Canadian national champion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BROWNE: Her recent performance at the nationals in Ottawa was nothing short of a combination of skills, determination and poise, as she came back with furor and ability after her most recent devastating injury. Her total point accumulation of 81.01 is a new Canadian record.

Mr. Speaker, we all celebrate in Katelyn's own personal success, but we can also celebrate the fact that thousands of young boys and girls who share her love of this sport in our province, and indeed across the country, now look up to Katelyn and say, if she can start on the ice in Marystown and end up at the Olympics, then so too can I.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in saying congratulations to Katelyn and all the best as you approach the Olympics next year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a significant advancement for the agriculture industry.

Earlier this month, I was pleased to join the Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment in announcing that additional Crown lands would be available to the agricultural producers in our province.

Mr. Speaker, my department has identified 62 areas of interest totalling approximately 64,000 hectares for agricultural use. To date, 19 of those areas – a total of 15,000 hectares – have been

reserved for development which almost doubles the amount of Crown land available for agricultural development. We are also progressing towards making much of the remaining 43 areas available in the very near future.

Prior to making this decision, we consulted with farmers, municipalities and other stakeholders who are knowledgeable about the industry. Their input was invaluable.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important initiative outlined in the *Way Forward: A vision for Sustainability and Growth in Newfoundland and Labrador*. By moving forward with these changes to Crown lands, we are helping farmers expand their operations; encouraging new entrants to consider agriculture as a viable career, and advancing food security measures.

Mr. Speaker, we are delivering on our commitment to increase food self-sufficiency by at least 20 per cent by 2022.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to see additional Crown land being made available for agricultural use. The minister's word is that we have spoken about this before. In fact, the recommendation came straight from our 2015 policy blueprint plus it was part of a review of our Crown lands when we were, the former administration, where it was part of our plans under the review. Sorry, I lost my train of thought.

We committed to relax Crown land policies for farm use and to make food security a provincial priority. It's a great beginning, Mr. Speaker, and we need to see additional measures.

If the province is truly committed to helping farmers and agriculture producers take full advantage of the opportunities to increase local

food production, we need to see one good announcement followed by others.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advanced copy of his statement. And this is an important first step towards greater food self-sufficiency and I'm glad to see this move. However, making land available without providing sufficient money for established farmers and new entrants to develop this land is an empty gesture. The industry needs public investment. It will also need a pool of labour, which currently does not exist. Government will need to help with this issue as well. These further actions are essential for the industry to grow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General.

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

Mr. Speaker, Crime Stoppers Newfoundland and Labrador is celebrating 25 years of serving the people of our province by working to make our communities safe and secure. I would like to thank the organization for their dedicated service and their efforts in gathering anonymous tips to help solve crimes.

This anniversary is an opportunity to raise awareness of this valuable, collaborative and community effort, as well as recognize the hard work and dedication of the volunteers who strive to increase awareness of the program. This is a community-based organization involving the public, the police as well as the media. All invest a substantial amount of time and energy to

gather important information to prevent and solve crime.

Mr. Speaker, there have been over 1,800 cases cleared since this program started, with over 3,600 charges laid and \$9.1 million in goods and drugs seized directly as a result of the efforts of Newfoundland and Labrador's Crime Stoppers program.

I would also like to thank the members of the public who have come forward to offer more than 36,000 tips to assist in keeping their communities safe. The public's participation is vital in seeing that those who commit crimes are held accountable for their actions. Crime Stoppers would not be the success that it is without the public's assistance.

Mr. Speaker, Crime Stoppers would also like to remind everyone that "if we see something, say something." And remember, information is provided anonymously.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members of this House to join me in congratulating Crime Stoppers Newfoundland and Labrador on their 25th anniversary in this province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We on this side of the House join with the minister and government and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in recognizing and celebrating the 25th anniversary of Crime Stoppers Newfoundland and Labrador, an organization that's done tremendous work throughout province.

Edmund Burke said many, many years ago: Evil prevails when good men do nothing. And I can tell you that crime prevention initiatives and crime protection initiatives and supports that are provided by Crime Stoppers have spoken, as the minister has referenced, have been instrumental in solving and supporting the efforts of those investigating crime and also as a deterrence to

crime. That gives people, good people, an opportunity to assist and support the efforts of our police.

Public, police and the media working together is proving to be beneficial for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We congratulate all those who've supported Crime Stoppers through the years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the minister.

How crucial it is to ensure our communities are safe for all people. Immense gratitude and congratulations to all those involved with Crime Stoppers – 25 years; bravo!

Now, let's do everything we can to prevent crime, which is often a result of the problems and challenges surrounding drug addiction. We do need a drug court with additional treatment and rehab programming. We need more affordable and supportive housing options and a real comprehensive opioid treatment plan, and we must act quickly.

Again, thank you to Crime Stoppers. Bravo for 25 years of dedication.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, here yesterday in the House once again the Premier has clearly stated there have been no discussions with Quebec regarding

hydroelectric developments. Mr. Speaker, a letter from Quebec, as well as emails, was uncovered through an ATIPP request that proves otherwise.

So I ask the Premier: Have you, any members of your staff or any minister responded to this letter from Quebec Minister Arcand?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, yes, this came up yesterday in the House of Assembly and I did get a chance to review the email, the letter that had come in from Quebec. Mr. Speaker, no, there has been no response to that letter. That letter was around the AIT negotiations that were ongoing, and it was late last May leading up into a discussion that was going to occur in Whitehorse last year.

Mr. Speaker, during that meeting, of course, there was significant discussions on the free flow of electricity to the province. I'm very pleased that during those negotiations we were able to put in place or we'd be able to negotiate rules around the free flow of electricity just not through Quebec, but this is a national item, Mr. Speaker. And we're very pleased to be able to advance this very important initiative at that table.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, the email trail paints a different picture. The email trail even talks about the discussion of partnership opportunities. And the letter talks about hydroelectric development. It's right there in the letter. That very Quebec letter was also addressed to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and as it's now called Industry and Innovation, because the department has now taken the focus off rural development.

I'll ask the minister of the newly named department: What actions have you taken, Minister, once you received this letter? What

action did you take as a response to that letter, Minister?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will certainly say that rural development is a priority and a focus of our government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: And, in particular, to the correspondence that the Member opposite is raising, is exactly what the Premier is stating. This is correspondence and dialogue as part of the Agreement on Internal Trade, which is about achieving the free flow of electricity across the Nation, from east to west, as an energy grid or opportunities that could exist around the free flow of energy.

And as Trade Minister, I sat at the table and we entered into a lot of negotiations around the Agreement on Internal Trade, which has not concluded at this point.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition Leader.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

So the minister is not going to tell us what action he took in response to the letter or if he took any at all – maybe he didn't even respond.

The Minister of Natural Resources yesterday didn't want to answer when she was asked if she had shared the letter with the Premier. Now, Minister, we know that you were very quick to send the contract of former Nalcor CEO up to the eighth floor. Let me ask you: Why didn't you send the Quebec letter to the Premier's office?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for his question. Again, this is concerning the Agreement on Internal Trade and my hon. colleague who just answered the last question, the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation was responsible, was the lead on that file and the letter was addressed to both he and I.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Actually, what the letter was about was establishing, was the intent – it was presenting the letter to signal the interest and the intent to establish a business partnership between our two provinces is what it says in relation to future developments in the domain of energy and more specifically, more precisely, electrical development. It even goes on to say the development of hydroelectricity. I don't see any reference there to an Agreement on Internal Trade.

So we have the letter from Quebec. It was sent to two ministers. It was sent to the Premier. The Premier denies ever seeing it, even though he was clearly copied on the email trail. Even it was forwarded to his chief of staff who said that the Premier had approved the letter being shared with the premier of Ontario.

So I ask the Premier: Can you explain to us how you approved sending the letter to Premier Wynne in Ontario when you say you didn't know anything about it?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think what the Leader of the Opposition here, as I tried to explain this to him yesterday, in

context of the negotiations around the Agreement on Internal Trade – that was an agreement not about developments, particularly within Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, but I will say if, at any point, negotiations would ever start – and they have not. I make that very clear; They have not. I would think that if there's an opportunity to create economic benefit and, therefore, improve the social benefits for people in our province, it would irresponsible for me as Premier not to at least explore those options.

So those negotiations are not ongoing, I say, Mr. Speaker. But going back to the reason why the premier of Ontario would have been included in this, of course it was the Government of Ontario that were kind of holding the pen and leading the secretary on many of the issues around the Agreement on Internal Trade.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I say again, the letter is not about the Agreement on Internal Trade. It is not. It says by the present letter, they're signalling the interest of the Government of Quebec to initiate discussions – means start discussions – with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador with a view of exploring avenues which allow for the establishment of a business partnership. And it goes on to talk about future development: electricity sector; development of hydroelectricity. It's not about AIT, Mr. Speaker, I'd say otherwise.

As a matter of fact, the email trail says the same thing. Because it talks about discussing possible partnership opportunities, et cetera. That means other things as well. And for the Premier of Ontario, the trail sets out – the discussions were taking place because the Premier of Ontario wanted to see the letter. She wanted to talk to the Premier of Quebec. She wanted to talk to the Premier of Newfoundland. That's called discussions, Mr. Speaker.

So I ask the Premier: come clean with the people of the province and tell us what discussions are taking place with Quebec?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, coming clean with the people of this province is certainly – I've always done, Mr. Speaker. What this letter is all about is about the Agreement on Internal Trade, which eventually will be finalized and will become the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. So, Mr. Speaker, it is being – as they say in the legal term right now, the information is being scrubbed, but what this letter is all about is about the free flow of electricity through the Province of Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, that is what that's about. Ontario was involved simply because they were a big part of the negotiation on the Agreement on Internal Trade, Mr. Speaker.

I had meetings with Minister Navdeep Bains on this very issue, Mr. Speaker, as he was leading some of the negotiations on behalf of the federal government. But I assure the people of this province, regardless of what the Leader of the Opposition is saying, regardless of what he wants to believe, this is about the Agreement on Internal Trade.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, the Minister of Education stated, his words: over my dead body would any other further cuts to teachers' positions happen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. BRAZIL: In a bizarre about-face, he quickly backtracked on his promise of no teacher cuts.

I ask the Minister: Which is it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I said what I meant, and I meant what I said. I clarified my comments and they were subsequently backed up by the Premier of the Province, and there's nothing further I can tell you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: So obviously, the Opposition and the whole of the province heard you change your view on that.

So I ask: Where you reined in by the Premier's office to change your comments and come back with something that didn't reflect you standing up for the teachers of this province? I ask that question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are standing up for educators in this province. As I said, I said what I meant, I meant what I said. I clarified my comments, and the Premier subsequently backed up those comments. There's nothing further to add.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So in that vein: Do you stand by your statements that additional cuts would cause damage that you could not accept as the Minister of Education?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: As I said, Mr. Speaker, I can repeat it again. I said what I meant, I meant what I said. I clarified my comments. I have nothing further to add. The Premier has added to that, more or less, repeating what I said. There's nothing further to add.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So I ask the minister: Do you stand by your statement that we cannot take any more teachers out of the classrooms? What actions are you taking to ensure teachers' positions are safe and our education system is enhanced?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: It's really interesting that the Member here sat in the House of Assembly when hundreds of teaching positions were cut in the province in 2013. He never uttered a single word about that at that time.

Prior to last year, or the 2015 election, the Premier of the Province, the man who is now Premier of the Province, said that we would establish a task force on improving educational outcomes, to do a comprehensive review of the K to 12 system. That task force has been established. There are four distinguished educators who are leading that. There have been public consultations all across the province. Educators, parents, students themselves are participating in the process. We have gotten very positive reviews on that. We'll get a report on that later this summer and we'll move from that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So will the Minister of Education now admit that the 217 teacher positions he removed from the grades one to 12 school system in September is a major reason there are so many challenges in our education system this year?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, it is evident that it's not only Ross Wiseman who's challenged by mathematics. The Member opposite has challenges as well. There are 73 – 73 positions were reduced last year. Not the number that he's throwing – I think it's a new number he's throwing around now.

As I said, we've established – the Premier has established a task force which is reviewing the education system, has a broad mandate to look at important matters such as inclusive education, reading literacy, math, student mental health and wellness, a host of other issues. They are doing a comprehensive review. This is a once-in-a-decade opportunity for people to provide feedback. Once we get recommendations, we will develop a comprehensive education action plan, which we said would be put into force in September 2018.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: I'm glad the minister brought up about math because I have to clarify something here. The grades one to 12 system lost 217 teaching positions. He may have replaced the full-day kindergarten with some additional ones, but the math adds up to 217 positions lost in the one to 12 system –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: – is the reason why we have so many challenges now. Administrators, the NLTA, the school councils association all have challenges with our education system right now.

So I do ask the Minister of Education: The province has already taken out as many education cuts as possible; will you now ensure no more cuts will happen in this budget to the education system? That's what you're being asked.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, we don't have a grade one to 12 education system in this province, and it's shocking that the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island would stand here and undermine, demean and underplay the role played by kindergarten teachers in this province.

I have been to dozens and dozens of schools this past school year and I've gotten nothing but positive feedback from kindergarten teachers about the new full-day kindergarten program that all of the Members of this House of Assembly had initially committed to, but only the Members on this side of the House of Assembly saw fit to follow through on.

There is no one to 12 system. I don't know where that exists, perhaps only in the Member's mind.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: I remind Members again that the only person that I wish to hear from is the person identified to speak.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: So the minister admits that cutting 217 positions out of the school system did no harm and did not contribute to the challenges that are being identified by administrators, students, parents, school councils and teachers as having a detrimental effect on our education system.

So I want to know, the people of this province want to know, the NLTA want to know, the parents want to know, but particularly students want to know: What are you doing to ensure that there are no more cuts to our education system in the upcoming budget?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, if the Member's genuinely interested in knowing where the challenges in our education system have come from, he can look at their record in office where they thoroughly drove this province upon to the rocks, emptied the Treasury. Now, the second largest expenditure, after health care, in Newfoundland and Labrador today is paying the interest on the debt that they, mostly, racked up. Education, unfortunately, tragically, shamefully, today is the third-largest expenditure of the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador after debt servicing.

That's their record after 12½ years in government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My conversations this past week with the NLTA representatives, with student councils, with administrators, is all about what is this present Minister of Education, who's been there since 2015 and has been the critic for four years prior to that, going to do to ensure the quality of education in this province doesn't drop off like is being indicated now because of the cuts that were made in the last budget.

They want to know what is your plan. We know there's never been a plan about what you did in the last budget. Let's hope you have a plan in the next budget to improve our education system. Share it with us, please.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: I'm not sure there was a question there, Mr. Speaker. I guess I've been invited to provide a response to whatever that was.

Mr. Speaker, I've said a number of times now the Premier has appointed a task force on improving educational outcomes. The intent of that task force is to provide feedback to the province and we will then issue an education action plan, with funds supporting that, for the September 2018 school year.

That task force is made up of distinguished educators from the province. They have a broad mandate. They are looking at inclusive education, mathematics, early learning, literacy and reading, inclusive education, as I said, multicultural education, Aboriginal or Indigenous education and co-operative education. They have a number of things they are looking at. They'll report back this summer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: So my question here is: Will the minister confirm that he will go to bat for the education system in this province, and the teachers of this province, and ensure there will be no more cuts to teacher allocations in the upcoming budget? That's what the educators in this province want to know, it's what the parents want to know, it's what the taxpayers want to ensure we have an education system that works for the students of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, I've been going to bat for educators in this province in this Chamber since 2011 when I was first elected, and far before that, if that's a surprise to the Member. We have implemented a number of the promises we made in the election campaign,

including full-day kindergarten. We brought democratic decision making back to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador by allowing them to elect their own school board trustees. The Premier had committed to establishing a task force; we have done that.

So we are doing everything that we can with the mess that we've been left with by the previous administration to improve education in this province. If the Member has substantive recommendations, other than the rhetoric that he is offering us, if he has substantive recommendations, we're all ears over here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, last week's restructuring by government saw a complete dismantling of the Department of Environment and Climate Change, with bits and pieces being divvied up into multiple departments. I ask the former minister of the department, now the Minister of Service NL, how do you feel about your government's decision to wipe out that department?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you very much for the question.

I guess what I could say is that I have the full confidence of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment, the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources and other Members of my Cabinet to ensure that the responsibilities that I had will continue to be followed by this government.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As an environmental scientist, with 30 years' experience, the former minister of Environment and Climate Change is well suited for this portfolio. Many see his removal from this department as a demotion.

I ask the Premier: Did you move the former minister of Environment from that department because he stood up to the federal government and said he was railroaded by Prime Minister Trudeau on the carbon tax issue?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Absolutely not. I have full confidence in the Minister of SNL right now. I have confidence in all the Cabinet Members that we have here with this government, Mr. Speaker. Right now, you know, the current Minister for SNL is still responsible for a very important committee that's put in place around methylmercury, as an example, related to the Muskrat Falls Project and the indigenous communities within Labrador.

We will always rely on the expertise that we have within his environmental expertise, as he does a great job as Minister of SNL, like we would every single minister that we have in this Cabinet.

This is a team effort over here, Mr. Speaker, and we must check our egos at the door. He is doing a great job in the Department of SNL, just like he did in his position as the minister of Environment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great that the Premier has confidence in him, yet he stripped him of his responsibilities with the Department of Environment and

Conservation – or Environment and Climate Change.

The recent restructuring of the Office of Climate Change saw the office being moved to Executive Council, yet the minister responsible is the Minister of Service NL. So which agency is the lead on this file?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I want to make a comment about the revolving door that we saw in the last administration, where we saw Finance Ministers come and go. We saw four or – like we did the Premier's office I would say, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say right now, I'll just reiterate one more time. I have confidence in every single minister that we have here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: The Office of Climate Change right now in the Executive Council, we have just finished the Pan-Canadian Framework on Climate Change and the former minister for environment will still be an active participant in climate change in this province.

The reason why it's in Executive Council right now, because climate change, and where this will go in the future is a span and a lens that we need to see on every single department, Mr. Speaker, and I will reach out to any minister that has an expertise in any field for their advice on any issue that we face.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess he's going to move everything up to Executive Council now. I guess that's the plan.

This Liberal government accepted Ottawa's decision to impose a price on carbon by 2018, a new tax. And now the Premier acknowledges

that a lot of work needs to be done to update the province's climate change plan.

Why did you choose now to take the Office of Climate Change away from the minister responsible for it and qualified to do it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I can tell you in that question there was a lot of misleading information because it's not accurate at all, I say, Mr. Speaker. The Office of Climate Change, Mr. Speaker – now, climate change impacts our province and, indeed, it's a global issue that many countries are facing right now.

You know, the former minister, who led the negotiations as fed into the Pan-Canadian Framework, Mr. Speaker, will always be a part of what happens. But through that framework negotiation, we were able to take any revenue from climate change – or carbon tax to put that into the general revenue and we could spend it at the discretion of the Province, I say, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This restructuring is causing confusion. For example, Mistaken Point is the first provincially-managed World Heritage Site in the province. Concern is being expressed that the world is coming and we're not ready.

Which minister is responsible to ensure that we're prepared for the influx of tourists and visitors expected at Mistaken Point this year?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Minister responsible for Tourism, we're always engaged with all the stakeholders on the ground and we'll be working to make sure that we're promoting and attracting through our ads and marketing, and through our initiatives to the key attractions and the anchor attractions that we have in Newfoundland and Labrador. And it's quite pleasing to see as well that the federal government has placed Mistaken Point on one of our postage stamps as well.

You know, there's a lot of things and a lot of recognition, and we're going to be working with the committee and with the entity on regional and rural development matters, as well around how we can provide and enhance the services around the community and the business opportunities that exist and other tourism synergies beyond this 565 million-year-old UNESCO site where life got big.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: What have you done to date to meet the UNESCO obligations that's required from your department?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Any obligation that has been required by our department, we're living up to that. We are certainly meeting with steering committees; we're engaged in that process. The former Minister of Environment and myself – actually, we were at Mistaken Point in Portugal Cove South when this announcement was made and celebrated with the community and the accomplishments. There's a team of people who are working with the community and the stakeholders to ensure there is compliance and that we live up to our obligations to advance UNESCO.

UNESCO is a very prestigious status when it comes to the four that we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We've been working with Parks Canada as well because they've been managing the other UNESCO sites and we've seen significant investments. Just recently, we invested in Red Bay and way finding and helping out the community there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Well, Mr. Speaker, what a difference a day makes. Now that the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation has reinstated the word culture –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. ROGERS: – the arts and heritage communities have two other crucial and reasonable requests. Mr. Speaker, the cultural industry represents a sustainable, renewable growth industry worth \$455 million.

So I ask the minister: Will he reinstate the positions of directors of arts and director of heritage and ensure that they are filled by recognized, qualified arts and heritage professionals?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And this department and this government recognize the value of culture. I've always stated – in terms of culture, in terms of the economic value of culture is \$450 million, in GDP there are about 5,000 jobs. And we invest heavily through our cultural programs of \$18.2 million, and we'll continue to work with the arts community and the cultural community on a number of initiatives.

One thing we will not do, though, at this point in time, given the difficult decisions that government had to make with the flatter, leaner

management and the reductions of management positions is get into any specifics about any type of position that would be impacted, out of respect for the employee. So I ask the member to consider that when framing her questions.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Well, Mr. Speaker, his flatter and leaner plan in fact ignores the need for an advocate where decisions are made in the area of arts and heritage.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: If he values our artists and their work so much, will he guarantee funding for the creation phase of their work to the national average within four years so our artists in Newfoundland and Labrador have access to funding to at least the same level as their counterparts in the rest of Canada?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I respect the Member opposite's question. When it comes to funding for the arts, we certainly contribute as a government, even in very difficult financial times, to the tune of \$18.2 million in the Tourism and Culture division of the department. But we also recognize the value and the accolades that our arts and cultural community are achieving and we do work with them quite significantly on a number of internationalization projects, on ways of which they can export.

We're really excited that we're advancing the status of the artist legislation. We're engaged with the arts community. We've had over 250 people engaged in that process. It's providing a lot of feedback, and this is where we're going to be getting more information. As well, as we renew our cultural plan, we'll work to our best abilities to provide for the arts community in terms of funding.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, the word culture may be back in the department's title but the term rural development has been dropped, just as rural Newfoundland and Labrador faces dire scientific advice on disappearing crab and shrimp stocks.

I ask the Premier: What is his government's plan to keep rural Newfoundland alive and well?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, we spend obviously a lot of time in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. It's a big part of my own district, so we're very concerned. And I would welcome the Member opposite to visit rural Newfoundland at any time.

There are lots of great things to see around our province, Mr. Speaker. It was mentioned just a few minutes ago, about making Crown land accessible for agricultural development. It's a big part of an initiative that over the years many municipalities, the agriculture industry, the aquaculture industry, it's all about rural Newfoundland and Labrador, investment in tourism I say, Mr. Speaker. These are all initiatives that we have put out there. Already, in just our first year in office, Mr. Speaker, we are making a significant difference in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, but indeed the whole province as a role.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi for a quick question.

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

Well, we've heard that positions have been eliminated in the department.

So I ask the Premier: If this is the case, who is going to implement his so-called plan to revitalize rural Newfoundland and Labrador and keep it alive and well, as he's saying they're doing, which they're not?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the Member opposite said that she heard – well, Mr. Speaker, we held a press conference last week where we outlined what the plan was. Many positions still exist in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, these were management positions that were taken out last week to create many efficiencies, but we've also made significant investments into the areas where those efficiencies will be used to generate activity in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing about all of this is this is a province, Newfoundland and Labrador, that has a rural component as larger communities. Mr. Speaker, we will not give up on any of those areas of this province and we will do the best job we can to create employment for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

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

Pursuant to section 26(5)(a) of the *Financial Administration Act*, I am tabling six Orders-in-Council relating to funding pre-commitments for the 2017-18 to 2022-23 fiscal year.

Thank you.

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 Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise today to present a petition: 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 *Budget 2015* announced a new school for the Witless Bay-Mobile school system; and

WHEREAS the planning and design of this school was underway, which recently Statistics Canada has recognized the region has having significant growth; and

WHEREAS the project was cancelled in *Budget 2016*;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reverse its decision and construct the proposed school for the Witless Bay-Mobile school system announced in 2015.

Mr. Speaker, the region from Bay Bulls to Bauline, or Bauline East as it's often referred to, has seen significant growth over the past number of years. Dating back to our time and our administration, we had recognized that and certainly planned to meet the needs of St. Bernard's, which is K to six, and the young families and young kids and young children we're seeing coming through.

With that, we had built on two additional classrooms. As well, over those years, had added portable classrooms which would be temporary in nature and would see a new middle school built as we saw in a 2014 consultant's report of BAE-Newplan, which quite clearly indicated, looked at the options of what would be the best options to pursue, whether extensions or rebuilds on St. Bernard's or Mobile high. It quite clearly indicated the best result was a new middle school, something along the lines of grades five to eight, which would basically take the pressure off St. Bernard's and as well take the pressure off Mobile high as those numbers flow through.

This was very clearly indicated based on that consultant and that documentation that was paid for, obviously, by the prior administration. And based on that and the history and what we saw in 2015 budget, allocations was made for the building of this new middle school.

Now, unfortunately, in 2016, the current administration cancelled that, and I have written, certainly, the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District, the chair, cc'd the ministers and others involved, emailed the English School District as well looking for details on the rationale for a proposal that we have very little details on putting an extension on Mobile high of nine classrooms.

But no one seems to be able to tell us how that's going to deal with the numbers and what we're seeing coming through in St. Bernard's in the K-6, and how that's going to be fiscally, I think, prudent in regard to looking at the long-term solution and how we meet that solution through what's being proposed. Which again, there's no detail, very little information.

I wrote on January 5, documentation here, looking for those details. To date, we do not have them. I know the parent community, the community in general, the municipalities, the local service districts are extremely concerned and it's time for the government to move on this, reconsider and address the education needs that have started in prior years and need to be concluded with the new middle school in that region.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has the greatest percentage of the workforce earning the provincial minimum wage in Canada, with women, youth and those from rural areas making up a disproportionate number of these workers; and

WHEREAS minimum wage earners do not earn enough money for the necessities of life; and

WHEREAS government ignored the recommendations of its own 2012 minimum wage review committee;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to implement the recommendations of the 2012 minimum wage review committee and legislate an immediate increase in the minimum wage to reflect the loss of purchasing power since 2010 and an annual adjustment beginning in 2015 to reflect the CPI.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And while it's been a while since people signed this petition and sent it in, Mr. Speaker – we had so many petitions on minimum wage, it was hard to keep up with them – it is very timely for us to still be presenting the petitions as they come in because of the fact that government finally is looking at the minimum wage and does have consultations going on in the province, and looking at the whole need for indexation. But the problem is that the workers of this province have lost so much over the last years without any raise that if we just index on where they are now, they'll never make up their loss.

So indexation in and of itself is not sufficient at the moment. And, as this petition asks for, it asks for the wages to be brought up to make up for the loss and then do the indexation on top of that. But I think it's important to look at who are the minimum wage workers in Newfoundland and Labrador. We certainly know that the majority are women. Approximately 66 per cent were female in 2015 when a survey was done. We had 12,800 minimum wage earners in the province, Mr. Speaker.

We also have a high number of youth; 50 per cent of those workers were over the age of 24 years; almost 40 per cent between the age of 25 and 54 years; 49.5 per cent were between five and 24 years. That's really quite frightening with the majority over 19, but we have young people working without any hope; 51 per cent worked full-time minimum wage jobs – 51 per cent; over 75 per cent had a high school education or better, with 44.9 per cent having some form of post-secondary education. And they go into post-secondary education hoping that it's going to make life better for them, and here they are working for minimum wage; 66 per cent of minimum wage workers were in permanent jobs, while 51 per cent were full-time.

A serious issue, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

To the 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 recreational ground fishery is part of our culture, history and heritage; and

WHEREAS the federal government is proposing a tag system for the recreational ground fishery in 2017; and

WHEREAS participants have to purchase a licence and purchase tags in order to participate in the recreational fishery;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the federal government not to implement a cost or fees to those participating in the recreational ground fishery in 2017.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, in the last Assembly I got up several times and spoke on the importance of this and the importance of us being able to have the right to go and catch a fish. Today, we understand there's a lot of crisis in the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery, a lot of people are really, really concerned about it.

You know, the fishery is such an important part of who we are as a people. It's important that we get treated fairly and that Ottawa understands our concerns. Sometimes if you look at what's after happening with the consultations that happened on the ground fishery, I know the MP for Central Newfoundland had –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

It's a job to hear in here.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I was talking about how the MP for Central Newfoundland and Grand Falls had some consultations out there because he wanted to see how people felt. He himself has urged the federal government not to go along with this system; yet, the minister, our Minister of Fisheries that represents all of Newfoundland has never come out and said he supported or didn't support the recreational fishery with the purpose of tags being implemented. I think it's our right to be treated like everybody else in Canada. There's no tag system anywhere else in Atlantic Canada nor should there be in Newfoundland.

Last year, I applaud the federal government. I applaud what they did by increasing the number of days we could get out there and the weekends. And that was basically due to safety issues, because sometimes we understand that the weather here in Newfoundland is not always – able to get out and be able to go catch a fish. So they extended it, and that was great, but we need this government to stand up for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We need this government to stand up for the fishers of Newfoundland and Labrador and our whole fishing industry.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: 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 there has been an identified lack of mental health services in our province's K to 12 school system; and

WHEREAS the lack is having a significant impact on both students and teachers; and

WHEREAS left unchecked, matters can, and in many cases will develop into more serious issues;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to increase mental health services and programs in the province's K to 12 school system.

And in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, as we've been debating in this House over the last year or so about cuts to our education system and the need to invest in young people, particularly as we also address some of the other social issues that young people face, and all those young people face them in a

confined situation and a confined environment, being our school systems.

With blended classrooms, with cuts, with teachers, with not having access to other types of programs, that's added stressors. With the general concept that young people are facing in today's society, one of the environments – where we have an opportunity because we have a captive audience – to not only address the issues that they face within that system, particularly those related to mental health, but the other ones that they may face in society.

We've gone a long way in identifying bullying. We've brought in the private sector to work with us. The corporate world has supported it, the volunteer sector has done it, the administration have done it, the parents have done it; but, particularly, teachers and students have engaged how we address one particular issue around mental health. And that is around bullying. It's one of the key components of how we address it.

There are a multitude of other mental health issues that within the school system we need to be able to have supports. Teachers have identified it, around students as part of our integration program and the extra supports that are needed. Challenges from the home environment that carry over into the school environment have an impact on the mental health of a young person. It has an impact on the mental health of the friends of a young person, as they see the stresses their friends are under. And that has a negative impact on them.

There's an anxiety issue here. We've seen some challenges around questions in the school system about not being able to get out for recreation purposes and the impact that has. For kids who are overly active, who need to be able at times to get their energy levels out. That adds to the mental health within that classroom.

We need to be able to support the education system so it ensures that – the environment is supposed to be a safe, engaging, happy, learning process. But if we have challenges, particularly around those related to mental health, if there are anxiety issues, if there are self-esteem issues, if there are issues around kids not being open, if there are issues around kids having behavioural issues and lashing out, all of those are related to

supports that can be addressed through some other means of mental health interventions.

And in some cases, we need to be able to put the resources into the administration, the educators, the parents, the volunteer groups that work within the school system. I do ask and encourage the government – the federal government are coming down and initiating monies around mental health, there's no reason we couldn't negotiate a parcel of that to be put in our education system to address mental health in our education system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: I call Orders of the Day, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

MR. A. PARSONS: And I would call Motion 2, Bill 69, first reading.

Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, the Health Professions Act, Bill 69, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded by the hon. Government House Leader that he shall have leave to introduce Bill 69, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services to introduce a bill, "An Act

To Amend The Health Professions Act,” carried.
(Bill 69)

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend
The Health Professions Act. (Bill 69)

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 69 has now been read a
first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 69 read a first time, ordered read
a second time on tomorrow.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from
the Order Paper, Order 2, second reading of Bill
65.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I move,
seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public
Safety, that Bill 65, An Act To Amend The
Financial Administration Act No. 2, be now read
a second time,

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that
Bill 65, An Act To Amend The Financial
Administration Act No. 2, be now read a second
time.

Motion, second reading of a bill “An Act To
Amend The Financial Administration Act No.
2.” (Bill 65)

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

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

It’s certainly a pleasure to be back in the House
after a break. I really want to congratulate the
House Leader and the team that he had working
on the schedule. Certainly many Members
mentioned yesterday how pleased we are to be
back in the House, and certainly this piece of

legislation that I have the opportunity to speak to
today is an example of why we should all be
proud to stand in this House.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 65, An Act To Amend The
Financial Administration Act No. 2, relates to
the tabling of Public Accounts. And for those
listening at home to this afternoon’s
proceedings, Public Accounts really is the
financial statements of the entire consolidated
government and when that information is
released to the public.

There are legislative requirements across many
jurisdictions in Canada, including our own, that
dictate when those records are to be presented to
the people of the province through this particular
Legislature. And what we’re proposing today is
an amendment to those conditions that would
ensure that information that needs to be
provided, not only to this House and the
representatives in this House, but more
importantly, I would suggest, to the people of
the province, happens on a regular and
consistent basis.

Mr. Speaker, the act will change the required
date of tabling of the Public Accounts respecting
a fiscal year to before November 1 in the
following fiscal year, and it will require that in a
year in which a general election is to be held in
accordance with subsection 3(2) of the *House of
Assembly Act*, Public Accounts be submitted no
less than 15 days before the date fixed for the
general election.

And our amendments also go on that we would
require that, in addition to the tabling of Public
Accounts on the required date, where a general
election is to be held in accordance with the
provisions of section 3 of the *House of Assembly
Act* other than subsection 3(2) to (5), an
unaudited financial report on the financial state
of the province be submitted in the same manner
as the Public Accounts no less than 15 days
before the date fixed for the general election,
unless within three months of the date fixed for
the general election, other indicators of financial
state of the province have been made publicly
available.

Mr. Speaker, this is particularly relevant in light
of the financial situation that we are faced with
as a government and the financial situation,

more importantly, that the people of the province find our province in right now, particularly in light of the history around Public Accounts and when Public Accounts have been released to the people of the province.

As a government, we have established a vision of sustainability and growth in this province, but in order to achieve this we must have a solid foundation in which to work from, and that solid foundation must be strong fiscal management. As outlined in *The Way Forward*, government must be redefined to address economic, social and fiscal challenges, and stronger fiscal management is a top priority.

The reason for that is simple, Mr. Speaker, it's to ensure that the taxes and the revenue that the people of the province are entitled to see reflected in services is invested and touches those services in the way that the people of the province expect, and that waste and failure to prioritize is not something that a government is ever left to not do.

Public Accounts, as everyone in this House should understand, and certainly those colleagues of mine that sit on the House committee that reviews Public Accounts would certainly appreciate and I'm sure the Members opposite who have had the opportunity to not only sit in this House as elected officials representing districts but also those particularly who have had Cabinet positions, would certainly understand that the disclosure of these Public Accounts in a timely fashion provides for an opportunity for the public to hold governments accountable.

Public Accounts is the key accountability to document, which enables the House of Assembly and its citizens, the citizens we represent, to hold government accountable for the use of public money. And in an effort to improve the timeliness of Public Accounts, legislative amendments that I've already outlined will now require these documents to be tabled on or before October 31 of the following year.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's interesting. You know if you look back, as I have had the opportunity to do, and as my colleagues have as we were preparing this legislation, and looked at the

history of when Public Accounts had been released back to 1998, most of the Public Accounts have been released in December, November and January. And as a matter of fact, the earliest that Public Accounts was ever released for the fiscal year of '15-'16 was the year that we released Public Accounts last year on October 19, 2016 – the most expeditious releasing of Public accounts that has happened in over a decade.

Mr. Speaker, those Public Accounts are crucial for a number of reasons. They are important because as Members of this House, and certainly members of the public listening at home would appreciate, that Public Accounts is a key accountability document which enables, as I said earlier, citizens to hold government accountable for spending of public money. Those documents and those numbers must be relevant and they must be timely in their presentation to this House.

And quite frankly, the relevance of those documents and the relevance of that financial information diminish with the passage of time. With a legislated tabling date currently defined as 10 months into the following fiscal year, the value of the information and decision-making process within government is very limited and stale dated.

Mr. Speaker, I think it would also be important for Members of this House to understand and certainly for those, again, listening at home, that improving the timelines of Public Accounts is also in line with recommendations from the Auditor General. In 2013, the Auditor General commented in his management letter, issued around the 2011-2012 Public Accounts, that the Office of the Comptroller General should continue with its efforts towards earlier tabling of the province's financial statements.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that in the three years following that Auditor General's report, there was only one year out of those three that Public Accounts was not released in an early fashion. Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, funny enough, it was an election year. Mr. Speaker, that's one of the reasons why, as a government, we felt it was extremely important not only to change the date around the release of Public Accounts to allow this House and

members of the public to have more relevant information when it comes to how government spends its money, but we also thought it was important to address the issue of what happens in a situation where Public Accounts and the election dates somehow collide, and we've provided clarity on what the process should be. We've provided clarity on ensuring that information is provided to the people of the province because, quite frankly, they have a right to know.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the 2015-16 Public Accounts were tabled on October 19, 2016, which was the earliest date of the Public Accounts, quite frankly, that had been released in the last 18 years. And given the fact that we have demonstrated the ability to table the Public Accounts during October, we believe that the legislative tabling date of October 31, as being proposed in this legislation, is reasonable and allows for agencies, boards and commissions and departments to provide the information that is fed into Public Accounts in a timely and responsible manner.

It also provides additional clarity for the Auditor General when he's preparing his review of Public Accounts on our expectations as a government and certainly allows his office to plan and prioritize work to be able to achieve the review that he would need to do in conjunction with the work around the province's financial reporting.

Mr. Speaker, the advancement of the tabling date of the Public Accounts also provides for greater consistency with the time period that government entities are required to prepare their annual report. As Members of this House may or may not know, the agencies, boards and commissions that are governed under the *Transparency and Accountability Act* are required to present their financial reporting into the Office of the Comptroller General so it can be consolidated into Public Accounts.

In accordance with section 9 of this particular act, the annual report shall include the audited financial statements of the entity. Government entities are required to make public an annual report on the preceding fiscal year within the time frame established by Lieutenant Governor in Council. For most government entities, this is

generally within six months after the end of their fiscal year. As the majority of government entities included within the Public Accounts for the year ending March 31, this would result in the majority of those reports now being made – needed to be made public by September 30.

So we will see, as a result of this legislation, some changes in how the agencies, boards and commissions have to complete their annual general meetings, as well as releasing of their own financial information. But, again, based on the fact that this year we were able to get that information out in the earliest time in 18 years, we feel it's a very reasonable expectation for those organizations.

Mr. Speaker, the early reporting, as I've said, will help enhance the accountability of the provincial government on the management of financial resources. It will also ensure that the relevance of the financial information that's contained in Public Accounts can be properly analyzed by the committee of the House that reviews Public Accounts, it can be properly used by government in making decisions and listening to recommendations from officials who are working on policy and other directional things that government needs to take a look at, but it also provides clarity to the people of the province when they see the Public Accounts in a more relevant time frame than has been in the past.

As an example, Public Accounts in 2012-13 didn't get released until January 14; 2011-12 didn't get released until January 16; 2010-11 Public Accounts didn't get released until January 6; 2009-10 Public Accounts didn't get released until January 20.

So, Mr. Speaker, you can see that there has been historical shift in now moving that date back to October. And certainly, as we've reviewed a jurisdictional scan of best practices by other jurisdictions, we felt the date that we were picking, which is October 31, would provide more consistency with what's considered best in class and would also provide an opportunity for information not to become stale dated before it was released. As was the case when we took office in December 14, 2015, when we had to release Public Accounts for the prior year in January, 2016.

As I've said, the Public Accounts for 2015-16 were tabled on October 19, 2016 – the earliest date that Public Accounts have been released in the last 18 years. Once again, I should take the opportunity while I'm speaking here to thank the staff within our Public Accounts division, as well as the Office of the Auditor General for their efforts in this regard. This is no small feat, and there is a significant amount of work that goes into preparing these documents and I certainly want to say thank you to those officials as well.

I'd also like to take the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to thank the members of the Finance Department, including the Office of the Comptroller General, as well as the Auditor General's team, for the work that has been done over the last number of months on this particular piece of legislation. It is one that we thought was a high priority last year. Officials worked on it in the department for many months, looking at, as I said, as an example a jurisdictional scan. I certainly want to congratulate and thank them for their hard work and their diligence in providing amendments to the *Financial Administration Act* that reflect a commitment to accountability and a commitment to being transparent with the people of the province.

Mr. Speaker, the Public Accounts for the year of 2014-15 fiscal year, as I said earlier, were not tabled until January 26, 2016. This was the latest Public Accounts had ever been released in the province, and the reason for that quite frankly, is that the former administration did not release Public Accounts prior to the election, or during the election when there's a freeze on government activities, and certainly what I understand is that that information was available. I can't explain why the former administration didn't release the information, but certainly our view was that was information that the public have a right to know. It is our intention to make sure that that happens on a more consistent and earlier basis.

I'd remind those listening at home, and Members of this House, that in the 2015-2016 budget the previous administration forecast a deficit of \$1.1 billion. Mr. Speaker, that number was later revised after the election of 2015 by our government, to be a deficit of \$2.2 billion, a doubling of the initial budget forecast. In fact,

the public was not even provided an update on the 2014-15 forecast as part of the highly anticipated but not released fall fiscal and economic update by the previous administration.

Mr. Speaker, it is essential that Public Accounts are released in a timely manner, as this will enhance – as I said earlier – the accountability of government on the management and use of public funds and will provide the public and the people of this province clarity on where the province's financial situation is. Early reporting also assists in the aligning of resources within the departments and government entities to ensure that the provincial government's financial statements are prepared in a timely manner.

In addition, it will inform the provincial government to make the appropriate resource allocation decisions based on the financial performance of Newfoundland and Labrador. In addition, these amendments will include that during years where the fixed date provincial general election occurs, that Public Accounts will be released no less than 15 days before the date of the election.

Mr. Speaker, to explain a little bit more of the thought process behind how Public Accounts will be released in election years, we wanted to overcome the potential delays such as the province and the people of the province experienced in the months prior to the last election. To overcome these delays in the release of the province's financial statements in the years that coincide with a general election falling within the month of October, we are proposing that the tabling date for Public Accounts be further amended to a date, as I said earlier, that is no less than 15 days before the date of the general election.

Further, in years in which the general election is a date other than an ordinary polling day in October, as per section 3.2 of the HOAA, the province will be required to provide an unaudited report on the financial conditions of the province.

So in a situation, Mr. Speaker, where the election date is early enough in October that the Public Accounts would not be completed, there is a requirement to release an unaudited statement to the people of the province so that

they would have understanding of the financial performance of the province based on the preceding fiscal year even if the Public Accounts has not been tabled.

The release of the Public Accounts and other unaudited financial update in advance of the general election further enhances government's accountability and transparency to its citizens on the financial management of the province. And providing a key financial accountability document in advance of a general election will serve to better inform the electorate.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial government is taking decisive action to create a multi-year approach to increase revenues, reduce expenses, eliminate waste and operate more efficiently and effectively. *The Way Forward* outlines the need to further address our new fiscal reality and to finding short- and long-term sustainable solutions for this province's finances.

And, Mr. Speaker, the amendments that we are proposing today provide a level of assurance to the electorate and the people of the province that the financial statements referred to as Public Accounts for the province will be released in a timely manner, regardless of the date of an election, and earlier than they have been released in some 18 years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm certainly pleased to rise today to speak to the bill as introduced by the Minister of Finance. I listened as she presented the bill and went through some of the issues in regard to the amendments to the *Financial Administration Act* and that amendment related to Public Accounts. As she has said, it will change the date Public Accounts will be tabled in the House of Assembly. She certainly referenced as well some of the jurisdictional reviews and scans that were done, and how we would come in line with many other jurisdictions in regard to this.

The bill will change the legislative deadline for the tabling of Public Accounts from February 1 to before November 1. So that means the deadline will be moved up by approximately three months. Changes are being made for section 60 of the *Financial Administration Act* to accommodate that requirement.

As well, the minister referenced in an election year, the Public Accounts will be tabled no less than 15 days before the election date as well. And then in the case of an election date, which we know is a set date every four years, it's changed; they're tabled no less than 15 days before an election date, unless in the last three months the Public Accounts had been released, a Budget Speech has been delivered, or other financial reports on the state of the province has been delivered.

I guess that would reference various indicators, economic indicators that are often given during the year, but certainly economic indicators are directed or are recognized at any time in a budget and I guess those are ones the minister referenced. Maybe further, she could speak to that. Certainly at times during the budget, the budget documentation, there are often references made in that to fiscal sensitivities to key assumptions, those types of things.

They would be related to things certainly that's relevant to us: oil prices, exchange rates. When those are announced in the budget, certainly as you follow through the year – anybody can do that and recognize where those assumptions are to at any particular time during the year – it gives some certainty and understanding of what path we're on based on a commodity market, because, as we know, commodity markets go up and down. Based on that, projections that you make are best informed by, certainly, experts in the field in regard to what their predictions on actual commodity prices will be. So I guess that's what she's referring to, and I'm sure the minister will probably speak to that later in debate.

So as well, I certainly want to thank officials too. We had officials from our department meet with Finance and certainly thank them for going through it and providing the information they did provide. As was mentioned before the Comptroller General made reference to other

issues before in regard to getting the information out and as well the minister referenced – I spoke to it as well – in regard to jurisdictions and the legislative requirements and what they are in other jurisdictions in regard to Public Accounts between September and January. So that's important as well. So I certainly acknowledge the work done by the minister in regard to doing this review and bringing it forward.

The *Financial Administration Act* is certainly a guiding piece of legislation within the government's financial branches and, in a broad sense, tells us what we can do, what we can't do and how expenses are to be processed, things like how funds have to be approved and those sorts of things. So in many ways the act is somewhat of a rulebook for the government on how funds need to be accounted for.

And as the minister references as well, the Public Accounts are the audited financial statements of the province's finances. It contains information on the previous fiscal year, certainly budget surplus, deficits and net debt of the province. It's important to recognize that it's the prior year's fiscal period, so usually about – and it's the audited financial statement of that fiscal year, the prior fiscal year. Not current, but prior. And that provides information in regard to that prior fiscal year.

When we bring down a budget, we know that there are estimates made for current year, but there are also revisions of the prior year and they're not actuals. We often refer to them as actuals. They're the estimates and then the revised number is in the document when a budget is presented for prior year. And then what this would do to Public Accounts would basically provide the actuals through that audit.

And those numbers would be for the prior fiscal year, which are the actual numbers and what they are after the audit takes place. It wouldn't be current year; it would be prior year. But certainly very important in regard to establishing what the actuals were for that particular year based on the budget, based on revisions, based on what transpired over that period of time. But what the minister is suggesting here is that period be moved up in terms of that reporting and when exactly it takes place.

Again, the main focus of the bill is certainly to do it somewhat earlier. This is something we're certainly pleased to support on this side, what the minister is bringing forward. Again, it goes to the issue of openness, transparency and bringing it forward for discussion to do that. It's consistent somewhat of other jurisdictions as well, and it certainly goes to the timing of it.

There are a couple of items in it that I want to acknowledge. I think it's section 60(2) and 60(3) of the bill. The two clauses talk about updated information about the financial health and status of the province in the public domain in advance of an election. So it talks about 15 days. I think section 60(2) shall be laid before the House of Assembly or submitted in accordance with subsection (4) no less than 15 days before the date fixed for the general election.

I'm not sure, and the minister can speak to that as well in terms of 15 days, whether that's viewed as a significant period of time or whether that should be expanded to be an earlier date than that in terms of getting to predate the election, time to circulate the information, for it to be certainly consumed by the public in regard to putting that out. That's up for consideration. As well, section 60(3) that if there was a budget in the last three months references, not the 15 days, but if there's another circumstance that occurs, that would be fine and met the requirements of the legislation.

Again, I get back to some of the comments I made earlier in regard to some of the performance indicators, or economic indicators that are often in a budget when it's brought down. And those are ones that certainly various groups, economists, industry groups, various people in society would follow to look at the performance and what's happening in regard to, as I said, economic indicator and performance, and performance back to the actual budget and you track that, and most people do, in regard to it.

I mentioned earlier, things like the – something like commodity markets, whether it's iron ore, whether it's related to a barrel of oil, whether it's related to the exchange rate on the Canadian dollar, how our export and how that's changed and what the difference is in regard to whether the rate goes up or down a cent. It correlates

quite clearly to what the return on a barrel of oil is and gets to what our projection is in revenue from the production of oil and certainly the export as well. So those are very important in assessing and looking at the economic situation.

As well, some other things I guess the minister may speak to later is in regard to revenue generation and the period of time during the year that we would get some information from the end of the fiscal year. Obviously, any budget you would predict revenue generation, whether that be provincial income tax, corporate income tax, HST, whether we'd have an overpayment or not, those types of things.

We would need to have that information from the federal government in regard to what those numbers would be and then we could put it in because they would be actuals we would put into Public Accounts, that that information would be available. I'm sure the minister has checked and within that time frame of, I think, six months, obviously that information would be available and that would be part and parcel of the process to make sure we have all the data we need to do the Public Accounts.

So, in regard to the piece of legislation, we certainly support it. We recognize the fact of making information available from roughly nine to six months in line with other jurisdictions in doing that. Obviously, as I said before, this is the prior fiscal year in terms of confirming what the actual expenditures were at that particular time and making it available at an earlier time.

We certainly support the issue of 15 days prior to an election date. I don't know what the relevance is of 15 days rather than making it an earlier period and a greater period of time before that, whether it be 30 days or 60 days. I don't know if that's possible, but it's just something in reviewing the documentation that came to mind and why that would be and why we wouldn't be able to expand that a little further.

Then, to that point, if there was some kind of fiscal update in an election year, I think that this 30 days – it wouldn't be required to release the accounts within 15 days, but I guess that gets to the point that in recognition there are indicators during the year that you can follow that would give you the ability to project where the

province is at a particular time based on what the budget had recommended. And you could follow those indicators, economic indicators, whether that's commodity prices or other things to be able to determine where we are at any time fiscally in the province. I guess that's what the reference is when it's saying the 15 days wouldn't be in effect but you could look at these other indicators to do it.

So I thank the minister for bringing this forward. I certainly look forward to debate in Committee and maybe answer some questions in moving this through the House.

Thank you very much.

MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster): The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's a pleasure today to stand in his House to support Bill 65, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 2.

I think what this bill does is – this is probably one of the greatest bills that we'll ever do to show that we are serious about transparency and accountability to the people of this province. Because what we saw in the fall of 2015 when our Premier, then the Leader of the Opposition, tried to get the information, to get to see the books of this province and we were led to believe with a \$1.1 billion deficit that turned out to be in excess of \$2 billion, I think this will go a long way to avoid that ever happening in this province again.

I think this is one of the greatest bills that we could probably introduce in this House or this city. What this does, Madam Speaker, is change the required date of tabling of Public Accounts respecting a fiscal year to before November 1 in the following fiscal year.

It requires that in a year where a general election is to be held, which is what we faced in the fall of 2015, that the Public Accounts be submitted no less than 15 days before the date fixed for the general election. So that will go a long way to

solving the issues we were faced with when we took office on December 1, 2015.

What this Public Accounts tabling date does, I guess, as I said, it improves our accountability, it improves transparency. What it will also do is an earlier tabling date aligns resources within departments and entities to ensure financial statements are prepared in a timely manner. What I mean by timely manner, not only by the date but certainly that the reports when they do come out at that time, they're relevant, they're up to date, they mean what they say and we're not led down a garden path of believing that a deficit, or in years to come a surplus is not what it actually is.

So we will never face that again. And that was something, as I said, in 2015 that we were faced with. I think the minister has outlined, articulated quite well, the advantages of this bill and what it means for us as a province and us as a government.

When you look at the record of the past administration in the releasing of Public Accounts, it's nothing short of dismal – I'm being very kind – when you look at the dates that they were released in the past 10, 12 years, it's shameful rather than dismal.

AN HON. MEMBER: Shameful.

MR. LETTO: To see that we had to come into office, again when we did come into office, the first thing we had to do was to release the Public Accounts. And to show the real dire situation that we were left with was amazing and was certainly – it came as a surprise to a lot of people in this province.

It was a situation that we had to face, and we're dealing with it day by day. For instance, in the 2015-16 Public Accounts tabled on October 19, 2016, that was our first – our last year's release. It was released in October. And that was the earliest date that they've been released in the last 18 years.

AN HON. MEMBER: How many years?

MR. LETTO: Eighteen.

AN HON. MEMBER: Eighteen.

MR. LETTO: Eighteen years.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's a long time.

MR. LETTO: Public Accounts, for instance, for the 2014-15 fiscal year were not tabled until January 26, 2016, which was the latest tabling since 1998-99. And it was our administration that ended up doing that, because the previous administration failed to do it before the election was called.

We did a number of jurisdictional scans, the department did and I certainly thank them for doing that. They've done a great job with this bill and putting in place something that's workable and meets the accountability and transparency guidelines that we wish to follow as a government.

Eleven of the 13 provinces and territories have legislative tabling dates ranging from September 27 to January 31. And of these 11 jurisdictions, six have generally released their Public Accounts one to two months in advance of the legislative tabling date. So we were, I guess – again, when you look at the provinces and territories of this country, we were really behind the eight-ball when it came to releasing our Public Accounts and being transparent.

I think the greatest asset of this bill is the fact that when we talk about election years, that we're going to do that before the election date. And again, I have to go back and say that this was something that really, really put us into dire straits back in late 2015, early 2016. And in a year in which a general election is to be held in accordance with subsection 3(2) of the *House of Assembly Act*, the Public Accounts will be laid before the House of Assembly or submitted in accordance with subsection (4) no less than 15 days before the date fixed for the general election.

We know that we have set dates for elections, but time to time they change, and our election date is in October, so –and as the legislation outlines, October 31 is the deadline for release, but we know that in an election year that that has to change, that we have to do it before October 31.

So I think we've really done our homework on this, and really taken into consideration any situation that we may be faced as a government by the release of Public Accounts. That's what I like about this bill, it gives us a good guideline, and it gives the people of this province a guideline of what our financial situation is in this province, and we are not faced with the surprises that we were faced with back in 2015-2016.

So again, I have to commend the department, commend the minister. I know this is something that we recognized when we took office that had to be done. And I certainly thank the minister and the department for taking it on themselves and to get it done early in our mandate. There was a lot of work put into this, but I think what we've done here is we've laid out a good foundation for our government of being transparent and accountable to the people of this province – and that's what that's all about, and that's what this is all about, is being upfront with the taxpayers, upfront – this is their money. It's not our money; it's their money. And they should know where we are in the financial situation of this province, because they're the people who are paying into this.

So again, I want to thank the minister, thank the department, and I certainly look forward to hearing from the Opposition. I notice that the Member for Ferryland had a few comments about it. And, for the most part, I think they're positive and they're in support of this. I should certainly hope they would be. It's too bad they didn't follow it, but glad to see now that they're supporting this on a go-forward-basis.

We also, you know, we talk about the assumptions and the estimates that we all go through in our budget process, and this is an opportunity to put some actual figures to the assumptions that we make, whether it's the price of oil, whether it's other revenues that the province receives, at least this gives an opportunity to put an actual face to the assumptions and either substantiates or amends or revises the assumptions that they're made at budget time and these are things that we can't predict on a definite basis. You have to predict certain things when you do a budget, as you would do with any budget. Not only in government, whether it's your own budget or

your organizational budget, I would say that estimates have to be made; but at least it puts some actual figures and gives us an opportunity to revise, amend or, at least, substantiate.

When he said he supports this bill because what it does is it gives us an earlier opportunity to do the Public Accounts and get them out earlier. Well, I would suggest what this does is it improves accountability and it proves transparency and it puts the onus on us, as a government, to be, as I said, again, transparent and accountable to the people of this province. That's what this is all about. It's being accountable and being transparent. Nothing else, and that's what it's all about.

So, again, Minister, I thank you and your department for the work that you've done on this. I think it's a great bill. As I said at the beginning, it may be the bill that really sets the foundation for transparency and accountability for this government, something that we're looking forward to doing and something that we will do for the people of this province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

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

I'm pleased to take my own turn in standing and speaking to Bill 65, An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act No 2. I sort of look at this bill as being pretty run of the mill; I'm afraid I can't get as excited about it as my colleague for Labrador West just got. I think it's good. I am not saying anything against it. I'll be voting for it, absolutely, and I think it's good to get the Public Accounts out in a timely fashion, very definitely. I think the whole province would definitely say yes to that and when we know that there's an election coming up, I think it's good to have the Public Accounts out before the election also.

I'm not sure what difference it will make 15 days before an election, but the thing is when it

comes to the overall financial picture of our province, we may not know details that will come out in the Public Accounts, but I think we all will have a fairly good sense at any time what's going on. In 2015, for example, I would point out that we all knew we were in a pretty bad state, financially. And it was no surprise to anybody in the province, I don't think, at all, because we all knew what was happening to the price of oil. We all knew what was in the budget. We all knew everything that we had to deal with in this province. So I sort of smile when I hear the government say that they were surprised, that they didn't know the state we were in, because everybody else in the province knew the state that we were in. And that's the reality.

However, having said that, I'm certainly supporting this. I'm glad that this has been put in place. I'm certainly not saying no to it. But let's not make more of it than it is. I see a lot of political posturing going on here over this bill today, and I'm not going to take more time just to do political posturing. It's a good thing to do and we'll be voting for it.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port.

MR. FINN: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

It's certainly great to stand and add to the debate here today. I'm very pleased to see this bill introduced from the Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury. Very interesting to listen to her commentary as well, and to put things into perspective as to where we have been previously under former administrations, a significant amount of time, at which no one was entirely aware of where our Public Accounts were.

I'm not sure I'm on the mic here, Madam Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: There's no light.

MR. FINN: No? Here we go. We can start again.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure to rise and stand here today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FINN: For those just joining us, who are listening at home or happen to be streaming online, I just wasn't on the microphone so therefore, for our good folks downstairs in Hansard that take the notes and record what we state here in the Legislature, I'm certainly now back on the record.

Today we're talking about Bill 65. Of course, just our second day into this sitting of the House of Assembly so, really, this is the first piece of legislation that we're debating today. And I think the timing of such is particularly important, that this is the first bill we'll be debating, An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act No. 2. Basically, in short order, what we're stating is that we now need to have our Public Accounts released and we have a date that we have fixed that they will be released. There's a provision in here whereby if a general election happens to be called other than a fixed election date, as there are some circumstances that can happen, we have provisions of which they'll be introduced no less than 15 days before a fixed general election and/or any other election for that matter.

And I think that's important because when you look at what we've been trying to do as an administration in government over the last year, we looked at some of the challenges that we face. And perhaps one of the biggest challenges was having a good, solid understanding of where the province's finances were.

And so, while we were well aware, for those of us who were running in the last general election, that the state of the province's finances were certainly very bleak, I guess to put it bluntly, one thing we were not aware of is what the actual numbers were. And so we said time and time again in the House – and it has been noted throughout the media and other means – that the Premier had written the former premier and now Leader of the Opposition in September of last year and was looking for an update as to the state of the province's finances.

At that time, Madam Speaker, we didn't get any actual answer and we were lead to believe that there would be a \$1.1 billion deficit. Well, it just so turns out that without any release of Public Accounts by the time we took office and had to release the Public Accounts – correct me if I'm wrong, Minister of Finance. I understand we released the Public Accounts in January. So that was something that we had to do that, perhaps, they should have done previously, and we were now being told and we had to tell the taxpayers of the province: I'm terribly sorry; the \$1.1 billion projection in deficit is actually \$2.2 billion.

So when you talk about being misled, and we're trying to properly plan as to what we're doing with our taxpayers' dollars, we really didn't have any idea. It wasn't until we took government that we were able to understand that there was an additional \$1.1 billion in deficit. So yes, we were aware that the state of the province's finances was very bleak but when you talk about another \$1.1 billion that is certainly substantial.

In Question Period earlier today there was a question raised, and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development had pointed out to everyone that we're spending more in terms of our debt annually, right now, than we're spending on education in this province. And it's ironic that the figure that we're spending on our deficit is actually \$1.1 billion.

Just to put things in perspective, so we're spending more on our deficit than we are in education. We take over office and we're lead to believe that there's going to be a deficit of \$1.1 billion and, in fact, it's \$2.2 billion. So in an effort to ensure that any future administration moving forward does not face that same circumstance, that's essentially what this legislation today here is doing.

We've looked across other jurisdictions, as noted by the Member for Lab West. This is being done all across this great country. And provinces are being open and accountable in letting taxpayers know, and even letting the Opposition know, as they all have a vital role to play in government – and Opposition certainly has a role to play. So we're talking about letting

people know exactly what's going on with the state of our affairs.

For the Minister of Finance to get up and have to say that when we released the Public Accounts, it was the earliest they had been released in 18 years. I mean, that's certainly astonishing, when you think about it. I think that everybody would agree, and I'd be shocked if the Members opposite didn't agree either. I don't know how any particular government – when you look across the country and the provincial governments are releasing their Public Accounts and letting the taxpayers of the provinces know and letting industry know and letting business know and letting departments within government know exactly what they can expect and exactly what the numbers and the state of the province is, certainly something that's important.

I would wager to say it's beyond important. It's absolutely paramount that these numbers be released and everyone, every single Newfoundland and Labradorian in this province is aware. You can take it a step further, when you look at going to the bond agencies and the lending markets. I mean, how are we to appear as a province when we can't even release our Public Accounts figures at a particular point in time to let everyone be aware of that.

So I certainly applaud the minister for bringing in this legislation. I'd be extremely shocked to see any disagreement on approving this legislation. It was great to hear from the other Member opposite as well, the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi – bear with me there – lending her voice to it as well, and certainly they're pleased. Certainly they're pleased with this move by the Finance Department.

As stated, 11 of 13 other jurisdictions have tabling dates ranging from September to January, so there's no reason to think that we can't be prepared to do the same. Six of these jurisdictions generally release their information a lot sooner as well.

So today's legislation is to ensure that we have regular and consistent information available to folks and everybody can have an understanding, a great understanding, of where we are. Again, we don't want to see any administration take

over office and form government and have no idea exactly as to what the state of the finances is. There's no need to be caught off guard. When you talk about proper planning, you talk about having a plan, you talk about having a plan in place, how is any new administration going to be able to govern without knowing the true state of the province's finances? And that was the exact position that we found ourselves in. It's certainly something you would not want to leave anyone in the dark on.

As the Member for Lab West pointed out, it's no different than when you make a budget for your household. It's almost like a partner, a husband and wife, and the husband says to the wife well, I'm not really quite sure where we stand but we'll find out when we go to look at tax time, and be completely caught off guard and have no ability to plan.

So this is something that will certainly allow for us, as a government, to plan as we move forward. And, as I stated, it will give industry, business, those who are looking to invest in this province, an idea of what they can expect. We'll have a good understanding as to what we can expect from our lending institutions; certainly a move to be applauded.

Madam Speaker, other than that, I don't have too, too much to add. As I say, I can only give great thanks to the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury. I look forward to her remarks as we close debate, unless other Members are looking to lend their voice to this particular piece of legislation today. But I have no trouble supporting Bill 65.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to it today, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm not going to take too long, but I did want to say a few words about Bill 65. First of all, I want to say that I support the bill 100 per cent. As a matter of fact, it was only two weeks ago that I

had a good discussion on the VOCM *Backtalk* with Pete Soucy about this identical issue, actually, as part of a number of reforms that I believe that we need to bring to this House of Assembly. This was certainly one of them. I didn't know it was coming here today, but I'm glad that it is and I will be supporting it, as I said, 100 per cent.

I do find it kind of interesting, just listening to the Member opposite, and I think a couple of them mentioned the fact that this is the first time that we've seen this done in 18 years. I'm not sure why we would want to bring up 18 years. To my recollection, in math, the former administration were there for 12 years, so somebody had to be there for those other years prior to them. I think that would have been a Liberal government. Not that it really matters, but the fact that we're bringing this little bit of partisan banter into it, I don't know why we would want to do that.

Also, the fact that we're talking about the fact that we didn't know prior to the last election what the deficit really was going to be. There's no doubt that it wasn't known what the exact numbers were. I think we can all say that would be accurate. But to suggest there was nobody had any idea, I think that's a little bit disingenuous; hence, the reason why the Premier wrote the then premier prior to the election asking for the information, because everybody knew it had to be higher than what was projected.

All you had to do was look at the price of oil, the fact it had dropped, and you could do the math yourself and you would have had an idea that it would have been worse. Now, did anyone know it would be as bad as it turned out to be? Probably not. I certainly didn't, and I'm sure nobody did. But, there's no doubt that we had to know it would have been worse.

MR. LETTO: You campaigned on it.

MR. LANE: Now, I say to the Member for Lab West, we're going to start off this session again. I listened to every word he had to say, never said a peep. And already now every time you say one thing that he doesn't like, all of a sudden we got to get into the heckling game.

Anyway, I'm going to continue on, but I'm not going to be putting up with any heckling. I'm not going to be putting up with any of this nonsense, and I'll call him out and anyone else on it every time. I'll respect you; you respect what I have to say.

Anyway, moving on, Madam Speaker. I would just say that – and especially given the fact that I'm supporting the bill. But I just think we're getting a little bit cute by half by some of the statements being made about who knew what and who didn't know what and so on. I think we all had an idea that it wouldn't be as bad; that it would be worse than what was put out there originally, but we didn't know how bad.

The fact of the matter is we're doing the right thing now, and that's the important thing. We're doing the right thing now. They're bringing forth a piece of legislation that basically, when enacted, is going to provide the people with the accurate information prior to the election, and I think that's very important. That way we eliminate all the mystery, we eliminate all the excuses, and when a party brings forth a platform in future elections, everybody will know, including, and most importantly, the general public will know exactly where we stand and then they can gauge the promises contained in all the party platforms and line it up against what people know the financial situation to actually be.

That way the people can hold all of the parties accountable. They can ask questions. They can question if you're planning on doing this, how do you plan on achieving it, given this particular situation? Where do you plan on finding the finances to do this or if you're going to do this over here, where are you going to take from in order to do it? Please explain, because based on the financial situation, I don't understand how you could propose this particular thing, whatever it may be.

So it makes good sense. It's a proactive thing to do. It's a positive thing to do. I'm glad it's being done and I will support it 100 per cent.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Bonavista.

MR. KING: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's an honour to stand here today in the spring session to speak on Bill 65, on the *Financial Administration Act* and changes that we're making to it. I'm also looking forward to speaking to Bill 66 when I get an opportunity because it's heavily related to the District of Bonavista.

With that said, my friends from Lab West and Stephenville – Port au Port and even Mount Pearl – Southlands have made some very good points about having this information out here.

AN HON. MEMBER: What?

MR. KING: I'm willing to give credit where credit is due.

MR. KENT: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: They made some very good points about the minister's statement about releasing Public Accounts 15 days prior to an election. Like they said, it is for accountability and transparency so the public are not surprised, or to coin a phrase from my friend from Mount Pearl North – or excuse me, Mount Pearl – Southlands yesterday, hoodwinked by what they see or what they're being told by the governing party at the time.

This is a big step forward, and like I said, goes a long to creating transparency and accountability; two things we campaigned on in the fall of 2015. What this also does is it brings us in line with other jurisdictions. So you have a number of different provinces right now who release their Public Accounts in the fall of the year, and this year being a record for us – within the past 18 years, October 19, 2016. The previous year, because the previous administration didn't release the documents, our government had to release it in January 2016 at a deficit two times greater than what was projected in Budget 2015.

What this does as well, by releasing the Public Accounts earlier in the year, and I'm a member of Public Accounts Committee, so it allows myself and my colleagues on the Public Accounts Committee to get to work and do things a little bit quicker. What it does, you see here, the Auditor General's report, it allows the

Auditor General to take the Public Accounts, go through it, highlight things that stand out to him which aren't good for the public and the taxpayer of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So once we get that report, once that report is released, we take a look at it for Public Accounts and we actually work with departments and agencies and entities to make sure they are doing things correctly, using taxpayer monies properly going forward. So what this does, you get this out earlier, it allows the Auditor General to get his report out earlier and allows us, as members of the Public Accounts Committee, to get rolling on things to make sure public tax dollars are spent wisely and correctly.

With that said, I'm fully in support of this. I think everything's been stated over and over again. I don't want to take anyone's time and repeat things. But on the – like I say, the 15 days prior to an election, a big step forward. Getting it out earlier helps me do my job as a member of Public Accounts and it makes the public aware of where their tax dollars are going.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to sit down.

Thank you.

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm just going to stand for a couple of moments – find my notes here, caught off – and speak to Bill 65, An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act No. 2.

I should say, since this is the first time on my feet since we've opened the House only yesterday that it's nice to be back. Amazing how fast – my grandmother had an expression, and those who work with me know that I quote my grandmother all the time, she used to say time and tide waits for no man.

It seems like it was just yesterday we paraded out. We were all excited to be heading back to the district for Christmas events, and I'm sure most of us have had a busy January and February, and here we are. Like my former colleague used to say, in the people's House,

doing the people's work. That's a tremendous privilege, Mr. Speaker, and one that I take very, very serious, and I know most of us here in the House do that; forty people in the House of Assembly doing the work of the people of our province.

I did smile yesterday when my former colleague across the way made a comment that somebody said to him, you're back to work on Monday. It's true that sometimes people have that view, that the few weeks we sit in the spring and in the fall is when we're working. When the truth is it's a very, very demanding job, Mr. Speaker. And sometimes managing people's expectations can be the most challenging part of our job, perhaps, especially when you're trying to navigate your way through some very tumultuous times, financially.

I'm delighted – and I've said it before, I have only been around the Chamber and working for the good people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair since 2013 but still more senior than lots here. So I've been around long enough to remember some bills in the past that maybe covered things up, that sanctioned things where openness and transparency was not the order of the day.

So I'm delighted. I take it very, very serious the work that we do and that my team do on behalf of the people of the province. And I want to send accolades to the minister, to my colleague, for bringing in this bill today, Bill 65, An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act.

Mr. Speaker, I sat here this afternoon and I looked at a lot of us who put our name forward on a ballot, you want to represent your area. You want to do the best job you can. You can't change the world, but you want to make a difference in your little corner of the world. And then you form government, Mr. Speaker, and as was quoted here many times, you form government to find out that we're in rough shape. We have had a rough year. There are Members of my team that have took, some of them, a tremendous beating, much, much more harder than I have. So it's very, very important that – it is the taxpayer money, as my colleague said. It's very important that we be open and that we be transparent with the people's purse.

Another thing I thought about, Mr. Speaker, is the tabling of Public Accounts that, in all of the departments, I believe it will make all of my colleagues say; How do we best invest this money? How do we do things like multi-year funding? And there are some other wonderful bills that are coming, Mr. Speaker, that was outlined in *The Way Forward* document. How do we best invest this money to provide stability, to get a better bang for the buck? I think about multi-year funding, I think about contract work in Labrador, the area where I reside, and the short seasons that we have and all of the benefits that's going to come.

I think that all ties into this Public Accounts in the interest of openness and transparency, Mr. Speaker. When we look at our own household if we were blindly going, trying to do a budget, you can't do it. Pardon the personal reference to the Minister of Finance, but it's no secret in this province she's been very, very successful in business. She didn't become successful in business by paying out huge amounts in interest every month, Mr. Speaker, I would venture to say. We heard today in Question Period about \$900 million in interest being paid, more than the entire Department of Education.

The Member for Mount Pearl North can smile away and it's all fun and games. It's not fun and games when you're talking about the people's money, the taxpayers' dollars, I say, Mr. Speaker. We have to take our jobs very, very seriously in what we're doing here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member not to be calling Members by their first name.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

AN HON. MEMBER: She better be careful.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, I will not stand in this House and be threatened by a Member opposite and told I better be careful. I stand here as a Member representing the people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and I'm certainly

outlining the importance of being open and transparent in government with the people's purse and the people's money.

And yes, Mr. Speaker, it's sad. I represent a rural district, lots of challenges. It's sad when you see schools struggling with limited resources and to see so much going out the door. But it's moves today like Bill 65, An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act that's going to help get us on the right track in the interest of openness and transparency.

Somebody talked about the public posturing that's going on here today because we're looking back to how this wasn't done in the past. I don't know if it's political posturing, Mr. Speaker, but it is important to explain to people why we're doing this and it is important for people to understand why we're in the financial situation that we're in, why you have to say no to many things that you would like to say yes to.

I am the mother of a young adult so if she comes to me and she's looking for something, a request, and I say no, it's important to me to explain why I have to say no. Maybe some decisions were made in the past and maybe it's going to take a little while before we can actually say yes to that financial decision. That's called good management, Mr. Speaker, and it's something that we haven't been that familiar with in this House of Assembly over the last number of years, unfortunately.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: But it is refreshing to see a bill tabled today in the House, Mr. Speaker, that all three parties, all three parties stood and said this is a good thing. We work for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and we're navigating our way through some difficult times. This is a bill in the right direction in the terms of openness and transparency and putting your money where your mouth is. And it's going to mean, at the end of the day, that more sound decisions are made for the people of the province.

I'm happy to speak to it and happy to support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It certainly is a pleasure for me today to stand and support Bill 65. I'd just like to make a few comments with regard to the bill. First of all, I just cannot believe that all these years have gone by that we've not had these measures in place, and I would certainly take this opportunity to say how pleased I am and proud I am of our Minister of Finance for being able to put forward this bill today and certainly recognize the tremendous amount of work that she had done and the tremendous challenges that she's facing in having to deal with the fiscal situation that we are in as a province.

I think for many of us on this side of the House, when we recognize the fiscal situation that we were facing, many of us sort of really had to take a second somber thought, really, of what the heck are we into. Mr. Speaker, I say that in all humility because, for the most part, I'm a fairly humble person, I think – thanks; I appreciate that snicker over there, but I am.

What I do, I take seriously. I guess one of the most frightening situations that I faced was last December 14 when, in fact, we were given the privilege by the Premier to sit in his Cabinet. I remember very, very clearly the first meeting when we looked at the fiscal situation that the province was facing. I don't think ever in my life, Mr. Speaker, that I have a feeling of I want to walk away from something. But I have to be brutally honest today. The challenges that we were facing, I tell you, it was certainly, for me, an eye opener. I had to look at it from the perspective that I think we need to do things better.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of that, of course, it requires a tremendous amount of work. I think in this past year the evidence is showing that we have had to do a lot of soul searching and we've had to do a lot of work in trying to get our province back into the fiscal situation where we feel that we do have a future for our young

people, for the people that are living in the province.

In my limited time in business, putting together a budget for the shareholders of the company and putting together a fiscal forecast every year was – a budget is intended to be just that. It's a budget, how you want to project your spending and how you want to project your expenses for the year.

Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, I just could not believe that you could put together a budget in March, by the end of March and project a \$1.1 billion deficit, and before December of that same year, you're looking at a \$2.2 billion deficit. Now, if you were in business – and I know government is a little different than business in the sense that we do have some social obligations that we have to make. We know there are programs out there that are run differently, but if you were in business and made that type of error, I don't think you'd have a business very long.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important for all of us to learn a lesson from that. I really want to applaud the minister for saying – and saying that going forward to be open, to be transparent, it is important for us as a province to make sure the people of the province are well aware of the financial situation or the financial conditions in which we're facing.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 65 will give us the ability to make sure the Public Accounts, to make sure that people are aware of the situations we're facing. My understanding, Mr. Speaker, as well, is that all three parties, prior to an election, all three parties put together a platform. When you put together your political platform, you put together your platform based on information you have – based on the most accurate information you have at that time.

I think, Mr. Speaker, all three parties when they put together their platform, whether it was a Blue Book or a Red Book or an Orange Book or whatever colour of book it is, when they put together their political forecast when they were to take office, based their platform on a \$1.1 billion deficit.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, obviously the government that was going out at the time should have known their finances at the time, and probably should have put together their platform based on a \$2.2 billion deficit, not on a \$1.1 billion. But us, at that time, as an Opposition and looking to form government, part of putting together the Red Book, of course, was very important for us, and a lot of what the forecasting was based on, the deficit and the numbers that we knew.

As we all know, and the Premier has been very, very clear in this House in asking and has been very, very clear in saying that he requested from the administration at the time, the previous administration, to give us an accurate account of exactly where we are financially.

I know the Opposition sometimes is quick to say, well, you know, you have to be blind if you didn't think the finances were worse than what they were because of the plummeting oil prices. Yes, that's true; however, it would have been very easy, knowing those prices were plummeting, there should have been at least – if they were governing at the time, obviously, there should have been some financial forecast that would have been built into that and expenses that were there, and should have been able to give us a better idea, and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador at the time, a better idea of exactly where we were financially.

Mr. Speaker, that wasn't done. Unfortunately, it wasn't done. It created, for any new government taking over, it created significant challenges. These are the challenges, Mr. Speaker, we have been dealing with as a government, and it certainly has created, I guess from where we're sitting as a government, decisions that we've had to make that are less than desirable. Obviously, we are trying to put this province back into a fiscal situation whereby – and I've often said it, I said it last year in the budget, whereby my grandchildren are able to live within this province and not have the burden of a debt that is increasing to an amount that is not sustainable.

I say, Mr. Speaker, the debt is certainly not sustainable. I think the hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development today, very eloquently stated that the number

two largest debt, or largest expense item going forward right now is interest that we're paying on our debt.

As a matter of fact, the interest we're paying on our debt exceeds the amount of money we were able to spend on education. Just imagine, Mr. Speaker. If we had been prudent in our spending over the last number of years, if we were able to have a good, solid fiscal framework in place over the last number of years and we were able to reduce that interest by even half, that's another \$400 million-plus, Mr. Speaker, we would have been able to put into some of the programs that we have in this province that people readily want; but, of course, Mr. Speaker, that's looking back. We all know what happens; you can't keep building your future on looking back.

So it's important for us now as a government to put in place measures whereby, when we are able to forecast going forward, and this year and last year we put together a budget, we put together a forecast for this fiscal year and we have – to the best of our ability, we have stayed our course and we have seen some significant improvements in areas that we had looked at in making sure that we're able to have a fiscal balance by the year, I think it's 2022-23.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's very, very important for us to continue that. And this particular bill that the minister has put forward will now give us an opportunity, will give this government an opportunity, will give the people of the province an opportunity to see exactly what our Public Accounts are saying; will give us the numbers that's important for us; will let us know and will let the people of the province know prior to an election and, of course, earlier in the year.

I think we've already mentioned one of the big challenges that the minister had to face – because the Public Accounts had not been done by the previous administration, one of the huge challenges the minister had to face was getting our Public Accounts together in the early part of last year and that was a challenge. Then, of course, not only that, then she worked through making sure the Public Accounts was ready for October of last year. So there was a tremendous amount of work in getting Public Accounts pulled together, Mr. Speaker, really two Public

Accounts in one calendar year and that certainly was a significant amount of work.

So as we move forward, I think this is a very positive move. I certainly applaud the Members opposite for seeing this as a very positive move, that going forward, going forward now, Mr. Speaker, we will be in a better position to have our accounts so that the people are aware of where we are spending and where our expenses are going and be able to look at and have a better fiscal understanding of where we are as a province.

So, Mr. Speaker, in spite of the many challenges we are facing, the many challenges we have faced over the last year, I am optimistic that as we continue to chart our course going forward over the next three years, that we will continue to be fiscally responsible. We will continue to make sure we are providing the services for the people of our province based on the ability that we have within our fiscal framework to do so.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that as we have worked through this past year and through the many challenges, and we know people have faced many challenges. I have said, over a number of occasions, that we have to understand that when we put together a fiscal framework, our fiscal framework cannot forever and a day be based only on revenue generation. And that's an area that we're looking at. There has to be a focus on expenses, because we all know that it's not enough to just grow revenue and continue to grow expenses. If we continue to do that, Mr. Speaker, we're never, ever going to get to a point whereby we can find that we have a solid fiscal framework in place.

And so, Mr. Speaker, what we have to do, we have to find a balance. We have to find a balance in that we have a revenue generation, we know what our revenues are going to be, we have a solid forecasting in our revenues and then we have to bring our expenses in line and to understand that there are areas that we have to find efficiencies. And I think that this government has started to look at that very, very seriously. We're looking at efficiencies within our government, ways in which we can provide services to the people in the province in a more efficient manner, and looking at ways in which

we can save some of our expenses in order to be able to balance out our fiscal framework.

So I think today is a very important first move for us to make sure that we have measures put in place, and this bill will certainly make sure that the measures that we put in place will be evident to the people of the province and will be evident to people that are looking at being able to determine what expenses they want to incur.

I think, again, it will be certainly a good measure for future generations and future people that are going to be interested in politics so that they know in advance of an election how to build their platform, what political pressures they will have, and how we will be able to sustain a fiscal framework going forward.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to thank you for the opportunity today to speak on this bill and, again, I want to just thank the Members opposite for supporting this because I think it's the right thing to do. I think it will certainly be, for us, a very positive – not only for this government, but for subsequent governments as well because it will give us an opportunity and give the people an opportunity to see just exactly where our fiscal situation is.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to stand on my feet again. It's always an honour and a privilege to stand in the House of Assembly and, as other speakers have alluded, it's good to be back in the House of Assembly. It's been quite an interesting and busy few months since we last were here. I wish all Members a happy new year – it's never too late to say it – and certainly wish everyone all the best as we move forward through this session.

I can certainly say that I'm very happy to stand and support the amendments being put forth today to the *Financial Administration Act*. In an effort to improve the timeliness of Public

Accounts, these amendments will require that the Public Accounts be tabled on or before October 31 of the following fiscal year.

I think, Mr. Speaker, as many have alluded, that this is an important point to consider because this is truly how information is given to the people of the province and, indeed, Members of the Legislature who are representatives of the said people of the province. Strong fiscal management – I would say if you went through Hansard, you'd have every government of every stripe saying that strong fiscal management's their priority. But really, it's not in your rhetoric but, moreover, in the evidence that comes behind your time in government where you see whether that's in fact a priority for your government.

And it was just so troubling and still is troubling for so many people to see what happened in the year that the governments changed and how long it took to get information on the Public Accounts. We all know, Mr. Speaker, that then Opposition Leader wrote to the former premier, September 28 of 2015, demanding the Public Accounts be released – they were not. They were subsequently tabled January 26 of 2016. That's the latest they've been tabled since 1998-99.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments serve now as a means to legislate a time frame for those Public Accounts to be put out there, particularly in an election year. So not only the people running for office, not only political parties know, but the people of the province know. Because it should always be a priority to share that kind of information with them, and I would argue that when you know that information is going out there, it will make you more responsible as a decision maker for the funds that you're expending and the money you're putting out there. I think, in many respects, it's a way to make the entire system more accountable, and I think accountability is very important.

Now, so many people have mentioned what went on in the 2015 year, and rightfully so. I mean, I can remember – I have an email here on my BlackBerry today from a constituent reminding me that you knocked on my door and here's the conversation we had, and I remember it quite vividly, Mr. Speaker. I can remember

shaking people's hands under the assumption that the deficit was at \$1.1 billion, only to find out that when the Finance Minister tabled her budget last year that number really would have been \$2.7 billion, had nothing been done. So, really, these amendments are a cure to that kind of things happening again.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, it's really not a means to blame any past governments but, moreover, it's a way to look to our history and learn from it. I once read a quote: If we do not learn from our history, we're condemned to repeat it. So, Mr. Speaker, I really think that we need to honestly look back on our past, learn where we can, accept where things that happened were good and acknowledge that and move forward. I think when we do that we will certainly be stronger for it.

Today I stand here in support of the amendments to the *Financial Administration Act*. I believe this contributes to our commitment to accountability in terms of the finances of this province. I believe in everything that we do, we should be sharing information rather than hiding it. Bill 29 comes to mind, but we shan't go there today, Mr. Speaker, but I just want to say how supportive I am of this. I hope that all Members support it. I'm glad to hear of the support from all sides.

Thank you.

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

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

I'm happy to stand here also and speak to Bill 65. Any time you get a chance to speak to any legislation in this House is certainly – it's not a right; it's a privilege. But this particular piece of legislation, I think it's quite important.

As I want to do whenever I talk about legislation, I talk about maybe the title, the size of it and the 'substantiveness'. In terms of this one, the act itself, the descriptor, An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act No 2 sounds very plain. The fact is there have been similar bills in the past, many with different meanings, but when I look at this bill – and, again, in terms of its size, it's not a bill that is

huge. It's an amendment. It takes up just a few sections.

The section says that section 60 of the *Financial Administration Act*, and I will not – I'll be quite honest; it's a very big piece of legislation. I know my colleague, the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, is certainly more familiar with it than it, but it's quite an important piece of legislation.

I think what's being proposed here today is something that contrary to – I know my colleague, the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, sort of downplayed it and said I don't know what the big deal is. I think this is important, and I think my comments today will sort of shine some light on why I think this. Even though it comes off as something that may be run of the mill, this actually is a substantive piece of legislation for very important reasons.

What it says here is quite simple. It says section 60 will be repealed and the following substituted: "The minister shall lay out the Public Accounts required under section 59 before the House ... or submit them in accordance with subsection (4) before November 1 in the following fiscal year."

And then it also allows here, "Notwithstanding subsection (1), in a year in which a general election is to be held in accordance with subsection 3(2) of the *House of Assembly Act*, the Public Accounts shall be laid before the House ... no less than 15 days before the date fixed for the general election.

"In addition to the requirement under subsection (1), in a year in which a general election is to be held in accordance with the provisions of section 3 of the *House of Assembly Act* ... an unaudited report on the financial state of the province shall be laid before the House of Assembly or submitted in accordance with subsection (4) no less than 15 days before the date fixed for the general election unless one of the following has occurred within 3 months of the date fixed for the general election: (a) the Public Accounts for the previous fiscal year have been laid before the House of Assembly; (b) the Budget Speech has been delivered; or (c) a report on the financial state of the province has been laid before the House of Assembly."

Now, again, when you read that it might not sound that significant, but we had to take it – we had to put it in context here. I mean when we stand here – and my colleague did a good job in her opening comments, and I'm sure when she gets a chance to sum up and close debate, close second reading on this, she'll talk about it again. Having been through this House in the budget process, both on the Opposition side and here on government side, it's an important process.

In fact, personally I think the Estimates process that we go through in the House is one of the more fascinating parts that the majority of people in this province don't know much about. I certainly had no idea what it was about until I got in the House. The fact that you can sit in this House and ask questions for hours at a time with the minister and their staff – and it's not like the regular Question Period which, as we all know, may have some theatrics and may not always be the best conveyance of information, I think Estimates is.

Now, there have been times when certain ministers – and I'm just talking about my own experiences, nobody else's. I had times when certain ministers were not very forthcoming and said stick to the line. I had opportunities too, ministers, when I questioned them, when I was in Opposition, they would answer anything you put to them.

Again, not very often I'll do this; I'll compliment the Member for Mount Pearl North. When I was a Health critic and he was the Minister of Health, he sat there and answered every question. Now, I didn't like all the answers. He didn't like all the questions, but he answered them. Again, I think there's something to be said about giving credit where it is due. He did that, he didn't shy away from it.

Now, some of his colleagues again, and I will say, I never had a chance to question the deputy or the Opposition House Leader. I never had a chance to question him, but some of his colleagues – and I'm not going to bring up their names. Some of them who may be there, who may not be in the House right now, it was terrible. It was terrible. They did not do it. So that shines a light on the fact that you were willing to co-operate.

I think when I do it, and you can ask the Leader of the Opposition who was my critic. I think last year, in fact – you usually have three hours allotted, I think we actually went over four hours because we answered the questions. We tried our best. Again, I'm sure I didn't answer them all to the satisfaction of the Member opposite but we tried. My staff who sat here in this House and we went late. That's what it's about, because this is our opportunity to question the financial performance of government. To question the taxpayers' money and how it's being allocated and how it's being spent. That's what we need.

The thing about a budget is it's only a plan. It's a plan. It is not the actual expenditure of the money which you get at the end of the year. And that is why this bill, the repealing of this act and the implementation of this new section is so important. This is a chance to provide the updated Public Accounts to the people of this province and do it in a timely fashion.

Now, I think it was already stated by my colleague from Lab West, that we've done this in our first year in government in a very expeditious manner, as it should be. People need to see this information. Good or bad, they need to have it. They need to have a proper understanding of where our finances lay because it's not our money. It's not Opposition's money. It's the people of this province's money, all of us, every single one of us that lives in this province. It's our finances.

Why this is so important, and it's been stated by my colleague who stood up. I think the deficit at the time of the 2015 budget, and if I get my information wrong I'm sure the minister will turn and shake her head and correct me, as she should do. I think it was around, and I might be off a bit, \$1.1 billion. That is not a small figure. That is a huge figure.

Now, if you want to put it in context, as the person responsible for the administration of justice in this province, I run the Department of Justice. It's a department which has roughly 1,600 people, not including the RCMP officers in this province. It's a huge department. Our budget, give or take, is roughly, approximately \$250 million annually. So that deficit was our

budget four times over. That's huge. That's a big number, a very big number.

Again, knowing what that is, what that plan was, any person, any government will make plans according to what that information is. The reason it's so important is that it wasn't the right number. Now, the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, he didn't know what the right number was. The Members opposite in the NDP, they didn't know what the number was. When we were sitting in Opposition, our caucus, we didn't know what the number was. And I can tell you who else didn't know what the real number was, and that was the entire populace of this province. They didn't know the financial state of this province.

There was only one group that knew, and that was the government of the day, who now sit in Opposition, who knew and refused to tell everybody in this province – and not just refused to tell, they kept it secret. They kept it secret. They kept the financial performance; they kept the expenditure of our taxpayers' dollars from everybody. And there might be a good reason for that, Mr. Speaker, and the reason being because the real number wasn't \$1.1 billion – which in and of itself is a huge number, it's a deficit, it's not to the plus, it's to the bad, to the negative. It was double that, it was double that. It was \$2.2 billion. You could run the Department of Justice eight times over. And that's what they hid from the people of this province.

So yeah, everybody, everybody was shocked, because everybody had an idea. We all had an idea of how bad it was. I mean, if you asked Joe Chesterfield, he had an idea of how bad it was. If you asked the media, they had an idea of how bad it was. If you asked the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, he had an idea of how bad it was.

If you asked us, we had – yeah, we knew. We knew it was bad. I mean there was \$1.1 billion, we thought. We had an idea it was bad, but we didn't know it was double what they said. And again, I cannot state this strongly enough, Mr. Speaker, they kept that information secret from everybody. They knew it and wouldn't put it out there.

You know why they wouldn't put it out there, because they didn't want the public to know how badly they mismanaged this province's money over the past decade or more. They had no idea – they knew it, and they didn't want anybody else to know it. They wanted to pull a fast one.

And that's why this bill – contrary to what the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi says when she says not a big deal. Well, to the contrary, I disagree. I think it is a big deal, because I tend to think that the people of this province deserve to know what the financial state of the province is. I think they deserve to know how the money is being spent. And you know what? Especially in an election year when politicians and political parties run and make promises, I think that the parties deserve to know so that they can put out the information. And again, we couldn't.

Now, one might say well, you should have asked.

AN HON. MEMBER: We did.

MR. A. PARSONS: Hold on. I'm building. You say, well, you should have asked for it – you should have asked for it. But the thing is our Premier, who was then Leader of the Opposition, did ask for it. He asked for it in September of 2015. When are you going to provide the updated Public Accounts, the updated financial state of this province? And it was never responded to.

So it wasn't a case of just, oh, we forgot to put it out or we never had time to put it out. It was we've been asked for it and we are choosing not to put it out. And what we're proposing here today, which I'm glad to hear that there is support from all Members of this House, I think, I would hope, is that no matter who is in power that there should be legislation that ensures that the proper accounting, that the proper Public Accounts, that the proper finances of this province are publicly known and have it known on a defined date and certainly before an election.

Rather than have what we had just in the last election, which was everybody thinking yeah, it's bad, it's going to be tough, but knowing that it was double what they said. Again, we all

thought they were poor managers; we just didn't realize they were that bad managers. We didn't realize it. And again, there's a reason they have one speaker to this today, and nobody else. One, right – they had one speaker. And the reason is they know that this is good – now again, I hear them talking over there. They're talking in their seats, but I'd like to see them stand up and put it on the record.

Talk about it; tell us about it. Why didn't you give us the information? Why didn't you give your constituents the information? Why didn't you give the people of the province the information? Now, I hear them laughing over there. It's not a funny matter when you take that information that belongs to people and you hide it, when you mislead them.

So what we have here, I think this is a tremendously, tremendously important piece of legislation and it's one that when this administration is gone, and the next administration is in, and the one after that, and the one after that, no matter who it is, the people of the province will know the proper state of the finances in this province. They'll know it on a timely basis, because this money belongs to them.

And that's what's important here, and that's why I'm glad to speak to this and let the people know why this is important. I'm proud that my colleague brought it in; it should have been done before. We've had no choice but to do it; we've got to fix these things so that we can't have administrations that deceive the people of the province from knowing what the true financial state is because it's their money; they deserve to know what's going on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: If the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board speaks now, she will close the debate.

The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

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

I certainly want to thank Members from both sides of the House for contributing to the debate this afternoon around the amendments that we want to make to the *Financial Administration Act*. Mr. Speaker, the discussion this afternoon has – the Member for Ferryland asked some questions, which I'll certainly look forward to answering when we get into Committee, and certainly Members on this side of the House have made references to the importance of transparency when it comes to Public Accounts.

I have to tell you, listening to the debate and watching the Members opposite, I find it stunning that there are Members opposite who truly understand the importance of Public Accounts, having sat on Cabinet committees, I find it interesting that during this debate, they've chosen not to speak, particularly when they've had experience on committees, as part of the Cabinet, as part of government, a part of administration, that has to make decisions based on the financial information that they are presented.

I would be shocked that the Members opposite who sat in committees of Cabinet wouldn't also believe it is – and I'm sure from the Member who spoke earlier, the Members on the opposite side who spoke are very supportive of this piece of legislation, but I would have also expected that they would speak about how important it would have been to them in their roles, that they have access to important financial information as they were making decisions on behalf of the people of the province.

Mr. Speaker, we had a number of Members of the House exercise their privilege today, to stand in this House and speak to this piece of legislation. And as several have said, it is a privilege. Many of us in this House – I would argue all of us in this House have asked to be elected by the people in our districts – in my case, the District of Windsor Lake – because we wanted to come into this House and debate the laws that affect how government operates; and also affect how the programs and services that government provides to the people of the province, is obligated to provide to the people of the province, actually happen.

Mr. Speaker, I think that it's important that every single one of us take that role and that

responsibility very seriously. With the situation that we're faced with now in the provincial Treasury, I don't think there's any opportunity for anyone in this House to take lightly – and I certainly have seen my colleagues on this side of the House take very seriously the situation that we are facing as a province, and also the difficult choices that we have to make as a government in order to provide sustainable services for the people of the province.

The Member for Labrador West spoke this afternoon and we certainly appreciated his comment and his support of this bill, and certainly his understanding of the requirement for Public Accounts to go out in a reasonable way. As I mentioned earlier, I'll look forward to answering the Member for Ferryland's questions when we go into Committee. I also want to thank the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port for his always-eloquent commentary in the House and his enthusiastic participation in every opportunity he has to speak to legislation in this House.

The Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi spoke, albeit briefly, to the bill and I certainly respect her comments and I anticipate her support for this bill as she has indicated in this House. I also want to acknowledge the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands who spoke as well about the piece of legislation, as well as my colleague for Cartwright – L'Anse-au-Clair who spoke quite passionately about the importance of making sure that the financial information that we have as a government is released to the people of the province in a timely way.

I've also had my colleague for Placentia West – Bellevue speak, and certainly thank him; as a young Member of this particular government he is, again, very enthusiastic about taking on his responsibilities to speak to any and all legislation he can in this House that is important not only to the people of his district but also important to the people of the province.

I've had two of my colleagues who sit in our Cabinet speak, the Minister for Transportation and Works as well as the Minister for Justice and Public Safety, and I want to thank them for their time and speaking to the bill and supporting the bill. As Members of Cabinet committees, these individuals certainly have

experience in the last year and a little bit on the complexity and the attention to detail that, as ministers, we must provide when we work on behalf of the people of the province in the privileged role that we have as ministers, a role that we take very seriously under the leadership of our Premier.

Mr. Speaker, this particular bill is an important one because, from my perspective – from our perspective in Finance, and I think I would say from our perspective here as a government, we believe the people of the province should have the information, the Public Accounts Committee that works as representatives of this House should have the information, and when audited financial statements are not available, accountability to government is weakened.

I can't imagine any situation where a Finance Minister, in any circumstances, would not want financial information about the province to go out in a timely way. I would be shocked to find out if that was the case for my former colleagues who've had the privilege of sitting in the role as minister of Finance, particularly those that have sat – maybe as Members of the Opposition party who have experienced that. I certainly can't imagine that they would have ever wanted anything but transparency on Public Accounts.

So with that said, Mr. Speaker, I'll certainly look forward to the discussion in Committee, and answering questions that Members may have. Again, I want to thank the Members of the House for their support. From what I understand, the House seems to be very supportive of this legislation and I'll look forward to continuing to provide information as requested as part of the debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

The motion is that Bill 65 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 2. (Bill 65)

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

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 2," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 65)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 65.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dempster): Order please.

We are now considering Bill 65, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 2.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 2." (Bill 65)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 2.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, long title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 65 carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just as a process question, I understood that the Member for Ferryland had some questions; I don't believe he's had the opportunity to ask those questions in Committee. If he wants the answers to those questions, I can certainly provide them; there were as a couple of questions he had asked around economic indicators and also around the 15 day – before October 31. If he'd like those answers I can provide them, but didn't know if it was appropriate to make that comment now, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

Shall I report Bill 65 carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: I move, Madam Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bill 65.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 65.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): The hon. the Deputy Speaker.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have asked that I report Bill 65 carried without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters referred to them and have directed her to report Bill 65, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 2, carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 4, second reading of Bill 67.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Clerk advises, in order to read the bill the third time, the report has to be received now.

MR. A. PARSONS: I’ll receive the report now.

MR. SPEAKER: The report shall be received now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?
Tomorrow?

The bill shall be read a third time tomorrow.

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Labrador West, that Bill 67, An Act To Amend The Public Safety Act, be read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 67 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act To Amend The Public Safety Act.” (Bill 67)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I’m very pleased to rise in this hon. House today to speak to Bill 67. It is an amendment to the *Public Safety Act*. With this bill, we will be amending subsection 29(4) of the *Public Safety Act* to decommission the Boiler Pressure Vessel Advisory Board, an inactive entity which is no longer needed by this government.

In *The Way Forward*, our government identified 218 agencies, boards and commissions in Newfoundland and Labrador. We’ve set the goal of reducing these total ABCs by 20 per cent by the year 2020. The bill we are bringing forward today is one example of how our government is moving forward toward meeting this goal.

In 1981, the Boiler Pressure Vessel Advisory Board was created under section 28 of the *Boiler Pressure Vessel and Compressed Gas Act*. At the time, the provincial economy was evolving and industrial development was happening at a rapid pace. Within this context, there was need for training, certification for professionals working on boilers and pressure vessels

throughout this province and, of course, a need for oversight of this industry.

In 1996, the *Boiler Pressure Vessel and Compressed Gas Act* was repealed, and in 1997 it was replaced with what we know today as the *Public Safety Act* – much easier to say, by the way. The board was last appointed in 1993 for a two-year term and has not been active since. By the mid-1990s, the previous responsibilities of the Boiler Pressure Vessel Advisory Board had shifted to different entities.

Today, the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour is responsible for overseeing the qualifications of the power engineers who work on boiler pressure vessels. The role of the previous board's examination committee is also now with that same department. As with other industries, this industry is now regulated by the skilled staff of my department, Service NL.

The term pressure vessel can refer to a wide range of products. It includes such things as propane storage tanks and commercial hot water tanks in hotels. It can refer to air receivers in garages, and heating boilers in churches and schools. It can also refer to process equipment such as that at the Come by Chance oil refinery, which has over 600 pressure vessels alone and power boilers at industrial sites like the Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Mill and the Iron Ore Company of Canada mine. Service NL has taken over the responsibility for all inspections, investigations and enforcement of the professionals who work on these vessels.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give a picture of the breadth of the work that Service NL does in this regard. Currently, we have 1,288 active boilers and 8,013 active pressure vessels in this province, for a total of 9,301 active boiler pressure vessel devices. Boiler pressure vessels are inspected in accordance with our periodic inspection policy resulting in an average of some 4,000 scheduled inspections being conducted per year.

All new boiler pressure vessels are inspected before they go into service and when repairs or alterations are completed, as are the pressure piping systems connected to the boiler or pressure vessel. This results in another 500 to

600 demand inspections being conducted each year.

The boiler pressure vessel technical expert team consists of 14 people, plus administrative support. This team includes trained staff in boiler and pressure vessel inspections, pressure vessel engineering and design and pressure welding inspection. With all these functions now covered by other existing departments within our government, the Boiler Pressure Vessel Advisory Board has not been needed for many years. This is why we are moving to decommission it.

Mr. Speaker, public safety is of paramount importance to our government. Industry in our province consists of thousands of talented workers who deserve our utmost care in legislation that relates to their safety and security. However, as industries evolve, it is important that our legislation evolve with it. We are confident that the safety and security of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are well served by our current system and that decommissioning this board will have no impact on this goal.

I will conclude by thanking the dedicated staff of both Service NL and the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour for their tireless work in regulating and administering the duties that previously fell to the Boiler Pressure Vessel Advisory Board. The dedication of these staff to this and the many other industries under their purview is an example of better collaboration among departments.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

I'm just going to take a couple of minutes to speak about the bill. Basically, first of all, I'd like to thank the officials over to the department. I went over yesterday for a briefing on this and I think one person called it (inaudible) simply a bit of housekeeping is what she said. But it's important to still have regulations in place because whenever you're dealing with valves or

any kind of pressure at all in the workplace, safety is always something that should be in the foremost of anything that's done, whether it's on a job site or whether it's at a facility.

I know the minister named several facilities that have boilers and pressure valves. We talked about it the other day, like hockey arenas and different areas like that. So it's very important that the inspections do get done on these valves and on the pressure because, again, it's a safety issue for whoever is working in those facilities.

It was interesting to me over there the other day, to listen to how many are actually in the system. You know, when you talk about boilers and pressure valves and stuff like, you didn't realize it was thousands and thousands. So it's important that we make sure everything is done correctly. I think the minister also mentioned that last year through Service NL – I believe, Minister – there was over 4,000 inspections done. So it'll tell you that our people, our hard-working public servants are out there doing their job and making sure that safety is an important part of any workplace.

Again, with the Boiler Pressure Vessel Advisory Board, the last time this was an active board was in 1995, which is over 20 years ago. The last appointment to this board was done in 1993, and that was for a two-year term. Also, the *Boiler Pressure Vessel and Compressed Gas Act*, like the minister also said, was changed in 1997 to a *Public Safety Act*, which is – and I know, Mr. Speaker, over a number of years, and we've all seen it through the news and everything like this, where sometimes a lot of injuries and also death has been caused in worksites where it's not safe, and it's important that we do have a safe workplace.

This committee was important, but as the years got on and as certification came through, different departments like Service NL and the power engineers, and there's a certain certification that's there today that wasn't there back in the '80s and '90s that people have to abide by. So it's very important. Also, the number of inspections that are done today, it's good to see that this is done to make sure our workplace is safe.

We just look at the equipment today that is being used; I'd say the technology is a whole lot better than what it was in the past and certification of anything that's done now, whether it's on a worksite or it could be a, like I mentioned an arena or anything like that, it has to make a certain certification. So that's important. And it's important that we have the inspections. But this advisory board itself that was set up in 1995, its purpose is no longer needed because of the expertise we have with our power engineers and stuff like that. So this is a bill that we will support.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels.

MR. BRAGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise in this hon. House and lend my support to Bill 67, An Act to Amend the Public Safety Act.

Although, I got to say before I start, I don't want anybody to be frightened by An Act to Amend the Public Safety Act. It sounds much worse than it is. This is basically a decommissioning of the Boiler Pressure Vessel Advisory Board, which was last used in, I think it was 1995.

And as the hon. Minister of Service NL mentioned, in recent years the skilled staff of the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour have taken the responsibility for certification and qualifications of power engineers who work on boiler pressure vessels in this province.

I was trained as a power engineer – one of my many talents, I think, over the years – and I can tell you what, in this industry, attention to safety is vitally important. Pressure vessels must be regularly inspected and ensure their continued viability.

Now, most people don't have any idea what a pressure vessel is, but I'm going to bring it down to a level that I think anybody who ever got a shower will understand what a pressure vessel is. The hot water tank in your house is a pressure vessel. Now, you don't need a fourth-class power engineer to install or operate a hot water

tank. But if anybody here ever had a leak in their hot water tank, they'll know on the side of that tank there's a pressure relief valve. That is vitally important to the functioning of the hot water tank.

Should that valve stick, be plugged and the temperature in the tank increase, increase the pressure created from the tanks, creates some steam in there, which could happen – if their element stayed engaged, the side, the top, the walls would blow out of that tank.

Now, if you can imagine, that little tank only stands about 4½ feet high; that's enough to take a roof off most houses.

AN HON. MEMBER: I feel unsafe (inaudible).

MR. BRAGG: They're very unsafe. The next time you're in the shower, run more hot water than cold. But the thing is, what we're looking at here, this was an Advisory Board put in place of industry and government of the day. And as the minister said, we've evolved since that.

So we are gone into something that's much bigger than a hot water tank. There are numerous valves, pressure release valves. There's steam. There's water pressure, you name it. So this will be like – what building? Maybe this building. The Health Sciences Centre comes to mind. You will see the big, old stack outside where the heat is coming up. Underneath that somewhere in the workings of that is where you are going to find your power engineers. There's going to be different classes of power engineers.

The basic first level will be a fourth-class power engineer, and that's what I trained to be. Now, that basically takes you a step above the hot water tank, but it does not bring you up to the kilowatt for a third class. So you have the third class, which would be the next level, a second class, and most times – someone mentioned Come By Chance. You would need to be a first-class power engineer to run an operation like Come By Chance because when the kilowatt hours get so big, then you're into something, more pressure, more design, more issues.

So we got that away from the Advisory Board. It came to, again, the lovely minister over there of

the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour. His people ensure the certification. If you walk into any plant, any plant, fish plants, you go into the engineering room, the plant room – they'll always call it the plant room – you're going to see the plant registration on the wall. That's going to tell you the horsepower of the operating engineers that are there and the requirements, so that's all registered with the government, we've got that, and also the certification of every engineer in that building is posted on that wall. So you know that's being operated by the right people who can do the job. So that is all being governed actually, by again, our good minister over there of the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

Now that we've evolved from that –

AN HON. MEMBER: Do Holyrood work like that?

MR. BRAGG: Holyrood definitely works like that. Again, in those bigger plants, you're going to see a higher class power engineer. And it works opposite. You would think higher would be numbers going up, but it actually goes from four down to one.

So the staff of this department does important work, Mr. Speaker. And it's because of their professionalism that we're able today to decommission the Boiler Pressure Vessel Advisory Board with no impact whatsoever on public safety. I commend them for the work they do.

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for having a chance to speak on this today.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I think I should add my voice to say yes, I will be voting for this bill. I think that we don't have to overplay what we're doing here. What it is, is repealing something that hasn't existed, except

on paper, for a couple of decades. And in case people in the province who may be listening to us this afternoon have any fears, as has been pointed out and I'll repeat, the role of this board is really defunct, the actual role, because expertise that is needed by the government is available both at the College of the North Atlantic and within the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

So the board is not needed. According to the *Financial Administration Act*, advisory boards may be put in place. This advisory board was put in place. It's no longer needed, and it has nothing to do with our making anything unsafe in the province because the expertise is there and is being used.

So having said all that, I will not take up any more time and say, of course, I'll be voting for the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burin – Grand Bank.

MS. HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise in this hon. House to also lend my support to Bill 67. As my colleagues, the hon. Minister of Service NL and the hon. Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels, have stated previously, the ongoing maintenance of pressure vessels is an important issue of public safety, Mr. Speaker. Since the Boiler Pressure Vessel Advisory Board was first created, the responsibility for regulation, inspection and investigation has, over time, become part of the day-to-day activities for Service NL.

As my esteemed colleague just mentioned, safety inspections of pressure vessels must be ongoing, thorough and accurate to ensure public safety. Today, Service NL has a robust inspection and certification system, Mr. Speaker, with technically trained staff and professional engineers who do approximately 4,000 inspections each and every year. The list of pressure vessels that my colleague, the hon. Minister of Service NL, read out earlier shows just how varied and technical this work can be. And I believe that we, as Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians, owe these technical inspectors our thanks and respect.

I feel confident in decommissioning this board today, Mr. Speaker, because of the dedication I see from the staff of Service NL daily. The work they do is important, and for that I thank them.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to take a couple of moments to speak to Bill 67, An Act to Amend the Public Safety Act. I'll be supporting this bill. I guess to a great degree, really, it's a piece of housekeeping, but it's important legislation, nonetheless, that govern pressure vessels. And, of course, we know that there are many, as has been outlined by the minister – I forget the numbers he said, but there are thousands of them in the province, and they could range in various sizes.

One of the factors around it is not just the size of the pressure vessel, but it's what's contained within the pressure vessel. And that could be any number of chemicals or compressed gases. There are many hazards associated to pressure vessels, in terms of the way they're handled, in terms of the way they are transported, in terms of the way they are used on the work sites, in terms of inspections and certifications that are required, in terms of who's qualified to use the products contained within a number of these pressure vessels.

In a lot of cases, we have situations where pressure vessels have to be cleaned and we have confined space entry procedures and so on that would apply, and training and so on associated to that, and rescue procedures. So when we talk about pressure vessels in the province, as I said, it is very common in many workplaces. It is something that needs to be – we need to ensure we have appropriate legislation in place as it relates to transportation, as it relates to health and safety working with it, as it relates to public safety. Obviously, the inspection of those pressure vessels is very important as it relates to that.

So as I understand it, we do have the expertise in place through the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour and so on.

Basically, the advisory committee that was put in place back in the early '90s, I guess they've become redundant. They haven't met, and we already have other mechanisms in place to ensure pressure vessels are properly inspected in a timely manner to ensure workplace safety and to ensure public safety.

So with that said, really what we're doing is we're reducing some red tape. We're cleaning up, I guess, some of the legislation that's redundant, removing this committee which hasn't functioned now for some 20-odd years, I believe. So it only makes good sense; therefore, I will be supporting the legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess with the conclusion of the commentary from my colleagues in the House, I'd like to just draw an appreciation, first of all, to them.

First of all, I'd like to acknowledge the Member for Cape St. Francis; he did attend their technical briefing. I appreciated that, as did two of my colleagues from Burin – Grand Bank and Fogo Island – Cape Freels. I also appreciated his comments that – he indicated this isn't just housekeeping. It is and it isn't. I think it's really important to underline the hazards and the dangers around – as my colleague from Fogo Island – Cape Freels had indicated, who's got the expertise and the knowledge and experience with this, which is one of the reasons why I asked him to speak.

These are extremely hazardous devices that we need in society that we need around us. This is in no way a compromise to the safety around them, their inspection and so on. I felt all the Members spoke to that, and I appreciate that very much; certainly, no impact on their operation, no impact on the safety to the employees who work around these devices; and also, by the way, no cost to government. This is very much an opportunity to address something

that's been sitting there for some 22 years. So, very pleased to do that.

So with that, I'll conclude my remarks.

Thank you.

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

The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Labrador West, that the House now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 67.

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

The motion is that Bill 67 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Public Safety Act. (Bill 67)

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 67 has now been read a second time. When shall the said bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole House?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Public Safety Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 67)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: This may sound like an echo, Mr. Speaker, but I do move, seconded by the Member for Labrador West, that the House now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 67.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to review Bill 67.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dempster): Order please.

We are now considering Bill 67, An Act To Amend The Public Safety Act.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Public Safety Act." (Bill 67)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Public Safety Act.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 67 carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Madam Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 67.

CHAIR: The motion is that I do rise and report Bill 67 carried without amendment.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): The hon. the Deputy Speaker.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have asked that I report Bill 67 carried without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report Bill 67 carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Given the hour of the day, I move, seconded by the Member for Burin – Grand Bank, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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