



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLVIII

FIRST SESSION

Number 61

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

Wednesday

1 March 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

Orders of the Day

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Service NL, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 5, Bill 68, and I further move that the said bill be now read the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded by the hon. the Government House Leader that he shall have leave to introduce Bill 68, and that the said bill shall now be 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 Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 5," carried. (Bill 68)

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 5. (Bill 68)

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 68 has now been read a first time.

When shall the bill be read a second time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 68 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would call Order 3, third reading of Bill 67.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Service NL, that Bill 67, An Act To Amend The Public Safety Act, be now read the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a third 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 third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Public Safety Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 67)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I would call Order 4, second reading of Bill 66.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, it's the early hour of the morning; I'm going to grab my notes here. I'm going to borrow the Minister of Justice's book. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that Bill 66, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 3, be now read the second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 66 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 3." (Bill 66)

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

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

It's an honour to stand in the House on this early Wednesday morning, for what is the first debate in the House on a morning session under this government. It's exciting to be participating in the new Standing Orders for the House, in particular those that recognize the importance of the travel that many of my colleagues have to make and also the family commitments that many of us also have in this House. So it's a pleasure, and I want to congratulate the Members of the House that worked on the new Orders and say it's exciting to be the first one to speak this morning.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 66, which is An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act No. 3, is a result of work that our government is doing on the area of our commitment on multi-year grant funding. As I said earlier, I'm very pleased to stand in the House today to discuss the amendments regarding pre-commitments of these multi-year grant funding that we want to put in place for community-based organizations.

Mr. Speaker, providing a commitment of multi-year funding to community groups is a commitment of *The Way Forward* and as a means to provide better services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who rely on

community organizations for further enhanced support.

I'm pleased to stand here today to begin that process of fulfilling the commitment that we made as part of our election platform and also the work that we've done in the last year to begin the process of implementing a multi-year grant funding program.

Mr. Speaker, the pre-commitment of multi-year grant funding for those organizations will allow for greater certainty in financial planning for those organizations, and it will provide both the organization and the provincial government the opportunity to do more long-term planning when it comes to those financial commitments.

Pre-commitment, though, while not a specifically defined term in the legislation, is the ability to enter into an agreement to obtain goods or services in a current year for delivery and payment in subsequent fiscal years. And currently, as Members of this House would certainly be aware of, under the *Financial Administration Act* the ability to pre-commit funds is restricted to agreements that are exchange in nature, agreements that involve the purchase of goods and the purchase of services. For example, government departments require a pre-commitment of funds for leasing space when the lease duration expands multiple fiscal years.

As Members of this House would have seen yesterday, I tabled some documents that were commitments around multi-year funding arrangements related to the purchase of services and goods such as leases and, as is required, we table those documents in the House.

Grant funding, specifically though, is considered a non-exchange transaction, as there isn't really a direct return of a good or a service. Therefore, under the current legislation, the ability for the province to commit to grant funding beyond the current fiscal year is actually prohibited.

So the inability to commit to grant funding for subsequent fiscal years has been identified as an obstacle to financial planning for community organizations that rely heavily on provincial government funding for their ongoing operations.

And let me say right now, Mr. Speaker, we're going to change that. The government is listening to the concerns of community-based organizations and to this effect we are amending the *Financial Administration Act* to allow for multi-year grant funding agreements.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. C. BENNETT: Everybody is really enthusiastic this morning, I can see.

This will allow for community-based organizations to receive enhanced financial stability leading to greater consistency in staffing and staff recruitment, and help in long-term planning to allow for a focus on service delivery.

Community-based organizations are defined as organizations that are representative of a community or a significant segment of a community and are engaged in meeting the social, wellness, educational, cultural, environmental, economic and community development or public safety needs of a community.

The lack of multi-year funding commitment to these organizations jeopardizes staff stability, staff recruitment, long-term planning and ultimately the community as a whole. And community-based organizations are often relied upon to deliver important services to the communities and individuals they serve. Providing this degree of stability through the multi-year contracts will allow these organizations to better focus their efforts on delivery of these services.

Mr. Speaker, organizations applying for the multi-year community grant program must be community-based, and funding is for a maximum of three years with the ability for groups to reapply. Eligibility criteria for the multi-year community grant program will also require groups to have been in operation for a minimum of three years and remain in good standing with the provincial government from a financial and performance perspective, as well as maintain an active presence in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take the opportunity now to speak in a little bit more detail about the specifics of the amendments that we're making today – we're asking the House to approve today, I should say – and provide a little bit more technical detail as to the reasons that the *Financial Administration Act* needs to be amended.

As I have said earlier, pre-commitment, while not specifically termed in legislation, is an operational term used to denote the ability to enter into an agreement to obtain goods and services for delivery and payment in a subsequent fiscal year. The ability to authorize such pre-commitments stems from section 26.4 of the FAA – the *Financial Administration Act* – which provides the Lieutenant Governor in Council, on a written recommendation of Treasury Board, to authorize government departments to enter into such contractual arrangements.

Subsection 26.4(a) and (b) further note that this authorization is contingent upon the payment resulting from the agreement coming due to a subsequent fiscal year and that the minister, deputy minister, or other officer charged with the administration of the relevant head of expenditure or subhead of expenditure reports that are referenced in the Estimates books, that in their opinion it is necessary to make the arrangement at that time.

Based on the current wording in the *Financial Administration Act*, this ability to pre-commit funding for subsequent fiscal years is restricted, as I said earlier, to agreements that are exchange in nature, in that they involve the purchase of a good or a purchase of a service.

Grant funding is considered a non-exchange transaction, as there is no direct return of a good or service to government as a result of providing the grant funding. Therefore, the ability of government to commit to providing grant funding to an organization, as I said earlier, beyond the current fiscal year is currently prohibited under the *Financial Administration Act*. And what we're doing today is making the amendment in that act to allow for multi-year grant funding to be accepted as part of the regulations under multi-year commitments under the FAA.

To simplify administrative processes, departments will be encouraged to submit a list of applicants requesting approval for multi-year funding within a year, and we will be making those decisions between – over the next year on the process. But government's current inability to commit to multi-year funding because of the FAA is an impediment to the process of multi-year funding, an impediment that we intend, as I said earlier, to correct as part of this debate.

As I said earlier, a community-based organization is defined as an organization that is representative of the community or a significant segment of the community. And a number of these organizations have indicated over the years that multi-year funding provides them with an opportunity to do better planning, better staff recruitment. It also allows them to work on multi-year strategic plans with a certainty around their funding.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year we announced to the community sector a commitment for core funding again for this year. Given the significant financial circumstances that we find ourselves in in the provincial Treasury, we were very pleased to do that early this year to provide stability to those community organizations who would be worrying and wondering if their organization would be impacted as a result of budget decisions. We felt it was important to take that concern away and let those great organizations continue to do the good work that they do.

Mr. Speaker, I think it would be fair for me to say as a Member of this House, and on behalf of the Members in this House, that I think we all recognize the significant contribution community organizations make to our community. Their ability to be innovative, their ability to be able to create partnerships with community organizations, to share infrastructure, to share resources, to be creative in how to provide the services they need to provide and that they want to provide by choice and by mandate is something I think that is a testament to the innovation of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who really are able to think about and implement ideas that result in incredible efforts being put forward by these community organizations.

I think everybody in this House would recognize the incredible work that the volunteers, that the boards of directors, that the staff and the many stakeholders that support our community organizations throughout Newfoundland and Labrador do. I think it's a critical component of not only our social and educational fabric in our community but more importantly, what we're known for as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The good work that these community organizations do I think is something that makes every single one of us as MHAs, particularly in those situations where we work closely with community organizations in our own districts, makes us extremely proud of the work they do. I think everybody in this House would also agree that funding for these organizations, having stability and having a clear idea of what the core funding requirements would be over a three-year period would be something that would be very beneficial to those organizations.

Mr. Speaker, just to continue; as I said earlier, we currently do not have the ability to implement multi-year funding, primarily because of the legislation that's reflected here today, the issue with the *Financial Administration Act*. At the same time, we are working diligently to create a portal for community organizations to provide information to streamline the application process for them, to take the time and administrative burden away from the process for multi-year funding so that they can focus on the needs of the community and the clients that they serve versus the needs and wishes of an administrative bureaucracy that may be not the best use of their resources. Certainly, we will continue to work on that over the next year and look forward to working in partnership with community-based organizations to identify and roll out our multi-year funding program as we've committed.

Various community organizations have provided feedback to government over the last number of years and, through various consultations, these organizations have communicated their desire to obtain multi-year funding arrangements with government to allow the organizations to plan for the long term. In recent years, some departments issuing grants to these organizations have issued letters in advance of the budgetary

process advising whether the grant funding will be continued for the following fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, as you would, I'm sure with your long history and experience in government, you'd certainly be aware that many departments in government provide funding to community organizations and not only government departments directly, but we also have agencies, boards and commissions that provide funding to community organizations such as the regional health authorities.

This lack of true multi-year funding commitment jeopardizes, as I said earlier, the staff stability, staff recruitment, long-term planning for these organizations, and these organizations are often relied upon to deliver critical services to the communities and the individuals that they support.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments that we're talking about today for the *Financial Administration Act*, we're also providing for administrative efficiencies, as I've said, for both the organizations applying for multi-year grant and to the provincial government. That will be the next phase of the multi-year grant program. Once we have the FAA legislation adjusted to be able to allow us to provide multi-year funding, we will begin the process of streamlining the administrative process for those organizations that are applying for and have been receiving core funding from government.

Ensuing that the provincial government is running in the most efficient way possible will ultimately also help us address the difficult financial situation that we are facing. Mr. Speaker, as I've said, community-based organizations provide a very important service to the people that they serve and to the province as a whole, and the multi-year funding commitment of government is a cross-departmental project that multiple departments are working on. And I'm happy to be one of the ministers that's able to stand and speak to this particular piece of legislation and also provide a little bit of visibility into the view on multi-year funding and what's going to happen over the next 12 to 18 months as we begin the real important work of providing the administrative infrastructure for organizations to apply, and

also the certainty around the three-year funding as we move into next year's budget.

Mr. Speaker, it's been a pleasure to work with multiple ministers on this particular project; it's still a very active project inside multiple departments and this step today on the *Financial Administration Act* provides us the opportunity to make a very substantial, albeit administrative, but important adjustment to the *Financial Administration Act* that will allow us to implement the plans we have for multi-year funding over the next number of months and into next year.

So I look forward to hearing Members from both sides of the House today speak to this particular piece of legislation and the amendment that we want to make, and I look forward to answering any questions that the Members of the House have as we work through this today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure to rise this morning to speak to Bill 66. As the minister has outlined in regard to the intent of the amendment, or to the bill, it speaks to An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act and it talks about the pre-commitments to community-based organizations.

I guess all of us here understand and recognize the role that many of the community-based organizations play in the communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, and the significant work they do. All governments, current and in the past, have worked extensively with community-based groups in terms of the work they do, and providing assistance through the Public Treasury to assist them in the work they do, and they do great work oftentimes – well all times, certainly, relating to public policy of an administration and what that is as they're implementing it.

The work they do certainly complements the work that's done by others in particular areas, whether that's with various advocacy groups, whether it's with seniors, youth groups – it's just a vast and a large array of groups that do that and do great work.

So what we're talking about here today is an amendment to the *Financial Administration Act* to look at a process over a multi-year period to grant funds, and that would be in advance of an upcoming fiscal year. While, in general, we certainly support the concept, we do have some questions and we'll go through, I guess, today in regard to what those would be and getting some answers to some of those questions. We look at sections 9 and 26 and that would allow the granting of funds; an amendment to the act would allow that to occur for multiple years.

As the minister has indicated, for some of these groups that operate, when they look in terms of administration or operations, what they need in terms of future years in terms of their ability to operate and what that is, is certainly very important to them. A lot of them could complement other funding that's coming from the private sector, could come from other agencies and groups or could come from fundraising. So it's good for them to be able to project over a period of time what the requirements are for operation and having access to multi-year funding, in some respects, could certainly assist that.

Section 9 allows the regulations to be prescribed by Cabinet. My understanding is that we don't have or haven't seen the regulations in regard to what would follow this and what the details would be. Again, I think we'll talk further in regard to the definition of community groups or community organizations and what that means and what's the ability to expand that if government, through Cabinet, has the ability to do that. So that's certainly an issue that we want to discuss further.

Section 26 allows Cabinet, upon the recommendation of Treasury Board, to pre-commit grants in advance of the fiscal year. The other question is in that year that the decision is made in regard to the amount of money that's being allocated for multi-year funding, is it paid out in that fiscal year; is it paid out in multiple

years? If there's an estimates and budget process that goes on here in the House and there's a figure that's identified for actual community groups, which you don't know what that definition is yet, what is that amount and when is it paid out?

Is there an opportunity in a future year for a new group to come forward and to apply and look for funding? But if it's already allocated over a three-year period, what's the process for that group to possibly access funds to do the kind of things they need to do? Because, in many cases, there could be new groups that are developed that are identified. If they come forward in the second or third year, is there opportunity for them to advance or to access funding? Or because the three-year funding has been allocated, the multi-year, would they be unable to do so? We need some information in regard to how that would work as well.

Currently, Cabinet can pre-commit spending related to goods and services. It could be to infrastructure, those types of things that we'd done over multiple years, but certainly cannot pre-commit outside of that. Obviously, what this is looking at is expanding government's Cabinet, Treasury Board's ability to make the pre-commitment to these grants over a period of time.

As well, across government now the word grant is used. Grant is used in areas like this in terms of community groups. There are also grants in regard to, or can be, on the economic development, on the business side of things. Certainly, with the health authorities there are term grants. We need some clarification in regard to what that means. That reverts to the definition of community groups and how that's actually defined.

I spoke of the regulations that we haven't seen yet. I don't think – I just want to thank the staff who gave the briefing to the Opposition staff in regard to this, but at that time there was no indication of what would be contained in the regulations or a copy of those or anything of that nature.

I think it was referenced that the organizations for multi-year funding must be community based and funding would be for a maximum of

three years, and I guess groups can reapply. So as you get to your second or third year or some period, I guess you'd reapply to look to be extended again for an additional three years or three years or less. I guess we'll need details on how all that would work.

An organization must have been in operation for three years, in good standing financially and performance-wise, and maintain an active presence in the province. That gets the whole issue of community groups, what they do, how they interact with various government policies and provide a service to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Obviously, there's an accountability factor to it in terms of what they do and must meet the needs in the province related to various activities. That's certainly understandable.

I understand, too, from the information we got there were some jurisdictional scans done in other provinces and what they do in regard to this type of funding, this type of pre-commitment. Some have pre-commitment of grants in legislation and some don't. So there are some references to specific grants in particular legislation and others do not.

So, as I said before, there are various departments, various grant mechanisms within various departments and I guess through this process we'll have to identify, or we'll hear from the minister in regard to: Is there going to be an integration of all those grants from various departments? Is this now going to fall under one entity? How would these flow? Certainly, we're looking forward to seeing an explanation on that.

As we go forward, we'll have some questions in regard to, as I said before, the definition of grants and what community group actually means under this amendment. But as I said before, the regulations we haven't seen. So we'd certainly like to see those and see what the content of them would be because you're investing greater authority in the Treasury Board and in the Cabinet to make these decisions. But not knowing these definitions, not knowing the parameters, how do they get amended? Can they get amended in regulation? If they can get amended in regulation that means they never come back to this House.

So we don't know. You want to be open and transparent in regard to that. It's good to know in the regulation exactly what it says, what the definitions are, what the parameters are. And if changes are to be made to it, once we vote on the amendments of the legislation, how does that come about and what's the authority of Cabinet to make changes in the regulations.

As I said, organizations apply for multi-year funding and then can reapply. The concept, as I said, in terms of what we're talking about, seems to be acknowledged. It seems to be – certainly, we have heard, and I know my time in dealing with community groups in terms of stability, budgeting and those types of things, the concept, yes, I think would be helpful from discussions I've had and most of us here know that in terms of dealing with various groups.

The regulations, as I said, I've not seen them yet. Government is asking the House to give Cabinet the go ahead, I guess, to make these regulations. We haven't seen any evidence of them; what may be contained in them. As I said, the Finance Minister later in debate maybe can give us some idea of what would be in the draft regulations. Let us see the draft regulations before they're finalized, and that would give some broader understanding in terms of what the details of this would be as we move forward in multiple years and give us an idea of what that would be.

As well, in the briefing I understand there was talk in regard to pre-commitment funds to what has been called community organizations. But the words community organization does not appear in the legislation. It would only appear in the regulations. Again, we're getting to the point of the definition of what that would be across multiple departments; how it would be amended to – who would have the authority to amend it and those types of items.

As we go through that, we'll certainly be looking for some detail and some feedback on that. Does it apply to sports organizations, youth organizations, health and wellness grants? All of those we're quite familiar with, but which programs and where are they that we're talking about. Is there a specific list that will be available? Will there be an appendix or – in the regulations, is that the item where you list out

what is eligible and what is not? Or is there a whole ability for new applicants to come forward, to bring forward and be asked to be considered for their grants?

When you look at that in terms of – we approve legislation here today or the amendments – sorry, the amendment to the act. What's the protocol for changing the regulations, including if we were to expand this into business grants, tourism grants? I mentioned before grants to health authorities, because these are not stated or defined in the legislation. We would certainly like to see some information on that, and see what the potential criteria is and how that would unfold in multiple years, and as we go forward to talk about giving out the funding in multiple years.

When we come here, and as mentioned before, come in here to discuss a budget and what has been allocated in a particular department or across government in regard to community grants, and there are various grants throughout various divisions of government. Will these be integrated? What will be the status of those?

Again, as I mentioned earlier, if we approve through Estimates here, it's voted on here in the House and there's a certain sum that's agreed to, to distribute to various groups, once that's done over a three-year period, I think it's very important to have an understanding of what any new groups to come forward, any groups that through challenges they may experience need additional funding, what's the method for them to do that? And are they allowed to do that with the description here?

Unfortunately, we don't have the regulations. We don't have the details, so we really don't know how and if that would work. I'm sure it's something that many community groups would want to know. They will want to have an understanding of those that exist today or those advocacy groups or others that would come up in the future and know how that would flow.

So I recognize the minister for bringing this forward. I think in concept there are certainly elements of this that would be very helpful to the community-based organizations. I think there's a lot of detail here that's missing when we look at the regulations and how this would flow over a

number of years, but maybe through the debate today and getting into committee we can get those answers and proceed then to see how this would flow over the next number of years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure for me to rise this morning on our first Wednesday morning session of the House of Assembly. I think it's a great idea, and I commend all those who have put this system forward.

Yesterday, we debated Bill 65 and, today, we're debating Bill 66, which are the first two bills of the opening of this session of the House.

As you know, last fall we introduced several pieces of legislation that were very valuable, and I'm happy to see that we're continuing that trend, because I think the bill we introduced yesterday, of course, was a very valuable bill for transparency and accountability. And the one we're introducing now, one we're debating now, Bill 66, which is the bill which would amend the *Financial Administration Act* to allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council on the written recommendation of the Treasury Board to authorize an agreement to be entered into for funds to be granted in a subsequent fiscal year where certain requirements prescribed in the regulations are satisfied, is equally as important. And certainly, I would venture to say, for many of those volunteer organizations, those community-based organizations who provide such valuable work, it's a dream come true for them.

I will talk about a couple of organizations in my district a little later, but I go back to last year in January, I think it was – it was early in our mandate, anyway – when the Minister of Finance came to Labrador West with me and we sat down with many of the community organizations like the Labrador West Status of Women, Hope Haven and a few more. Their concern at the time, of course, given the fiscal

condition of the province that we found ourselves in, funding was a major concern for them, and the fact that, of course, the fear of losing funding.

But the minister at the time was very adamant that community-based organizations would continue to be funded. And to go this one, take this one step further, I think is yeoman's service to those organizations because the concern that they had at the time was that they spent, rather than – not to take away the service they provide to the community. But they spent a lot of their time – a lot of their time – wondering where the next year's funding was coming from. And they spent a lot of time in administrative duties trying to secure that funding.

What we see here today, to be able to commit to a three-year funding agreement with those organizations, puts a lot of those fears to rest, gives them more time to do the service that they so well do in the communities, and to provide the service to the residents. I think it's a great thing we're doing here today.

So, as the minister has stated, currently under the *Financial Administration Act*, the ability to pre-commit funds is restricted to agreements that involve the purchase of goods or services, and the ability to commit grant funding for subsequent fiscal years has been identified as an obstacle to financial planning for community organizations that rely on funding for their ongoing operations.

And that's the message that we got loud and clear. The minister and I, and many more, of course, that have talked to these organizations, that's the message that we've been getting for years, is that they spend so much of their time trying to secure funding that sometimes they lose sight of what their real mandate is.

This amendment to the *Financial Administration Act* will allow community-based organizations to receive enhance financial stability, leading to greater consistency and long-term planning, and allow for more focus on service delivery, which is basically what I've just referred to.

It allows them to provide the service – and again, I go back to the Labrador West Status of Women, the valuable service that they provide

to the community; Hope Haven, which is a crisis shelter and provides such great service, an important service to women in our community. Now they'll have secure funding that they can rely on for three years rather than going month to month one year to the next, and spending their time on that, they can now concentrate on the service that they provide.

And, of course, with every organization and with every funding agreement, there should come some accountability. I strongly believe that any organization, whether it's the Status of Women or any other organization, they're prepared to accept some accountability and responsibility for funding, if they know that the funding is secured and the funding is long term.

Organizations applying for multi-year grant funding must be community-based and funding is for a maximum of three years, with the ability for groups to reapply. So three years is normal when you look any multi-year funding agreement – and the one that I'm most familiar with is the one in municipalities, the Municipal Capital Works multi-year funding agreement, three years. Three years is a standard length of time and I think it's quite adequate, actually.

So the main eligibility criteria for multi-year grant funding will require groups to have been in operation for a minimum of three years. So the groups are well established. They've created a base for themselves. They've created a home for themselves. They've created a mandate for themselves and they created a service for themselves that the community really appreciates.

They need to remain in good standing with the provincial government from a financial and performance perspective. I don't think that's a lot to ask for. If a group is receiving funding from any government organization or from government itself, they have to be prepared to be accountable for that funding. They have to be able to report on the activities. And I'm confident that they are quite prepared to do that. If they can get a three-year funding agreement with government whereby they have stability, they have predictability, they're prepared to do their part and be accountable for the funds that they receive.

Of course, they have to maintain an active presence in Newfoundland and Labrador. Again, that's pretty natural. I am sure the department has put a lot of time into this, and I know – going back to when the minister visited Labrador West back in early 2016, we knew then, or I knew then certainly that that's where she was thinking – that's what we needed to do based on the information that she had gotten from the groups that were there, that they needed that stability and that predictability and commitment to long-term funding.

I know the department put some time into this and some work, research – seven jurisdictions, actually. Seven jurisdictions across this country, seven territories, provinces, provide in legislation the ability to enter into multi-year contracts. So it's nothing new, it's something that I think that maybe we should have done a long time ago, but it's a service and a commitment I think that will be well received within the volunteer community and within the service organizations.

The remaining jurisdictions do not have specific reference in legislation on the ability or inability to enter into multi-year agreements. At least now we've become number eight, and I think that's great for us to be doing that. Now, one of the questions I asked in the briefing was: Well, what about new organizations coming in, new organizations that may form or establish themselves in communities? Because one of the regulations, one of the criteria in this, for multi-year funding, is that it would have to be in operation for three years.

But we're not forgetting about the many new organizations that may want to form, because they can still apply for funding. They won't get the multi-year until they've been three years in operation, but they're certainly available and eligible to access funding for start-up and to get established. So we're not ignoring any new organizations, what we're doing is that we're establishing a foundation and a solid footing for the organizations that we have in this province.

As I said earlier, two of the organizations that I'd like to reference that would be recipients of this multi-year funding and, certainly, have mentioned to me several times, and they were quite adamant when the minister visited last

year, that this was the way to go. I would consider them two very, very – there are more, but I would just reference two in my district. That would be the Labrador West Status of Women and Hope Haven, which are two very, very valuable and active organizations in the Labrador West region.

The Labrador West Status of Women was formed actually – was incorporated in 1977. If I got my math right, I think that's 40 years ago. So they've been around for a while and when I think about the Labrador West Status of Women – and it was formed in 1977, by the way, in response to the 1967 Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada. The second reason why it was formed was because of the local hiring practices at the local mining companies.

I remember that quite well because I was an employee of IOC at the time. It was a time when women were getting into non-traditional occupations and IOC were just hiring them one here, one there, but as you know today, a good percentage, a very high percentage of the workforce at IOC, for example, are female. So they have done their work. They have served their purpose to the community.

When I think of the Labrador West Status of Women, of course, I can't help but think of one very close friend of mine and a very active person in the community and that's Noreen Careen who ran this organization. She was the executive director of this organization for many years. She's stepped back now in the last year or so because of health issues, but she's still an active member of the community.

When I think back at all the work that she has done and all the work that this organization has done for the community of Labrador West, it's just unbelievable that they were able to exist since 1977, going from year to year, not knowing whether they were going to have funding for the following year or not.

When you think about it in your own organizations, that's not a very comfortable way to operate, but now at least with this – and I'm sure that Noreen is jumping up and down today. I don't know if she's watching us, but she will know very soon, I'm sure, that to hear this today is music to her ears. I'm sure there are many

other people in Labrador West – I’m not just singling out Noreen because there are a lot of other people in Labrador West that provide service like this and serve on the boards with her. But when you think about it, it’s a dream come true for these – also, these groups, yes, she may be the executive director but the majority of people who keep these organizations going are volunteers. There’s a volunteer board of directors. You have your volunteers who go out and deal with people, deal with their issues and, of course, provide great service.

The other one that I will refer to and mention is Hope Haven. Hope Haven was formed, I guess, in the early 2000s. Actually it was formed and it was built when I was the mayor of the Town of Labrador City, and I remember advocating to government and to other organizations to get this particular service organization up and running. What it is, it’s an organization that provides confidential, safe emergency shelter to women, with and without children, who are experiencing violence and abuse. The premise or the property that’s built there is a building that was erected in the early 2000s.

I remember going through all the hoops and the issues of getting the permitting and whatnot and certainly dealing with the residents in the area who were concerned that they were having this type of shelter in their neighbourhood. But I tell you today if we went in there today and tried to do anything to remove that shelter, there would be quite an uproar because it has provided a very, very valuable service to the women and children of Labrador West.

Again, it is a unit that has capacity to accommodate nine residents for a six-week period while they’re going through these troubling times, provide a 24-hour service, a crisis line and they have staff for 24 hours a day. We met with these people back in January and, again, the same issue came up, that they spend a lot of their time, a lot of their time – and they’re very busy people. As you know, with this type of service, it’s a very busy operation to run. But they spent a lot of their time trying to secure funding for the following year, and one of the issues that were brought up was that we need to know. We need to know if we’re going to have funding next year or the year after or the year after that.

I think what we’ve done here today with this bill – and I certainly congratulate the minister. I know how passionate she was in those meetings, and I’m sure she has her own organizations in her district that she deals with – and everybody, every MHA in this House has an organization in their district that would benefit from multi-year funding like this and have organizations that provide such valuable service.

So, Mr. Speaker, I guess what I’d like to say and conclude is that yesterday we had a great bill with our transparency and accountability with Bill 65, today we’re debating a bill that I’m sure the Opposition have no problem with, and I look forward to their comments as well.

It’s a bill that really sets those organizations onto solid footing. It provides them stability, allows them to provide the service that they’ve been established to provide, and allows them to focus on their core mandate, which is to provide the service, whatever organization it is. It allows them to concentrate, to be able to provide their core mandate, rather than going from day to day wondering if they’re going to have money in the bank to provide the funds for either services, either goods or payroll.

Mr. Speaker, again, I congratulate the minister, thank the department for the work they have done on this, and I think we’re off to a good start in this session with the two bills that we’ve debated, certainly the first two, 65 and 66, and I look forward to many more debates on many more good bills. I think this one today is a very valuable one and one that it will be well received within the volunteer community of our province.

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.

It’s indeed a privilege to stand in this House on our first Wednesday morning in the new set-up here to debate legislation, and particularly to speak to Bill 66. This, logistically, and from a principle point of view is a piece of legislation

that I can support. And I see the merits and I see the value of it.

It's pleasing to know that the opposition have listened to the outcry from the changes from last year's budget around the definition or core funding and multi-year funding and the benefits of that. But I think we all agree, organizations, particularly the not-for-profit sector, needs stability. They need to be able to have an ability to plan around staffing, around programs, around developing partnerships.

And as my colleague for Ferryland has outlined, logistically, this makes all the sense in the world. We just need to have a little bit more detail of how this works, because we all want this to work properly. There's no doubt the government are planning to make this a piece of legislation that would be beneficial. We, as the Opposition, want to ensure that the groups that could benefit from this indeed get that opportunity to do it.

All the logistical information needs to be clear so there's no confusion like we had last year at budget time about what's project funding and what's core funding. These organizations do too much, are too valued, and are too necessary for the people in this province not to have a clear understanding of where they sit and be able to plan for the future.

As my colleague for Labrador West outlined, these organizations need that support, and we all need to be able to support that endeavour. So there's no doubt, we on this side, or particularly the Official Opposition, will be supporting the concept.

I know the minister has been fairly forthright in asking us to outline any concerns we have, and no doubt we will do that, just some clarification here around what defines community group. I know there are some definitions there around the multi-year funding. Are there abilities there for increases as things change dramatically, the process for analyzing exactly the return? Because these organizations still have to be accountable. There has to be a process here where these organizations are accountable for the money they're getting.

We're first entrusting that their history and their proven record dictates that they fit the criteria for multi-year funding, which I'm convinced 99.9 per cent of them do and will in the future. But in those rare cases where there may be an organization that goes astray from their mandate or doesn't fulfil what it was set up to do, what are the safeguards here to ensure that that money then could be better used somewhere else if that organization isn't fulfilling its need? Or, how do we help that organization get back on track?

What impact does it have on the staff of that department? Is there less staff needed? Is there more staff needed? Can the additional time that those staff have be put into supporting these organizations in a non-financial way but in a supportive manner? So there's a bit of clarification here that we'll ask some questions in Committee no doubt, and no doubt the minister and her staff have gone through that.

I do thank the minister and her staff for the briefing they gave our officials. It was in-depth around the principle of what wants to happen and the discussions. And no doubt, we'll get a little bit deeper into some of the detail and the importance of it.

As we do know, this is not new. It may be new from a legislative point of view, and maybe even from a legal operations point of view, but multi-year funding has been happening for a number of years with a number of organizations. It may just not have been channelled through the proper process here. And I'm glad the minister is bringing it in here because once the proper process is in place, then everybody knows where they stand. Each department will know where their allocations will have to go. They'll know where their future allocations will be prioritized, and it gives the private sector – because there are private sector groups out there.

If you look at the monies that are generated by the organizations that we fund outside of the confines of direct government agencies and corporations, the third party partnerships that they themselves enter into with the private sector and the community sector, is multi-million dollar investments there. Having that sector know that the organizations they are going to partner with have some guaranteed longevity,

for at least a three-year period, is a rare, positive thing.

One of the challenges I faced as a civil servant a number of years ago, and one of my direct responsibilities was particularly with a number of organizations in the not-for-profit sector, was around sustainability. One it was around project sustainability or program sustainability to be able to get a program that you had just initiated and piloted for a year and then to be able to take it to where you're going to get your maximum benefits for the people of this province, but not being able to secure the funding was a challenge there. Fortunate enough, as I mentioned earlier, core funding and multi-year funding in principle existed because most departments would commit to it once they were sold on that this organization and the programs and the projects they were offering were beneficial and met the needs of that line department.

Again, security always was hinging on the economic times, particular priorities that may be addressed in that particular year and things may change. What is here and what will need to be clarified so everybody is on an even playing field, is exactly what is meant by long-term sustainability, the processes around if things change. If priorities change dramatically in the need in society, if it's around a mental health issue, if it's around physical inclusion issue, if it's around a social development issue, how do we adjust the budget lines here? Will the line departments still have access to additional pots of money that can then address some of those other particular needs?

I know it has been noted here, and my colleague here had noted from Ferryland: What about new organizations coming into the process? How do you deal with things like that? How do you ensure groups that have that ability to offer a program, come in somewhere along the way? And I know the minister will outline that, and it has been outlined somewhat here, but just a little bit more detail would be easy to explain it.

I know my colleague from Labrador West outlined exactly some of the processes there but you have to dig down because there are a multitude of different agencies that have different needs, have different approaches to stuff, even their own internal structures may not

fit directly with the bureaucratic process we have. So we may have to modify, or in some cases we may have to train them and support them to be able to modify their structure so it meets the particular needs here so they can continue to offer the services that they do.

We've seen over the years the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been invested by government, taxpayers' money to return a billion dollars' worth of services by the partnerships that have been developed. A process like this gives that ability to ensure that we maximize where we are with it.

The legislative process, while we understand some would say it's an administrative structure here, no doubt it is, the senior bureaucrats would need to have it because they have to ensure that each category adds up and the columns all meet the needs of the criteria and the policy, and Treasury Board has to sign off and Cabinet has to sign off, and the taxpayers and the Auditor General has to be happy that that money is being allocated. What I like about this now, it also gives an opportunity for agencies outside there to do their direct planning.

So as we look at some of the things here about how we move it forward in dealing with section 26, there's no doubt it's an opportunity for us in this House here to open up a bigger discussion around, particularly, how we prioritize what's important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. There has to be a better understanding.

In some line department which was done – it's unfortunate that in our cycle of governance, every decade or so the administration of the day will take a process and do a real analysis of the funding sources we have out there in the partnerships, in the not-for-profit sector and in some of the other agencies that we support through special program funding, about where the priorities are. Because every so often we have to reassess where we go when there is limited amounts of money – and we all know there are always limited amounts of money. No matter if the oil price is at \$50 or \$75 or \$100, there's always a demand on your revenues. And you still have to have a mechanism in play to ensure you prioritize what the citizens of this province feel are most important.

So as we go through this whole process, and we'll have a good dialogue here and we'll have an open discussion, my opinion here is that everybody wants this to work. Everybody wants to ensure that the agencies they deal with on a day-to-day basis have stability there, and have an ability to have some vision about long-term planning.

One of the biggest issues and one of the biggest challenges that the not-for-profit sector will tell you in Newfoundland and Labrador is being able to recruit long-term staff, because in the not-for-profit sector there's not a lot of security around year-to-year funding. The first principle in life is the survival of yourself and your family, your core thing, but people come in very principled, very trained, very experienced about being able to help organizations but, unfortunately, because of the demands for their own financial needs, the security is not there. Long-term partners find it harder to build into something.

The outcomes in particular programs or project funding is hard to measure because just as you get up and get started and get staff trained, get your message out to the general public, recruit the proper participants, assess some of the challenges that you ran into, get to a point where you now think we can move this to the next stage, funding no longer exists. The organization has to prioritize somewhere else because it only has limited funding on a year-to-year basis and things have changed. So this is a great opportunity for us to be able to put that on an even playing field and start to move things forward.

I've had the experience over the years to work with some organizations who have come in at an entry level and particularly wanted to find out that they were just going to represent the general masses of what the issues may be, but took on a life of their own and particularly started to develop programs and services that were immensely successful and really filled a void in our society that we weren't offering in line departments because we didn't have the resources or the expertise, or we weren't quite sure if that was exactly our mandate or we weren't at the grassroots level or the front-line process of being able to assess what's going on.

And I just throw a couple – Choices for Youth, and we all know the valuable work that they do. The Community Youth Networks, for those who have them in their respective regions, the valuable work that they do, everything from employment initiatives to mental health inclusion supports to educational upgrading to all the social community development assets there.

They're only a small group of the thousands that we have in this great province of ours who are driven. A key point here that needs to be outlined, it's the tens of thousands of volunteers who will see the benefit coming from this long-term sustainability. They're the ones who once a month, at minimum, sometimes two, three, four times week meet with their boards, meet with their staff to try to improve what's happening; try to fight for every dollar to ensure that the lights stay on and the doors are open; that kids come through the doors, seniors come through the doors or people with special needs come through the doors to avail of a certain particular service.

So selling this, outlining this, making it less bureaucratic and less intrusive but, at the same time making, it accountable – because there's not one volunteer out there who doesn't want to stand on their laurels that they're doing a great job and they're accountable for every cent they spend and every cent they receive. Because the more that they can prove and the more that they can boast about the great work they're doing, the more comfortable they feel about being able to come to another partner and say give us more. Give us more and I'll tell you why, because what you're giving us is going to benefit everybody in society.

So it's an opportunity here for the volunteer sector to say we got a little bit of breathing space. We got a bit of breathing space because now we can concentrate on not every day worrying about the ticket draws or worrying about the next corporate event that we've got to try to plan. We can now worry about the energy in a board meeting of not being 20 minutes on programs and two hours on fundraising; it can be the opposite.

It can be 20 minutes on our fundraising – because they still have a responsibility to do

their part, to ensure that the programs and that have the financial ability to expand, but they can now spend the bulk of their time concentrating on how they develop programs and services that improve particular lives of the citizens in their area and particularly how they make partnerships.

Partnerships are not always about the financial benefits; they're also about the resource benefits, the social workers, the nurses that may be in the communities, the community leaders, the legal professionals, the social development people, the recreational specialist. All these are important components to ensure any not-for-profit organization or any agency that we as government, as the stewards of the taxpayers' money, partner with out there to ensure that we get a better return on our investment.

So I do say there will be a few questions when we get to Committee for the minister to clarify but, in principle, I think this is great. From a logistical point of view, I think it's a great amendment to the bill. From an operational point of view, I think it will be beneficial to everybody. We just need to ensure that what we're offering and what we're going to partner with, with these organizations, it's clear, it's precise, it's clean and it's accessible. And if we find a way here because we're streamlining what we're doing, to be able to keep that same resource, or the same human resource that we had within the department, that now can lend another added support.

Again, it could be in training in a way, it could be in helping how they do their financial recording, it could be how they develop their own HR plans – whatever we can do to improve that process, improves the process for government. Because it goes in a cycle. The better equipped the not-for-profit sector is, the better the partnership is with government. The better the partnership is with government, the better the partnership becomes with the private sector that support the not-for-profit sector. So it's a cycle here that all on the same page will make things work that much more effective and efficient.

So, Mr. Speaker, on that, I will take my seat. But I do want to, again, commend the minister for moving this forward, and do caution that we

ensure that all the organizations out there do have proper access to funding and that we do have a serious look at some of the cuts that happened last year to a lot of these organizations. Because even three-year funding, at the levels that were cut last year, is not sustainable. I've worked with a number of these organizations over the last number of months to see how they could get over the hump from last year because it was mid-year when they had to make the cuts.

And I give credit to the DF Barnes of the world and the Hickman Motors and the hundreds of other organizations who stepped up to bail out those organizations in that year, but it's the accumulated years that are going to be challenges for these organizations. So I ask that we go back – you're doing something that's good; let's rectify something that wasn't so good a few months ago. Keep everybody on an even playing field; give everybody the resources they need, make this partnership work for everybody in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward in the Committee asking a few more questions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KING: It seems like I got lot of support here this morning which is –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: It's kind of overwhelming here on this Wednesday morning, the first Wednesday morning, where most of us have sleep in our eyes and still thinking about the dreams we had the night before, but –

AN HON. MEMBER: What did you dream about?

MR. KING: Dreamt about the speech this morning.

Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to stand here today and speak to something very important to the District of Bonavista, and this bill, Bill 66, is going to improve the financing and the long-

term stability for many community-based organizations within my district.

First of all, I'd like to thank the Minister of Finance and her department for bringing forward two good pieces of legislation, both today and yesterday. Long, long overdue and it's a big step forward for this province and for the people with the release of Public Accounts yesterday and with the multi-year funding for community-based groups.

Within the District of Bonavista this is, as I mentioned, of vital, vital importance to us. The tourism and culture industry within the District of Bonavista is one of the largest economic drivers within the region. Last summer, we saw a boom in our district that we'd hadn't seen, I think, previous to that. And people are coming to our region, not just for tourism but for culture as well.

I know there's been a little controversy over that, but it's great to see that we put a new – or not new focus, but we put our focus back on tourism and culture because it is a major employer for our area, and we have some great groups who are doing some good things.

When I started this political journey in 2014, I met with a number of groups. First, I had to win a nomination and then win a general election, so it gave me pretty much 16 months of pounding the pavement, meeting with community-based organizations, and knocking on doors. One of the biggest things I've heard from community-based groups – such as Rising Tide Theatre, the Trinity Historical Society, Sir William Ford Coaker Heritage Foundation, Elliston tourism, Home from The Sea, the list goes on and on – is that they wanted some stability to move their organizations forward.

What they felt when I talked to them, time after time after time, in the lead up and after the general election of 2015 is that they wanted this funding. They felt that the previous administration – their concerns fell on deaf ears. And it's nice to see them support this bill today because they certainly didn't support it years ago.

What they felt is there was uncertainty for these organizations, a delayed hiring, a delay of

delivering the programs. It didn't allow for professional opportunities for their staff. It was a detriment for their growth and created an inability for long-term planning. So, Mr. Speaker, this is where we're getting here today; it provides stability and it provides for long-term planning and growth.

After the general election, myself and the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation met with these groups prior to the Chamber of Commerce annual general meeting, and again this topic came up. They wanted this long-term funding so that they can have more stability and that they can grow our economy on the Bonavista Peninsula and in the District of Bonavista.

I brought this forward to the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board and also the Office of Public Engagement last year when I held two public engagement sessions for the Government Renewal Initiative back in February 2016. The one in Bonavista and one in Trinity were very interesting – or, excuse Port Rexton, were very interesting because that is where a lot of our tourism and culture industry is based. It was third in 2015 compared to my buddy there for Lewisporte – Twillingate who looks after Twillingate, but I think may have changed in 2016. He's saying it did, but I tend to disagree.

But what they said to me is, you know what, we need this. They said if anything else and you get out of this GRI, we need this. So what I did was I wrote the reports, sent it off to the Office of Public Engagement, pestered the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board saying this is a benefit to us, pestered the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation about this, because it is important.

So when I told some of the groups about this change, in an email on Monday, I got a number of responses back. I'm going to take a couple of minutes to read them out.

This is from Donna Butt of Rising Tide Theatre in relation to this multi-year funding: It is something we have been asking government to do for a long time. It is something I and others discussed with Minister Mitchelmore and yourself – excuse me for using his name, but I am reading it from the email.

Multi-year funding will enable Rising Tide to engage long-term planning in all aspects of our organization. It will help us in development of new plays that reflect the history and culture of this magnificent province that we so proudly share with all those who come here. It will allow for strategic planning and advanced marketing.

It will allow us in continuing to expand our activities and grow and maintain our shoulder season. This is very important. We often see a big boom in our area from the end of June, when the school lets out, until the end of August, early September. This funding can also help bring in new people to the shoulder seasons, which would keep restaurants and businesses open longer and employ people longer.

It will contribute to our long-term stability and our ability to lever federal funds. It will allow us to continue our artistic and economic contribution to our community, our region and our province. That's from Donna Butt of Rising Tide Theatre.

I got another email back from Jim Miller, who's the chair of the board of directors for Trinity Historical Society who wrote this on behalf of his organization: Establishing multi-year funding for organizations such as the Trinity Historical Society and others across the province that are community-based organizations will be beneficial for permitting long-term planning and just as important, if not more so, is the financial stability that will bring to the operations of these organizations.

We will now be able to plan ahead for human resources, professional development, research, exhibit development, preservation of our historic sites, archival materials and artifacts, as well as work on long-term and strategic planning – I'm seeing a theme here – for the future of our organizations.

As you know, from our prior discussions – and this gets back to what I talked about – with yourself during pre-budget consultations, which was in 2016, meetings with Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation in Bonavista over the past year or so, and other times when all of us on this email have had an opportunity to say that we've spoken to the benefit and importance of establishing multi-year funding, I

and the board of the Trinity Historical Society are very pleased to know that this change is forthcoming and our voices are heard. Another leader in the tourism culture industry.

I also have here from Edith Samson, the executive director of Sir William Ford Coaker foundation in Port Union: The Sir William Ford Coaker Heritage Foundation and myself are very pleased to know that this change is about to happen, and that we have been heard – another recurring theme, that we're being heard. As we move ahead with the development of Port Union, the built heritage, creating a creative economy for Port Union, working with various sources for the redevelopment of the heritage properties and following up with the applications to Canada's tentative list for UNESCO heritage world status and the Geo Park for the Bonavista Peninsula, having multi-year funding provides stability to work on these opportunities.

I'm assuming that this multi-year funding will be applicable to the Cultural Economic Development Program, CEDP, within the Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation – I'm still getting used to the name – which we all apply to as arts and heritage organizations. We really are thankful that our voices are heard and taken into account for this change in the act. We really look forward to how discussions regarding the programming in the future can include some of our ideas that may be beneficial to community-based organizations, participants who take part in various programs and how it might serve the region and province better in the future.

So I touched on the CEDP – and I have to find my notes here just to get a little background for those who don't know; bear with me. Here is it. So CEDP supports arts and heritage organizations. So this includes major music festivals as well. It has a track record of no less than four years, organizations that apply for CEDP. Managerial, professional, financial and technical capacity, in other words – excuse me, in other things, you buy the boots for the workers, all this is funded under CEDP. It provides long-term viability, cultural activities, is member based and has industry-wide benefits.

So some of the groups that actually benefit from CEDP would be the Trinity Historical Society, Rising Tide Theatre, Sir William Ford Coaker Heritage Foundation, but also here off the Avalon you have the Resource Centre for the Arts, the Writers' Alliance, you have Gross Morne Theatre Festival and you have the East Coast Trail Association. So quite a number of organizations will benefit from this.

I just posted – I was speaking to this on Facebook, so just recently or within the last few minutes before I spoke, another leader in our cultural community, Geoff Adams who operates the New Curtain Theatre and the Curtain Call Café in Milton, said to this – and he's always has some difficulty in getting long-term funding – said: This will allow a group like our foundation to maintain our facility and activities here in Milton. So that's another group that will benefit from this.

So I'm proud of this legislation. I'm very, very happy here today to speak to this, the benefit that it has to the District of Bonavista and the opportunities it brings, not just to my district but to the province in general. So if anything we get out of this, here are some key take-aways that I've gotten from talking to industry leaders with regard to our community-based organizations. It allows them for long-term and strategic planning, development of new programs, plays, activities. Strategic marketing, that's bringing in new people to our area; better able to leverage other funding sources. So whether it be in the private sector or from the federal government, these are – having that stability, having the ability to match other funds, allows them greater freedom to get these additional funds which will help them grow.

This legislation will make it more effective for them to hire. They're going to know the numbers they can have for their organization earlier. That way they can go out, do their hiring process, get better people and train those people. It offers better professional development opportunities. So if you know you have the funding available to put into your organization, now you are able to have better professional development opportunities to grow yourself as a person, to be an expert, to highlight the things you have within your organization. That, I think, is just as important as anything else.

Finally, most importantly, it provides stability for these organizations. Time and time again over the 14, 15 months that I was on the campaign trail, and in the 15, 16 months since I've been an MHA, that's what I've been hearing from these organizations. They want stability. They want the ability to operate their organizations, to provide a good tourism and culture experience in the District of Bonavista, in our region, and in our province, so that we draw people from, not just our own province but from around the world like we have over the past number of years. This is going to be able to grow the District of Bonavista, to grow our industry, to see more people in our region and we will see the spin-off economic benefits from this piece of legislation.

So with that, I would like to thank the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board and her staff for bringing this forward. It's been an honour to speak to this legislation, Mr. Speaker, and I will certainly be supporting this bill.

Thank you very much.

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 really am pleased to stand this morning – though it's morning – and speak to Bill 66. And if ever there was a bill that brings some good news, and we get many of them. We get some that are just housekeeping but this is a bill that brings good news, that brings good news to the literally thousands of people in the province who are involved in their communities in actually providing services that are essential to their communities.

I speak – as a number of others in the House could, I think – from my own personal experience because I was involved in the not-for-profit community-based sector prior to being elected and having the honour of standing in this House, and I know the stress. I know the stress of being in charge of an organization and the stress of wondering from year to year, what

funding are you going to have. Are you going to be able to continue the work?

Also, not just the stress of not knowing, but also the time every year of doing project proposals and the time and energy that has to go into project proposals or funding for operations because that happens as well. It's not just projects but also funding operations which is what this bill is covering, every year having to put an application together, it takes time, it takes energy and I think now, thank goodness, will become unnecessary.

There has been a funny attitude in government and dealing with government. Again, I'm speaking this from the perspective of when I worked in community-based organizations. You were almost made to feel guilty when you made your application for a year to think well, what makes you think you're going to get the money the year after, why should you assume you're going to get more than this year's money.

Yet, here you were with a community group that was doing very important work in the community, recognized by the government as important work, yet you were made to feel guilty that you could assume that you're going to get money the year after that. That's not the way it should be. This bill is changing that, and I think that's extremely important because government and the community have come to really depend on the services that are being offered.

As I was listening to my colleagues naming off groups in their districts and in their jurisdictions who are community-based groups doing great work, I thought I better not start trying to rattle off names because there are so many, obviously, in St. John's with the population we have and so many in my own district that I don't want to miss anybody. I think the important thing is the recognition – and this is what is so important – that the work the community groups are doing is essential work for the good of the community.

So whether we're talking about women's organizations who are helping all kinds of women deal with issues such as spousal violence, economic insecurity, housing issues, whether it's the community centres. We have a number of community centres in the city that also receive funding and which are essential to

their communities doing things like after school programs, mentoring programs, even child care programs in some cases, programs of enhancement for children.

There's one community centre here in the city, I know, who actually has a program of getting students involved in playing instruments, stringed instruments. There are all kinds of things going on. We also have the groups that work with at-risk youth and groups who are working with adults to address mental health issues, housing issues, drug addictions. I mean the list goes on.

In actual fact, a lot of our community groups are doing the work that we expect of government services. So if we recognize how important that work is, and government must because over the last years governments in this province, and both parties sitting here were part of that, have been downloading services, downloading things on to the community group shoulders. So all the more reason than to make sure that it is easier for them to do their work, and the multi-year funding will certainly do that.

I look at the eligibility criteria, and the eligibility criteria are good. I agree with them. In order to qualify organizations must be community based. I would assume the government is going to define what community based means. Funding is for a maximum of three years but groups may reapply. That's good. That's because if the work they're doing is essential and if their reports show that that work is essential and is really doing something good for the community, it's good to know they can reapply. They'll need to reapply; must have been in operation for three years before they apply. That makes sense as well; must remain in good financial and performance standing with the provincial government. That makes absolute sense; must maintain an active presence in the province, and that makes sense too.

I notice that we don't have the word of accountability in there but I'm sure the criteria with regard to remaining in good financial and performance standing with the provincial government has in it the meaning of accountability, openness and transparency so that the people know that what this group is supposed to be doing is happening.

I've checked and I know this is not the case now but some years ago, a long time ago, back in the 1990s when I was working in the community, I was getting – our organization was getting money from a provincial department and we'd get it every year. I used to ask, I actually said, what are the criteria for my reporting mechanism? And the department had no criteria for the reporting mechanism. It was even said to me, well, you know, they didn't expect a report. I said but I'm getting \$100,000, surely I should have to report it. That has changed, but that did exist.

I would always put a report in because I wanted to be accountable. I didn't want it said that they didn't know what we were doing. I would put my report in but there was no criteria for the report. So that was really quite shocking. At the time, I remember really, really being shocked about it because at the same time we were getting federal government money and certainly the restrictions that were there for reporting were very strong. The good thing about the federal government funding was that it was also multi-year, so they had two good things going for them. I do know the reporting mechanisms now are in place, and that's extremely important.

One of the things that I'm concerned about, and I would like the minister to speak to when the time comes, is we need to know exactly what is meant by community based and we need to know what is the definition of programs for community-based organizations, because various departments do have money for community-based groups. So what is the definition that will show who can apply and what programs are covered by the legislation?

I don't see that in the bill itself and maybe that's going to be in regulations, as some of my colleagues on this side of the House have asked about that, but I think there's a lot of detail we need to have in place in the regulations to ensure that when a group applies it knows that nobody is going to say to them well, how do you know you're going to get money from this program? What makes you think this program is covered? We have to be sure we know exactly what programs are covered; what funding programs are covered when it comes to organizational funding for community groups.

Can groups who are dealing with the arts, will they be considered community based? Will they be covered by that? Or will it just be project funding for them? What does community based mean? I notice the criteria say: must maintain an active presence in the province, but they must be community based. So we're going to have to have a definition of both of those things in the regulations so that there'll be no doubt, because we don't want confusion among the community-based groups.

You see one group being told yes, you're community based and you're covered, and another group being told no, you're not covered, didn't you know that? So we really do have to have clarity. The legislation is great, but it doesn't paint any of those pictures, and I think we need that. We need to make sure that things are clear.

One of the things we need to think about, and I know this is a hard time for government, we know all that. It's one thing to have the multi-year funding but we also need to assess the amount of money that's going to our groups. There have been cutbacks over the years to organizations, like the women's organizations that are doing essential work. They really don't have adequate funding for salaries. They'll still be penny-pinching; it's just that they'll know for three years how much penny-pinching they have to do.

And I'm not being negative here, I'm just pointing out a reality. That we expect a lot from the community groups. We expect a lot from them with regard to the services they deliver, and there is still going to be – whether they get the funding for one year or three years, there is still going to be the whole pressure of having to have, of going after project funding in order to deliver the programs they want to deliver. Because in actual fact, an awful lot of the programming that's going on doesn't come from the operational funding, it comes from project funding; whereas I think there are some of the programs that sometimes get offered are an essential part of the organization and should be part of operational funding.

I think we do have issues to look at. We have a long way to go in looking at how we fund community-based groups. They scramble all the

time, there's no doubt about that, and the multi-year funding will help alleviate one level of that so they have some security as they scramble for the rest of the money they need to carry on programs. So I know, we all know organizations that when you ask, well, how many positions are permanent? Well, it would only be one or two positions that are permanent, and then other positions are always contingent on getting project funding. So as long as you have a particular project going on for a while, or you can pick up new projects, you may have a person on a staff, and a good person who does great work, but you always have to be finding project funding for that person.

So this is an issue that's not going to change with the multi-year funding. I mean, that's a reality. The multi-year funding will help so that they have security and know they have the operational funding, but we still do not have enough money in the operational funding, and it will not make up for the program funding that's needed.

Government still has to look at, how are we going to make sure that our groups have the money to do what we expect them to do? Because that's what has happened, they are now expected to do work that once upon a time they didn't have to do. And there's still a question of, with some of the work that some groups are doing, especially in the women's movement, should there not be, for example, assigned positions where there's a community link between a government body and the organization, maybe social workers that are assigned to actually work with organizations. So there are many multiple ways in which we need to look at how we can make – to support better the work of the community groups.

A lot of groups will not stand and say what I just said, because the groups are always in a position of being there with their hand out and hoping they're going to get funding. So they don't have the ability to stand or go to a minister or to say publicly, we still have a lot of problems, we are still feeling the workload of the downloading onto our shoulders of services that really government should be offering. We really are feeling the stress of not having enough staff to meet the demand. All of that is there, and there's no doubt about that.

So we have to continue to meet with them. We have to continue to look at their needs, their funding needs for staff, because they're not being met. The multi-year funding is not going to change that. We have to look at the need for – they need money for staff training because more and more they are dealing with issues in the community that are complex and you have to have staff who can deal with those complex needs that are in the community.

You don't have automatically money for training in the operational funds; this is very serious. As well, groups need to have training in best practices in governance and financial accountability. So sometimes groups may not meet the standard that we would like to see when it comes to accountability for the use of money or even maybe for how accounting practices are kept within the organization, and they will need money to do training with staff on that level as well.

So in looking at the money that is needed by a community organization, we really do need to look at all of the facets. The multi-year funding is great, but we still have to do much more to take the pressure off our groups, our groups who are doing such tremendous work out there but who work many, many hours over what they are paid for, who spend much time in volunteer work besides the work that they're paid for and who just totally give of themselves to the community. Burnout is high in community-based work; burnout is very high.

So I'm happy that we're doing this multi-year funding. I'm happy to support this bill, but I think there's much more that needs to be talked about. I hope that the minister will speak more to some of the issues I've raised and if I don't hear an answer in particular to my question with regard to the programming that will be covered, then I will ask that when we get into Committee.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): The hon. the Member for Stephenville.

MR. FINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly welcome everyone here on a Wednesday morning. It certainly great to be up

and awake in the morning, as the Member for Humber – Bay of Islands was just saying to me, certainly great to be here in the House of Assembly on a Wednesday.

Of course, this was only made possible through some of the great efforts from the Minister of Justice and our Government House Leader with some changes to the legislation that would allow us to be here in the morning. Certainly, this is giving us an opportunity to be more efficient and more effective as we plan properly throughout the year.

Plan is the key word because that's what today's legislation is all about; it's all about proper planning. It's very similar to yesterday's legislation. It was also an amendment to the *Financial Administration Act* and that was all about allowing people to plan. So yesterday's legislation was referring to the release of Public Accounts that was going to give the people of the province, industry, business, you name it, the opportunity to see the numbers so we can plan accordingly and work going forward.

Today's legislation is no different. It's going to give groups, organizations in communities the opportunity to plan properly. Planning properly is really important, and that's something that our government is committed to. In fact, this piece of legislation was actually one of the initiatives in *The Way Forward* document. And if you'll bear with me for a moment, I'll read that.

One-Window, Multi-Year Community Grants (Action 2.12): "Our Government will implement a strategic one-window, multi-year approach to community grant funding. This will ensure an efficient and consistent approach to administration, accountability and evaluation. Financial systems and legislative frameworks will be modified" – which is what we're doing here today – "as required to facilitate the development of multi-year funding arrangements with community organizations where appropriate. Multi-year funding will enable community groups to plan more efficiently."

MR. LETTO: Another promise kept.

MR. FINN: Thank you very much, the Member for Lab West who just pointed out, this is

something that we committed to in the fall and you're seeing legislation here today that will directly affect that.

So this is Bill 66, as noted by some of the previous speakers, An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act. As the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury noted in her opening remarks, currently this legislation would be restricted for multi-year funding, be restricted to the purchase of good and services. So this change essentially would give the ability for community-based groups – and there have certainly been a number of questions asked. The Member for Ferryland had a number of specific questions, and the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, and I'm certain that the Minister of Finance will address some of those, of course, when we get to the Committee stage of debate here today.

But I guess, from the outset, without getting into any of the weeds here, this is a great piece of legislation. The ability for organizations to plan properly – this is an obstacle that's been pointed out by non-profit and community groups for years. For years and years and years, organizations have been asking for some type of commitment so they can plan properly in order to provide programs and services to individuals and communities.

And so, I recall distinctly going to pre-budget consultations held by the former administration and during those pre-budget consultations the former administration's system was quite simple. They'd sit everybody up in a room; there'd be a square table or a bit of rectangle or u-shape, if you will, the Minister of Finance and/or any other Members of the House may be present and groups would sit down in front of them and just plead their case. You would have a 20-minute window to just pour your heart out and just beg and plead and say this is what we want, this is what we want, this is what we want.

Quite a bit of different approach that we've taken, where we've asked groups to have a sit down and a discussion and dialogue with us; but, under that former way, I can tell you, I sat in the room four years, '07, '08, 2009, 2010 and I saw community groups after community groups come in and specifically ask for some type of

stability around multi-year funding – some type of stability.

It's something that I think has been well known across the non-profit sector. I think if you talk to anybody at the Community Sector Council, any of the groups involved – a number of individuals have referenced specific organizations today. I think if you talk to anybody, you will clearly understand that this is something that's been asked for, for quite some time.

One of the reasons why this is really promising to me is I come from a non-profit background. Just before becoming elected, I spent eight years working with the Community Education Network in Stephenville. The Community Education Network is an organization that has been established for 25 years. In fact, they just recently celebrated their 25 years of existence this past fall.

The organization was originally founded due to low education and high school dropout rates on the Port au Port Peninsula back in the later '80s and early '90s. Since the organization was founded in 1991, it grew substantially over the years. Currently, they provide programs to address all the social detriments of health and they do everything from early education and childhood learning from our Family Resource Centre programs to Adult Basic Education programs.

I specifically worked with employment initiatives as an employment counsellor, as well as with housing and homelessness. So what I can tell you about this organization is that they receive funds from a variety of different government departments. They receive funds from Advanced Education, Skills and Labour. They receive core funding from Advanced Education, Skills and Labour right now. They receive funds from the Department of Education. They receive funds from the Department of Justice, the Office of Public Engagement, the Department of Health. So when you look at an organization from the outset and you look at all the programs they offer, one thing that people don't often think about is who administers that behind the scenes.

What I can tell you is I was fortunate enough to have a conversation with the the financial

administration officer with the Community Education Network and what I understand is that this time of year, in particular, as we approach the year-end fiscal, the financial administration officers are trying to do some wizardry because they have no idea what they're going to do going into April 1 or moving forward into the next fiscal year.

We have organizations saying to their employees: Okay, well, your program is going to expire on March 31 and we're not quite sure if we got any commitment from government yet moving forward. So we hope that we have some funds kind of set aside in a pocket, if you will, to keep you employed. So staff really have no certainty. They don't know if their program is going to get funded or continue. The inability to comprehend that really puts financial administration officers at a loss. It really puts them at a loss as to how to move forward.

This particular pot of funding – and again a commitment made by the Premier in *The Way Forward* vision document – will address that uncertainty. Again, just as I had mentioned, addressing the uncertainty of Public Accounts was addressed yesterday. I'm very pleased to see some support from the Members opposite. As questions were raised, I'm sure the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board will have every opportunity to address some of those specific questions.

But I guess just to point out to Members opposite and to the folks that are listening, you have to start somewhere and by putting in this legislation today, the framework is there; this is the first step. As they've mentioned as well, I'm sure the regulations will come forward in due course. Because it's important to note that this is going to give an opportunity and potential for groups to apply, baring they met some of the criteria. And the criteria that will be set out will be outlined as the regulations unfold, so just kind of important to point that out.

Again, I'm extremely pleased to see this commitment. It's a positive step in the right direction. It's just another example of us listening as a government, as we did in the spring session of last year, in the fall session as well. We've introduced legislation that people of the province have been asking for, for years.

Right now, they've all acknowledged that groups have been asking. I heard the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island, the Member for Ferryland said the same thing, they realize that groups have been asking for this funding. So it kind of leaves me asking the question: Well, why didn't they do anything about it? Why didn't any legislation come from the other side when they were in power to address this, if they had known about it for years?

This is no different today than what we did with the procurement legislation in the fall – absolutely no different. We've heard from groups and communities and municipal governments all over this great province; they wanted to see some changes to the procurement act. So, as a government, we took that advice and we acted on it.

This is no different today than the presumptive cancer care for volunteer firefighters – no different. It's another example of something that the people and the volunteers in this province have been asking for, for years. And so, while the former administration is here today, the Members opposite, they're happy to support the bill, I'm sure they'll have a number of questions as mentioned, but I'd be remiss not to mention that this is just another example of something that they heard for years and years and years and just didn't act on – just absolutely didn't act on.

Again, it's all about planning. It's all about planning and giving people the ability to plan properly. Uncertainty, questions and no foresight as to how to move forward leaves everybody scrambling. So you have community groups, as I just mentioned, come March 31, they don't know if they got someone employed on April 1. They have no idea. Yet, they're providing a great service and we all understand that the thousands of volunteers and the folks that work on the board of directors in the various community groups, we understand that they work very hard and everybody applauds that. Well, why can't we just give them an ounce of certainty? Why can't we just give them a small degree of certainty? And that's what this piece of legislation does today.

I'd be shocked if we didn't receive support from all sides. As mentioned, this is something that

would have an impact on community groups across the province. I would imagine that there's a community group in just about every other district that's represented here in the House that would have an impact on this.

You talk about everything from youth organizations to senior's organizations, organizations with mental health initiatives, Schizophrenia Society, for example. I mean, there are so many groups that could benefit from this but, again, important to note that they would have to meet some of the basic criteria as outlined in the legislation regulations. Some of them, minimum requirements, as alluded to by the Minister of Finance when she gave her opening remarks.

So again, it's all about the ability to plan, to plan wisely and just another example of how our Premier and this government is listening, and is listening intently, for some of the things that the Members opposite had every opportunity to introduce year after year.

I'm very pleased to see this legislation put in place today. A huge thanks to the Minister of Finance and her staff of course. A lot of times it would be remiss not to thank the staff who've been involved in putting the piece of legislation together. And I know that there are a number of ministers that have been involved in this legislation as well, and I know the Minister for Children, Seniors and Social Development and the good staff of her department have had a huge role to play in this. And I look forward – I believe we might be hearing from her a little later on, but certainly 100 per cent for me for Bill 66. I look forward to support from all sides.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my place, and thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Before the Speaker recognizes the next hon. Member to speak, I'd certainly like to recognize and apologize to the previous speaker. I recognized him from the District of Stephenville and it should have been Stephenville – Port au Port, my apologies.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm only going to take a couple of moments because I think pretty much everything that could be said, has been said. I have some questions as well, although I believe they're probably the same questions that the Member for Ferryland already raised, so he'll probably get to ask them before I do. So if I get the answers, fine; if not, when I get to Committee and there's something that hasn't been answered, I'll ask.

I think it's fair to say everybody supports this piece of legislation; we all know the valuable work that the social sector does in our province, so many community groups and organizations. There's a huge list of them, whether it be groups that deal with addictions, or deal with youth, or deal with seniors, or whatever the case might be – there's numerous organizations that deal with different aspects of health care. And they all do great work. We do need to support them, and certainly when we invest in those organizations, we get a great return on that dollar.

Obviously for them to function effectively, they need some certainty in terms of their budgets from year to year. I've spoken to people in many organizations who have that challenge every year in terms of wondering where the revenues are going to come from, whether they can count on those government grants coming through or not. A lot of them spend an inordinate amount of time doing fundraising in anticipation of perhaps not receiving funding, and really their efforts should be put towards the mandate of their organization as opposed to selling tickets and doing golf tournaments, whatever they have to do to raise money.

I know there's going to be a certain amount of that as well, but that should not be their primary focus. It should be on doing the great work that they're doing; I think that providing the stability

does that. I think one member talked about the fact that it would certainly be helpful in leveraging funds from other programs, other levels of government, perhaps private sector and so on, matching funds and things like that. So I think it's a positive all around in that regard.

Obviously, as the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi mentioned, this by no means addresses the issue of whether or not an organization is receiving adequate funding. That's a separate debate. It's linked to this, I suppose, but I do see it as a separate debate. I guess that's part of the budget debate when it comes forward. But there's no doubt, there are organizations that are struggling because they don't have sufficient funding, and that needs to be addressed as well as we're able to do so.

In terms of providing some certainty for these organizations so they can plan three years out and so on, I think it's a positive thing. As I said, I believe everyone's going to support it, I certainly do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'm very pleased to stand here today and speak to the amendments to Bill 66. I won't take very long because as my colleague across had said, many of the other topics have been said. But I'd like to just say our government is committed to the community organization and the commitment they make to the fabric of our community. So it's important, and I'd like to use the word, consistency. This provides consistency.

In my previous life, I was an executive director for a not-for-profit organization and consistency is what we always talked about as organization EDs, or executive directors. And having that consistency, the ability to hire staff on a longer-term basis, provide training and support to them. Also, not only for your staff perspective, but also for your programs and services you're providing – the much-needed programs and services you're providing to the people that utilize the use of the organization and use those

services. So it's very, very important, I believe, to have that consistency. It's something that charity organizations have been asking for, for a very, very long time, and we're happy to be delivering on a promise here today.

I'm happy to highlight a couple of the organizations that come to my mind that I've had the opportunity to work with, that will benefit quite heavily from funding like this. The Kids Eat Smart Foundation is in this funding regime. They receive \$1.1 million a year. I'm a volunteer with Virginia Park Elementary. They receive a breakfast program, along with 248 other schools in our province, which is important. It provides 25,000 students per day with a nutritious meal.

It's quite fitting that we're doing this, bringing this legislation in, especially for this group today because it's the first day of nutrition month, which my colleague next to me knows very, very well. And I'm happy to be part of that organization. I know the consistency of having funding for a longer-term basis will allow them to do bigger planning and more strategic planning that will allow them to grow their service and hopefully reach out to more children and provide a little bit more of an ability for them to plan, which is important in any opportunity that we have to do that.

The stability of funding is always a challenge in any charity that I've been a part of or worked with and any opportunity we can have, as a government, to support that, I think is an initiative that we should try to do. Like my colleagues have mentioned before, I can't see anyone else in the House not supporting a move like this to listen to the charities that have been speaking to us for so many years, to allow them to have that stability that we all would like to have.

With that note, I won't belabour it any longer. I'm pleased to support this, as a former executive director and a former not-for-profit chair and involved in that community just like many of us in this House, and I know that's going to make a big difference to the ability that these executive directors have to deal with each and every day. They spend a lot of their year applying for grants, for year-over-year funding and this will alleviate that, at least cut it in a

third or two. I'm quite happy to be supporting this and be part of a government that's willing to move in this direction.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. George's – Humber.

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I won't take a lot of time on this bill as well, but I just wanted to get up to say a few words in support of the legislation. What we're doing here is we're changing the *Financial Administration Act*.

The *Financial Administration Act* is an act which governs the way we spend money and the way we account for the money that we've spent. Yesterday, in Bill 65, we looked at changing the way that we account for the way money is spent. That's a very positive change. It allows people to see where we are financially and then it encourages a public debate about how we spend money, how much we spend and things like that. So that was a very positive change.

Today, we're talking about another piece of legislation that will change the *Financial Administration Act* of this province in terms of enabling government departments to give funding for community-based organizations for multi-year funding. So this will allow organizations that do good work in our community to plan better, to be able to have more stability in the work they do and will be able to – for example, in terms of people who work with community-based organizations, because of the way they're funded, year by year, they don't have a lot of continuity. As they get close to the end of the year contract, maybe they're concerned about whether the funding will be given again for the following year. So this impacts on the ability of community-based organizations to retain good employees, because they're possibly looking for employment elsewhere that gives them more security in their day-to-day lives.

So those are some things. It allows – the changes that are being made today allow organizations to

do a little more planning in terms of long-term planning in the way they operate. They are able to plan for two- or three-year programs rather than just one year programs because they have that certainty around the funding.

I just wanted to say before I close, these community-based organizations are really good value for money in terms of the way we spend taxpayers' dollars here. These community-based organizations, I know I have a number in my district – and others from outside the district that services the area – they provide many different services and they provide them at a very cost-effective manner. They leverage the work of volunteers. So the ability to improve the way we fund these organizations is very important to the efficiency of these organizations and the way they operate, and it's very important to the people in the communities that are serviced by these organizations.

So it's a very important piece of legislation. I want to compliment the government for taking this approach, and also the Minister of Finance for bringing forward these changes in legislation in a very timely manner. I just wanted to add my voice and I'm pleased to see there's support on all sides of the House for this piece of legislation. I think it holds a lot of potential in terms of the way we fund organizations. So I'm pleased to support this piece of legislation.

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.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to take a moment to thank all the Members of the House who participated in the debate this morning, our first debate as part of the new hours that the Standing Committee has put in place. I certainly appreciate the participation from both sides of the aisle.

The particular piece of legislation that we are debating today, for those listening at home, just as a reminder, is an amendment to Bill 66, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 3. This provides for the legislative changes needed under the *Financial Administration Act*, which governs portions of government spending. It's going to allow for the establishment of a multi-year grants program for community-based organizations around core funding.

Mr. Speaker, last year's budget, if you looked at the numbers as they are reflected in the Estimates, as many members in this House have already referenced – and there are a significant number of dollars that move through government into community organizations or other organizations whether they are economic organizations or regional health authorities, for example, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing – the total combined number for grants across government and in the Estimates book, as by the Estimates definition of grants, is \$4.07 billion dollars.

So the numbers that we're talking about today, to bring it back to the core discussion, are those grants that are specifically for community-based organizations. The Member for Ferryland in his comments earlier asked some questions about the definition of community-based organizations, and certainly those organizations that are representative of the community, or a significant segment of the community, and are engaged in meeting the social, wellness, educational and community development needs of the community. ‘

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier this morning, we have a cross-departmental team working on the multi-year grants program. We have officials on that team from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation; we have the Women's Policy Office represented; we have Executive Council; we also have representatives from CSSD, the Children, Seniors and Social Development Department. We have representatives of the Finance Department as well as the Office of the Comptroller General, and other departments such as the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development would be asked to participate in that work on an ongoing basis.

The committee's work is continuing around the structure of multi-year grants for community-based organizations, and once the regulatory framework has been established that will be communicated to, first and foremost, community organizations and certainly to the people of the province in a very transparent and public way, so that they can be very clear, certainly for the community organizations that will be able to avail of the multi-year funding, they will know clearly that they are in that category and also provide opportunity for the taxpayers of the province to have transparency into the criteria for eligibility for multi-year grants.

We've had a lot of discussion this morning from both sides of the House, I think, in recognizing the significant importance of community organizations in our province, and certainly many of us, if not all of us, recognize the challenges that those organizations can be under.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I certainly wanted to mention in my closing remarks, the Member for Conception Bay East spoke about the definition of project or core funding. And based on the research that I've seen that was reflective of the work that the former administration had done, there had been a number of areas where the former administration had started to capture the monies that was being delivered to community organizations as core grants and the money that was being delivered as project grants.

There may have been some disputes related to that under the former administration but certainly officials are working to clarify, in our administration, the definition of core grant and program funding. Because as Members of this House would understand, program funding is specific to a program that a community organization is offering, and core funding, operational funding, is the funding that we're talking about when it comes to sustaining those community organizations. Projects oftentimes can come and go depending on the strategic plans for the organization, but core funding is specifically what we're talking about.

I also wanted to mention earlier, several Members talked about accountability for community organizations and I think it's not lost on this hon. House. You know, the situation that

we saw earlier last year with a community-based organization whose mandate was incredibly important in our community in the area of supports for women, but an organization that certainly had significant community questions as well as questions from Members of this House around the stewardship around the funds that they were provided.

And I think it is not lost on any of us that in this current environment where community organizations work is so important and integral to being able to support people in our community that the integrity and the accountability for those funds is at the highest level.

For those community organizations that set the bar very high in their own organizations, I would like to say thank you and congratulations to their boards of directors, their volunteers, their staffs, for taking a very best-in-class approach to making sure that they are able to provide support and provide disclosure around the accountability that they have for the funds that they receive, whether they be funds that they received through the provincial Treasury, through the federal treasury, or through community-based donors, corporations, not-for-profits, et cetera, that also support our community organizations. That accountability is certainly essential and I think expected in every corner of our society in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize those Members that spoke today. The Member for Ferryland spoke. I appreciated his early indication that he was supportive of the amendment that we want to make to the *Financial Administration Act*. He asked some questions around the regulations. As I said earlier, the regulations will be made public when established and, most importantly, they will be communicated to the community organizations so they have a clear understanding of the applicability of those regulations on their own organization.

I want to thank the Member for Labrador West. I would certainly echo his comments, particularly in my role as the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. He mentioned the Women's Centre in Lab City that I've had the privilege of spending some time with those fine volunteers

and a great organization, as are many across the province. And I also want to echo his comments on Hope Haven as well. I think those organizations really do know how to, as they in their own words say, stretch a penny.

I would also like to thank the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island. I certainly appreciate his support of these amendments. I understand and certainly have appreciation for his questions regarding the definition of project money and core funding, particularly as his own personal experience and his own personal involvement with a community organization and his own advocacy and in the former administration, from the notes that I've read, around that particular organization and his own questioning of project and core funding. So I can certainly understand his questions today.

I would suggest for the Members that asked the question about how organizations could come on to or off of multi-year funding, that we probably are going to look at the same approach that we would look at for infrastructure spending, where you have a plan for multiple years, you have priorities, you have criteria that you're assessing on whether those organizations remain on multi-year funding. The monies will be budgeted in the budget as it's presented, but the multi-year funding will be monitored through a similar process as would be held with infrastructure spending.

I also wanted to thank the Member for Bonavista who spoke very eloquently about his district today; also, the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, who asked some questions about what exactly the definition of community based was, and also raised some questions about program money. And as I've indicated, the work that we're doing on multi-year funding now is around core funding.

There is some discussion in the committee that's working on the regulations that there is some program money that may in fact make better sense to be included in core funding so that those organizations can better leverage the federal government. I think there would be unanimous consent in this House that all of us would want those community organizations to leverage every cent that they can get from the federal government as well, and we certainly

wouldn't want to stand in the way of that by not recognizing some small amounts of project money as being part of this rollout when we do roll it out later on this year.

I want to also say thank you to the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port for his comments this morning, as well as the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, my colleague from Virginia Waters – Pleasantville also spoke, as did the Member for St. George's – Humber.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment; we have a tremendous amount of work happening across multiple departments, as I've indicated to the House. Some six to seven departments are involved in the multi-year funding work as it's happening right now and those individuals who are working hard on this project also have other things they're working on. Some of those were available to the Members of the Opposition and Members of the Government House side, as part of the briefing. I certainly want, I think on behalf of all the Members in the House, thank the officials for their time in the briefing, in advance of the discussion on this particular bill.

In closing, I just would like to come back to the reason we're here to have this discussion on the amendments to the FAA. Implementing this approach to funding for community-based organizations is consistent with the direction that has been provided in my mandate letter, as well as government's strategic policy objectives as noted in *The Way Forward* document issued in November 2016.

Included in *The Way Forward*, we are looking at implementing the multi-year approach with also delivering a one-window portal for organizations to apply for this core funding and continue to maintain their core funding. Those are things we're hoping to be able to communicate to community well in advance, because we also recognize that as anything changes, as we change to a multi-year funding which in the organizations that are receiving core grant funding now, that there would be a lot of questions. And it is, I think, a responsibility of ours to make sure we answer those questions and provide clarity as soon as we can so that those organizations aren't caught in a year where the ambiguity of what's happening may present challenges to them. We want them focused on

the good work that they do and not focused on the questions they might have around this process.

So it is our intent to make sure that the communication with those community organizations, as well as the taxpayers, the people of the province, is fulsome and will be one that respects the needs well in advance of the end of their fiscal year to have significant clarity. I would expect that information will be shared with community organizations as early as the beginning of this fall. So that they'll have clarity going into next year as to the process, and also how that might affect their long-term planning so that they can get to work doing the things they need to do.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat, and thank my colleagues again for their support. I heard from all sides, I think, unanimous support for this particular amendment to the FAA. I certainly appreciate the comments that were made here this morning.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

The motion is that Bill 66 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. 3. (Bill 66)

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 66 has now been read a second time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, a bill "An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 3," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill 66)

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

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

With the consent of my colleagues, I would suggest that we recess now until 2 p.m. today.

MR. SPEAKER: According to Standing Orders, the House is now recessed until 2 p.m. this afternoon, being Private Members' Day.

Recess

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have Members' statements for the Member for the Districts of St. George's – Humber, Topsail – Paradise, Exploits, Cartwright – L'Anse Clair, Torngat Mountains and Stephenville – Port au Port.

The hon. the Member for the District of St. George's – Humber.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to congratulate students from Our Lady of Mercy Elementary school in St. George's who, this past year, won first overall at the FIRST LEGO League Robotics Competition in St. John's and were crowned provincial championships.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. REID: The team of students from St. George's and their coaches will now attend the World Festival in St. Louis, Missouri, this

coming April. They are one of only six teams from Canada invited to attend, with over 80 countries represented. Out of more than 29,000 teams who competed worldwide in more than 1,200 qualifying and championship tournaments worldwide during this past year, they were ranked in the top 100.

In this competition, teams of students aged nine to 16 are challenged to think like scientists and engineers. They choose and solve a real-world problem, and also build, test and program robots. Through their experience, teams operate under the core values of celebrating discovery, teamwork and gracious professionalism.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of the House to join with me in wishing the robotics team from Our Lady of Mercy Elementary school in St. George's all the best as they compete with the best in the world in St. Louis in April.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Topsail – Paradise.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to take this time to acknowledge two incredible individuals that have received the Canadian Red Cross Lifesaving Award for their heroic efforts, in September of 2014, for saving the life of a young soccer player who had been seriously injured on the Topsail soccer field.

Gerry Stead and Alana Langdon were watching the children's soccer game when this tragedy took place. Together, Gerry Stead and Alana Langdon, without hesitation, both rushed onto the field to the injured 11-year-old boy.

Each played a role – a very serious and important role – and the life saved is a result of a superb team effort. The attending surgeon said if not for the quick action of Gerry and Alana, it is unlikely that this young player would have survived. Both said the true hero was the young player who survived these injuries, and has made a full recovery and again able to enjoy his life and a game of soccer.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me today in congratulation both Gerry Stead and Alana Langdon who are two true heroes.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. DEAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Mr. Beaton Yates of Botwood. Beaton was born in 1937, and has lived his entire life in Botwood. He raised a family there and is one of our best-known volunteers.

Beaton is also a veteran of the RCHA, the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery. He joined in 1954 and served in Germany from 1955 to 1958 with NATO peacekeeping forces. He is an active member of the Royal Canadian Legion; he volunteered with the Legion Action Committee at the Dr. Hugh Twomey health care centre veterans unit for over 10 years, and faithfully visits the veterans unit every Sunday.

Beaton was awarded the Queens Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2013 for outstanding service and was awarded a lifetime membership to the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 5 in Botwood.

Beaton is an exceptionally dedicated member of the Salvation Army Church in Botwood, organizing, cooking and serving the seniors' luncheons. After 40 years, he remains an active member of the Salvation Army brass band.

Beaton is a devoted husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather. He lives his life always putting other people first.

I ask all hon. Members to join with me in offering congratulations and thanks to Mr. Beaton Yates of Botwood.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Someone once said: It's not what we take when we go, but what we leave behind that matters. I rise today to pay tribute to an outstanding individual from my district that left much behind in how he loved his family, how he treated others, in how he ran his business and how he loved life.

Randy was a devoted son, husband, step-father, brother, uncle, cousin, friend and a respected member of the community who left an impression on all who were fortunate enough to meet him. Innovative, a visionary and a planner; in his 46 years, he experienced more than most of us will if we live twice that time.

He personified the truth of the quote by Mother Teresa: "No one ever became poor by giving." Randy was a man who gave to his family, to individuals in need and to community efforts. It was a sad day in the Labrador Straits and my entire district when we said an untimely goodbye to one who still had so much to offer.

Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to pay tribute to such an outstanding businessman from my district. Randy Earle of Earle's Grocery in L'Anse au Loup, you will be forever remembered.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Every year at Hospitality NL's annual general meeting, the Cruise Industry Association of Newfoundland and Labrador presents an award called the Cruise Vision Award to an individual or group that has made a significant contribution to growing the cruise industry in our province.

This year the award was presented to a young lady from Nain, Nunatsiavut, Ms. Ashley Dicker, making her the first Aboriginal person in the province to win this prestigious award. Ashley is a volunteer in the tourism sector and was Adventure Canada's point person in Nain for the last three years.

The industry described Ashley this way: "She volunteers her time to ensure that each cruise visit to Nain is a positive and enriching experience for both guests and the community. Her thoughtful program planning has led to a better understanding of the Newfoundland and Labrador character, Inuit traditions and the unique make up of Nunatsiavut."

This year, her hard work and dedication resulted in Adventure Canada's most successful stop in Labrador in their 21 year history along the coast.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Ashley Dicker on her Tourism Excellence Award for 2017. There's a special place in my heart for Ashley, Mr. Speaker, she also happens to be my daughter.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is with great privilege that I stand today to recognize Maude Kendall of Stephenville. Maude was recently honoured by representatives of the Canadian Red Cross at a ceremony in Stephenville as she was retiring from volunteering with the organization after 50 years of service.

Her half century of volunteering with the organization began in 1966 when she then lived in Ramea. Moving to Stephenville in the 1980s, Maude realized that there was no Red Cross organization in town and proceeded to form a local branch.

While Maude acknowledges that there were a few small disasters such as minor floods and fires over the years, it was her work in later years that she says she will never forget. In September of 2001, eight planes carrying some 1,200 passengers were diverted to Stephenville where Maude and the Red Cross were on hand to help. Maude spent 70 hours straight at the Stephenville airport during 9-11.

A few years later in 2005, Maude was eager to assist approximately 100 families that found

themselves homeless after a major flood – a true role model and inspiration to all volunteers.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Maude Kendall on her 50 years of volunteering with the Canadian Red Cross.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to offer condolences to the family and friends of James McGrath. Mr. McGrath was a former Member of the House of Assembly, Member of Parliament, a federal Cabinet minister and Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. McGrath was an exemplary parliamentarian, and his body of work which span over 40 years is truly remarkable.

Born in Buchans in 1932, Mr. McGrath spent time in the Royal Canadian Air Force before embarking on a career in politics and being elected to the House of Assembly in 1956. In 1957 he won the federal seat for St. John's East and was ultimately appointed to the federal Cabinet in 1979 when he became the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans under Prime Minister Joe Clarke.

Later, in opposition, he served as Chairman of an All-party Special Committee on House of Commons Reform, and was an outspoken proponent for reform legislation concerning children's advertising.

Mr. Speaker, James McGrath became the province's Lieutenant Governor in 1986 and served that role for five years. He is one of only a few Canadians to receive a lifetime membership in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. He is also a recipient of the Churchill Society Award for the Advancement of Parliamentary Democracy. He

also received an honorary doctorate from St. Francis Xavier University in 1979.

Mr. Speaker, I hope, and we all hope, that Mr. McGrath's family can find some solace in the fact that he was a great Newfoundlander and Labradorian who had a significant impact on his province and his country.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in offering my deepest sympathies as they go through this difficult time and join me now in a moment of silence.

(Moment of silence.)

MR. SPEAKER: Please be seated.

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

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

I thank the Premier for an advance copy of his statement today. Mr. Speaker, the hon. Jim McGrath dedicated his life very proudly to serving the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and started when he was just a teenager and having a keen interest in the Confederation debate.

And as the Premier mentioned, he represented our province in the federal Parliament, first elected in 1957, but while he was unsuccessful in the following election, he persevered and was elected six more times, serving from 1968 to 1986. He sat in the federal Cabinet as the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, and he did chair a special committee that introduced the practice of electing the Speaker by secret ballot; chaired the standing committee on human rights and accepted the call to serve as Newfoundland and Labrador's eighth Lieutenant Governor from 1986 to 1991. He's had nothing short of a remarkable career in public service.

To his family and friends, I express our deepest sympathies as the Leader of the Official Opposition, and as the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, the party in which he proudly served. He's earned a place of honour in our province's history by dedicating his life to making all of our lives better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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.

And I thank the, the prime minister – the Premier for the copy of his statement.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. MICHAEL: No, I don't think so.

I hope Jim won't mind my saying that. A bit of humour might help her today.

I'm deeply saddened, actually, to hear of Jim's passing. He was a family friend, and like most people who knew him, I was very fond of him and always happy to be in his company.

Jim McGrath would want to be remembered first and foremost as a passionate Newfoundlander and Labradorian. I extend my condolences to his family and hope they find some solace in our admiration of his enormous contribution to our province and our country.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise in this hon. House to recognize March as Fraud Prevention Month in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Fraud Prevention Month unites more than 80 law enforcement agencies with public and private sector organizations across the country to raise awareness and protect Canadians from fraud.

This year's awareness activities are related to binary options – an illegal online investment

scheme that usually results in significant financial losses for investors.

Binary options require investors to bet on the performance of an asset such as a currency, stock index or share over a short period of time. The payouts are held in online accounts and when investors attempt to collect their gains, they may find that their accounts do not exist.

Mr. Speaker, no one is registered to trade in binary options in Canada and we encourage anyone who encounters such fraudulent activity to please report it to the Service NL's Financial Services Regulation Division.

As well, one of the best ways for residents to protect themselves from investment fraud is to research if the advisor or firm is registered with the Canadian Securities Administrators by visiting www.AreTheyRegistered.ca.

During Fraud Prevention Month, Service NL will be tweeting fraud prevention tips, and I encourage all of my hon. colleagues to help raise awareness on this very important issue.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I want to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, we also recognize Fraud Prevention Month. I'm sure we've all heard the sad stories of people losing large amounts of money through fraudulent schemes. In many instances, the impacts are heartbreaking.

Mr. Speaker, knowledge is power, and it's important that we all play our part in raising awareness of fraud prevention. Any tips we can give to the general public are valuable. It's also important that instances of fraud be reported so that others can become aware and the risks of being taken advantage are reduced. We all can do our part and raise awareness on this issue.

Thank you very much.

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 thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Anyone can be a victim of fraud, but seniors are particularly vulnerable. It's good that there are more initiatives to protect Canadians such as tweeting prevention tips, but many vulnerable people such as seniors have no access to Twitter or social media.

I urge the government to ensure that people not hooked up to social media also receive fraud prevention tips, and I ask the minister to make connection with the various seniors' organizations to make that happen.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, we saw the Minister of Education stand up and pledge zero cuts for his portfolio.

I ask the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development: Will she stand up and commit to no reductions to the funding of programs and services for the children and youth in foster care?

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Children in care receive this exact same level of education as every single child in this province. I'm not really certain, Mr. Speaker, why the

Member opposite has singled out just children in care. All children receive a good education in this province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Mr. Speaker, the question was pertaining to funding of programs and services for children and youth in foster care.

And we are wondering if she will make the same commitment as her colleague to no reductions to these programs and services, yes or no?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I believe the Member is talking about a budget item. That will be released when the budget is released.

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

MS. PERRY: I did not hear a commitment there, Mr. Speaker.

Can you tell us how many foster placements have been created in Labrador in the last 12 months?

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: I thank the Member opposite for giving me this opportunity to speak about foster placements, Mr. Speaker.

The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development values every single foster placement, all 580 that we have in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. We work diligently with Aboriginal leaders throughout Labrador to ensure we can find whatever foster placements we can find.

When children go into care, Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, we work to place children with

family members, with uncles, with aunts, with grandparents, with siblings, Mr. Speaker, whomever we can place children with that is closest to the family. So foster families throughout Newfoundland and Labrador are valued, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Following the government restructuring, I've been told that changes have been made to the Youth Corrections branch.

I ask the minister, if she can outline these changes for the people of our province?

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, we are evaluating the Youth Corrections branch, so the Member opposite is somewhat correct. And we are identifying the need in addressing the resources to the need within the department, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Can the minister elaborate on what changes you have made?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the Member opposite, that last week when we made the difficult announcement that we made about a flatter, leaner management as well as government restructuring, that I indicated to the media at that time, that once all employees affected received notification and received clarity around the impact of them as individuals, that we would be providing this House with that information.

I would ask the Member opposite – I understand her eagerness to answer questions on this particular matter, but until we can assure the

Members of this House that every single employee has been spoke to, I will be happy to table information in this House that reflects the departmental staffing changes, as well as the numbers of new positions that were created as part of the work that we did last week.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A number of key contracts are up for renewal in March, including those with Key Assets, Blue Sky, Shalom and Waypoints.

Will the Liberal's cost-cutting measures be applied to these critical service providers?

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite is talking about a service to vulnerable children. The Department Children, Seniors and Social Development will continue all services for vulnerable children that are necessary. We evaluate each individual child's needs, and we apply the service to that individual child.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Can the minister, based on her most recent briefing numbers, tell this House what the current client to worker ratio is in Mushuau First Nation and in Sheshatshiu?

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I can. The regional average caseload for Labrador is 1 in 29; for Sheshatshiu it's 1 in 37; Natuashish, 1 in 26; Nain, Hopedale, Makkovik, Mr. Speaker, 1 in 28; Happy Valley-Wabush, 1 in 25 – I can go on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Mr. Speaker, it's disappointing to see Members opposite laughing, this is quite a serious matter.

Given ongoing cuts by the Liberals: Can the minister confirm that the client to worker ratio will not be impacted?

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: I can confirm, Mr. Speaker, that our department works diligently to ensure we have a proper client-staff ratio.

Mr. Speaker, since I have become minister of the department, not once did I decline an RSA for Labrador. We work constantly and consistently to ensure that our children have the proper staff ratio.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: I have been told that child protection staff have been impacted by last week's Liberal cuts.

I ask the minister: Will she stand firm to make certain there are zero cuts to those who provide direct supports and care to our most vulnerable children and youth in the upcoming budget, yes or no?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I'm not certain how you can go yes or no on the care of children – protecting children, Mr. Speaker.

Each child is based on an individual, an individual assessment of the child. The allocation of resources are fluid; they're changing constantly throughout the province as

children come into care and as we put children back into their homes, back into their homes with supports and services, back into their homes where we want children to be.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday in the House of Assembly, the Minister of Education stated, I said what I meant, I meant what I said, when asked important questions about his position on education cuts.

I ask the minister: Will you stand by your over-my-dead-body comment that there will be no more teacher cuts in the upcoming budget? A simple yes or no.

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, I apologize. Yesterday I tried to use Dr. Seuss – I think it was lost on the House – to illustrate that I said what I meant and I meant what I said.

That is a book about an elephant named Horton. And the elephant in this room here, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that the people of this province were basically misled about the nature of the financial disaster that was created by the previous administration. That's the elephant in this room. It's not as funny as *Horton Hears a Who!* It's not funny at all.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: There's no doubt there may have been some misleading here, but it definitely wasn't on this side of the House; it was on that side about what they would do when they took government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, what the people did realize was 30 new schools being built under this administration, 100 newly renovated, hundreds of human resources added through counsellors, teachers assistants, millions of dollars –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: – put in the school lunch programs and additional services added to the people of the province.

I ask the minister: Last week, you stated additional cuts would cause damage; will you commit that there will be no more cuts to the education system in the upcoming budget? Again, a simple yes or no.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before I recognize the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, I remind all Members of the House that the only individual that I wish to hear from is the individual that I've identified to speak.

The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for the question. It's an honour and a privilege to serve here in the House of Assembly. There are only 40 of us in the province who have this privilege. The great thing about this job is that in a few weeks or a month, whenever it's going to be, we're going to have a budget. It's going to be presented by the hon. Minister of Finance here on the floor of the House of Assembly. We'll have weeks and weeks and weeks to debate its content and I don't have anything further to say about its content.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, at this point, I'm not really even sure what's going to be in the thing. All I know is what our department has proposed. We're going to be meeting around the clock to get that finalized soon, but there are no pre-budget announcements to be made here today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: It's ironic, for four years in Opposition, he was the champion for investments in education and how we, as an administration, should improve it.

So I ask again: Actions speak louder than words; will the Minister of Education commit to no further reductions to education in the spring budget?

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

MR. KIRBY: Like I said, Mr. Speaker, I could repeat myself again and again, and I have to do that because it doesn't seem to get through to the Member. We are not going to be making any pre-budget announcements here on the floor of the House of Assembly today, that I'm aware of. I'm not going to be making any.

In a few weeks or a month or so, we're going to have a budget here. We'll have an opportunity to debate it. We have a very lengthy tried, trusted and true process that we use to debate the budget. If the Member wants to debate its contents at that time, we can do that; but I am no more or no less a champion for education than I was in 2011 when I was first elected here and in the 25 years prior that I was a public education advocate.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: The Minister of Education has spent in excess of a quarter of a million dollars on external consultants to determine which of the libraries he plans to close.

Can he tell us which libraries he plans to close in the near future?

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

MR. KIRBY: I thank the Member for the question. In response to public concern last spring, I think it was or maybe early summer, we accepted a recommendation from the Public Libraries Board to have a consultant to review the library system in the province to ensure that it is best serving the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

There was a fairly lengthy process that went on. We had the public consultations from Labrador City right down to St. John's. We had a survey that was done online. You can go to the Public Libraries Board website and see what was heard in that.

I understand that the report is in the process of being finalized. I expect to see that and for that to be released publicly in the spring.

Thank you.

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

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

The Minister of Fisheries was directed in his mandate letter to establish a fisheries advisory council; that was 15 months ago.

Will the minister commit to a date when this council will finally be put in place?

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for his question. Mr. Speaker, I was directed in my mandate letter to establish a fisheries advisory council and I can assure the Member opposite that we've taken our time to make sure we get this fisheries advisory council right. We will be moving forward with the fisheries advisory council in the very near future.

The Member opposite should reflect on their time in government, Mr. Speaker, because I believe there was a time in either 2007 or 2011 when the previous administration committed to a

seafood marketing council and we're still waiting for that one.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Minister, you're the Minister of Fisheries now; it's time to make some decisions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Government said this council was supposed to play a key role in the strategic plan to revitalize cod.

I ask the minister: This council is still not up and set up; when is this plan going to come forward?

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

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, again, I thank the hon. Member for the question. Again, I would like to just reassure him that that's something we're taking our time to make sure we get it right. Because in this province today, we're facing a situation in our shellfish industry and a transition back to ground fishery that are not going to go so in sync as we would like to see, Mr. Speaker.

So it's important that we set up this council as soon as possible, but it's more important we get it right.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, he had 15 months to get it right. It's time to get it right now.

We're all aware of the recent reports of the dramatic cuts in shrimp and snow crab in our province. Harvesters and plant workers are very

concerned, yet the minister said it's too early for his government to do anything. I'd say it's almost too late.

I ask the minister: When are you are going to put a plan in place for our fishery?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROCKER: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, I thank the hon. Member for the question. But maybe the hon. Member needs to understand how this process happens when it comes to quotas. So we've had science work done in the last two weeks on shrimp and crab. Now, DFO will go out and meet with the stakeholders in the province, whether it's the harvesters, the processors, all the groups in this province, to formulate the numbers around the quotas.

Until we know what the quota cuts are, it's premature for us to go out and talk about something that we don't have any idea really what the number is going to be at this point. We know there are going to be reductions, Mr. Speaker. This government has responded to reductions in quotas previously.

It was this government, I must add, that finally brought an end LIFO. And without an end LIFO, Mr. Speaker, this year we would not have an inshore shrimp industry at all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I remind the Minister of Fisheries it was an all-party committee that got together (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: We all played our part in that, and we all agreed with that.

I've been speaking to fish harvesters the last number of days and they're very concerned

where they're going to sell their fish to. I'm wondering: What are we doing to expand markets both locally and globally.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the fishery in this province this today, one of the things that we're going to have to do in the future is make sure we maximize value because, unfortunately, quantities are going to be going down when you look at shrimp and shellfish.

So, Mr. Speaker, we will work with the industry and we've worked diligently with the industry over the past 15 months, I can assure the Member. Anybody in the fishing industry, whether it's in harvesting or processing, who's wanted to sit down and have their opinion heard or their thinking heard by this government, we've been more receptive to do so. Mr. Speaker, I can assure you, we'll continue to work with the processors and harvesters in this province.

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.

Can the minister please provide a copy of the analysis and the resulting rationale that went into the decision to divide Parks and Natural Areas Division? Who made this decision?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, part of the restructuring plan that was announced last week was – when you look at the parks, Crown lands, agriculture, forestry and all of those sorts of things, part of the restructuring was to make sure we find the efficiencies, the programming efficiencies. An example with the

Crown lands on the West Coast, we already had the enforcement, agrifoods was already there, forestry was already there, Mr. Speaker. So it was important that we break down those silos, Mr. Speaker, and create what is really the natural efficiencies that were already in the system.

So when you look at parks and putting it in Tourism, it was – it's an example of making sure that we not only carve out the natural heritage sites that we have in our province, and parks in general, to make sure that it's part of our tourism package as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can the minister identify and outline all the sites that are included in natural areas?

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the question I am not quite sure of – the number of sites that are natural areas? Well, Mr. Speaker, there are sites like Mistaken Point, Cape St. Mary's Bird Sanctuary and others. Past that point, Mr. Speaker, I would have to ask the Member if I could actually get that list for him and provide it at a future date.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are hearing that the division responsible for Mistaken Point is in chaos. Can the minister confirm that the position responsible for guiding and overseeing important work, including presentation, interpretation and promotion of Mistaken Point was eliminated?

And I want to remind: the world is coming in June, and we're not ready.

Thank you.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Member knows of a division in this government or in this province that's in chaos, I would certainly ask him to take that conversation to me outside this House or here in this House later today because the reality is, Mr. Speaker, I've not heard of any chaos in the department that I represent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Mr. Speaker, we may have a case of mistaken minister here, because yesterday I don't think anyone knew who the minister was. Now, we've finally narrowed that down today. So, and all due respect – chaos, I'd like him to check back and come back to me and fill me in on that at a later date.

I ask the minister: How does your government plan to keep commitments made to UNESCO now that Mistaken Point is an ascribed World Heritage Site?

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

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, what our government did last week was endeavour on a flatter and leaner management structure. That structure in no way jeopardizes any of our natural areas, or any of our parks or any of our sites in this province. I think what the Member opposite is doing is just fear-mongering. So I would encourage him, that if he has concerns be responsible and bring them to the department.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Mr. Speaker, I guess that's what I'm doing here, I'm asking for the status because people are concerned.

We've heard from numerous sources that over 700 people looking to tour Mistaken Point were turned away from visiting the site last year because of lack of resources. Increased tourists to this site were up 71 per cent last year and the announcement only came in July. There will be a far greater number of tourists arriving at the site this year.

Can the minister give assurances that the appropriate resources will be in place?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As minister responsible for tourism and culture, I would like to say that we've done exceptional work when it comes to promoting Mistaken Point. We've actually done some of our advertising around the site itself to promote and attract people to go to Mistaken Point. We've invested in Trepassey and looking at the hotel that is there, Edge of Avalon, to make sure that we can expand and be prepared for increased tourism traffic. We're working with the stakeholders on the ground.

The former Department of Environment as well was working with the ambassadors and working with the groups to make sure the site is prepared, that there is capacity and that we are going to be able to deal with increased visitor traffic. But, we also have to recognize that this a protected area. We're dealing with 565 million-year-old fossils, and we have to make sure that there isn't a significant amount of people going in areas where they're not supposed to.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Mr. Speaker, something I'd like to make clear. There are obligations that fall under the UNESCO site. You have to meet obligations. The criteria are clearly laid out criteria, and no one has answered that question yet.

Another point, so Mistaken Point is the first provincially-managed World Heritage Site in this province. A plan is needed.

I ask the minister: What is the government's management plan to meet those obligations?

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, nothing has changed with the changes that government made last week with regard to the management structure. At no point in time has there been anything changed with regard to the way we manage Mistaken Point or any of our other sites in the province. The Member gets up just throwing these darts in the dark again, right. They pick numbers and they pick places that they want to just start tossing stuff out there, Mr. Speaker, with little or no research.

Again, I can't understand, Mr. Speaker, why the hon. Member –

AN HON. MEMBER: They're mistaken.

MR. CROCKER: Yeah, they're mistaken obviously in their approach to this, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I worked with the Minister of Tourism. When it comes to natural areas, Tourism and my department will work very closely together because we'll be the custodian of the management area, of the land, but when it comes to selling our tourism to the world, Mr. Speaker, our Tourism department is doing a great job.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Mr. Speaker, again, I'll remind him – maybe they're unaware. This is the first provincially managed UNESCO site in the province. There are clear obligations, I can't stress it enough. The government opposite, the minister should know the answer to these questions. I'm not fear mongering, I have my sources. Obviously, he can't answer the question.

So I'll ask him another one now. Can he table a copy of this management plan, seeing they are so up-to-date with everything else?

Thank you.

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will certainly find the information that's available for the Member and get it back to him.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Given the increased number of tourists expected: Will the minister reaffirm that resources will be provided including road improvements, site enhancements, interpretation centre and staffing to meet visitation demands?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to our anchor attractions, when it comes to sustainability and development our department worked with the former Department of Environment on the dossier to help achieve world UNESCO status. We're well aware of the obligations to ensure that we maintain and follow those criteria.

We're going to continue to work with the community, as I'll work with the Member, the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources. On economic development initiatives, it's no different than anywhere else in the province. Our rural and regional development teams and economic development officers are adequately prepared to help facilitate and work with our partners to achieve economic development across Newfoundland and Labrador but also maintain our unique culture and preservation that exists in this natural protected area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South for a very quick question.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess we've just confirmed there's not much in place for this coming summer. So I'll ask one more question.

Can the minister confirm that their cuts have led to a full complement of staff not being in place for the spring opening?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources for a quick response.

MR. CROCKER: No, Mr. Speaker, I can't confirm that, because that's just absolute fear mongering again from the Members opposite.

It's shameful that they would take a site like a UNESCO World Heritage Site and stand up in this House today, Mr. Speaker, and drag it through the mud and talk about the work that's been done by them. Even the Members opposite had some – were in government when this site was going through the process and it's absolutely shameful, Mr. Speaker, that they do that in this House today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There will not be any Member of this Legislature take the Legislature on their back. The rules in this Legislature are clearly defined and clearly understood. I ask for order from all Members.

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

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

In 2015 the Member for Bay of Islands told a group of protestors: "When I fought for long-term care in Corner Brook ... it wasn't to allow a B.C. company to come into our province and make a profit off the most vulnerable citizens in Newfoundland and Labrador. I can tell you here today that a Liberal government, if formed, will not privatize health care in this province. You have our commitment on that."

Mr. Speaker, since gaining power, this government has decided to privatize the design, construction and maintenance of hospital and long-term care facilities in Corner Brook.

I ask the Premier: Why is it now okay to allow a BC company to come into our province and make a profit off our most vulnerable citizens?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, design and engineering on projects the size of a long-term care site or a hospital that we have in this province, I would remind the Member opposite that it's usually done by engineering firms outside of government. So that's not unusual.

What we've been able to do in Corner Brook with the long-term care site is look for expressions now for people that would qualify. And, indeed, as we made it quite clear, the services provided in terms of the front-line services would be supplied by public services

employees, like our nurses and our LPNs and organized labour groups, Mr. Speaker. We have made that quite clear.

What is very obvious of this, and I'd like to remind the Member opposite, it that this building, the long-term care site in Corner Brook, would be owned by the people of the province from day one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The summary information released to the public concerning the so-called, value-for-money assessments for the Corner Brook hospital and long-term care projects is skimpy to the point of telling the public almost nothing.

I ask the Premier: Will he release the full value-for-money assessment to the public?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the assessment that she's referring to, that the Member opposite is referring to, outlines some 7 to 9 per cent savings on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, given the situation that we're into, this is a savings. We've went through it. The consultants identified that this is the best way forward. The other option that the Member obviously is suggesting is that we not do this; therefore, leaving vulnerable people in our society like seniors – she's suggesting that we not do that.

Mr. Speaker, the new long-term care site in Corner Brook will employ some 200 people on its completion, nearly 400 people during construction.

It is very odd today that the Member opposite is asking about employment, in particular in some of the smaller communities, when this indeed actually services the needs of seniors and people with disabilities but also creates employment.

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.

What I'm looking for is the proof of why this is a good thing for the province. We've had claims from the previous government that Muskrat Falls was our least-cost option for electricity supply. That's a mistake we'll be paying for, for generations to come.

So I ask the Premier: How many years will it take government to pay for the Corner Brook hospital and long-term projects under the proposed P-3 arrangements?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I ask the Member opposite: Certainly don't compare this administration to making the decision that were made around Muskrat Falls; it is a very different decision. In a few years, in just three years, we will see energy rates double as a result of the decision that she's referring to. This is not what's happening with the long-term care site or the hospital in Corner Brook.

Doubling electricity rates, the decision that she's referring to, is a quite different decision than when we talk about long-term care sites and a hospital for Corner Brook. People have been waiting a long time. The previous administration has announced this a dozen times. But fundamental to this decision is that the services will be provided by the public sector. There is a savings and it's a 30-year arrangement. Mr. Speaker, it's savings from day one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If the Premier wants us to accept what he's saying, well, why will he not give us the full assessment to the public so they can decide,

because that's what we haven't gotten about Muskrat Falls and that's what we're asking for here.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I guess what the Member opposite is asking for is that we put out what would be the budget that we would be thinking about that this facility would require from the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not prepared to put out the number right now when we're going through an evaluation process. It would be irresponsible for us to show companies or anyone interested in this – some cases, in a province like Quebec, it's actually unionized companies that participate.

Companies in Newfoundland and Labrador are looking forward to this. But for us to put out these numbers right now would be premature. We have done a significant amount of work, it is outlined in the assessment that she's referring to and there are some 7 to 9 per cent savings for the people of this province, and the people of the province will own the building from day one.

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Patient Safety And Quality Assurance In The Province, Bill 70.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for Which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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 2016* implemented a regressive tax on books in this province; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador is the only province in the country to have such a tax; and

WHEREAS a tax will undoubtedly affect literacy rates in this province, as well as negatively impact local authors and publishers;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to immediately cancel this ill-conceived book tax.

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

Mr. Speaker, *Budget 2016* was a disaster for the people and the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are the only province in this entire country facing recession because of the policy measures implemented, and one that will have a lasting impact forever on some of our most valuable citizens, our children, when it comes to the book tax.

I have heard so many of our students who are attending university come home and talk about their struggles and just the additional burden that this book tax is placing on them and their limited, meager funds that they have to try and survive getting an academic education in this province, Mr. Speaker.

We also have the impact that it's having, of course, on the authors and publishers in the province. We continue to receive emails, Mr. Speaker, to this day, of concern from people of the province about *Budget 2016* and what it's done to attack and erode our culture.

Books, in particular, are the very fabric of learning. We can go back in time to the ancient scrolls and know the importance of what books do for us and our ability to learn, be educated and do what we can by way of helping others in the world through learning.

And without access to books, Mr. Speaker, and by imposing this regressive tax, we are going to see some of our children unable to avail of these books. We're also seeing across the board increased impact on organizations that rely on books to provide their services such as daycare, such as Community Youth Networks, such as our libraries, including our school boards who now have to bear the additional cost of a book tax. A book tax, the only place in all of the country that has a book tax is in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard over and over and over again this government wants to look at innovative ways. A junk food tax would far, far, far be of benefit to our kids –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: – than a book tax. Please get rid of this regressive book tax.

Thank you so much.

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 government recently cut vital funding to many of the provincial youth organizations; and

WHEREAS the cuts to grants to youth organizations will have a devastating impact on the communities, as well as its youth and families; and

WHEREAS many of these organizations deeply relied on what was rightfully considered core funding for their day-to-day operations;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reinstate funding to the province's youth organizations immediately.

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

Mr. Speaker, in this House of Assembly this morning we debated a piece of legislation, Bill 66, which was about multi-year funding. And one of the key components that we all spoke to was the importance of organizations, volunteer organizations, not-for-profit organizations; but particularly, a number spoke to the importance of youth organizations and what it means to have not only core funding, but multi-year funding so that they can continue to enhance proper programing, continue to attract proper staffing, continue to develop good partnerships with the private sector, with other government agencies, municipal agencies and in their own communities itself.

But to do that – and I mentioned this, this morning – they need to have the rightful core funding that was always part and parcel of the expectation that we, as taxpayers, had to give to those organizations and as the government duly saw the investment in being a benefit to the people of this province.

Right now, a lot of these organizations have lost anywhere from 40 to 60 per cent of their core funding, so even a multi-year funding is still not going to put them any further ahead. Because three years down the road not only did they lose 60 per cent of their funding, but three years down the road the value of that 60 per cent could

be 65 to 70 per cent. They have to make that up somewhere in the community.

So it's not a good investment to do it that route. What we're saying is you want to start off fresh; you want to introduce something that we all spoke to this morning that is a good piece of legislation that will benefit organizations, particularly those youth organizations. Go back, reverse the cuts that you made, which were minimal when it came to savings, yet would have a devastating effect on these youth organizations. You're starting off fresh with multi-year funding.

No doubt, these organizations, the hundreds of them that I'm familiar with and other people are familiar with, will meet the criteria for multi-year funding. Bring them back to a sustainable portion of funding where they can move out to invest in our communities, provide the programs and services, save tens of millions of dollars for the taxpayers because they have a better ability because of their infrastructure, because of developed partnerships, because of their ability to leverage money in the other sectors, to be able to offer the programs and services to the sector that they provide services for.

So we're encouraging the government and the Minister of Finance to go back and in this line budget find a way – and there are creative ways of doing it – because you're moving towards something good, make sure that good is really beneficial by instituting and reinstating the funding that was cut, which was a minimal amount of savings from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, to ensure that these services can be provided and the multi-year programming funding is a benefit to everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'll speak to this again, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament

assembled, the petition of the undersigned residents humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS government plans to remove the provincial point-of-sale tax rebate on books, which will raise the tax on books from 5 per cent to 15 per cent; and

WHEREAS an increase in the tax on books will reduce book sales to the detriment of local books stores, publishers and authors, and the amount collected by government must be weighed against the loss in economic activity caused by higher book prices; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the lowest literacy rates in Canada and the other provinces do not tax books because they recognize the need to encourage reading and literacy; and

WHEREAS this province has many nationally and internationally known storytellers, but we will be the only people in Canada who will have to pay our provincial government a tax to read the books of our own writers;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government not to impose a provincial sales tax on books.

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

Mr. Speaker, I stood a few days ago in the House with this petition as well and talked about how short sighted it was. When you look at the prayers in the particular petition and saying that we will be the only people in Canada who will have to pay our provincial government a tax to read the books of our own writers, some of our writers have told us that, in fact, the tax will be more money than they will get for each of their books.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is obviously something wrong with that. There has to be a better way.

Thank you very much.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

It being 3 o'clock and Private Members' Day, I call on the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair to present her private Member's resolution.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's truly a privilege today and use the next 15 minutes to speak to something that I am very passionate about, and that is supporting the increased participation of women in leadership and political roles.

So just to review my statement that I read into the record on Monday, Mr. Speaker, the wording of the PMR on women in leadership:

WHEREAS only 34 female MHAs have been elected in Newfoundland and Labrador since 1930; and

WHEREAS as of June 2016, only 22.8 per cent of all national parliamentarians were women; and

WHEREAS the recent Daughters of the Vote event saw significant interest among women across the province to become involved in political and leadership roles;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House urges the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to encourage increased participation of women in leadership and political roles.

Mr. Speaker, time won't permit me today to talk about all the things that I want to say – I'll get a few minutes to clue up at the end as well – about the importance of supporting women in leadership roles. The PMR today, Mr. Speaker, is moved by myself and is seconded by my colleague for Burin – Grand Bank.

Before I came into the Chamber this afternoon, we sat today, the first time, in a morning sitting and we had a lunch break. And before I came in, I did a little impromptu survey in the caucus room with my colleagues. I just went up to them

and said: Who's the person that has influenced your life the greatest, to date? And resoundingly, Mr. Speaker, nine times out of 10 it was a female and, for most, they said their mother.

I just want to start by saying by saying women, we take our place and we play a strong role. That's why it's important that in this Chamber where decisions are made, where policies are put forth, where we debate things that will become laws in this land to live under, it is important that we have a better representation of women here in this Chamber and right across the country.

Women represent more than half of the world's population. Yet, it's unfortunate that we continue to be grossly under-represented. When we look at our parliaments across Canada, Mr. Speaker, I think BC has maybe the best representation, with about 36 per cent. So we have a long way to go. Here in this Chamber, we have 40 people that represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and 25 per cent of that is women.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we look at some of the work and some of the studies that have been done by the UN and other groups, we see that advancing women in leadership is a key component in addressing women's equalities, and there's a figure I want to touch on here. The United Nations note that policy begins to adequately reflect women's concerns when 30 per cent of the government body is female, as a minimum requirement. So we've got about 25 per cent, Mr. Speaker, we still have a ways to go.

As the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarian representative for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador since 2014, I have had some tremendous experiences and opportunities, Mr. Speaker. I think I've been in maybe seven or eight different Legislatures in the country and I've gotten to meet some amazing, strong women that are leaders in their field, that are doing great things to impact change in society, to make it better for men and women, for families. Because as we know, Mr. Speaker, often women bring different things to the table and women maybe will think about different things and care about different things.

I shared this story at lunch with someone in my own community, a little coastal community in Charlottetown. In the last six months I've had three emails from a young mother. She's from here in St. John's, I believe, and she moved to Charlottetown. Shortly after they moved there, she took her two young boys to what they thought was a playground, only to find out the playground is all grown over and dilapidated. The four year old and the six year old were in tears and said, mom, how come we don't have playground? She's written me three times to say, can we find funding for a playground?

I haven't had an email from either gentleman in that community saying we need a playground. So I just share that as an example, because I just had an email again from her the other day. And, yes, I will do whatever I can –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: – to make sure there's funding for a playground in that community so that these children can have well-balanced lives.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I've travelled to the different Legislatures there's that consistent theme where women continue to be grossly under-represented. There are all kinds of barriers, and I shared with – I'm going to talk about the Daughters of the Vote event that we held here last Thursday. I shared with them in particular some really sobering stories when I assisted in a campaign school in Yellowknife. Some of the young ladies said, I would like to run for public office – but it was difficult for them to get people to donate. It was difficult.

It seemed to be more difficult for the women to have people donate to their – as you know, you can't run for public office until financially you have the wherewithal to do that. And, you know, flying into areas where there were language barriers and sometimes you would need an interpretation and all of these different things. My heart went out to them, and I helped them where I could. I'm not sure how things went in the final election but I hope some of them did get elected, Mr. Speaker.

So we see there are all kinds of barriers. I stand before you as someone who – I've not been without my own barriers. I moved back to my

community in '91, and in that 25 years I got involved, as a young mother then – I was in a little community where if you wanted to see things happen, you didn't always have the luxury to wait for someone else to make it happen, so you got involved and you did your part.

I spent a lot of time sitting at tables that were male dominated. This is no offence to anyone in the Chamber that might have grey hair or no hair, Mr. Speaker, but it was my experience again and again that sometimes I might bring an idea, maybe to the health board. I might bring an idea forward and it wasn't accepted, and a few meetings later some older gentleman would bring it to the table and it would be acted upon.

That used to be really, really frustrating for me, Mr. Speaker, because sometimes I was sitting at board tables with people who lived half time here and half time out of the country. I was a young mother and I was using the health system, I was using the educational system and I felt like I knew where the shortcomings were and where we needed to make improvements, but sometimes, Mr. Speaker, we're not given the same credibility, we'll say as women.

There's a quote that I've known most of my life that says: As women, if we are to make it we have to work twice as hard to be considered half as good. And there could be some truth in that, too, Mr. Speaker. When we think about, reflect on what women bring to the table, it is so important that we do all that we can to support women.

Last Thursday, we held a Daughters of the Vote event to commemorate the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote in Canada. And it was Manitoba that first gained the right to vote. When I did a little research into that, it's hard to believe, Mr. Speaker, that women, under the law, were not considered persons. Women were the leaders in the household, raising children and keeping things together, but they were not considered persons under the law.

It wouldn't be until April 13, 1925, before women would earn the right to vote in this province. And when they did, Mr. Speaker, earn the right to vote, the voting age for men was 21 and the voting age for women was 25.

Sometimes I think as young girls we mature quicker than men, Mr. Speaker, so I don't know why we had to wait four more years before we were able to vote.

You know, some of the struggle, some of the tremendous struggle of those early women who fought for women's right to vote, that followed the courage of their convictions, said if we are going to take better control of our own destiny, then we have to be a part of the political process. It's really, really admirable. I've been inspired by it, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of quotes by powerful women that in these early days pushed for that right to vote. And what they were up against, Mr. Speaker, was foolishness. Like there will be more broken homes, we're likely to see an increase in alcohol consumption. All of this is what they were dealing with before in order for a woman to have the right to vote.

So, Mr. Speaker, if we believe that women are equal citizens with the same rights and capabilities as men, if we believe that women are equal citizens with the same rights and capabilities, we should all be doing everything we can to encourage our mothers, our sisters, our daughters and our friends to run for public office.

Last Thursday, myself and some of my female colleagues here in the Chamber from all parties, we, and in partnership with groups like YWCA, with the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, we hosted what I think was a fantastic day, and 38 young women from around the province spent the day in the Chamber. The day was made up of a panel where we heard from some real-life experiences from female MHAs, some of the barriers, some of the things they had to contend with. There were different speakers. And we ended with a lovely evening at Government House where their honours also spoke in a very inspirational way, encouraging these young women to support their dreams and follow their goals, and talked about the benefits of being in public office.

Mr. Speaker, that afternoon we used an hour to do a debate. I sat in the chair and I watched these young ladies debate, and I thought to myself, the future is in good hands. These young ladies were so capable, competent. They spoke so fluid and articulate, knowledgeable of their

subject, and I can't wait for some of these young ladies to take their seat here in the Chamber.

I did say to them – we're talking today about encouraging women, supporting women in leadership roles. I did say to them, just like we need more women, it would not be healthy or a balance to have all women at the table either. It's about having that balance, Mr. Speaker. Right now we're under-represented. We need better equality, but it's about having both, because when we have diversity of thought, diversity of leadership styles, we are better governed and we have more sustainable growth.

Mr. Speaker, I've read this many times, I've lived it, I've experienced it – women in government, they seem to come to the job with an agenda of productivity. Get in, get it done, get out. Because most of the time we've got a whole bunch of other stuff to do as well. Their goals are not as quibble over ideological differences, but to talk, listen and compromise in order to pass comprehensive legislation.

Leaders, Mr. Speaker, need to represent those they are leading. And all too often, decisions that affect women, their families and societies are made without women having a voice. This is what this is all about today, Mr. Speaker. We need the increase in women's voice; not only at the table here in the Legislature, we need it at municipal tables, we need it at the various committees and boards around the province.

The under-representation renders public policy unable to properly take women's concerns into account. Mr. Speaker, I gave a story that relates to what I'm about to say. Women tend to care about the more human issues: child care; health care; education. Something that I've always wanted to do, through the years, is when I see young women, encourage them to follow their dreams, to step into leadership roles. And I remember many years ago saying to a young girl: You should run for council. It was in my community, and she said: What do they do besides collect garbage?

Long story short, Mr. Speaker, she went on to run; she did many wonderful things across the country. She got on other boards; she now works with the town of Holyrood. But I said you have a young child, you want to bring some programs

into your community and you just find something to connect with them on, Mr. Speaker, and to make them passionate about their cause.

So, Mr. Speaker, I see my time is almost gone. I will clue up at the end and I will use the next portion of my speaking to talk about some of the barriers that are still there. Barriers that we need to work together to overcome. The first time I ran for this public office in 2013, myself and the now-Premier, we went into a little community, into a little garage where a number of older men were, and one of the gentlemen looked at me and he said: So you're the little girl that wants to be the next Member.

Well, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, there was a big bear that rose up inside me that day, and there was a lot of syllables that came out of my mouth in a short period of time because these are some of the things – now if we had had a big man of stature walk in, I doubt that he would have had anything said to him about his size or anything else. But anyway – that's the stuff that makes us women more determined than ever to go out, and not only to win but to win with a resounding majority and then we need to encourage more women –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: – to be at the table with us, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

It's certainly a pleasure and an honour for me to stand and speak to this motion before the House today, and I certainly stand in support of this resolution, along with all of my hon. colleagues. And it was quite enjoyable to listen to the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair speak about last week's day that we had with these 38

phenomenal young women, who I have no doubt will be leaders of tomorrow. And I, too, share with her in looking forward to the day when they do sit here in the seats of this Chamber and continue to lead our province to even greater things, Mr. Speaker. I have no doubt about it, these 38 young women and many, many more are out there and have a lot to contribute to government at all levels.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador certainly, though, ought not need urging to encourage participation of women in leadership and political roles in our province. But if it's going to take urging for the government to act, then we are certainly here and ready to do that, as are other groups and individuals both inside and outside of government, because a lot more is needed to get more women here at the table.

Last year, through Honour 100, we marked the sacrifices of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in the First World War, a conflict that led to the reshaping of the political order of the entire world. That war ended in 1918, but incredibly it was still another seven years before women were allowed to vote in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As the Heritage Newfoundland and Labrador website states, although many of the country's newspapers supported women's suffrage by the 1920s, the League still encountered much resistance from government officials, particularly Liberal Prime Minister Sir Richard Squires.

When the Legislature debated a franchise bill in 1921, the government easily defeated it, by a vote of 13 Liberals against 9 Conservatives. So we've always been quite strong, Mr. Speaker, in support of women. Following their 1921 defeat though, at the Newfoundland and Labrador Legislature, the League members did not give up. They spent the next few years accumulating support for their petition, and by 1925 they had gathered 20,000 signatures. By then, charges of corruption had driven Squires from office, and Walter S. Monroe was the country's new prime minister.

Aware that Monroe and some of his cabinet were sympathetic to the suffragist cause, League members once again lobbied government

officials for support. Monroe introduced a franchise bill to the Legislature in 1925 and this time, it passed unanimously on March 9 and became law on April 13.

Imagine, 1925 – there are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians alive today who were born at a time when women were denied the right to vote or run for office just because they were women. Hard for women such as myself to believe, Mr. Speaker, and I'm ever so grateful of the efforts of these women.

In fact, women would probably have waited even longer than that, had there not been those women of courage and fortitude who were prepared to fight for equality and justice, and simply were not going to give up. Those who waged that fight were no doubt labelled rabble-rousers, or worse, for daring to upset the apple cart.

But sometimes, apple carts need to be upset. A democracy that denies some citizens the right to shape it and lead it on grounds that are unreasonably discriminatory, like gender, is not really a true democracy at all. The representative government we had from 1832 to 1855 was not truly representative. The responsible government we gained in 1855 was not truly democratic. Even in 1925, it was not equal. Men could vote at age 21, but women had to be 25. That inequity did not get corrected until 1946. But 1925 was a major step forward.

And in the next election, on October 29, 1928, a total of 52,343 Newfoundland and Labrador women cast ballots in their first general election, representing a 90 per cent voter turnout rate. Let's keep in mind, on April 13, when we celebrate the 92nd anniversary of women gaining the right to vote in Newfoundland and Labrador, the incredible efforts of the women who led the suffrage movement so that all of us, as a people, could benefit.

In 1930, Lady Helena Squires won a by-election, and she became the first woman to ever sit in the House of Assembly in Newfoundland and Labrador. I often wonder how she would feel to know that today, 87 years later, 10 of our 40 MHAs are women, and 3 of our 13 Cabinet ministers are women. And I often wonder: Would she be impressed, or disappointed?

Because roughly half the people in our province are women; and I would love to see the day when roughly half the people in the House of Assembly are also women.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PERRY: We need to aspire to achieve parity in Parliament and in leadership roles in our society. But how do we achieve that?

On March 9, 1992, NDP Member Jack Harris gave notice of a private Member's resolution that the House of Assembly support the principle of representation by two Members per district, one woman and one man without increasing the number of legislative seats. As we all know, that did not transpire, but it's the type of innovative thinking that I think we need to continue to explore to identify ways that we can bring more women here into the House of Assembly.

This was one possible approach but it certainly didn't anticipate, I guess, the way we see gender in the 21st century. We do need approaches that will make a difference. Why is it that men and women do not already have parity in Parliament and leadership positions in our province? To get that answer we need to look at the barriers women face. To get at solutions, we need to consider approaches that have proven to work.

I'm also going to take a quick look at some of the barriers. I believe the greatest barrier facing women is deeply entrenched sexism. It has been pointed out and talked about for decades but it remains an enormous problem in our society. It manifests itself in so many ways.

We've heard women in leadership roles talk about the battles they've faced, the attacks they've endured. Premiers Kathleen Wynne, Rachel Notley, Christy Clark, Kathy Dunderdale, all subjected to ridicule in terms that were fundamentally sexist, criticized for what they wore. When was the last time you heard a man criticized for what he was wearing?

We saw it in the recent US presidential election campaign, a campaign that seemed to set things back 100 years in terms of respectful behaviour. We see it in popular culture. It is shameful that in 2017, nearly two decades into the 21st century, we still have to deal with stereotypes

that women can't lead; can't deal with challenges rationally and unemotionally; can't deal with complex mathematical, financial, analytical and administrative problems. Because we all know that is not true. It is shameful that women in positions of command are criticized for being too tough, like they're portraying their femininity. Like they have a character flaw that means they can't be trusted.

I believe women in leadership roles are subject to a kind of attack that most men in leadership roles are spared, and the difference is grounded in prejudices that are gender based. So how do we successfully combat these stereotypes? How do we stop seeing being a woman, being able to lead as polar opposites, as if you have to forego one in order to be the other?

I think we have to get out of our way to showcase women who have already stepped forward to lead and elevate them as role models that women and men, boys and girls, should admire and emulate. We have to showcase them in popular culture. We have to showcase them to our children, through the way we educate them. I'd like to see us bring women leaders into our schools: to talk about leadership to our children, to talk about how they have approached challenges, and how they have resolved them. And this will achieve two things; firstly, these lessons are transferable. Every child faces conflicts and successful strategies for leaders can also be successful strategies for individuals in day-to-day situations.

Secondly, it makes the reality of leadership imaginable for children. They can picture themselves in the boardroom, or in charge of a team facing a challenge. What strategies work? When do I listen? When do I delegate? How do I inspire? How do I achieve a consensus? How do I face a tough choice? These are the types of education, Mr. Speaker, and conversations we need to be having with our young children, boys and girls.

When you're asked to picture yourself in the leader's shoes, taking on the leader's challenges, then that's when the gears start turning and fires of leadership start burning. There's not just one way to lead. There are many. Different people will lead differently and different situations call for different types of leadership. But the most

important reason we need women in leadership roles is that we need to be able to draw on all those styles of leadership and approaches in order to face the challenges before us in the most effective way possible and that will deliver the best results.

For too much of human history, societies have been led by leaders who've relied on top-down chains of command. Very dictatorial and very militaristic. I don't think it's a coincidence that in the era of universal suffrage, we've been seeing a shift toward roundtable decision-making based on dialogue and consensus. We've seen styles of leadership that are about nurturing and mentorship. Now, not all women lead with this style, but some do. And it's an asset we bring to the table. We need to be flexible enough as a society to change the way our systems function so the new styles of leadership can be tested and tried.

If we create an atmosphere of true openness and tolerance, devoid of harassment and belligerent conflict, many women who currently choose to stay to the side will come forward. And I truly believe that, Mr. Speaker, because they look at some of the things that happen in Parliament and they say, I'm not signing up for that foolishness. We as Parliamentarians have a responsibility to stop that foolishness, to put real business on the table, get rid of the games, and that way I do believe more women will come to the table.

We need to get out of our way and create a welcoming atmosphere. It is not just about family-friendly time schedules. It's also about respect for one another, and we have to start that right here in our own House and lead by example.

There have been many nasty things said on the floor of this very House by Members now sitting in this Chamber that have contributed to the – or sitting in this Chamber over the years, that have contributed to the toxic atmosphere that women face. Some people can tolerate that and some people will be no part of it. It is not for the belligerent and disrespectful to decide who gets to lead our province.

Those who consider themselves to be strong have no right to bully those that they consider to be weak. We need to stand up to bullying, not

just in the classroom but also in the boardroom, in the public forum and right here in this very Chamber. And this includes bullying of municipal councillors and mayors as well. We've seen that right here.

We saw bullying against the past administrations, the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, the kind of language that crossed the line. Those who insist on bullying others should be called on it and told either to stop or leave. None of us should have tolerance for such bullying of each other or anyone else.

I believe one reason that bullying is more likely to drive women from politics and leadership roles is that women understand that violence, disproportionately, targets women. Women have a good reason to feel unsafe when situations get threatening. It is natural for people to gravitate away from situations when they feel unsafe.

If some people pollute an environment with violent words and violent behaviour, many women will avoid that place, so will many men, whether it's a boardroom, or a Legislature, or a working environment like a fire hall, or barracks, or construction site or whatever. And remember, violence is quite often disguised with what might seem like humour and fun and play, but it's anything but funny to the people who feel that. Buried in the joke is a subtle threat directed at them.

Jokes that imply sexual assault, jokes that imply ridicule or ostracism based on physical features, all of these are examples of violence that poison an environment. Good people, potentially top-notch leaders are being denied to the people of our province and our country and our world because some people choose to poison workplace environments and other people choose to tolerate that.

Our government ran an ad campaign about teaching our children to respect women. The Violence Prevention Initiative was a response to that legitimate need. It must not be sidelined or curtailed. It is a tangible action that the provincial government needs to be taking and the very thing we're talking about in this resolution.

It is so important, Mr. Speaker – and I know my time is winding down; there's so much more I'd like to say. But it's so important that we cultivate respectable environments where we need women to be working and leading because, otherwise, some very capable women are going to remain outside.

Mr. Speaker, as a woman who has long believed in leadership, it's not about being a woman; it's about the fact that we are equal. We are equally as intelligent, equally as capable, equally as competent, and I believe that we here in this House of Assembly need to take the leadership, show the way. Let's stop bullying right here; let's encourage more women to the table.

Thank you so much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

It certainly is great to be back, and it certainly is very important to speak to such a PMR as this one. But I will start by saying that whether we think we can, or whether we think we can't, we are right. I am a strong believer that what we think about, we can bring about.

So again, I'm very pleased to speak to this private Member's resolution. And I am committed to doing as much as I can in my role as MHA, as citizen of my community, and a woman to do as much as I can to help encourage, promote and help guide every woman in my district and across our province. Every woman who comes to my door or makes a phone call to me, I certainly will do everything I can within my role to help make their goals reality.

As we know, and as my colleagues just mentioned, women are still a minority in many professions, especially here in politics. I mean, look no further than our own Newfoundland and Labrador legislature. As we look around the room, we have 40 elected officials here in the

room, and only 10 of those are women. So that certainly needs to change.

We are here today, of course, to promote and to urge our government and to ensure increased participation of women in leadership roles and political roles. I guess, I'll tell my story. I am very proud, of course, and proud of my district, and proud to say that I have become the very first female MHA to be elected in my area of what was Port de Grave, but now the district is Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

I'll talk about my nomination. Back, just following 2013, names started coming forward, and we saw the interest come forward for nominations across the entire province. But in my particular district, which was Port de Grave at the time, there were six candidates, and two of those were women. It was certainly a long, drawn-out battle. Lots of campaigning, lots of running around promoting, meeting with as many organizations as I possibly could; I was up against some tough competition.

Actually, there were two particular candidates who were running for this nomination who came from big political families in the area. Fortunately, with the support of my family, my friends and everybody who came together for me, I managed to pull out that win to become the nominee for the area. I'm proud to say that the other female nominee or who ran for the nomination, rather, Ms. Katherine Crane, came forward and she became a prominent member of my campaign team and is still very supportive today.

I want to mention how important that is. How important it is for us women to stick together. I'll use the example of reality shows that we see on television, such as *Survivor* or *Big Brother*. I'm sure some of us watch those. I know it do when they come on, but we notice even in reality shows, in such shows like this, the women, they don't tend to stick together and they're quickly picked off in these shows. It's something worth noting that we have to support one another to become successful. We achieve the greatest results by working together.

Having said that, throughout my life, I've had some great role models –some support from men, of course. Actually, when I did secure the

nomination, my colleague, the Minister of Justice, was very supportive of me, I must say, and did everything he could to help and to promote and came to the district. That's a great example. We have a lot of great male colleagues here in our caucus and even across the floor over there with our all-party committees and whatnot. Again, I am very proud to say that it is a first for the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

Also, to highlight some powerful women in leadership roles in my district, there was a past president of the Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador, Ms. Judy Morrow, who is a very strong lawyer in the area. Of course, as we know, Judy has a very strong personality and she certainly gets the job done.

But the beginning of my journey began, of course, with my very first support system, that being my family, my immediate family: my mom and my dad and my sister and my two grandmothers in particular. My Nanny Healey, I'll talk about, who just passed away recently, had 13 children. That in itself, I call that leadership, I mean, to raise a family of 13 children who've all managed to do okay in life and to become good people and good members of the community.

Now, perhaps my grandmother was a bit biased. I mean, she stood by me throughout my political journey, as well as at the beginning of the nomination and through the election. She was with me that night of the election as the votes were coming in and also during the nomination as the numbers were coming in. In her eyes, I could do no wrong. Maybe she was a bit biased, but I will never forget her unconditional support.

Every time she looked at me, when I was travelling to university in Halifax or whether it be something I was doing in high school at Ascension Collegiate in Bay Roberts, and then when I embarked on my political journey, just that look she had in her eyes, every time she looked at me, how encouraging that was. It was just this never doubting, never-ending faith that she had in me that I could certainly do whatever I really put my mind to. So that will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Certainly, by my mother, my own mother, I was encouraged to strive and to do the best I possibly

could in everything I put my hand to, especially in my academics. My mother was adamant about everything I did in school, how important it was to study, and to have plans going forward for what I wanted to do when I finished high school and whatnot. She would consistently remind me to do my homework and to study the lessons of the day – and also in music.

I was fortunate enough – my sister and I, Erin, were fortunate enough to have parents who encouraged us to be involved in extra-curricular activities, especially music. And I certainly believe that anything that parents can get their young children involved in, daughters, it certainly contributes to the character they become, and to their confidence, going forward. I mean, every opportunity to speak in front of a crowd, or to get out there and learn how to play a musical instrument or figure skating – I was a figure skater growing up. I wanted to play hockey, was my true desire but back in that time, in the late '80s, early '90s, it wasn't necessarily common for young women to play hockey, especially in the minor hockey associations.

So at first, I figure skated, but then at age 13 I started playing hockey. And at age 36, I still play today. And I love it. Now it's so refreshing to see young girls coming up through the minor hockey. We've had amazing hockey players come from my area. I'll name one, Ms. Ashlee Drover of Bay Roberts, who went away to the United States on a hockey scholarship. The same as, actually my teammate, Ms. Peggy Wakeham, who also travelled I think to Vermont and went on a hockey scholarship, and she plays in the league and certainly that is a leadership role. She's also a referee in many of the leagues in the metro area and Conception Bay North.

So sports also certainly contribute. And I can't talk about figure skating and not mention our Newfoundland and Labrador's own, of course, Kaetlyn Osmond, who is now leading us on a national stage, international stage, doing so well, and again it's a leadership role. These young children – I have a young figure skater coming up for my district by the name of Ms. Jenna Efford. She's outstanding. She travels now outside of the province and throughout the country to really contribute to her skill. Again, these are true leadership roles and skills.

Lots of encouragement for young girls to play, as I mentioned; sports is really huge to increase confidence in young girls coming up. Also in high school, I guess it was my type of personality, I've always been driven – I think I was born this way. The moment I came into the world, whatever I saw or whatever I wanted, I set my sights on and I was determined to go after them.

I'll take my university career for example. I happened to be a political science major and it was in my courses, I guess, learning about Pierre Elliott Trudeau, as I've mentioned before, then I decided this is something I really want to do throughout my life, at some point in time in my career, to put myself out for public office.

Then during my summer jobs, again, I was a tour guide on the Harbour Hopper in Halifax. That was an outgoing role that you're speaking all the time; you're meeting people. So again, I can't emphasize enough how important it is to push yourself out of those comfort zones and to speak and to put yourself in front of crowds as much as possible.

I attended university at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax and, actually, The Mount has about an 80 per cent female enrolment. At that university, there's about 80 per cent female but, ironically, the major I selected, political science, I was the minority. There were mostly men in my major, in my department there for political science.

I then went on to study journalism at Kingstec in Nova Scotia in the Annapolis Valley, and I remember lessons from and lectures from my then professor, Yvonne Colbert, and Jan MacKinnon, who were both players in the industry prior to becoming instructors. I remember learning, of course, about the stereotypes and the boundaries that we would then even have to overcome and face as journalists.

I'll never forget my instructor saying that men typically have an easier time in broadcast roles. I'll use the example, body types and body size. It was said by my professor that a man can get away with being a bit overweight as opposed to a woman on television. I mean, whether it's right or it's wrong, it's unfortunate, but we see

examples of it. I'll never forget that and I remember thinking wow, that's the first time I've heard that said, but I guess it's a smack in the face in a way.

Having said this, as I've gone through my schooling career, my academic career, there were some fantastic women in leadership roles at the CBC where I've done my school internships. I'll use the example for CBC Halifax, Ms. Nancy Waugh. She took me in, set me up for my first internship. She was the producer of CBC TV in Halifax. I must say she was very admirable and it's great to see a woman lead that team, that news team. She was a leader.

Of course, our very own Debbie Cooper here at CBC, been a long-time host here at CBC *Here and Now*. That was my first journalism job when I returned to Newfoundland and Labrador following my school career. Debbie was so kind to me. I actually sat next to Debbie in the newsroom and she was always very helpful and encouraging and I can't say enough about her. Marilyn Boone was also a producer over at CBC and it's great again to see women in these roles. Cathy Porter of CBC Radio was also the boss, as we like to say.

But again, I have to mention here a man who did have a big impact on my career, my journalism career, and that is the late John Furlong. Being a man, he was very encouraging and he did everything he could to reach out to a young journalist like myself to give me a chance, to give me opportunity and kind of teach me some tricks of the trade. So there are some wonderful men, as I've mentioned, who do have a great lasting impact on the people we become.

Look no further than our own prime minister, Justin Trudeau. When questioned by the media about why Justin wanted to put equal representation of women in his cabinet than men, what was his reply? Because it's 2016. That's what it was at the time. So that's refreshing to see our prime minister, of course, lead that. And it made headlines; it made news across our country, throughout our provinces and whatnot.

Also in our very own districts, I have a lot of great women as well, but not enough. Again, I

can't emphasize enough, we need more women at every level of politics, municipal and provincial. Also, throughout my district, we're starting to see more women become involved in such as firefighting, volunteer firefighting. The Spaniard's Bay volunteer fire department has now more women coming forward. There's one woman on the Upper Island Cove volunteer squad, of course, Ms. Rebecca Mercer. I commend her. She's the only girl there, but we want to see more of that. And we have women – also, I have to name Sonia Williams of Harbour Grace who is also a town councillor and a volunteer firefighter. So it's refreshing to see these women in leadership roles, but we need to see more.

Each town council, they may have one or two women, so everything we can do – and colleagues, it's our obligation and it's our responsibility as MHAs, we are role models, it's our duty to make ourselves accessible to the people in our districts and to do everything we can. I know I enjoy taking every opportunity to get to a school, whether it's to talk with young people then and to really tell these children – and it was told to me, I remember. Toni-Marie Wiseman visited Ascension Collegiate when I was a student at Ascension and she made an impression on me. And I will say, another powerful woman in a leadership role here. Toni-Marie has been a prominent face at NTV for quite some time. When I worked with Toni-Marie at the Newfoundland Broadcasting Corporation, again, she was very helpful and it's refreshing to see.

So I can't encourage us enough, I mean, men and women, we need to get out there, we need to get on the ground, meet with our organizations. I know I do and I certainly enjoy it throughout our district at every opportunity to be accessible, to talk to our school groups, as young as primary school. I often visit Coley's Point Primary School in my district and I have a lot of bright, young students who I'm very proud of there. And I will do everything I can to promote their education, to promote their confidence, you name it, I will certainly do it.

Look around the room here that we have, we have a lot of great women here in our very own Legislature. Of course, we can't name them by name but by district: Cartwright – L'Anse au

Clair, the Member started off this PMR and she's going to close it. That's great. We've got the minister of children, social development, seniors – not right in that order. And over here in Burin – Grand Bank, Harbour Main, right next to me; across the way, St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, St. John's Centre; and Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune – woo hoo.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. P. PARSONS: Oh, yeah, absolutely, our Finance Minister. I missed her there. And the Minister of Natural Resources. So we have a lot of great women here and I know these girls – should I say the girls – and myself we are committed to doing everything we can to promote this. So I certainly look forward to the co-operation of each and every Member here in this wonderful House of Assembly to support this private Member's resolution, and we need to do as much as we can, of course, to – and maybe someday we'll look across the room and we'll have an even keel, maybe we'll have a balance of 50-50 of female MHAs along with our strong colleagues, our male colleagues.

So again, thank you, it is a privilege to speak to this resolution. Always great to stand up here and represent the great District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave. I will take my seat, and I look forward to seeing the co-operation of all Members here today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm very happy to stand and speak to this private Member's motion and today, being March 1, we are exactly a week away from International Women's Day, which will be celebrated all over the world and there'll be a number of activities that will be celebrated to acknowledge the great gains that women have made across the planet.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things, I have been a long-time feminist activist, and I often say I was

a breach birth, so I know that there's more than one way of doing things and more than one way of arriving.

The hard-won rights of women – and one of the things I have learned as a feminist activist over the years is that our rights are never given to us. We have to work so hard for them. We work so incredibly hard. We work with passion. We work with compassion. We work with expertise and brilliance.

And we know that for the survival of our communities, it is so important to look at the table where decisions are made and say, who is not at the table. Because we know how crucial it is, absolutely crucial, that the diversity of our communities is represented wherever decisions are made on how we make decisions about how we live together as communities. Without that, our decision making is impoverished. To not have parity of women at the table where decisions are made is like going through life with one hand over one eye, that we do not get the whole picture.

That's why it's so important that around our tables where these decisions are made, that women are at the tables, that indigenous First Nations people are at the tables, that racialized people are at the tables, that people with incredible wealth are at the tables – but that's mostly who's at the tables now – that people without wealth are at the tables. That younger people, older people, working people, people with disabilities, the diversity of our communities must be represented at the tables.

That's what feminism is about, Madam Speaker. Feminism is about looking at the tables to see who's not there and then not only to just sit there and say: wow, wouldn't it be nice if there were more women at the table. It's not just about saying wow, wouldn't it be nice if there were more people of colour around the table; wouldn't it be nice if there were more indigenous people, First Nations people around the table.

Feminism is about doing whatever it is we can to ensure the blocks and barriers that keep the diversity of our communities from getting to those tables – that's what feminism is about, actively removing blocks and barriers.

Identifying them first, helping to remove them and then also helping to empower the people who are not at the table. Giving them what they need, finding what it is we need to ensure that the people we need at the table can get to the table.

I could only wish, Madam Speaker, if the people at home could see my desk right now. I've actually spread my papers over onto the desk of my colleague, the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi. I've got papers all over the floor. I have all kinds of documents that talk about what's being done all over the world to ensure not just oh, wouldn't it be nice, but to ensure that women are at the tables where decisions are being made.

What are the blocks and barriers? What do we do about it? What are the resources that are needed by women in order to be elected into positions of decision –making, to be supported in their campaigns? How do we change our Legislatures so it makes it more possible for women to be at the table? How do we do our business so it makes it more possible for women's voices to be part of the decision-making process?

I was here, Madam Speaker, last week when the Daughters of the Vote had their conference, and it was a thrill because I sat up close to where you were and the other side of the House was filled with young women; bright, passionate, compassionate, skilled, expert young women filing all the seats on the other side of the House. What a pleasure it was, how exciting it was to look there and see women occupying those seats.

It was in such contrast to what we see here today, because we only have 10 women in our House of Assembly. And we've been at this a long time, since 1949. And Canada has been at it for a much longer time, for 150 years. At this rate, how long will it take – at the rate that we are gaining women in our Legislatures, how long will it take before we reach parity?

It isn't going to just happen. It doesn't just happen. Rights and progress doesn't just happen. It needs concrete measures. That's what I would like to help the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair – I was kind of excited to read her

motion, her private Member's motion. We all want to see more women here in the House of Assembly. We all want to see more women in positions of power.

Basically, what we have here is a private Member's motion that says, wouldn't it be nice. Well, I believe we all think wouldn't it be nice, but it doesn't just happen. And the young women who attended the workshop last week told us about the blocks and barriers they experience, and we know them.

I have a fabulous paper here that's from an international consortium where they called together representatives from a number of countries; from every continent in the world to look at what are the blocks and barriers to women achieving full equality in their parliamentary procedures and what needs to be done. It's not just about thinking, wouldn't it be nice. There are very concrete measures, and I would encourage people to read this.

Gender-based analysis; the missed opportunities we've had already in this House where the gender-based analysis was not applied to the budget. A gender-based analysis was not applied to the procurement act. A gender-based analysis was not applied to the Independent Appointments Commission, where they just newly appointed to the board of Nalcor three women and eight men, and not a single person from Labrador, and not a single indigenous First Nations person. Without using concrete tools, this private Member's motion is meaningless.

It's sort of like – the only analysis I could think of would be like the hon. Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, who I truly believe is committed to ensuring that there are more women in our House of Assembly and in leadership roles and in our agencies, boards and commissions – I believe she wants that to happen. But basically her private Member's motion says that this hon. House urges the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to encourage increased participation of women in leadership and political roles.

It's not enough. It's somewhat meaningless unless we identify and put our money where our mouth is. There are a number of measures this government can do to make that a reality. And

it's not going to happen just by saying we're going to encourage women to do it – because women want to be here. They don't need encouragement; they need the blocks and barriers that prevent them from being elected addressed. Poverty, child care, wage disparity, home care, that's what women need in order to be able to fully participate, not only in this House, but in our communities.

Without anything to remove the blocks and barriers, without anything to empower women and give women the resources they need in order to address the systemic discrimination that still exists, this is meaningless. So it's sort of like the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, in all sincerity, saying to the women in her district, I want you to come to the House of Assembly, I want you to come to St. John's and I'm giving you a car. However, there is no engine in that car and there is no gas in the gas tank, but somehow you've got to get that car here. And that's what this private Member's motion is like.

I applaud the emotion and the intent, but there is no engine in the car, there is no fuel in the gas tank. Therefore, Madam Speaker, I propose an amendment, a friendly amendment to your private Member's motion, one that I would think you would absolutely support and encourage because it's about putting an engine in that car, it's about putting gas in that tank so that we can go beyond just saying we're going to encourage women to be elected, we are going to say we are going to put measures in place so that women in fact can be elected.

So I propose an amendment, seconded by the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, as follows:

The proposed resolution is amended at the last clause by adding immediately after the word "roles" the words and commas "by immediately making changes to the operations of the government by bringing to this Honorable House proposed amendments to the *Independent Appointments Commission Act* which provide for a gender balance for appointment recommendations and by applying a workable, Gender-based Analysis Tool to the process of applying the *Public Procurement Act* when it is proclaimed, and preparing the annual budget of the province" with a gender-based analysis tool.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member for St. John's Centre has put forth an amendment to the resolution that we're debating today, so this House will take a brief recess to consider the amendment.

Recess

MR. SPEAKER: Are the House Leaders ready?

Order, please!

The amendment is deemed out of order. As stated on page 766 of O'Brien and Bosc, an amendment is out of order if it is beyond the scope and principle of the bill.

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

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

And I'm not surprised by that ruling. I somewhat expected it because it changed the private Member's motion in a substantive way, substantially. Because there isn't any substance to the private Member's motion. There's no substance at all. There is no teeth in this. It is merely kind of window dressings or fairy dust or something about wouldn't it be nice, government can encourage women.

Mr. Speaker, again, we have a gender-based analysis tool in this province that wasn't used on the procurement legislation, which is so important. It wasn't used on last year's budget. I know that to be true because I did an ATIPP – two ATIPPs as a matter of fact – and there was no evidence whatsoever that the gender-based analysis tool was used. And there's no gender analysis done on the Independent Appointments Commission. Those are incredibly missed opportunities. This government missed those opportunities. They did not stand up for the women of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want to quote from the international document that I referred to earlier in debate and it says: If we believe and support the statement that women have the right to equal political participation then what we must do to ensure

that, to ensure that the blocks and barriers to women's full participation are removed and that measures are put in place to help facilitate and ensure so women will have full, equal political participation.

So what I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, and I ask for every Member in this House to take responsibility to ensure that blocks and barriers are removed and to ensure that women have what they need. Let's not just give them a car with no engine and with no fuel; let's make sure that we put fuel in the gas tank and that there is an engine in the car.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly an honour to stand here in my place today and support my colleague, the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, on her resolution and to speak about the importance of women in politics but certainly, generally, women in leadership roles across our society.

I heard the comment earlier by the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave that women must support women but I also believe that so must men. I've had the fortunate pleasure to have strong women in my life, my entire life: my two grandmothers; one a mother of 13 and another a mother of six. In fact, my grandmother, I call her the chief letter writer in Bar Haven Island in Placentia Bay. She would be the woman that people would turn to, to write her letters. She always taught me that the pen was mightier than the sword.

We have so many role models in our own personal lives that I think it's important to recognize my own mother. A strong career woman, a teacher, an administrator and someone who got married back in the early '80s and kept her own name. She still has her own name to this day. That's a woman of independence, Mr. Speaker, and a woman who I admire a great deal. Of course, I have one sibling, a sister, who is a teacher and someone who I respect greatly.

So we all have those personal stories, Mr. Speaker, and we can all relate to that. Indeed, in my own work life, my first boss was the federal minister, Judy Foote, someone who I look up to as a role model and certainly as a mentor, determined and strong politician in her own right. Of course, everyone knows the shared work history of myself and the Member for Burin – Grand Bank who I have always looked to as another strong woman in my life. She's someone who, when I worked with her, juggled many issues and files, and still does. It's one of her many talents.

Beyond that, here in the Legislature, we have excellent colleagues: the Member for Harbour Main, the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, the Member for Windsor Lake, the Member for Burin – Grand Bank, Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, Placentia – St. Mary's, and of course Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, St. John's Centre and St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

So we know about that, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to stand here today – I'm not going to take a lot of time, but I think it's very important that we look to the women in our lives and the women who we work with. My campaign manager, Mary Hodder, was the first female Deputy Speaker here in the House of Assembly. We have another female Deputy Speaker and probably the first one to take the Chair as Acting Speaker for a day, and she did a terrific job, just before Christmas, at that.

I think that we can all look to women in our lives and as leaders in our communities; we need to do that. I'm certainly saying that there are barriers to women becoming elected, much like young people, financial and otherwise, so I identify with those issues.

I think everything that we can do, Mr. Speaker, to help support women – because I know that's our goal. We want a Legislature that has young people in it, that has more women in it, more Indigenous persons, persons with disabilities, persons of visible minorities. And when we achieve that, we truly will have a diverse Legislature.

I'm not going to take up any more time, Mr. Speaker, but I just want to say to all of our female Members, you do an excellent job at

bringing perspectives to the table. I will say that I am in full support of the resolution. I hope that we all support it.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I will take my seat.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Thank you for acknowledging me, and I appreciate my colleague across the House sitting down early, not using his time, because in private Members' resolutions, we're on a short time; but I still get my 15 minutes, now that he hasn't used up his time. So I appreciate that, giving me a chance, because I do have a fair bit I want to say about this resolution this afternoon. I think it's a very important one.

If people are just tuning in the BE IT RESOLVED part of this resolution is: BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House urges the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to encourage increased participation of women in leadership and political roles.

My colleague for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune behind me, earlier, I believe, referenced and expressed her concern or suggested her concern about why it is that the House should have to urge government to do that when a government really should be taking a leadership role in encouraging women to take leadership roles themselves, not only in politics but leadership roles in communities, business and in government as well.

There are many examples, and we've heard from Members in the House this afternoon, where women have been important in the lives of all of us. How true is that? They certainly have been, and they've played an important role. They certainly played an important role and continue to do so in my work life and my home life as well. We should encourage women to participate in leadership roles.

During our time in government – Members opposite always like to talk about when we were in government, so I'm take the opportunity to do that this afternoon because when we were in government – and my colleague earlier referenced former Premier Kathy Dunderdale, who was the first woman to hold office as premier in our province. There have been lot of examples of women across the country now and, currently, there are women as well who are premiers in the country.

Premier Dunderdale had a very strong focus on exactly this very topic and this very importance of encouraging and creating a climate where women have opportunities in leadership roles. The NLOWE proves itself and proves that the women have the drive and talent and ideas to success; a great organization that supports women entrepreneurs for Newfoundland and Labrador and they do very, very good work.

Premier Dunderdale herself, while she was premier, led the first Ovations. It was in 2012 it was announced that Ovations would take place. It occurred in early 2013. Ovations was about applauding and recognizing the accomplishments of women in communities all throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, but not only just in communities in volunteer organizations but also in business and also in government.

There was some 700 people attended the afternoon forum; some 800 participated in the dinner event, part of Ovations. Ovations didn't end with just the one-day discussion about the importance of women. There were a significant number of important women, strong women who've proven themselves in leadership roles that attended and participated in Ovations.

People like Zoe Yujnovich, who was the president and CEO of IOC at the time; Krystin Pellerin, well known to many of us is an accomplished actor who has done very, very well for herself, not only here in the province but abroad as well; and then there are local people so well recognized by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians like Amy House and Kelly-Ann Evans and Dana Parsons and Janet Cull, and a whole list of others that are very well known that participated and attended the idea to stimulate and provide opportunities for women.

It didn't end there; it went on to a series of lunch-and-learn events that were carried on around the province. They happened over the months following that. They proved to be very, very successful. There were many examples of good lessons learned, ideas and creativity that were shared. Because having the discussion about encouraging women to leadership roles, to politics, it's corporate knowledge that's shared and passed on, and it grows.

I have a constituent of mine who particularly, around the same time, had a very good experience with Premier Dunderdale, and this grandmother sent me a note today. I know her well and I inquired on her today and I said I remember when, and she sent me a note today and it's regarding her granddaughter who she is the primary caregiver for.

She says: Kathy met, and names her granddaughter, at school in December 17, 2013 – she remembers the very date, Mr. Speaker; it was so important to her, she remembers the very date – after her granddaughter had done a project on Premier Dunderdale. The granddaughter was so happy to even be recognized, especially by the premier, and for her to take the time out of her busy schedule and speak to her in private and then in her classroom, she said it was unbelievable.

At the time, the granddaughter had a loss in her family and she was still working through that, very hard, and Premier Dunderdale had a significant, positive impact on this young woman. She's very much a young woman today. She was humbled as a child, at the time. She was very happy to know that the hard work that someone does could actually come down to a level of a school child, a school person, a young person in school.

She actually goes on that after that, the premier did a follow-up visit at this young lady's house and followed up with gifts the following Christmas and so on, and they grew that relationship. But what's most important today is this young woman whom I know – I know her as well – it's had a significant impact on this young woman's life. The grandmother even points out that on the day that Premier Dunderdale was leaving office she took the time to write a note to the young woman.

That's how it speaks to how leadership occurs. It has to be a focused effort and a concentrated effort and when those bonds can be built and stimulation, encouragement and building confidence in young women can occur, it's important not just to do it and drop it; it has to be continuous. I know in that particular case that's what Premier Dunderdale did. And I can tell you that woman and I have become good friends to this day and I've heard her speak many times about Premier Dunderdale and the impact it's had on her granddaughter. That's the type of things that need to happen.

In recent years, I stand to be corrected, but there was concerted effort as well to give opportunities for women in government and leadership roles. And there was a strategic effort to make sure that opportunities would happen. We know, Mr. Speaker, that so often in history, we reflect on the past when a woman, a very capable woman, and a man applied that there were so many times that if they were equal, or sometimes when the woman was seen to be a better candidate, the man got the job first. That should never be the case. That should never be the case. If the woman is the best applicant, that's who should get the job and should be successful in getting the job.

In my time in government, I know we talked about gender balance quite frequently. And with deputy ministers, we had achieved – I think 47 per cent was the balance of gender between women and men, which I think is very good – very good. The Clerk was a woman when we left government. Strategic, very important positions, senior roles, important roles in government were held by women; I think 47 per cent comes to mind. And I think that we all have to represent the desire to find that equality in the workplace, and especially in government.

It's interesting with Cabinet lately, and opposite – the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair brought forward this motion today. I could speak to many of the women that are here in the House because we have some very strong, capable women – there is one who sits behind me here – who's a significant contributor to our caucus, and I know how strong she is in her own district, and there are women here who have great value.

Interesting for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair – and I'm going to highlight her; I hope she doesn't mind – but the Premier has been criticized for being the Minister of Labrador Affairs, when the Member bringing forward this motion today is a very capable parliamentarian who's done very, very well. And she's the Deputy Speaker and does a good job – absolutely.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: She does an excellent job and all her colleagues agree. And she would have been a great opportunity for the Premier to put her in Cabinet. Because they have out of their seven female Members in the Liberal side of the House, three are Cabinet ministers. Out of 13 Cabinet ministers, three of them are women. And she would have been a great Cabinet minister. It fails me today to not know why he didn't do it. He could have made her parliamentary assistant responsible for Labrador Affairs. He could have done that as well, her being from Labrador. And he didn't do it.

I know that the government opposite have great favour for the prime minister and for the federal Liberal government. Because the prime minister on Cabinet day, remember he said, it's 2016. Or was it was 2015 at the time – because it was 2015 at the time when he was asked why he had gender balance in his Cabinet. And it was an important point for him, as the prime minister, it was an important point for him as a feminist and as a Liberal to have a balanced Cabinet. But our government, our provincial Liberals, chose a different way to do that.

So while we as Members of the House can encourage government – we can encourage government – but for Members opposite you can do that; you don't have to come to the House to do that. You can do that in your caucus room. You can do that in your Cabinet. You can encourage government to take steps that would help provide that balance, and gender balance, when you have capable, strong women available to be Cabinet ministers.

I pointed out one Member. I'm not going to mention any of the rest of them. I just mentioned her because she was the one who brought forward this resolution today, which I really felt

was ironic, and I mean it in all sincerity to the Member opposite. I found it ironic that she was bringing this forward when my bets were that she was going to be a Cabinet minister, and for the reasons that I just laid out to Members of the House.

So having achieved the 47 per cent was done on a conscious effort. The government has now gone through, I'd say, three efforts to reduce the size of the public service. Last year, they reduced deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers. I don't know if there's a gender lens put on that. Maybe the Member, when she closes debate, she could refer to that. We don't know if there's a gender lens put on that at all or what the gender implications were.

We know that they filled a number of those positions, either changed the titles – I know the Department of Transportation changed the title. They have a new position over there that's senior advisor to stakeholder relations or something like, that is a new position that was filled by a political staffer. So they filled a number of Liberal friendlies into some of those ADM and director positions and so on. I haven't done an analysis on the gender balance on those. It would be interesting to do it.

Last week, they did their new rollout of their leaner, flatter government, I think are the right words, and we don't know if there's a gender balance there. They did two things last week because they've gone into people, pointed a finger at them and said: Your job is gone, pack your box up and go home. But they've also created a circumstance where pools of employees, and we're hearing numerous examples of this, where pools of employees now have been told over the last week – and the minister articulated this was going to happen. She said it was going to happen over the next week, so I thought by today it would have been done but she said over the next week.

There are departments, by the way, who told departments and announced in departments, everybody who's impacted have now been notified. So we know that as well. But they've created where pools of people have been told: Okay, there are four of you now in this office. We're reducing you to two. You're going to

have to compete for your jobs. See over the next few months how that works for you.

What a terrible thing to do. We don't know what the gender balance is there, if there is a gender analysis done on it. Again, the Member for Cartwright-L'Anse au Clair can speak to that when she closes debate, maybe she can, but maybe we can find out in the coming days. But what a circumstance to say to women, you have women who work in government who are single mothers, who have young families, who have husbands and wives who work in government.

I understand government's desire to reduce the size of the public service. That's not my issue. My issue is how you do it because if you create anarchy in people's lives, you create unknown, and that third step I just referred, creating competition in the workplaces to keep your job in the future, has caused significant disruption to women and men and families in the public service.

I think that's probably been as tough on people – a lot of people that I've spoken to have said: I just wish I knew. I've talked to lots of women who said: I wish I knew. I have to make obligations with child care and transportation, all those things. I wish I knew if I'm going to be out of a job in a couple of months' time when I unsuccessfully compete against my co-workers, who I've gotten along with so well and now we don't talk to each other because we're trying to protect our own jobs.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: So, Mr. Speaker, I think I got a spark out of Members opposite over there now, and I guess they don't like some of the things that I'm saying to them. But this is about encouraging women in leadership. It's about providing an avenue and a means for that to take place.

The short 15 minutes I had to talk today is not near enough to talk about this important issue, Mr. Speaker, because it is an important issue, and it's an important discussion for us to have as parliamentarians. As this private Member's resolution comes to a close in the next 15 minutes or so, I really hope government continues to put a focus on ensuring that we

have the best people possible, and that women are afforded opportunities as much as anyone else, no matter what part of the province they come from, no matter what their background is, they should be given equal opportunities for leadership roles in government as anyone else. And I certainly encourage them to seek public office as well because they do bring great value to the work that we do as parliamentarians as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. C. BENNETT: And the Minister Responsible for the Women's Policy Office, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Absolutely.

MS. C. BENNETT: I'm proud to stand here today in that capacity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. C. BENNETT: There have been a couple of things in the debate this afternoon that I want to clarify for those listening at home. And I understand that the Member who is going to close the PMR is going to speak fairly quickly, or shortly, so I'm going to have to be very expeditious.

To the Member opposite for the District of Paradise, I would ask him why he has a very competent woman in his caucus who he has not provided an opportunity for leadership in his caucus, or his Cabinet, and why he hasn't seen fit to reward her for her incredible work and the great work that she does in the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to talk a little bit about the work that we have done in the Independent Appointments Commission. I'm proud to stand here today and say that as of the recent numbers I have yesterday, Tier 1 entries, 32 per cent –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

Thirty-two per cent of those appointments are females; at the Tier 2 level, 48 per cent are females. And we are working very hard inside the Women's Policy Office with all of our colleagues, and I would ask the Members opposite to engage in this incredible opportunity for us to encourage every single Newfoundlander and Labradorian, particularly women, to participate in the Independent Appointments Commission.

Mr. Speaker, Members opposite also alluded to the fact that they're questioning whether or not there is gender lenses provided to public policy as part of this government's activities. I can assure the Members opposite that there is an active process that the Women's Policy Office is undertaking, including training, ongoing training inside departments on gender analysis, ongoing support for departments as they write legislation, ongoing analysis and detail in every single piece of material that comes forward in recent months to make sure that the gender lens is applied.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to speak specifically about the fact that we are here debating that this House needs more female representation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. C. BENNETT: And let me say, Mr. Speaker, that let us first look at our own houses and our first houses that we should be looking at are the party systems that our particular parties operate in. And I would challenge the two parties opposite to look at things like our party has looked at: things like a strong women's commission that recruits candidates and encourages training and mentorship for those candidates; funding programs for those members who want to run in office and don't have the financial resources to do it.

Because the thing that's going to change in this House of Assembly is making sure that when women who run – and we know they win when they run – get a chance to be supported by their party, just like this party over here has done, Mr. Speaker.

With that said, I'll happily turn over my time to my Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair who I'm so proud to work with, particularly in light of the great work she did last week on Daughters of the Vote. An incredible number of young women across this province who passionately want to be in this House as passionately as I do, as passionately as my female colleagues do, as passionately as every feminist on this side – and I would argue every feminist on that side – wants to be here so that we can make sure that the words and the important policy discussions that are happening in this House happen in a way that represents 51 per cent of the population, and that the issues related to women are reflected in the policy decisions we make in a way that's meaningful, responsible and progressive.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A wonderful debate here this afternoon on a very important topic. Nice to hear from a number of strong, capable women, women parliamentarians, but also especially nice to hear from men.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes when we talk about the barriers to women, it's really, really sad, but I will confess because I have a reputation for telling the truth and I'm honest to a fault sometimes my friends say. Sometimes the biggest barriers to women are other women.

I want to go back to a couple of things that the Member for St. John's Centre said today around the PMR and not going far enough, and what we need, and talking about we have a car but we don't have the motor and we don't have the gas. Well, I know a lot of strong women who don't need the car at all because they can put on snowshoes and they can blaze the trail and find the way, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: You know, we talk about women needing to break through the glass ceiling, but, Mr. Speaker, one of the things we

need to break through, and it's sad that it's 2017 and we're still having this conversation today, it's breaking through the barriers of attitude that still exist.

I would look to the Member for St. John's Centre and say it really, really immensely saddened me, it saddened me as an individual here in the Legislature, a parliamentarian, a position that I humbly hold since 2013, when I saw their leader on February 1 tweet about the newly appointed Minister for Democratic Institutions and say, in reference to the prime minister, he sent a rookie woman. He sent a rookie women. And this is three weeks ago.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important PMR that we're discussing here today, because this is the kind of stuff that we're still dealing with. The stories from women saying they elected a pretty face. This is the stuff that makes women dig their heels in and say we will go out and we will show the men and the women of today that women have the right and can be capable and competent at any single table that we sit at.

The concern around the proposed amendment to the PMR, the ruling which my colleague brought down, referenced the Independent Appointments Commission and carving out seats. I will just to speak to that for a moment, because when I've done a little bit of research, under the Independent Appointments Commission, so far 22 individuals were appointed to eight different tiers, and 32 per cent of these have been female.

They did not get these positions because they were female, but they got the position because they were the most entitled, the most qualified. And that's what I like about this. If I decide to run for a position against my colleague here for Lake Melville, I don't want a seat carved out for me; I'm going to beat them fair and square. That's the way I look at this, Mr. Speaker, as a women.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: There have also been 25 individuals appointed, to date, to Tier 2 entities, and 48 per cent of these have been female. So I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we're moving in the right direction, and it all starts with

conversations like we're having here today, important debate in the Chamber.

I want to thank the speakers today. The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune spoke very passionately. She's obviously – I'm going to say something that's a little bit political, and I told her this after the election. I said, I thought about you and I admire you, because there was this red wave that went through – and I give credit too where credit is due. And sometimes your career can end because of that. She's obviously doing something right; she's obviously getting back to her constituents and showing up and she's a strong woman –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: – and she has a lot of challenges. She represents a district that's far away from the Legislature, and I can relate to the challenges and balancing the work life and the family act, and I commend her for that.

The Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, who has her own interesting story to tell, very interesting to listen to; she's worked, herself, in lots of male-dominated areas and proven that she's capable and competent. And the Member for St. Centre, who always brings lots of passion to the Legislature when she speaks, Mr. Speaker, and an interesting career in film, and certainly nobody here would dispute, a strong advocate for women.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: And I appreciated her comments here today.

Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege every day of sitting next to the youngest parliamentarian ever elected in our Legislature, and it was nice to hear him get on his feet today and talk about the influence of powerful, strong women in his life – no doubt, strong women that have helped play a role in getting him where he is today.

The Member for Topsail – Paradise, I thank him for his confidence in me. I guess what I would say to that, Mr. Speaker, is the way I was raised, you have a job to do; you do it to the best of your ability. Everything happens for a reason; we are where we are at the time. I will continue

to get up every single day with my first loyalty being to the people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair and then as a team player, working with this great bunch that I work with. I thank the Member for Topsail – Paradise for his comments today and his accolades to the strong women in his life.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, to my colleague, the Member for Windsor Lake – and I can tell you those of us who work close to her know that she hasn't had an easy ride either. The last year, it's been a difficult one, but many times I've heard her speak very passionately, wanting to help pave the way or make things a little bit better for women.

I had the privilege, just a couple of weeks ago, on behalf of the Minister for the Status of Women, to travel to New Brunswick for the Atlantic caucus meeting and to sit with Premier Gallant who holds the Status of Women portfolio, Minister Biggar from PEI and Minister Bernard from Nova Scotia. I spent the day, Mr. Speaker, and during that day as we talked about issues that are important to women, and breaking down the barriers, and how do we reduce the violence against women, that day, we released the *Guide to Gender Diversity in Employment*.

That was led by my colleague here. That was led by Newfoundland and Labrador. I had the privilege of doing it, Mr. Speaker, but I was just representing the minister. And I want to thank her for that. Because not only do we need more women in legislatures, we need more women at all of the different tables. We need more equal representation in the workplace, especially in the male-dominated areas, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to close by saying society benefits when women have a seat at government and decision-making tables. Life impacts women differently and having their experience heard creates better policies and wiser governments. Mr. Speaker, the more women that we have in politics and in Chambers, the more young women have role models to look up to.

I believe that it all starts with all of us, doing our part to encourage young women to pursue their dreams and aspirations and support them in whatever way we can.

I'm happy to be part of a Liberal government that, provincially and federally, have elected more women to date than any other party, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: When I first got elected in 2013, I was actually the only female in the caucus at that time. I have to say, I was treated with nothing but the utmost respect. I think that just goes to show, we are breaking down the barriers every single day, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the day when there will be certainly more female colleagues in this Legislature, at municipal tables, at provincial boards and out in the male-dominated, non-traditional female jobs, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank everyone again for their participation in this private Member's motion today.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

All those in favour of the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

AN HON. MEMBER: Do you want Division called?

MR. SPEAKER: You need four more people, I believe, to stand, if –

AN HON. MEMBER: That's what we were doing.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

Division has been called.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: All those against the motion?

Division has been called.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips ready?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

CLERK (Barnes): Ms. Coady, Mr. Byrne, Mr. Haggie, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Crocker, Ms. Cathy Bennett, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Trimper, Mr. Warr, Ms. Dempster, Mr. Browne, Mr. Mitchelmore, Mr. Edmunds, Ms. Haley, Mr. Bernard Davis, Mr. Derek Bennett, Mr. Holloway, Ms. Pam Parsons, Mr. Bragg, Mr. Finn, Mr. Reid, Mr. Dean, Mr. King, Mr. Paul Davis, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Brazil, Ms. Perry, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Petten, Ms. Michael, Ms. Rogers, Mr. Lane.

Mr. Speaker, the ayes: 32; the nays: zero. The vote is unanimous.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The vote has been registered as unanimous.

The motion has passed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: It being Private Members' Day, this House now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 in the afternoon.