



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLVIII

THIRD SESSION

Number 21

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA

Thursday

May 17, 2018

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

In the Speaker's gallery today, I am very honoured to welcome the Hon. Paul Quassa, Premier of Nunavut, to our Chamber.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: It's a great honour, Sir, to have you here with us today.

Also accompanied with him is Teevi Mackay from the Government of Nunavut, and you'll see – all Members – on your desk that Teevi has provided to us a pin of their Coat of Arms for Nunavut. It's a very beautiful pin, please wear it with pride.

Also accompanying them, and on the occasion of National Seal Products Day are: Ms. Rowena House, Ms. Joan Kane, and Mr. Bruno Vinhas. They've been joining us here today for a special ceremony we had in Confederation Building.

Welcome to you all.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: In the public gallery today, and I'm feeling rather secure, we have many representatives from the RCMP and the RNC who are all here for a Ministerial Statement.

With the RCMP we have: Assistant Commissioner Peter Clark, Commanding Officer of the RCMP for Newfoundland and Labrador and a friend of mine, good to see you, Sir; Sergeant Major Doug Pack; Tanya Gilbert, Supervisor in the Operational Communications Centre; Sheryl Noel, Analyst and President of the Union of Safety and Justice Employees; Corporal Trevor Baldwin, Peer to Peer Coordinator with the Health Services Team; Ms. Glenda Power, Director of Strategic Communications.

With the RNC we have: Chief Joseph Boland; Constable Georgina Short, Special Programs Coordinator; Constable Tammy Madden, Criminal Investigation Division; and Constable

Allan Rowe, Operational Patrol Services Division.

Welcome to you all.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I would like to take this occasion, before we begin our formal proceedings, I'd like to rule on a point of order raised on May 15, 2018, yesterday.

This point of order was raised by the Opposition House Leader concerning comments by the Premier in Question Period. The Opposition House Leader indicated that he believed the Premier used offensive words against a Member of this House contrary to Standing Order 49.

With regard to the content of these comments, I would like to draw the attention of the House to page 618 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Second Edition, where we are clearly reminded that: "The proceedings of the House are based on a long-standing tradition of respect for the integrity of all Members. Thus, the use of offensive, provocative or threatening language in the House is strictly forbidden. Personal attacks, insults and obscenities are not in order."

When speaking in this House, Members must remain ever cognizant of these fundamental rules. They exist to safeguard the reputation and dignity not only of the House itself but also that of its Members.

O'Brien and Bosc, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states on page 619: "In dealing with unparliamentary language, the Speaker takes into account the tone, manner and intention of the Member speaking; the person to whom the words at issue were directed; the degree of provocation; and, most importantly, whether or not the remarks created disorder in the Chamber."

It is not that a statement or behaviour is incredibly egregious, but that it causes disruption or disorder. Although I find that there is no point of order, I do remind every Member to be respectful in their remarks to each other.

Further, if there is an issue and a Member believes that his or her privileges have been affected or a contempt of this House has occurred, that Member should raise a point of privilege at the earliest opportunity.

Finally, I also remind all Members of the Code of Conduct and the processes available to Members in relation to it.

I thank you very much.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today, we will hear from the districts for: Ferryland, Bonavista, Mount Pearl - Southlands, Topsail - Paradise, and Labrador West.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in the hon. House today to recognize Rachael Tuff, an 11-year-old female athlete from my district who exhibits tremendous athletic abilities.

During the weekend of April 6 to April 8, she attended the 2018 Atlantic Canada Skating Championships that was held in Nova Scotia where she took home a gold medal in the Pre-Juvenile Women (Under 11) Division. The event hosted 200 skaters from age's seven to 18 from all four Atlantic Provinces.

Rachael is a member of the Mount Pearl - Paradise Skating Club and has had a very successful 2017-2018 season. She won gold medals in her division in the following competitions: 2018 Eastern Divisionals, 2018 Skate Canada Newfoundland and Labrador Sectional Competition, and the 2017 Rebecca Park Memorial Friendship Skate.

She also won two silver medals this season, one during the Newfoundland and Labrador Winter Games held in Deer Lake this past March and another in the 2018 Provincial Championships.

These awards show that Rachael as a young athlete is committed, dedicated and has a desire

to be successful. This also shows true leadership to all of her peers.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all my colleagues in this House to join me in recognizing Rachael Tuff for her accomplishments and wish her much success in the future.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, it's not every day that you see a new municipality formed in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's why on January 23, I was honoured to deliver the good news to a packed house that George's Brook - Milton would become the province's newest town.

George's Brook - Milton is a fast growing community and is the gateway to the Bonavista Peninsula. For many years this community was served by dedicated volunteers who formed a Local Service District committee. This committee saw the growth and determined that they needed to take the future in their own hands to build a community that they wanted to see. Over the past couple of years they have worked hard to build that case.

That hard work paid off and a municipal election was held on May 8. Twelve capable candidates put their names forward and over 65 per cent of the population came out to exercise their democratic right including the town's oldest resident at 93, John Stanley. Once the votes were counted, Mayor Craig Pardy, Deputy Mayor Morgan Ellis, Blanche Wiseman, Sarah Whalen, Brian Foley, Darren Ellis and David Adams formed the new council.

Please join me in congratulating the new council and thanking those who put their names forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in this hon. House to recognize several outstanding young people in my community. The 2018 Mount Pearl Focus on Youth Awards was a tremendous success and highlighted the great talent, athleticism and intellectual ability possessed by some very amazing youth, as well as some very community-minded adults who have dedicated themselves to working with youth in Mount Pearl.

These individuals included: Mount Pearl Female Youth of the Year, Emily Garlie; Male Youth of the Year, Nathan Pitts; Youth Volunteer of the Year, Brianna Hepditch; Male Youth Athlete of the Year, Alexander French; Female Youth Athlete of the Year, Camryn Bonia; Youth Team of the Year, Mount Pearl Paradise YBC Senior Boys Team; RNC Youth in Service award winner, Kelsey Stanford; STEM award winner, Abygail Pike; Youth Group of the Year O'Donel Outreach Team; Performing Arts individual award winner, Andrew Hepditch; Visual Arts award winner, Rebecca Purcell; Literary Arts award winner, Erin Burke; Official of the Year, Renee Quick; Adult Volunteer Working with Youth award winner, Paul Price; and Adult Volunteer Working with Youth in Sport award, Claudette Whelan.

There were also performing arts recognition awards presented to the O'Donel High Jazz Band, the Mount Pearl Senior High Little Shop of Horrors cast, band and crew, and the Mount Pearl Senior High Drama Festival.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating these amazing individuals on their accomplishments and wish them all the very best in their future endeavors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

There are dedicated individuals from all communities across Newfoundland and Labrador who often rise to the occasion

whenever one is needed. One of those is Tara Lynch from my District of Topsail - Paradise. Tara was awarded the 2018 Town of Paradise Citizen of the Year award at the 28th annual volunteer appreciation event held last month.

Tara is a community leader and volunteer. She is the chairperson of Holy Family school council and was involved in organizing the Santa Claus breakfast, the Jingle Hop and Family Fun Night. She was instrumental in bringing the Kids Eat Smart breakfast program to Holy Family school and regularly volunteers with the program.

Not only that, but Tara has been involved in forming the school basketball program for students of Holy Family and also serves as an executive on the Paradise Minor Hockey Association, the Mount Pearl Paradise Figure Skating Association and serves on the Paradise Youth and Community Centre advisory committee and volunteers as well with the Holy Family church.

I once heard it said that sometimes if you want to get something done, you should ask a busy person, and Tara is certainly that.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating Ms. Lynch for her dedication and her contribution to the community.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the 2018 graduating class of Menihek High School in Labrador West. This past weekend, 75 young men and women, dressed with the Labrador colours over top of their dresses and suits, marched with their heads held high in pursuit of the next phase of their lives.

The graduation theme this year was: What feels like the end is often the beginning. Very fitting, Mr. Speaker, as high school graduation is the

end of one chapter and sets the path for a new chapter in life, whatever they choose that to be.

I would also like to recognize the teachers and staff of Menihek High, in particular Principal Drover and Vice-Principal Pitcher, who have shown tremendous leadership to the students of Menihek. Both the school and the communities of Labrador West are fortunate to have them guiding our students in the right direction. And, of course, we can't forget the organizing committee and parents who spent countless hours preparing for the big event.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the Class of 2018 at Menihek High School and wish them every success in their future studies and endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, this week I have had the honour to participate in a number of activities to celebrate our Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and Royal Canadian Mounted Police as part of Police Week 2018, which is recognized from May 13 to 19.

On Monday, I joined my colleague the Minister of Health and Community Services, RNC Chief Joe Boland and RCMP Assistant Commissioner Peter Clark at the Elaine Dobbins Centre for Autism to launch Police Week 2018. The location of the event was significant as this week is intended to highlight the importance of partnerships in the community.

As a government, we have put an emphasis on working with police and community partners to ensure that we are living and raising our families in one of the safest provinces in Canada. That security and peace of mind is a direct result of the hard work, dedication, professionalism and

commitment of the women and men in our police agencies.

While policing is a very rewarding job, Mr. Speaker, it comes with significant risks. On Wednesday, I had the privilege of representing the province at a memorial service honouring officers who have died on the job. We recognize the sacrifice peace officers make to keep us safe and we are eternally grateful.

This morning, I was present for the launch of the RNC corporate plan, which outlines the agency's goals for partnerships and engagement, organization development and crime reduction to build safe and healthy communities.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking the members of the RNC and RCMP for their service and for the important work that they do to protect the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. We join the government in recognizing Police Week. In doing so, we acknowledge the top-notch policing service we have in this province. Both the RCMP and RNC provide first-class service to the people of this province. These two organizations are made up of talented and committed professional women and men who have accepted the important duty to serve and protect.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge a recent announcement in my own District of CBS. After several years of lobbying and meetings with RNC in the department, the community will soon be home to a new detachment. I offer my sincere thanks to RNC Chief Joe Boland and the Minister of Justice and Public Safety for working with me and the Town of CBS in making this a reality.

Mr. Speaker, most importantly, I wish to thank all police officers in our province for providing an important service, one that comes with many challenges and dangers. You are to be commended today and every day.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I thank the minister. It's been wonderful to watch our police services, the RNC and RCMP, become increasingly diverse and more reflective of our community. I am particularly happy with the great work they are doing around the issue of mental health. It's been wonderful to watch real partnerships grow between the police and community groups and I, too, am proud to enjoy a good working relationship with them.

I thank all the women and men of the RNC and RCMP for their dedication, their sacrifice, their passion and compassion in serving out people.

Bravo!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, last week was North American Occupational Health and Safety Week, highlighting the importance of preventing injury and illness in the workplace.

In trying to make safety a habit, there is no better place to start than with our young workers. I am happy to say that the youth of this province are leading the way when it comes to working safely. In 2017, young workers, aged 15-24 years reported 1.3 lost-time incidents per 100 workers, a rate that is below the provincial rate of 1.5.

To help reduce this rate even more, WorkplaceNL has a number of youth-oriented programs aimed at helping young workers develop positive safety habits early in their careers. One of these programs is an annual radio and video contest, where grade seven to 12 students can demonstrate their safety knowledge.

Workplace NL works with the winners to professionally produce the radio ad and use the video to help educate others on workplace injury prevention.

This year, the winning radio ad was produced by Kira Clarke and Rebecca Warren of Crescent Collegiate, South Dildo. The winning video was produced by Villanova Junior High Media Crew from Conception Bay South. The members are Michael Burke, Sam Collins, Nicole English, Claire Gillingham, Jacob Kavanagh, Eli Paulin, Ben Philpott, Amythest Rodgers, Alex Samson and Sera Tulk.

Please join me in congratulating the next generation of safety-minded workers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. This side of the House joins government in congratulating the students of Crescent Collegiate and Villanova Junior High in participating in the winning radio and video ads to educate the public on workplace injury prevention.

I'd like to thank all the students who participated and put submissions into this contest. I would also like to thank everyone who took the time to participate last week in North American Occupational Safety and Health Week.

It's important to take every opportunity we have to highlight and educate people about workplace

health and safety. It's a priority we all should have.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. Promoting the rights of workers to young people as they enter the workforce can help encourage a lifetime of safe work practices. The right to refuse unsafe work, the right to unionize and the many other workers' rights in our province help keep workers safe and prevent injury and illness in the workplace.

I'm pleased to join with the minister in celebrating the many students who took part in this year's contest, and offer special congratulations to the teams from South Dildo and Conception Bay South on being chosen as contest winners.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, held annually on May 17.

The purpose of this day is to bring awareness to the violence, discrimination and repression experienced by LGBTQ people worldwide. Its ultimate goal is to achieve inclusion for all members of our society, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.

May 17 commemorates the World Health Organization's decision in 1990 to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder. First recognized in 2004, International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia is now marked in more than 130 countries as a means to share awareness about sexual and gender diversities.

This year's theme – Alliances for Solidarity – reminds us of the potential to effect change when we work together, and recognizes the efforts of all social justice movements to bring about change.

Today is a day of action to engage in a public conversation about sexual and gender diversity and expression, uniting us in support of human rights for all.

Let us each make a commitment to stand for equality, inclusion and respect for all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. On the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, I stand in this House in strong support of acceptance, inclusion and respect for everyone.

Twenty-eight years ago, the World Health Organization declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder. Since that time, we have seen great progress towards the inclusion of all; however, there is still a great deal of work to be done.

I encourage all Members of this House, and all members of our communities, to participate in the alliance for solidarity, to support the public conversation about sexual and gender diversity, and encourage a culture of respect, acceptance and inclusion for everybody.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud as a lesbian to stand in this House today to mark IDAHOTB. Our rights in the LGBTQ communities were never given to us, they were hard won.

Today, we celebrate, but we also shine a light on the persistent homophobia and transphobia that still exists because of fear, misunderstanding and plain old hatred and discrimination. Those attitudes belong in the dark ages, but we are moving forward. In our province right now, it is our courageous LGBTQ youth and their allies leading us.

It is time now that government appoint a special LGBTQ advisor to ensure all government policies and programs are inclusive and aligned with all our human rights legislation.

Bravo to our youth, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, two MHAs who are currently under investigation for harassment have been excused from this House but are still performing duties in their district. Do you feel this is appropriate?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, I would say it's probably best addressed to the Speaker. But

it's very unusual that you would actually see the Speaker stand and answer questions from the acting leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that they've been removed from our caucus, the Members that we're talking about, so I think every MHA would have an opinion on what's appropriate and what's not appropriate. However, what I know is not appropriate is that we should be spending public funds on putting a party leader who does not have a seat in this House – which is about the proposal that we saw last night when it comes to spending public funds in this House.

Mr. Speaker, the current positions of the two Members that you're addressing as best, they now sit as independents in this House of Assembly, not within this caucus. I think the leader of the Opposition, or whatever capacity he sits in today, should be fully aware of that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier is well aware that wasn't the proposal put forward. He's just trying to put a spin on it again for political reasons.

Do you support that the two MHAs have been granted leave from the House of Assembly and are not sitting in the House of Assembly to represent their constituents?

MR. SPEAKER: I will interrupt on this point because, as indicated by the previous remarks from the Premier, this was the responsibility of the Speaker, my office. Those two Members sought approval. I granted it. That question is better directed to the Speaker's Office.

I would ask you to redirect, please.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: No interruptions, please.

The leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Acting Minister of Education advise the House why teacher allocations are being reduced in schools across the province?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure for me to stand and speak on a lot of the good things that are happening. I just want to make mention of the Premier's Task Force where we're actually making changes that previously were never even thought of making changes.

We are now in a position where we're looking at improving educational outcomes in this province, improving the way in which instruction is being done, putting more resources in place and deploying resources in a way that's conducive to good education for our students in this province. We'll continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Can the acting minister inform this House if there's actually new money being invested for creation of reading specialists or just money that the department is moving around?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I will not tolerate any interruptions.

Please, the hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wish the Members opposite would have taken time to read the budget and look at it line by line. They would have seen there are significant investments in education, an increase.

I just mentioned the Premier's Task Force. We're putting a considerable amount of money

into the Premier's Task Force in making sure that the recommendations that are in place – that we are going to take action on those recommendations, recommendations that are not going to be sitting on a shelf, like have happened in the past.

We are making a commitment to that; we have put money into the budget to make sure we have those resources available. As I said earlier, we're making sure that whatever we're doing on this side of the House, we're improving educational outcomes for our students in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: I think we need to also let the acting minister know that you need to talk to the teachers who have been made redundant and the impact that it's going to have on those schools, particularly in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Can the Acting Minister of Education provide this House with an update on class sizes for the upcoming year and if the caps are in line with the recommendations of the task force?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I make reference to the fact that we, as a government on this side of the House, have made a significant commitment to education within this province from K to 12. We will continue to do that.

The Premier was very, very clear in making sure that there was a Premier's Task Force put in place to address – and we put in place now 40 schools come September, 40 pilot schools in September to start implementing the recommendations that were made in the Premier's Task Force.

Mr. Speaker, we have made a significant commitment and will continue to make

commitment to education and providing the best education possible for our students in this province so that they can perform.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, the minister didn't answer the question about cap sizes, but I'll get back to that another time.

Can the Acting Minister of Education provide this House with an update on the combined classes and if they are indeed in line with the recommendations of the task force?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, in response to the acting leader of the Opposition, we have certainly looked at and have the numbers that are in place. As you know, there are pupil-teacher ratios and there are provisions made for smaller schools in rural areas of the province where some of the student-teacher ratios are lower than they are in other areas of the province.

Mr. Speaker, we are cognizant of the fact the number of students that we have, the number of teachers that we have and the deployment of teachers, based on programming that's provided within the schools to provide a proper education to some of the schools in rural areas of the province that may not necessarily have all the resources that are available in urban areas.

We're making sure we're doing that, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HAWKINS: We'll continue to do that even while I'm in as the acting minister.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, the acting minister doesn't know what combined classes and cap sizes are all about. I guess we'll wait until next week.

I ask the Minister of AES: Did you participate in the pre-budget consultations with officials and students at Memorial and the College of the North Atlantic prior to cutting their operating budgets by over \$10 million?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if I should address the preamble that he put in there because I tell you, I had 30 years in the classroom. I know exactly what happens in a classroom.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAWKINS: He doesn't need to tell me (inaudible) Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAWKINS: I can tell him, I am well aware of the education in this province and what we have provided over the years.

As for the AESL and for the College of the North Atlantic and Memorial University of Newfoundland, Mr. Speaker, again, I would like for him to go and look at the numbers in the budget. He will know that we, as a province, as a government, is contributing more to operating Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic than in New Brunswick with four universities and in Nova Scotia with 10.

Mr. Speaker, we are making significant contributions to the operating budgets of both facilities.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, the president of Memorial University recently admitted the massive infrastructure problem at the university is being pushed down the road as government cuts its budget.

What is the government's plan to address infrastructure challenges at MUN?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, thank you so much for this opportunity today. Obviously, the hon. Member hasn't driven down Prince Philip Drive for a while because he will notice there is significant infrastructure investment.

We have a new core science building; a significant investment by this province, by the federal government and by the university. We are looking at a new Animal Resource Centre that's happening. We have made investments in the Battery for our graduate students. Mr. Speaker, we continue to make significant investments to the infrastructure of all of our institutions and we will continue to do that.

Mr. Speaker, like anything, there may be some challenges when it comes to all infrastructure spending. That's something we're working with the university to deal with. We will continue to do that. I have every confidence that we will get to the point.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I remind the minister, that science building was a PC initiative.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: If you want to let the university fall down around your ears that's their prerogative.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Please proceed.

MR. PETTEN: That was a PC initiative and it's good to see, but they need to worry about the infrastructure of the university.

MR. SPEAKER: Please proceed.

MR. PETTEN: Mr. Speaker, the president of MUN recently stated: Newfoundland is going to have to decide what kind of university it wants.

I ask the minister: Will the decisions made by his government have a negative impact on our post-secondary institutions?

MR. SPEAKER: I do remind all Members, I will not tolerate interruptions.

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to get to the preamble of the Member opposite because he made an error. What we talked about, what was a PC initiative as if the party owned this. I want to clarify one point on this, is they had allocated some \$125 million. The provincial government today is investing \$25 million, but because of the co-operation and collaboration we have with the federal government, they have replaced the PC initiative, bailed out the initiative that you had put in place with \$99 million to go towards the core science building.

Let's be very clear, there are a number of PC initiatives that they say are a burden around Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. So when it comes to PC initiatives, we don't need the Members opposite to remind us of what were PC initiatives. We're continuing to deal with this on a daily basis, bailing out and changing many

initiatives to support Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: I hope the Premier takes credit for the federal government and his friends in Ottawa for the carbon tax and the destruction of Grand Bank with the Arctic surf clams, and we can go on, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: Their friends in Ottawa haven't been that great. Sure, they might have been there – and, by the way, the science building is going to be a great addition for Memorial University, but he needs to be careful of how much praise he takes from the federal government and his friends in Ottawa because the carbon tax is coming.

I'm going to ask this question again, and maybe the minister might get up and answer it.

Mr. Speaker, the president of MUN recently stated: Newfoundland is going to have to decide what kind of university it wants.

I ask the minister: Will the decisions made by his government have a negative impact on our post-secondary institutions?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, it's a pleasure always to answer questions in this House when they're honourable questions that are asked.

Mr. Speaker, I take this very seriously. I think we've looked at and we've talked to the university. The hon. Member should know that we are putting in place a comprehensive study of post-secondary education, both our post-secondary public institutions, whether it's the college or university.

Within that study, Mr. Speaker, we will be engaging a wholesome discussion on exactly where the university will be, not tomorrow, not in 10 years, 20 years and 30 years. It will be an opportunity for all of us to be engaged, and I invite the Member to be involved in that as well, Mr. Speaker, because he asked if I was involved in the consultations. I'm not too sure if he was.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Can the minister confirm if any campus closures will occur as a result of cuts to the College of the North Atlantic?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, we are in this province in challenging times when it comes to demographics within our campuses. Mr. Speaker, I can say at this point in time, no, there are not. We are working with the College of the North Atlantic, with the board of directors who make decisions on organizational decisions, decisions on program offerings, and unfortunately every year, every spring when we look at enrolments within the classrooms within the College of the North Atlantic, unfortunately, sometimes decisions have to be made when it comes to staffing. That has been done this spring, as it is done every spring up to this point in time, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Natural Resources give an update on the progress of the construction of the concrete gravity structure for the West White Rose Project?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

About a year ago – I guess it was a year ago this May – we announced that Husky was moving forward with the development of that platform. I'm very pleased to see that happen. I'm very pleased for the projects that are going on in the province around that platform, and very pleased to see continued development of our offshore.

With regard to the project itself, Husky has changed out some of its senior management team, Mr. Speaker. They have some new project leads for that project. They are moving forward on the development of the gravity-based structure. The unions have been fully engaged, and we look forward to their continued success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Are the agreed to general operations, targets and timelines originally set, are they being met today?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I understand it today, we are – as I said, they had some change in their senior management responsible for the project. I have heard no major concerns at this point that their timelines have changed dramatically. I will be meeting with Husky again in the near future, and I can certainly again question that, but, Mr. Speaker, things are happening out in Argentina, and we're very pleased to see that things are happening. They certainly weren't happening under the former administration's watch.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: I'll just remind the Member, there were a couple of oil and gas projects ongoing when we were in power.

Mr. Speaker, when this project was announced local residents were excited to get work. We're being told there are issues with unionized workers in the area with proper skillsets are not getting access to jobs.

I ask the minister: Have you received any complaints, and, if so, what is being done?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is a union process for those positions. Husky has made arrangements with the unions around that project. That project is proceeding, the unions are proceeding. I have not been engaged with anyone at this point in time that has expressed grave concern around that project in this regard. I know that the building council trades Newfoundland and Labrador have been involved in that in ensuring things are happening right here in our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When the minister last spoke in the House about the Vale underground mine, she said: Should Vale decide not to go underground we'll be exercising that Development Agreement and the remedies they are under.

Minister, has Vale missed any milestones contained in the Development Agreement?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said repeatedly in this House, Vale is considering its options to go underground. We

continue to encourage them to do just that. I'm hopeful that my hon. colleagues would be there right with us, encourage them to go underground.

We do see that Vale is moving forward with the streaming of cobalt which is tied to the underground development, Mr. Speaker. We're cautiously optimistic they will be moving forward with their underground project. As I've said previously, if they do not decide to move ahead with that project, we do have remedies under the Development Agreement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the open pit mining operations are proposed to end in four years in 2022. The underground mine ensures that jobs will extend into the future.

Can the minister indicate again, as I asked, if any milestones have been missed? What penalties for Vale will be implemented for those milestones being missed?

There was a 60-day review done last fall and after that we were supposed to get some clear direction of what was happening. It's now well into this year. What's the status? Will they be held to those milestones?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I've indicated, Vale is still considering what it will do with the underground mine. We do see that they are moving forward with the streaming of cobalt. I take that as a positive sign because it's directly linked to the underground deposit, Mr. Speaker.

We are working to ensure that Vale does move forward. If they do not move forward, we do have remedies, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that every

Member of this House of Assembly would like to see Vale move forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed we would like to see the project move forward for all Newfoundland and Labrador, but the reality is there's a Development Agreement, there are milestones and there are penalties with it.

I'll ask the minister this: What's the time frame for Vale not adhering to those Development Agreement milestones? When will you start implementing penalties? What's the drop-dead date for this project?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, we are working to ensure that there is a seamless continuation of the project from above ground to underground. We want to make sure that there is continuing opportunity for the Voisey's Bay mine.

We have been working, as I've said, encouraging Vale to go underground. We do see them streaming cobalt that is directly linked to the underground development. We're continuing to encourage and support Vale in making sure they go underground. I suggest everybody in the House do the same.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can the minister once again try to explain to this House and to the taxpayers of this province why has government felt it necessary to offer \$40 million of tax rebates and incentives to a massive, multi-million dollar, out-of-province

company in order to set them up in this province?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will explain for the House again that Newfoundland and Labrador was the only province in Canada without a licensed cannabis producer. Given that the federal government is making recreational cannabis legal in July 2018 – that was the date that was stated – the province had to act to ensure supply.

We took action. We were able to enter into an agreement with Canopy Growth Corporation who's going to invest more than \$55 million into the province; a 20-year agreement, guarantees supply. There's no obligation to buy. This is not an exclusive agreement. There are no tax dollars going into this corporation. They will get a reduced-sales remittance on product that is sold in Newfoundland and Labrador. They plan to export.

We are building an industry. It's creating 145 jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: A loss of \$40 million in tax revenue is a loss of \$40 million to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PERRY: I ask the minister: What other companies are being considered to receive the same tax breaks and incentives as you gave to Canopy Growth?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, this is a situation of which we're developing an industry. We're creating jobs and opportunity here in Newfoundland and Labrador, setting up manufacturing that is going to lead to yield and a return to the Treasury. This investment is a good deal for the people of the province.

I can name numerous bad deals of which taxpayer dollars went back in the pockets of people. When you talk about an investment that was made in my district, a pellet plant operation that never saw the light of day; all the drilling that happened, the millions of dollars on Parson's Pond; if you look at the loans given back to Humber Valley.

We are looking at a number of great deals here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We're looking at talking to a number of companies to invest, to create jobs and we're open for business.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: They had an opportunity to generate \$40 million additional for the Province of Newfoundland and they lost it, Mr. Speaker.

Will any of the marijuana grown here and subsidized by Newfoundland and Labrador taxpayers be shipped out of the province? If so, why should taxpayers in this province be on the hook?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, there is equal opportunity for any producer to come in and create an opportunity for cannabis production here in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Member opposite obviously does not understand business and the opportunity.

She would prefer, based on the timelines, to not have a production facility in Newfoundland and Labrador, have us import the product and have all the cost but no jobs. Right now, we've created an opportunity where an industry is being developed. Jobs are being created.

Today, an environmental assessment release happened for Argentia Gold in the Argentia area. There are a number of other companies that are looking at setting up shop in Clarendville, Corner Brook, the Stephenville area, Paradise, St. John's and others. There's lots of opportunity.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Unlike Members opposite, I have full confidence the entrepreneurs exist right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PERRY: How will marijuana grown and sold in this province compete against cheaper and of equal quality marijuana sold online?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, we have to look at this in terms of having a licensed producer. The only way to have a licensed producer in Newfoundland and Labrador is that they have to apply to Health Canada to become licensed. We're in negotiations with a number of other companies, but until they become licensed with Health Canada they are unable to establish a production facility in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Once these companies get their licensing through Health Canada and their clearance, their investments and they meet the standards, we're more than happy to enter into agreements with companies that are going to be to the best benefit of the people of the province. Unlike bad business deals that they've done, like giving away huge investments through Emera to the people of Nova Scotia and giving electricity away for free.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: He completely avoided answering this question so I'll repeat it again.

How will marijuana grown and sold in this province compete against cheaper and of equal quality marijuana sold online?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, we have already established that online sales on the outset will be done through the NLC here in Newfoundland and Labrador. The price will be set and the price will be regulated. That is something that is very clear and that's been stated publicly. I ask the Member opposite - I can't be any clearer than that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune for a short question, please.

MS. PERRY: Mr. Speaker, the online community is global. They can buy from any online company anywhere in the world.

What incentive will there be for people in this province to buy local, if the prices here are higher?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, for once she's talking about the local companies here in Newfoundland and Labrador. She doesn't want a company to come in here, invest here, create jobs here for local people and return dollars to our Treasury. She doesn't want production jobs and now she's suggesting that everybody go and buy online, out of market for product elsewhere.

She's completely trying to, I guess, devoid government of investment, growth and opportunity. That's the PC way; that's the PC approach to doing business. That's why we're in such a situation here in Newfoundland and Labrador, because of their bad business deals that they've done over the years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

International Day Against Homophobia and transphobia is recognized worldwide. In our province rates of suicide, school dropout and homelessness are highest among LGBTQ, 2-spirited youth. These are our children. We have seen advancements in rights, training in our schools and the increase in GSA groups which is a wonderful thing; however, as we have seen lately, more needs to be done.

I ask the Premier: What happened to the commitment to an LGBTQ age-appropriate, inclusive curriculum where all our youth see themselves and their families reflected in our education system?

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for the question. Today is an important day, Mr. Speaker. We started this afternoon with myself reading a statement to recognize the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.

Mr. Speaker, we are part of a government where we recognize the value of inclusion for all people in society, regardless of their sexuality or their gender expression. That is why, in my department in particular, we have a number of grants. There are a number of camps throughout the summer that we provide support to for LGBTQ individuals. Planned Parenthood is one of the larger groups that we provide support to, that do a lot of work with this group that the Member opposite is talking about.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I asked specifically about an age-appropriate, inclusive

curriculum in the Department of Education. I did not get that answer.

Mr. Speaker, the turmoil and homophobia we have seen lately around the province regarding LGBTQ, 2-spirited youth and their efforts to be seen, heard and included is based on fear and misunderstanding. This is devastating for communities, for families and, particularly, for our courageous youth who are reaching out.

I ask the Premier: Will he create a position of an LGBTQ, 2-spirited advisor to help government to more appropriately address issues in our education, health, justice and social programs so they are inclusive and responsive to the needs of all our people, especially our youth?

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will remind the Member that through our Safe & Caring Schools Policy and the guidelines for LGBTQ-inclusive practices, Mr. Speaker, our provincial government has been supporting inclusive school practices and will continue to do so.

We've been supportive of inclusion. There is open dialogue. There is resource development. There are many student-led initiatives that we support, Mr. Speaker. In addition to that there's the Violence Prevention Initiative, which also reflects our government's commitment to addressing the various types of violence in our province. We'll continue to have that open dialogue and to find opportunities where we can to support.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The new *Residential Tenancies Act* will help landlords get rid of bad tenants, but it does nothing for the many thousands of good tenants

who are paying a third to half of their income on rent and might face more rent hikes in the future. The budget only provides for a few hundred additional affordable units for the province this year.

I ask the Premier: Will he commit to doubling the total number of rent supplements next year?

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Newfoundland and Labrador Housing – that corporation that offers the suite of social programs – we have a tremendous team over there that does very, very valuable work, a lot of programs. We have just endorsed the principles of the National Housing Strategy and we are currently working out the details, Mr. Speaker, right now of the bilateral agreement between our province and the federal government.

The rent supplement, Mr. Speaker, is very, very important to many of the people in our province that are vulnerable, marginalized people in society that couldn't otherwise afford housing. We've just recently, in *Budget 2018*, made some of the rent supps portable. We will continue to do what we can for those important people that depend on this valuable service.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi for a quick question, please.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We finally have boarding homes covered on paper with the new *Residential Tenancies Act*, but we need action, not just words on paper.

I ask the Minister of Service NL: Will she work with municipalities to ensure they have the resources to do a proactive inspection of rental units throughout the province?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Service NL.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I hope to bring the new act into the House of Assembly today. I thank the Member opposite for the question.

We are open always to work with municipalities and other partners to make housing and homelessness a better place for all people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The time for Oral Questions has ended.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, in Question Period, the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune had raised a Conference Board of Canada report. At that time, I had highlighted the methodologies that make up that report.

I want to say that all the indicators in that report were done based on data from 2013, 2014 and 2015. When she talked about innovation going from a B to a D, all of that data would have happened while their government would have been in office.

I table the Conference Board of Canada report, the methodology that was put forward.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Order, please!

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Pursuant to section 8 and section 10 of the *Public Tender Act*, I hereby table report of *Public Tender Act* Exceptions for March 2018 as

presented by the chief operating officer of the Government Purchasing Agency.

Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a resolution and bill respecting the raising of money by way of loan by the province, Bill 17.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Energy Corporation Act, Bill 19.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Corporations Act, Bill 18.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 22, pursuant to Standing Order 11(1).

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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 opioid addiction is a very serious problem affecting many individuals and families in our province and the Bell Island area is no exception; and

WHEREAS the effects of these problems have implications that negatively impact many people, old and young; and

WHEREAS support and treatment programs have been proven to break the cycle of addictions and have helped many into recovery;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to establish a Suboxone-methadone treatment plan for Bell Island, which would include a drug addictions counsellor at the hospital and a drug awareness program in the local school.

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

Mr. Speaker, I've spoken to this seven times now in the House, and the petitions just continue to keep coming in because people are identifying that there's a need there. They're also identifying frustration that we're not getting support. While the local health professionals want to support it, we're not getting it from Eastern Health and we're not getting it from the department. We need to be able to move things forward.

We talk very openly here about the issues around opioid addictions. We talk about a collaborative approach to solving that, but somebody has to take the lead and take the action. We've got organizations and not-for-profit organizations and citizens who want to

lead things, but there has to be a lead from an organization point of view and from a resource point of view, from a line department, who can in turn tell the regional health authority that you need to take steps forward here and to moved things.

CBC this morning had a great article where they talked to a couple of those people who are struggling with the opioid issues on Bell Island, but also talked about the supports. The home-based supports they're getting, the community-based supports they're getting. The gap here is about needing the in-house supports that are locally available for them.

I realize we can't supply everything for everybody, everywhere, but in certain cases where there's a demand, and where you already have a multitude of partners and a multitude of assets that can be leveraged and developed so that they can improve exactly what's being done here. Why would we not move it to the next level?

It's unfortunate that we talk such a high number, and one of the number used is that there are 70 people in a small community who have a full dependency on opioids and need some kinds of interventions and some supports. So we need to take a responsibility to do things in the proper manner.

So, again, I'm encouraging government to step up, and when these organizations are out lobbying, that Eastern Health also do it's part and move forward to supplying some of the services that are needed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further petitions?

The hon. Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

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

residents of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS class sizes, adequate school space and healthy socialization is essential to our students receiving the best quality education; and

WHEREAS schools such as St. Francis of Assisi are without cafeteria space and students do not have the opportunity to move about daily in a daily routine; and

WHEREAS schools in Newfoundland and Labrador have some of the largest cap size and some of the lowest rates of literacy; and

WHEREAS the education system in our province must be designed to ensure that each child has the ability to reach his or her full potential;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to call on government to take action in the education system to ensure smaller class sizes and provide sufficient personal space per child to allow for a higher quality of education. Take action to address and ensure that schools like St. Francis of Assisi, which are without adequate space and are using combined classes, are ensured that students have a higher standard of education in a quality learning environment.

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

Mr. Speaker, I attended a meeting last week in Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove and there was a large number of parents, teachers and grandparents in attendance. It's a huge concern in the area with the local school. I have to say, this particular school that I'm talking about, the results that have come back over the last number of years with their scores in educational criteria is high. This whole community takes this school as a part of the community and they're all so invested in making sure that the best quality of education is in their school.

They have a problem because there is no cafeteria in that school and children are in combined classes. One class this year had 10

students from one grade and six from another. When you have six students, which were three girls and three boys, the social aspect of that alone, not being able to play with their friends and not being able to go to lunch with their friends, because that's where a lot of socialization and stuff like that happens.

The cap size in the school also, classrooms aren't the normal size classrooms. They're smaller classrooms and you're talking about putting 29 children in a class. That's a huge issue because there's very little space in those classes. Now, if it goes to the hard cap in some classes, it can go up to 31.

These are letters I received from the people that were at that meeting, from grandparents and teachers and everyone else, and I'm going to present these to the Minister of Education.

I will be up again to talk about this petition.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. Government House Leader.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 3, third reading of Bill 13.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, that Bill 13, An Act To Amend The Jury Act, 1991, be now read a 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?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

This motion is carried.

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Jury Act, 1991. (Bill 13)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill 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 Jury Act, 1991," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 13)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call Order 4, third reading of Bill 14.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that Bill 14, An Act Respecting Children, Youth And Families, be now read a third time.

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

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

And I'm so good that I do the bills twice.

I would call from the Order Paper, Order 3, third reading of Bill 7.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 7, An Act

To Amend The Revenue Administration Act, be now read a 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?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act. (Bill 7)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill is now 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 Revenue Administration Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 7)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call Order 4, third reading of Bill 8.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 8, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000, be now read a 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?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

This motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000. (Bill 8)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill is now 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 Income Tax Act, 2000," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 8)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Court Security Act, 2010, Bill 16, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Court Security Act, 2010, Bill 16, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Court Security Act, 2010," carried. (Bill 16)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Court Security Act, 2010. (Bill 16)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?
Tomorrow?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 16 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 5, second reading of Bill 15.

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MHA for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, that Bill 15, an act to amend the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2000* be now read a second time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Your colleague is trying to speak.

Thank you.

Please proceed.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act Respecting Tenancies Of Residential Premises." (Bill 15)

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to introduce a bill which repeals and replaces the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2000*. Throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and every region of our province many individuals and families are considered tenants or landlords. In this way, the *Residential Tenancies Act* is used every day by average citizens of the province. We have a large rental market of approximately 15,500 private apartment units as of 2017, according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing estimates. So as you can see, the act affects many people from a wide variety of backgrounds.

The relationship between landlords and tenants is often a complex one, Mr. Speaker. As a tenant, a person needs to do everything they can do to help ensure their landlord knows if they have any problems, need something repaired or if they have a concern within their rental unit. As landlords, it is important to keep checking your property, give appropriate notice whenever you want to visit the unit and try to talk with your tenant to solve any problems before they develop into larger issues.

Many landlords are people with mortgages who rent out their basement apartments to help pay their bills. Time and time again, we have heard the public discussion on the rights of both tenants and landlords. We have heard stories about landlords who refuse to repair a property, often creating deplorable conditions for a tenant. On the other side of this, we have seen examples of excessive property damage by tenants, resulting in financially challenging situations for landlords. Oftentimes, however, these matters escalate way beyond the ability of tenants or landlords to find solutions and a hearing, through my department, may be the course of action to resolve the dispute.

Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize, however, that most landlords and tenants throughout Newfoundland and Labrador are law-abiding, well-meaning individuals. We recognize that there is a need to ensure that rights of landlords and tenants are protected, and this is why we have a *Residential Tenancies Act* in our province.

Mr. Speaker, the current act was proclaimed in 2000 and has not been substantively amended since that time. Landlords and tenants and other interested parties have been asking for changes to the residential tenancies legislation for some time. The act also has many unclear sections that are not easily understood and require clarity and modernization.

I have stood many times in this House of Assembly regarding legislative amendments. Each time, I have said that it is incumbent upon us as a government to ensure legislation is effective for the people it serves. The *Residential Tenancies Act* is one more example, Mr. Speaker.

We committed to review the legislation and bring forward amendments that protect the best interests of tenants and landlords. Our objective is to update the legislation in a way that is responsive to everyone's needs. In 2012, the previous administration conducted consultation and a jurisdictional scan to determine best practices in our province.

During the 2012 consultation, a series of public, face-to-face sessions were held across the province. A consultation discussion guide was issued and feedback was gathered from the general public stakeholders, landlords, tenants, property management companies and any other person or group who were interested in providing comments. A summary *What We Heard* document was developed, and Service NL also conducted a comprehensive review of the act, including an extensive jurisdictional component. While the consultations were held in 2012, associated changes to the act were not pursued by the then-government of the day. Since 2012 there have been continued demands from stakeholders to amend the act; however, market conditions and financial considerations today have changed drastically since 2012.

The former minister of Service NL committed to a review of the *Residential Tenancies Act* in 2016 and it was reflected in my 2017 mandate letter from the Premier. Through this review, as well as the feedback received through various public consultation processes, we have identified several areas that merit significant amendments. We have also identified the need to clarify the act's language to ensure it is modern and clear.

While we relied on the information gathered in 2012 consultations and the associated analysis as the foundation to move forward on recommending changes to the act, consideration was also given to the fact that additional issues have arisen in the rental market since the consultations were conducted. We have also received feedback on the act through other government consultation processes, such as the Housing Corporation's review of its programs and services in 2017, the 'Housing First' Forum in 2016, the Violence Prevention Initiative round-table meetings in 2016, the public engagement process on poverty reduction in 2015 and the All-Party Committee on Mental

Health and Addictions public consultations in 2015.

We also received feedback from a number of individuals and groups such as Stella Burry's not covered report, the St. John's Board of Trade landlord's committee, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour and a Facebook group established by Mr. Sherwin Flight with approximately 8,500 members. We want to thank all those who provided input to help arrive at the amendments we are presenting here today. It is our intention to build on the work that was done in the past in a way that includes recent public comment on the issue.

Given the different interests regarding the act, my department has made every effort to balance competing needs of landlords and tenants in drafting the changes, and to provide a modern and clear regulatory framework to govern the rights and obligations of both parties. A modern and robust regulatory framework is necessary to deliver consumer protection to tenants, while also ensuring the needs of landlords are taken into account. That is what our government intends to do.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight a number of the changes to the *Residential Tenancies Act* that we are bringing forward. It is an unfortunate reality of our society that many individuals are victims of domestic violence. It is incumbent upon us as a government to continue to explore means of helping these victims find ways of leaving the abusive situation and re-establishing their lives. I am delighted that one of the amendments we are introducing today will help address this matter.

Currently, there are no provisions in the act that provide for early termination of a rental agreement in situations of family violence. The changes we are proposing today will provide for early termination of fixed-term rental agreements without penalty by providing a 30-day notice in these situations.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that boarding houses and common house-sharing arrangements are not covered under the current legislation has also been consistently expressed to our department. It has been a common theme heard in most of the public consultation process. Furthermore, the

report from the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions in 2017, along with the June 2017 Mental Health and Addictions Plan, reiterated this request.

Boarding houses are excluded from the act as it stands now, along with living accommodations provided by a religious, charitable, or not-for-profit organization. Our amendments will expand the applicability of the act to boarding houses and the living accommodations I referenced, with the exception of transient accommodations provided by religious, charitable, and not-for-profit groups.

Another matter that has been brought to our attention is the length of time for notice of rent increases. As it exists in legislation, the notice period currently stands at three months. The new legislation will increase the notice period from three months to six months. This increase would give tenants additional time to seek out alternate accommodations if they cannot afford the increase, while landlords can, with good forward planning, implement necessary increases to cover their costs.

Mr. Speaker, in situations of group eviction, it is now required that all tenants, including those in residential complexes, in addition to tenants of mobile home parks, be given a six-month notice. Furthermore, the act is now clear that group termination notices are limited to the grounds that are outlined in the act. These grounds include: demolition, changing the use of the property to that other than rented residential premises and extensive repairs or renovations that require the property to be vacant.

Mr. Speaker, representation has also been made to us regarding the length of time a landlord can keep a security deposit which currently stands at 15 days after a tenant leaves. The amendments will decrease the time a landlord can keep a security deposit from 15 days to 10 days.

If the rent payable to a landlord is in arrears for 15 days, current legislation says the landlord can give notice that the rental agreement is terminated and the tenant is required to vacate the premises on a specified date not less than 10 days after then notice is served. Our proposed changes will reduce the time it takes to evict a tenant in a month-to-month arrangement by

decreasing the time the tenant must be in arrears before the 10-day eviction notice is given to five days from 15 days.

Mr. Speaker, as it currently stands maximum fines for contravening the *Residential Tenancies Act* are \$400. We have heard the fines are too low to encourage compliance with the act. In the *What We Heard* document it states: "Many of those we heard from voiced their concerns about particular violations of the *Act*, including violations by some landlords who change the locks on their tenant's doors and would remove their possessions without properly terminating the lease. It was suggested that some of these violations could be curtailed if the maximum fine allowed in this section was increased and we received suggestions that it be increased up to \$3,000." The new legislation will see an increase in penalties from a maximum of \$400 to a maximum of \$10,000 for corporations and \$3,000 for individuals.

Mr. Speaker, under the current legislation a landlord or tenant can make application to the director of Residential Tenancies for reconsideration of an order made by divisional staff under section 41. The new legislation will eliminate the reconsideration of the orders to the director and allow parties to proceed to the court process thereby reducing the timeline by 17 days.

In terms of group evictions, the existing act allows the landlord to apply to the director for further consideration in situations where a six-month notice period for mobile homes would cause undue hardship; however, there is no similar provision to allow a tenant to apply for further consideration. As such, the amendment will allow the director to hear an application and determine that a six-month notice period for a group eviction will result in undue hardship for the landlord or the tenant and make an order to either reduce or extend that time period.

Mr. Speaker, currently legislation is also not clear as to whether a tenant who sublets a property is considered a landlord. We have amended the definition of landlord to make it clear that subletters are landlords. Representation has also been made regarding timelines associated with abandoned properties. The act currently states that a landlord must

store abandoned personal property for a period of 60 days. The time frame has now been reduced from 60 to 30. The bill would also allow the landlord to store the property in the rental unit avoiding the cost of temporary storage.

Mr. Speaker, these are a few of the major highlights of the amendments we are proposing today to the *Residential Tenancies Act*. There are also a number of amendments concerning such matters as: copies of orders, electronic documentation, receipts, accounts for security deposits, fees for non-sufficient funds and various housekeeping items. These changes are aimed at modernizing the legislation, recognizing the digital world we live in today.

When you look at all the proposed amendments brought to the floor of this House today, I believe it represents a balanced approach to addressing what we have heard from both landlords and tenants. Throughout the process we have kept the fact that this act is utilized by a large number of our residents at the forefront. Therefore, it was important that we not only strive to achieve a fair response to landlords and tenants alike, but also make sure the act is clear and precise for everyone.

Enhanced consumer protection and a deterrent of bad business practices have been very important topics for our government. Our objective is to give good landlords and good tenants additional tools to protect their rights. Both *The Way Forward* and my mandate letter from the Premier have placed great emphasis on these matters. We have also committed to better services and better outcomes for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act* we have introduced in this hon. House certainly reinforce these commitments. It is important that we, as a government, continue to address matters of concern for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

It is indeed a privilege to get up here today and talk about Bill 15, An Act Respecting Tenancies of Residential Premises.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to start off first by – it's something that has been in the news I'd say for years and years and years when you look at what is happening with landlords and tenants. We hear of so much in the news when you look at – I was reading some articles yesterday about the state some of the residents had left for the landlords. Then there are some other cases where the landlord – the state of their rental property and stuff like this. It's been an issue that has been discussed in this province for years and years.

The minister did mention a word there that it's a balanced approach. I've read a lot of the act and there are a lot of questions that I will have minister when we do get to committee about this act. That's what I think over the years all representatives and all ministers of Service NL had to find.

It's a job sometimes to find a balanced approach because you're dealing with two different entities. One is the landlord and the rights of the landlord and the other is the rights of the tenant. So it's a difficult procedure to go through sometimes because, obviously, what is good for one may not be good for the other. That's where this act today and some of the changes – I will go over now shortly in a sec – in this act are trying to address.

It would be interesting, this act came in – we had just a couple of days. We had some over in the department, and I thank the department for their briefing on this act. It was introduced here in the House yesterday. It will be interesting to find and see how both groups, both landlords and tenants, respond to the changes that have come as a result of the new changes in Bill 15.

This has been revised. This landlords and tenants act was first introduced in 2000. So this is a completely new act that we're here debating today. Currently, the relationship between

landlords and tenants in the province is governed by Consumer Affairs Division of Service NL, and there's a director. There's a separate division that people can go and have different disputes and different things settled.

In this bill today, I think there are 60 different sections all together within the bill. In this bill, what it does it sets out the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants and regulates matters for which rental agreements, rental increases, security deposits, notice of termination of tenancy, sets disputes and how disputes can be done. The legislation is also aimed to protect both sides; it's aimed to protect both the landlords and tenants.

It's interesting for the minister to get up, and she mentioned it two or three times in her statement is, what we've heard. That was back in 2012. That was part of the consultation our government took in – and it was a huge consultation that was done province-wide and it was completed. It went to all different sections of the province and different areas of the province to find out what people heard. I heard the minister reference that a couple of times today. So it's nice to know she's used some of that in our things.

In the last number of years, since 2015 there have been three different ministers of Service NL. I would imagine that each one had in their mandate letter that this was a priority for their government to do. We've heard from different ministers. We heard from one minister that said they were going to go completely, not even look at the consultations – and the minister did mention this also, that they were going to go and do a complete set of consultations and go back and review everything, and she's right. The minister is right when she states that it's difficult, because sometimes things change. We can only look at areas where you can see – and I'll give a great example, too.

In Labrador City, I know there was an increase in the mining and rental and stuff like that. It went right on; it went way up. At that time, if you were a landlord –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: That's right, and now it's gone right down. Exactly what the Member says.

Sometimes with megaprojects, and I'm sure the Clarenville area when Bull Arm was on the go, and Sunnyside and that area, they had areas that were very concerning for the landlords. If you got a rental property and there's a project on the go, well you hope you can make the most money that you can – and probably people built homes for those.

Then you have to look on the other side of it, who's a tenant, someone who's renting in that area. All of a sudden there are no rules or regulations in place that can help that tenant that all of a sudden my rent is going to be doubled. I heard tell about it in the Clarenville area and Sunnyside and Bellevue and that area where people were actually saying: okay, listen, I'll go into my cabin and I'll rent my home because this is the time to make some money at this.

So it's a difficult time. The minister is right when she said changes in market has a huge effect on how landlords and tenants and the respect that we have. So it's nice to see the minister used a lot of *What We Heard* document that was done in 2012 by our government.

In the briefing, we were on the understanding that there were some amendments coming to this act. In that particular briefing then we found out that it was a completely new act that was coming in. I'm going to ask the minister some questions on that also.

The consultation part of this is huge because housing affects so many different groups in our society. When we went over to the briefing and they gave us the different groups that were involved in the consultation – like I said, it started basically in 2012 when everything was done with the residential tenancy consultations, and they consulted with everyone.

I'm just going to name some of the groups, and I know the minister mentioned some of them already. We had Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, A Road Map for Ending Homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador. I was part, for a little while, and then my colleague from CBS came on the Committee for Mental Health and Addictions and their consultations that they had.

We had a public engagement on poverty reduction, which, as part of our government over the number of years, was probably one of the proudest moments as an MHA in our government, in our time, was when I went to – and it was a Housing initiative that was done in St. John's. We had a person from New Brunswick that was there and they spoke about what great changes we've made in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Because in 2003-2004, our province was considered the lowest – when it came to poverty in the country, we were at the lowest scale for any poverty with all the different categories and everything else. So our government, at the time, took on a poverty reduction plan and for 10 to 12 years – it took a while, but we gradually came up that list, and at the end, when you look at poverty reduction in our province, we had made great strides. It was probably one of the most successful things that we've done.

That was done through everybody. That was done through all the different organizations in our province that stepped up and made sure that we were doing the proper thing, to make sure people weren't living under the poverty line and we were trying to get as many people on that.

There were also consultations that were done through Provincial Housing First Forum. There was a Violence Prevention Initiative roundtable meetings, and like I said, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing consultations and programs. There were a lot of stakeholders involved in all the consultations that were done over the years, and the last three years since this government came in.

The City of St. John's, I spoke to a representative from the City of St. John's and I asked them what they thought of the new regulations. They said: We haven't seen them yet, so we really don't know what's in the regulations. We did do a lot of consultations ourselves, and we were hoping that we would be involved in this, but they were never told what the results were. I'm sure that a lot of stuff that's here they're going to be very pleased with.

The St. John's Board of Trade were also involved. They had a private sector landlord subcommittee set up. There's a Facebook group

that the minister mentioned today in her news conference. I was down to her news conference this morning and she mentioned about this Facebook page that was there, it was Newfoundland Tenant and Landlord Support Group. I believe, Minister, you can correct me if I'm wrong, there was about 8,000 people in that group.

That's huge when we use groups like that because that's where you'll hear the stories. I'm not sure if that was all tenants or landlords or both.

AN HON. MEMBER: Both.

MR. K. PARSONS: Both, okay. It was both groups so that's very important because that's where you'll get a lot of information and you'll understand.

Like I said, myself, I rented for a few years and I was very fortunate because the landlords that I had in both cases were great. I'm going to mention one now, I won't mention the other one, but my good friend, Marjorie, that used to be on *Open Line* all the time; Marjorie was my landlord. She really liked to talk about politics, I can tell you that. At the time, my father was involved in politics, so the conversations with me and Marjorie were great. She was fantastic.

We had an issue one time with a stove and within a couple of days we had a new stove in our apartment. She had taken care of it, any concerns at all. It was a really good relationship.

The minister mentioned it too today, there are a lot of people – we hear the bad stories all the time. No matter where you are, you'll always hear the bad stories, but I know and I am sure that the majority of people who are renting in this province, that are tenants in this province, are great tenants. I'm sure that a lot of landlords in this province are good landlords.

This act is a great act because when I read a lot of it – I didn't read it when I was a tenant, but when I read it, I have to say one thing, it had language that was understandable. Sometimes when you read acts there are a lot of language that you just don't understand. What does that mean? I have to say, this act does have the language that people should be able to

understand and will understand exactly what the procedures are.

Like I said, there were a lot of people; stakeholders in this. I know the minister mentioned this morning Stella Burry and she mentioned the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour. I'm sure there are a lot of private landlords and tenants that did some submissions to this.

Like I said, this is a new act. It's going to come in force in January 1, 2019, I do believe is when this is going to come in.

This act today that we're going to be discussing is, like I said, I hope and I know talking to people that were previously – and the briefing we had, it's intended to protect the rights of both the landlords and the tenants. The proposed changes are very close to the – the two acts are very similar but there are some major changes in these acts.

I'm sure that we will hear from landlords that will say: I don't like this part of it. I'm sure we'll hear from tenants that will have some changes. There are changes in this act also that will benefit both groups, so it's important that we look at all the changes.

I'm going to mention a few of the changes. The minister just went through most of them but I'm just going to give a little mention to some of them and just to talk a little bit about each. Then I'm going to just give a few that I think the tenants will like and I think a few that the landlords will like.

When we do go to Committee, Minister, I will have lots of questions that will be general questions because there are some parts of society who are not included and other parts that are included in this that I would like to ask about.

The inclusion in the act also is about religious, charitable and non-profit organizations. We know in different communities right across the province you'll see people like the Lions Club and you'll see the Salvation Army. In my area, I believe the Kinsmen in Torbay have an apartment building. Under the act now they are going to be included as part of the landlords and tenants act. They're going to have to agree to

and sign agreements and follow this act also. That's a good thing.

The minister mentioned about family violence. Mr. Speaker, we hear too often in society about what happens with family violence. It's such a stressful time on families and everything else. I'm grateful to see that the provisions of early termination with fixed rentals in this agreement without penalty providing a 30-day notice for situations of family violence.

That's very positive because the stress and what happens when people are involved in violence, whether there are children involved, if it's spouse and no matter what, any time that we talk of family violence, we all know that happens too much in our society. I can only imagine the stress that is on the people, so I really like this part. I have some questions when we get to Committee that will address this, but it's an important add-on to our act. I don't believe it was in the act before.

Also, a big part here is the increased notice of period of rent. So the increase notification that your rent is going to go up. It's gone now from three months to six months. That's so important because we all have to live. A sign of the times are most people in this province, no matter where you are, live from paycheque to paycheque. If you're faced with a rental increase that you can't afford, then it's nice to be able to have the time to be able to look. Whether you've got to go say I just can't afford that anymore, or maybe there's something that's coming in six months, I have a bill paid off, then I'm okay to be able to do that, or you just say I'm just going to move on and look for another accommodation somewhere.

It gives a person a lot more time. Again, three months, you're in a panic situation. People just look at it and say I only have so much time because once one month is up you're really into it. Six months is a good move. I'm sure there are some landlords that probably won't be so happy with this, but it's a reasonable thing I do believe.

Also, next, I look at areas – decreasing the time the landlord can keep a security deposit from 10 to 15 days. Fifteen days is what they can keep it now and now it's reduced down to 10. That's important also. That's your money. If you're

moving on, you still have to make sure that apartment is in the condition you left it in and there's no damage done and whatnot. But, obviously, you're either moving on to a new area, or you're moving on to a new apartment. You could be moving out. You may be getting married, you may be doing anything. To hold it for the 15 days and 10 days, there's no need of it. The sooner you get your money back the better it is for everyone.

The minister mentioned that it's a small and minor part of the bill, when we talk about delivery of documents and serving of documents through electronic means. Mr. Speaker, that's just basically getting with the sign of the times. That's what's happening in society today. I'm not with the sign of the times most times. If I have anything to do that's with the computer or with my phone or anything at all, I have to go to somebody and say: How do you do that? I prefer to have paper all the time. I prefer not to send an email, I prefer to talk.

Most people today – I look at people and they go online now and they're buying this stuff. It's just a matter of sending a picture or doing a transfer from your account. Or when you get a cheque you can take the cheque, take a picture of it and put it right in. That is what people do in society today. It's probably making it easier for both the landlord and the tenant to be able to do this.

That's important because it eliminates a lot of time and it's easier. It's so much easier being able to go and drive up to a person's house and collect the rent, or to go and probably have to put a notice in for something. They can do that through electronic means. It's just a matter of getting with what the times are today.

I say to the landlords about payment: How easy will it be for payment of bills? Like I said, I don't know how to do it, I really don't, but I know it's done all the time. Electronics these days, can you send me this, can you send me that. I have to go to someone else and say send that for me.

The people can do that today and it's important. I know the minister said it's minor but I would imagine to landlords that's huge, and even to tenants also. They may be working in Bull Arm or they may be working in some other place, to

be able to send it electronically would be a huge convenience for that person.

Another part that the minister didn't mention – but when I went through it – is expanding the statutory conditions on peaceful enjoyment, including reasonable privacy for landlords and tenants. When I first read it I had to get someone to explain a little bit more to me about it and we did ask some questions.

Everybody has a right in society today. In this House of Assembly here you're not allowed to take a picture. You're not allowed to take any pictures in here in the House of Assembly now. We just changed the rules lately for our media up on top. They're allowed to take still pictures of –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: Right, during QP, as I'm just told.

In today's society there are some people that can have cameras. We've heard it; we've seen it in the media. We've seen it recently at a fitness place here in St. John's; a person went in and took some photos. I believe, Minister – and I do have some questions on this also – that's basically what we're talking about here, about the privacy of individuals.

Today, we're all scared. Everyone is scared of the fraud that can happen with different people and the fraud that can happen when people get information about you. We're all scared of what can happen on social media. We've seen it. Everyone's seen what can happen. I think we'll have to expand a little bit more on that, but that's also an important part to this whole piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, there are other parts of the legislation also that changes – and this is something that, again, I went over to the briefing and learned a little bit about it – the definition of a landlord. The definition of a landlord is made clearer in this so that we know that subletters are also considered landlords. If I have houses and somebody else is working for me and they sublet it – I give it to them and they sub it out to someone else – now they're considered the landlord. That's a change that's in this also.

When you look at the director and we talk about the director – and I'll mention that a little bit later now because it's right in the bill and I'll give you the definition of the director. That director has the authority – and this is a very important part – without attempting any mediation or holding hearings to include situations where the landlord's property is significantly at risk. We were over to the briefing, Mr. Speaker, and we asked for examples of this. I didn't know first and then I realized, okay, I can see what is happening here.

If I'm a landlord and I know that something is seriously happening in my rental unit, I've got to go to the director and there has to be a hearing and everything else. While all this process is in place the damage is happening. There was an example given over there of someone who lit fireworks in a rental unit inside and the damage that could do to that person.

The way the previous bill was you'd have to get to the director, you'd have to get the hearing; I guess you'd call the police or whatever. But this way the director, once he realizes there's significant damage or could be significant damage to the property, then right away they can get the enforcement in to make sure that person or those people are out of there altogether.

Another part of this now too – and the minister went through this part, but I will mention this – is reducing the time it takes to evict a tenant in arrears, decreasing the time the tenant must be in arrears from 10 days' notice to evict and give them five days from 15 days. I asked some questions when we were in the briefing because there are some circumstances that I thought about that could be – and I understand why it's brought in. I understand that if you owe money and the longer it takes to get money – you're talking 10 days, 15 days – that should be paid. But there are some circumstances that I'm sure could come up that a person may be hospitalized or something like that. Then, what happens in that case. I'll probably also ask some questions on that, but I understand why it's coming in.

The other part – not being a landlord I didn't know this until we went over to the briefing – say, for example, you abandoned your property. The landlord has to store your personal property. That was for 60 days. Now that's reduced down

to 30 days. When that was the way it was, the landlord had to go get a rental unit and find a place to rent and store all the property that was in that apartment. Now that's changed and you only have to store it for 30 days. But this legislation now is allowing the landlord to store personal property on the rental property without requiring any agreement in writing. So you still have to store the property, but at least you don't have to go with the expense of going out and having a rental unit. It's important that that's part of it too.

Only the landlord to establish a separate account – this is important too. I go to the prepaid funerals, when I first saw this, and understand what we went through a couple of years ago when people had money and security, or they thought they did, and a company went out of business – where's my money, and it was gone.

What this part does, is holding security deposits if they have more than three rental premises. That means you have to set up a separate account and have that account in a trust so that your money that you pay for your security deposit is kept there. So if, for some reason or another, you go bankrupt, at least that money is there. You did your job on your security and you kept your apartment in great shape or whatever, at least that gives the tenant to know that, listen, my money is secure if someone goes bankrupt or something like that. Again, there are all kinds of positive changes there.

There's some interest in this. When we were over in the briefing, it was the increase in penalties. The legislative part of us, we had before, was \$400 and now it's gone to \$10,000 for corporations and \$3,000 for individuals. Now, individuals can be both landlords and tenants, so that's a huge increase.

It's interesting because when I first looked at it, I said \$400 doesn't seem like a lot of money if some damage is done or you're doing something. I mean, to clean an apartment today I'm sure it costs a lot more than \$400. This is in section 51 of the bill, but I would imagine that we were probably one of the lowest – that's what they explained to us in the briefing, that we were one of the lowest and that we're basically coming up to where other provinces and

territories in Canada are and that's where that's to.

The other part of the bill and there's a lot here – and we'll get to one part of this section – where it shows that people are not included in this. I'll talk about that a little later. We included boarding houses and living accommodations – and like we said earlier, we mentioned religious, charitable and non-profit organizations. So that's a huge part of this also.

Because we've seen over the years, a lot of times we've seen stories on the news in the evenings about people living in boarding houses, and sometimes they're pretty hard. It's pretty hard to look at. We do have some landlords out there – and like I said earlier the majority of landlords, majority of tenants are great, but we do have some landlords and we do have some tenants that sometimes are living in pretty deplorable situations. So it's great that we're including boarding houses, because a lot of times, like I said, on the news – and I know most of them we all talk about and see on the news were boarding house. So I'm glad to see that in this.

Again, I mentioned about the director allowed to go straight to the court process to reduce timelines, that there is no need for a hearing. So if the director sees that one of the parties are not keeping to their standards, that they can go – and that reduces the timelines, because I think the hearings and everything will take about 17 days to do.

The other one, too, when we were in – like I said, Mr. Speaker, this is a huge bill. There's a lot to this bill. It was reducing the period of time that a landlord or a tenant can make application to the director from two years to one year from termination of a rental agreement. Before, if I was renting, or I was the renting tenant or the landlord, after our rental agreement I could go to the director and say listen, I never got this, or I forgot, I should have got this, or I realize that this was done – you had up to two years to do that. So now it's changed from two years to one year.

I think that's a positive change also, because two years down the road you should know – one year down the road after moving out of a premises or

the landlord can come back and say the tenant did something. One year, you should be after figuring out what's happening.

Like I said, there are provisions here for post-dated payments and allowed electronically. So we talked a little bit about that.

Mr. Speaker, I guess when this bill was first thought about, the changes to the bill, it was very difficult because it's a job – like I said earlier when I first started to speak that this bill – to do something for a tenant that does not have an effect on the landlord.

I'm sure when this gets out into the public, and when the public and landlords can see it, there are going to be some issues that will happen that one party is not going to be happy with. But just to talk about the tenants and benefits that I see with the tenants would be the family violence, the 30-day notice – it's great. I think the increase in going from three months to six months is very positive. I think the holding of the security deposit, moving it down to 10 days from 15 is a positive.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we have a lot of tenants – this is another part I haven't touched on yet – that are in a complex or mobile homes and stuff like that, and the minister did mention about it. For the purpose of demolition or changing the rental premises, they could want to do a major overhaul and that probably could take a year, it could take up to two years with repairs and stuff like that. Right now, this act, the landlord has to give them six months' notice. Again, I think that's a positive thing for tenants. You're not just shoved out on the street if somebody wants to come in and do some renovation or to demolish some area or something like that. Again, that's a positive thing.

Also, it's important about the subletter, the person who is actually your landlord – the landlord who you pay your money to, say, rather than the subletter who is probably giving out a lot, has a whole bunch of subletters but at least the landlord that you're paying to, the person who is subbing that is now considered the landlord. That's spelled out in the act itself.

Again, a positive thing for the tenants will be electronically how you can make your payments.

I said that earlier, that an important part of this will be a sign of the times and getting with so that I can send – you could be anywhere, you could be on vacation or you could be working abroad or anywhere at all. We have a lot of people in this province who travel for three weeks at a time that are in Alberta, they could be in BC, they could be anywhere in Canada, they could be anywhere in the world, and an electronic means of making payments will be very, very important to those people. That's an important change that's here.

I just mentioned some benefits that I felt the tenant would be in favour of. I'm sure the landlord may be not so happy with some of those changes, but there are changes also that will benefit the landlord.

Again, I mentioned a little while ago about what could happen to an apartment when a person – I have some articles here and it's pretty interesting if you look at some of the pictures that are on these articles and what was left behind and stuff like that. If I was a landlord and saw some of this, it would be – the landlord has something there now, if he said my property is being destroyed, my property is being absolutely destroyed, he can go to the director now and the director can make an order right away without having a hearing, without doing any mediation or something like that.

I know this is going to be defined in policy later on, Minister. We'll see this and how this is going to unfold and what the director has to do in order for it to be considered a significant risk. I know this must be a positive thing for the landlord.

There's also a part the landlord would also like, it's arrears, when they're owed money. Now if you look it, it's a 10 day notice but it's moved from five days now to 15 – or was 15 days and it's moved to five days. So that's positive.

Also, I mentioned a little while ago about abandoned apartments. Before – I didn't realize this until I was over and had the briefing with the department – the landlord had to store everything that was left in the apartment. The person took off, gone, and everything that was left there was the responsibility of the landlord

to take it, put it in a rental place and store it for 60 days.

I can imagine that was – financially having to rent a place, to hold it for 60 days, the work that's involved. I don't know if any of you have ever moved from apartment to apartment, but the work it takes to move all the stuff that's in an apartment or a house, it takes a good few truckloads to move most of the stuff that's there, and there's a cost to that.

This portion, I'm sure the landlords will like it, because now they only have to store personal property for 60 days. Also, to be able to secure it on their property, that's an important part. Then, like I said, the cost of moving or the cost of having somebody come and move it to a unit would be really, really high.

The minister mentioned about this also, about the clarification of receipts and failure to provide copies of rental agreements. There are some sections in this that will make it easier – and I suppose it's electronically or whatever – for the rental agreements and receipts to be moved back and forth between the landlords and tenants.

Notice of termination; termination notice would be required if the landlord and tenant agree in writing. If both agree in writing, the rental agreement on a specific date, that they want to cancel, they can do it also; if both are in agreement of the termination of that rental agreement on a specific date. This eliminates a lot of red tape too, because if you have to go through the processes and everything else, it will eliminate a bit of red tape.

The landlord also has to set up a holding, like I mentioned earlier, for the deposits of three or more units. So that's another positive thing. Again, any time we can make it easier for people to pay their bill or to send things through electronic means, it's a positive part of this.

When we went over, there was some talk about the director and the director's job in what the director does when it comes to this act. Before, the director was done through Cabinet, and the Cabinet had to decide the person they wanted to appoint. That's changed in this act. It will be going to the responsibility of the minister. Again, I guess that's just to eliminate a bit of

work for Cabinet, and probably the minister is the best person to do that.

In the bill there are a lot of definition materials and policies that I'm hoping we'll see. There's some consideration of what an abandoned premises – what's considered? It could be a person that, are they abandoned? Have they paid? There's nobody seen going into the – but they could be still paying and stuff like this. So there's some clarification that we need on that.

It was interesting, when you read the act itself, there are many different kinds of rental agreements and what the definition of a rental premises is. When I looked at the act, there's some fairly interesting, because I know – I'm not allowed. I know, Mr. Speaker, I'm not allowed to go to the specifics of the act and we'll get to that when we do but there are some areas in here where it doesn't apply to. It doesn't apply to different groups and it's important to understand.

Again, at the briefing, it was a good briefing and they gave us some examples. Living accommodations: a hotel, motel, inn, a tourist home, hostel or other similar combinations like that, also vacation homes for seasonal or a temporary period.

For people that want to go through – the minister mentioned this for different rehabs, whether it's through church groups or through government agencies and stuff like that. Accommodations for people in shelters – they're not included; nursing homes. Also, there are accommodations for educational institutions, for students. That's interesting that they're not included here, too.

There's one part of the act, though, Mr. Speaker: “a government agency that pays rent on behalf of a tenant.” That will be an interesting one to hear what the minister has to say about that.

I want to go back and just talk about the director who is the ultimate power for this whole act. The director has the ability to hear all the grievances or whatever is on the go and to “investigate and determine a matter arising under a rental agreement or this Act.” And can also assign the duties, including mediation and different duties to persons that the director's seem as appropriate. There are different

inspectors and different people that they will look into.

We'll get into most of this, Mr. Speaker, when we get to Committee. Again, I just want to talk a little bit about the importance of this act and the importance that people have confidence that they're going to be taken care of. Again, like I said, there are different groups out there, are landlords that are great people. Make sure that – I gave an example of Marjorie earlier. There are a lot of Marjories out there who make sure that their tenants are well taken care of.

We do have some landlords that need this act and we need to make sure that they – one of the obligations in the act itself on a landlord is to make sure that they give a clean, safe premise to the tenant. There's also part of this act that is obligations of a tenant and the obligations of the person who is renting or whatever. Their obligation is to make sure that they keep that clean, make sure that they don't do any damage to it and make sure that the rental unit that they're doing is in the best possible shape that they can.

Mr. Speaker, I think I touched a lot of the areas in the bill. I know that there are 61 amendments. I don't think I've touched on them all, but I will in Committee. I'll be interested to hear from other speakers today of different aspects of this bill and where they are.

It's a very important bill to the people of the province. It's very important that we have so many – it's just a sign of the times. We have so many people that are in these units and they need to know that they are protected. They need to know that government has policies and procedures in place and regulations that will protect them.

While this bill is both for landlords and tenants, we have to be very balanced to make sure that both sides are protected because, like I said earlier, there are going to be things in this bill that will make tenants happy and there are things in this bill that won't. There are things in this bill that the landlord will be very pleased with.

Overall, I think it's a good bill. There are a lot of details that are not there that I'd like to see when it comes to policies and stuff like that.

I'm sure in the next few days and the next month or so, when people really get a grasp of what is in this bill, they will give us their pros and cons.

Again, I thank you for your time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'd like to thank my hon. colleague from the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis for his kind support of this bill, it seems like. That's excellent to hear. It's a great bill. It's great work from the people in our department and the people of the province that came forward with these ideas.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to stand here today and speak to the amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act*, Bill 15.

I'm sure every Member in this House of Assembly, at some point or another, has worked with a consistent that has an issue with rental units, both a tenant and/or a landlord.

Undoubtedly, this act touches a large number of people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and in every region of our province. It is certainly a topic that has garnered a lot of attention over the years. As the Minister of Service NL said in her opening remarks, we've heard the many stories of incidents where landlord-tenant relationships have broken down. We've seen isolated cases of residential properties destroyed by tenants and we've seen tenants living in substandard conditions because their landlord wouldn't address issues that they had.

In my own experience as an MHA, like many people in this House, I've had many dealings with tenants who are uncertain of their rights and obligations. Generally, by the time it comes to my desk or every desk in this House, the situation is greatly escalated or the tenant doesn't know where to turn to get help to resolve their problem.

I've also had many interactions with landlords who've been faced with extraordinary circumstances. They have found it difficult to evict unwanted tenants who've been a victim of serious destruction to their properties.

In the history of Service NL, I'm certain residential tenancies continue to be one of the most common topics on which we regularly receive public input. Mr. Speaker, it's important that we fully understand what residential tenancies means to both the tenants and the landlords.

For the tenant, a rental premise is their home and like all of us, we have certain expectations with respect to our place in which we live and share with our families. If our basic housing needs are not being met because the landlord is not fulfilling their obligation under the contract, this causes undue hardship for the tenant.

Likewise, a landlord has made a significant financial investment into their rental premises, and even in some cases it may be their primary residence as well. When landlords are faced with an issue of nonpayment or destruction of their property, it also creates a very difficult situation.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, it was extremely important that the rights of both the landlord and the tenant be weighed equally in these proposed amendments. It was also important that we look at the *Residential Tenancies Act* in the context of the current marketplace, as well as the era of technology in which we live. The digital world we live in today is very different than that of 2000 when the act came into force. That is why we've made changes that recognize the need to be able to share documents and information electronically.

Speaking of sharing information, Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to highlight a very important consideration during the drafting of these amendments, and that is the protection of individual privacy. I want to thank the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for their input on this legislation. As a result of this feedback, there are a number of changes to the act which I would like to address.

Under section 10(1)7, the title of the section has been expanded to Peaceful Enjoyment and

Reasonable Privacy. This expansion places obligations on both the landlord and the tenant to respect each other's privacy. This matter came to light as a result of recent incidents such as when a tenant discovered their landlord had video surveillance inside the rental unit. We looked at other jurisdictions such as British Columbia, which had a similar expansive definition.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight once again the family violence provision that has now been included in the act, and echo the Minister of Service NL's comments and its importance. This is a significant amendment which allows for the early termination of rental agreements in situations where family violence has occurred. This process is modeled on the best practices across Canada with strong privacy protection for victims and informed by strategic consultations with concerned groups including the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour.

Several jurisdictions, including Nov Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut have legislation that allows tenants experiencing family violence to end a fixed-term tenancy if they believe they or their child will be harmed if they continue to stay in that rental unit.

Family violence will be defined in a similar manner to the definition of the *Family Violence Protection Act*, which was recently amended in this House through Bill 1. The definition which already includes many forms of violence such as assault, physical confinement and other acts or omissions was expanded to also include "conduct that causes psychological or emotional harm or a reasonable fear of that harm, including a pattern of behaviour the purpose of which is to undermine the psychological or emotional well-being of the applicant or a child; (f.2) conduct that controls, exploits or limits the applicant's access to financial resources for the purpose of ensuring the applicant's financial dependency" Those were important considerations that were added into the legislation here today.

Under this bill, fixed-term rental agreements can be terminated without penalty by providing a 30-

day notice. In situations of joint tenancy, the landlord will be required to give notice to the remaining tenants under the same rental agreement; however, the remaining tenants could sign another rental agreement with the landlord, should they wish, and the agreement will be terminated at the end to the notice period.

Similar to other jurisdictions, a protection order issued by the court or a certificate from a designated authority confirming that the tenant or child has been a victim of family violence would be required to end the tenancy.

Designated authorities to be prescribed in the regulations may include those working in the law enforcement, health care, Victim Services sector; such as the police, social workers, doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, Transition House staff or Victim Services staff, just to name a few. But they'll be dealt with in the regulations.

Under section 25(2)(b), which relates to the application for certificate, the words "reasonably necessary" were added. This clarifies that the director would only require information that is reasonably necessary to make a decision regarding the situation of family violence. In situations where there are other tenants in the rental premises, the landlord will be required to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the tenant, similar to such requirements in Alberta and Ontario.

In section 27, entitled Confidentiality, the landlord is required to keep information confidential unless required to disclose – which is important – under the act or any other act or regulation; or for the purpose of complying with a subpoena, warrant or order issued by a court, person, or body – it's a very long mouthful – with jurisdiction to compel that information. This provides clearer language with respect to ensuring confidentiality of information.

Considering other legislation such as the *Criminal Code* of Canada, the input of the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner was critical in the preparation of this clause. The elements of the bill regarding domestic violence were intended to provide a victim of violence the greatest possible

protection for their privacy. This can be a matter of life and death, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't get any more important than that.

Under section 42(10), which is the application to director, the notice that the date, time or place of the hearing of the application under this section is changed may be placed – this language is intended to clarify what type of information would be distributed to tenants in a large apartment-type building.

Mr. Speaker, I want to once again thank the Privacy Commissioner for his valuable input into the development of the amendments. The changes I have just spoken about are very important for the protection of privacy and they do not alter the balance of rights of the landlord and tenant in this legislation.

While privacy protection is a very important matter for our government as a whole, the nature of the work at Service NL is very much centered around personal information transactions on a daily basis. Service NL is responsible for the majority of licensing, inspections, public record keeping and regulatory functions within government. It's a primary access point for people who need those type services. The department undertakes hundreds of thousands of transactions each and every year; these range from electrical permits for electrical inspections, to restaurant inspections, to the production of Vital Statistics records and the Registry of Deeds.

Within the Motor Registration Division alone, Service NL completes more than 1 million transactions per year. In terms of the residential tenancies division, applications have increased from 948 in 2015 to 1,125 in 2017. Furthermore, there were 538 hearings in 2017.

AN HON. MEMBER: How many?

MR. B. DAVIS: Five hundred and thirty-eight.

Mr. Speaker, not only am I pleased to stand here today to support the amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act* in general; I'm also very pleased for the consideration for the protection of privacy. Our government made a commitment to the people of this province regarding better services and better outcomes.

The changes we're making today to the *Residential Tenancies Act* satisfies both of those commitments we made and what we have introduced here today certainly supports all of those commitments, and we continue to want to do that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I encourage everyone in this hon. House to support the amendments made here and this legislation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's indeed an honour to stand here in this House and talk to the piece of legislation that we're about to debate and, no doubt, have discussion on. I would suspect we'll get to point where we will adopt this piece of legislation. It's a piece of legislation after reviewing it and going through the bill, it's a fairly encompassing bill, it's very detailed and, at times, very technical but, at the end of the day, addresses a particular need and an issue that's been outstanding for a period of time and one that no administration could rush into because there are so many nuances here and there are so many components of making sure that what you're presenting is the best piece of legislation that can be put forward.

I know we hear the word balance. I like the word balance because, at the end of the day, any piece of legislation, it's not going to be totally 100 per cent for one side or another side or a particular group that may benefit from it; but there has to be a balance about what you're putting forward is the best piece of legislation to address a particular issue or a particular service. In this case, we're talking about landlords and tenants and the impact that laws, regulations, rules and policies would have on their ability to get fair service for fair payment. That's what's being talked about here.

While we talk about – I noted here the only thing that I shrug a little bit is when I say changes that benefit. I don't like the word benefit because it makes a divide, that there's a divide between landlords and tenants. The only divide between landlords and tenants are in that

small less than 2 per cent of either landlords or tenants who don't follow the existing rules, who don't have a good working relationship, who don't have respect for either the property that they own or the property that they're renting or leasing.

To say that we need to have changes that benefit, I don't like that. I think what's been talked about, a balance of changes but particularly changes that are fair and that could be implemented and understood and adopted for everybody that would want to follow rules and regulations that are put forward.

Looking at these – I had an opportunity to go through them all and I'm very pleased. It started to bring back – only a few years ago, probably four years ago, I had an opportunity as minister to sit down after the consultation process and start to formulate some of the recommendations that were to be put in play to move it forward, and noted that most are still similar to what was debated at the time of the consultations.

That's a positive because we all admit this is long overdue, but there was a concept here of ensuring you have it right. There was a fair bit of consultation. There was consultation done by the previous administration. Before they got to bring it for a piece of legislation, things had changed and the administration felt – rightfully so – that there's another nuance here.

Things have changed – maybe not dramatically from the outcome after reading the recommendations here that they are 95 per cent similar, if not exact, to some of the ones that were recommended a number of years ago – but the consultation process ensured that we adopted things that are reflective of changing times. Some of it is about electronic payments, about electronic records, about inclusion of some of the other groups and agencies here. I saw that as a positive and hats off to the administration for taking it to the next level of consultation. You can't lose when you go back, reflect and say, you know what, there are either other agencies or other groups or sectors of society that we either inadvertently forgot to include or, for want of a better phrase, weren't part of the equation at the time.

The process that was started before, back in the late 2000s there was discussion, and then from 2006, 2008, 2009 and 2010 there was more formulation. In 2012 there was heavy consultation because it was felt bureaucrats can't sit down and solely write these recommendations that will change legislation and be enacted, a policy that has to be followed; the general public have to be engaged, particular stakeholders have to be engaged and a broader lens has to be put on it. That was started heavily in 2012 and continued right up until no doubt that the minister signed off on what was going to be brought to Cabinet and Executive Council for discussions to be brought here in the House for debate.

I've looked at them. Again, when we talk about balance I think it's a balance in not making things too encompassing, not making it too restrictive and not making it too financially burdening for those who may be involved. While at the same time sending an assertive enough message to landlords who don't follow proper procedures, and to tenants who may think at the end of the day there's a free ride and you can jump back and forth

This is what I want to reiterate so that people don't get the wrong impression. This really is relevant so that – as the old cliché in life: Locks are for honest people because at the end of the day, they're just there as a mechanism. Those who follow the rules of the law and that never lock their doors. Don't need to, they trust people. But it's the 1 or 2 per cent of those who don't follow the law, don't have respect that we have to be cognizant of. That's who you try to protect yourself against.

That's what we've done here. I think we've curved it in such a way that those who follow laws and respect policy will do fine on this, won't be upset about this, won't see this as hindrance and won't see this as an attack on them as landlords or tenants. They will see this as something that strengthens who they are and really invigorates them to say I can have a relationship with a tenant or with a landlord. That's positive.

What it does do, for those good landlords who have to deal with tenants who do not want to respect the law, it gives them some safeguards.

It may not be able to prevent things upfront, but I can guarantee you it can rectify the situation after the fact so that they don't take a heavy financial loss. On the other side, it protects the tenant who may ensure at the end of the day – they may not know what they're getting into with a particular landlord at the beginning, but they can know that there are some protections as the process unfolds.

The other benefit is that we'll have a mechanism, that there will be an ability at the end of the day for landlords who are not up to par to be chastised and maybe, even in some cases, moved out of that system because of some of the fines we have, some of the regulations and some of the restrictions. Tenants who are not following the rules, regulations and policies will indeed then be ostracized to a point where they're going to have to start to change their ways if they want landlords to start renting to them.

It becomes an avenue here where we've got that balance. I think we need to sell this to the point that this is about having rules and regulations in play that are just expanding on what we've always had there and have worked for good tenants and good landlords, but now protect those who may inadvertently have a bad tenant with a good landlord or a good tenant with a bad landlord to protect that process.

I'm pleased to see this is in line. I can remember being there and in the day some of the recommendations on some of the penalties – now I know it was four years ago – to me, seemed very minor. I could see a landlord thinking rather than repair something, rather than do something that is in the best interests of giving a tenant a proper house or a proper apartment to live in, I'll take my fine. I'll move it on because I know the market dictates. I've got somebody else waiting who will pay me top dollar without me having to invest anything and do the right things.

Looking at this now I see the fact that we've moved it, maneuvered it up a little bit from the changing trends and knowing the economy of scale and the impact that it will have on people that it becomes a deterrent. This is what it's about. It's about sending deterrents to those who may think they can get away with certain things

or not treat their tenant, or tenants treat the landlord with respect and a responsible manner for the property they're engaged with.

I've looked here, I've seen some of the penalties; a maximum of \$400 to a maximum of \$10,000. A maximum of \$400 to a landlord who owns 50 properties is nickel and dime in any way, shape or form. It sends that message to those who may not have the proper reputation that if you're not going to clean up your operations, \$10,000 is substantial. That sends a message. That's up to a maximum and there are varying degrees of what the penalty is for what they haven't followed under the act itself.

It also gives the landlord some protections because the tenants at one time could take advantage and could flippantly move around. Sometimes, as is noted here, could leave their own assets in that apartment which restricted the landlord from not only using the apartment and renting it, but they were on the hook for not being able to do anything with the furniture or the assets that were in there. As a matter of fact, in some cases, it became not only a financial loss because they couldn't rent the property, but it became a cost to them because they then had to find a way to store it. Now, we've sort of cleaned that up and made it only in extreme circumstances where there's an issue between the two and a dispute.

We've managed to find a better way and a quicker, more efficient way to speed up any disputes, because you're going to have disputes. Human nature is you're going to have disputes sometimes when it's two rational people. They're the ones that you really want to be able to move quickly. When there's an irrational partner and a rational partner, you want to even be able to move them quicker because at the end of the day you know somebody is being disadvantaged here or taken advantage of.

I like the fact that we're looking at speeding up the process. I do recall the conversations four years ago when I became minister and I was presented and said: Here are our findings; here are some of the recommendations that have been put forward through the consultation. Here's what we've helped formulate as bureaucrats to put it in line with what legislation would be. We need to sit down, Minister, and have a

discussion about which ones you think should move forward.

The word at the beginning then – and that's four years – was about balance. We have to have a balance because we have to be cognizant of both sides. I remember sitting down and having an assistant deputy minister and a deputy minister; one who actually was a landlord and owned property and the other one who had children who were renters. It was ironic to see even the clash at that level between what was in the best interest of one sector over the other, and then when you'd get into, well, let's find a balance. Where's the balance between them? What would be acceptable?

I know it's going to be hard, no matter what side you sit on here, if you're a landlord or a tenant, about is this going to disadvantage that particular sector? Again, I reiterate, it won't for the 98 per cent. For the 2 per cent, somebody's going to be disadvantaged. If you're the one who takes advantage as a tenant, you're going to have to pay the price. If you're the one who takes advantage as a landlord, you're going to have to pay the price. Hopefully, we'll get to a point where it's 100 per cent compliant.

Only when there are two rational sides having a dispute do we go into which one of these comes into being the policy we enact to ensure that the dispute is settled fairly and justly. That's how this whole process works, when you talk about any types of policy that are to protect people in our society.

I looked at some of the other ones that were here. What I liked, a lot of it used to be about – I remember it being pushed back to courts. You'll have to take it to court; you'll have to deal with it in court. The fact is the director now has much more authority to be able to make swifter decisions and make referrals about what are the issues here that need to move to the next level. So there are positive things that are moving along the process here.

Notices for periods of rent increase from three months to six months. There are things about that that makes sense. There's a timely fashion here that needs to be done on both sides. If it's about eviction for whatever reason, or it's about somebody who's leaving, both partners need a

certain period of time for certain notice to prepare for whatever the next step is going to be. Either they have a vacant apartment or somebody needs to find another apartment. There's some clarity on that. It's opening it up to be respectful.

What I like, when I read them all, it becomes reflective of changing times in our society here. A couple of years ago in the metro area you would be – we were down, I think, was it 1 per cent vacancies. Look at the impact that would have had on a tenant being able to move out of a rental property that wasn't up to par, or physically wasn't in the location they need to be, or something had changed in their life from a mobility issue that they couldn't find something that was more suitable and had to stay there because of the restrictions on the market not being there, and vice versa.

If the market gets up and there are six, eight, nine and 10 per cent vacancy rates, tenants can flick around because they know at least a landlord will take a chance on somebody if I come in with a small deposit for security because they need to be able to rent that property. What this does here is it's open enough, but yet tight enough that as the markets change so does the ability to protect both sides of it. I liked that when I looked at it.

I started to reflect on some of the same discussions we had four years ago and even thinking about the two officials coming to some consensus after some heavy debate. First, before they came to a consensus on their own, going back and looking at the consultations, reading the notes of what was discussed by stakeholders. Then hearing stories about what could happen, because our own experiences may not be totally realistic of what really happens. We may envision certain things.

In this case, the consultations gave people a real understanding of some of the struggles and some of the challenges, knowing they're for a small minority of the people we're talking about here or the clientele we're talking about here from a landlord point of view or a tenant point of view of not following rules and regulations, but it protects everybody. It's a safeguard. It's a clean set of regulations and policies.

The recommendations here will now – while I know it's being sold as a brand new act, I do see a lot of the headings where things that were in the *Residential Tenancies Act* before. I do understand there are certain standard processes that are the same in all acts and you just change and add exactly what's relevant to where, but I do note substantial changes because not only are you adding a number of new policy regulations, you're enhancing a number of the other ones that have been added to the whole process.

Looking at this and knowing the general public had proper input is a safeguard for me. Knowing that the dialogue we had four, five, six, eight years ago has improved to a point now where it's been reflective of the changing times and better uses of technology and better uses of social media and these type of things for getting the message out. For being able to share information. For being able to communicate between landlords and tenants so that the communications barriers and the miscommunications are not there. For being able to be more expedient, for being able to deal with departments and particularly under the act being able to look at what regulations may protect one particular side or partner in this endeavour as a renter or a 'rentee.'

With that, I said I'd probably only take a few minutes because I wholeheartedly support it, and I look forward to the discussion here. I know my colleagues here have a number of questions, and I may get to ask a few questions here on clarification because some of it – I'm just trying to jog my memory – is how we got to that and what it was based on.

From what I'm reading, I see it as a nice flow on how this will be beneficial to both sides. I know there still will be some struggles out there from a landlord and a tenant's situation because nothing is the be all and end all and the super piece of legislation that addresses every issue. Again, it will apply to those who want to follow the rules and the regulations, but it gives a common sense approach to being able to directly settle disputes in a respectful manner and a clear and precise manner.

With that, I do look forward, when we get in Committee, to some questions being asked, particularly from our side over here for

clarification. I do thank the minister and her staff. I know, as a former minister, how diligent people want to be able to move legislation, to get it in play so that they can make sure citizens have access to policies that reflect their needs and protect them.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I take my seat and look forward to getting to Committee.

Thank you.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm so pleased to hear this afternoon support for this bill. I know the minister has worked very hard ensuring this bill has been updated, and I know that her team has been very strong advocates for some of the changes. I'm glad to see Members of this House supportive of some of the changes that are being brought forward.

I'm pleased to rise in this hon. House to speak to the proposed changes to the *Residential Tenancies Act*. This legislation is long awaited, Mr. Speaker, and highly anticipated by the people of this province.

As Members of the House of Assembly, we regularly hear about the direct impacts that the *Residential Tenancies Act* has on landlords and tenants in Newfoundland and Labrador, both through the media and from our constituents. What we are less likely to hear about is how those experiencing violence are affected by the *Residential Tenancies Act*.

As a society, Mr. Speaker, we often have trouble hearing and addressing violence until it's really too late. Poignantly, it's precisely the people who are experiencing violence and turmoil in their lives that need these updates and changes the most.

I'd like to draw your attention, and the attention of Members of this House, to the proposed changes in this legislation that support tenants experiencing family violence. These amendments will allow tenants experiencing family violence to terminate a fixed lease early by giving 30 days' notice rather than the current

60 while maintaining privacy and confidentiality.

By introducing this legislation, we are joining other provinces throughout Canada who have implemented similar measures to support survivors of violence. It is a change that will help reduce the length of time that women who are experiencing violence and allow them more flexibility to respond when violence occurs.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, even in 2018, we have a staggering number of people in our province today who are experiencing violence perpetrated by those who are supposed to love and support them above all else. Some of these are family members, Mr. Speaker.

In 2014, 544 women and 223 children were admitted to Transition Houses in Newfoundland and Labrador as a result of intimate partner violence; 544 women and 223 children. While this is a heartbreaking statistic, this number does not reflect the true magnitude of the problem, as this is the number who received help from Transition Houses. Many, Mr. Speaker, who experience violence do not report it. In fact, it is estimated that only 10 per cent of those who experience violence at home will report it; 544 women and 223 children.

There are a number of reasons that women – and the vast majority of those who experience intimate partner violence are women – do not report or seek help. Violence at home is a very complex issue, one that is not easily understood or easily addressed, but we do know one thing for sure, those who are experiencing violence need a range of interventions and supports. As a government, it is our responsibility and we are always working to improve the supports that we provide to survivors of violence.

One of the ways we do this is by collaborating with community partners and our colleagues within government to find ways to improve access to services and supports. Another way we support survivors is by funding organizations that provide front-line services directly to those that need it.

We recognize the need for funding can increase over time and so through *Budget 2017* we reinforced our commitment to our community

partners by increasing the funding for the eight women centres throughout the province, the Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Transition Houses themselves. In *Budget 2018*, you saw additional funds for the sexual violence centre and you saw additional funds for the indigenous groups.

We appreciate the work that all the stakeholders are doing and we partner with them to constantly improve our services and make those services better. We do this because the women and children of our province deserve better.

We also consider our existing programs and services and ask: How can we do this better? How can we better serve the people of our province? We listen to people like the Federation of Labour who brought forward some of the amendments that we're seeing here today, especially around the violence piece.

The proposed changes to the *Residential Tenancies Act* are an example of that analysis. It is one way, one of many, that we can take existing legislation and improve it for women and children in violent situations. Unfortunately, the risk of intimate partner violence is the highest for recently separated partners and we know that a woman's risk of being killed by a legally separated spouse is nearly six times higher, six times higher than the risk from a legally married spouse. Clearly, this is a time when women need that increased support.

As a government, we want to do what we can to empower these women and facilitate their efforts. It is vital that women have the time and the resources to prepare a safety plan and have it in place when they leave. This is the best way to ready themselves to leave their abusers. Whatever support we can give them, Mr. Speaker, I think not only this government, not only the MHAs in this House today, but all of us here in Newfoundland and Labrador would like to do that.

Under current legislation, the situations where women are fixed-leased tenants with their abuser, they are bound to the terms of the rental agreement. This can mean that the tenants must provide at least two months' notice before terminating the agreement. What this means for someone experiencing violence is that they are

legally obligated to provide two months' rent to their landlord. Whether she remains in the rental property with her abuser or alternatively moves out and pays rent for two properties, this can create a number of obstacles for women considering leaving an abusive situation.

Economic issues can be a significant barrier for women who are already at a disadvantage compared to men. With a wage gap of 66 per cent, women in Newfoundland and Labrador earn less than men. They are also more likely to work in a minimum wage position or work in part-time work to allow for the additional time they spend providing unpaid care for children and other family members. Women therefore are already more likely to be in a financially precarious situation or live paycheque to paycheque. This is a serious challenge when leaving an abusive situation, particularly if the abuser has control of the finances. In that circumstance, women may feel unable to support themselves if they leave their abuser.

This instability is compounded when trying to pay rent on two properties at once. One with the former spouse as well as an additional property that they must move in to. The woman is saving up money to support herself in the transition, she has to save twice as long under the current legislation, which requires two months rent, rather than one.

If passed – and we hope it is, Mr. Speaker – changes to the legislation will allow those who are experiencing violence to terminate a fixed lease early and provide 30 days' notice to the landlord, rather than the 60 days currently required. Under new legislation, the landlord will also be required to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the tenant. Together, these changes help to support the safety planning of those who are attempting to leave their abusers. Women will now be better able to make a safety plan and execute it quicker.

As a result of this legislation, fewer vulnerable women and children will experience abuse. As minister responsible for the Women's Policy Office, that is always our goal, to decrease, prevent and ultimately eliminate violence against women and children in our province.

Everyday, Mr. Speaker, our staff at the Women's Policy Office work with their colleagues throughout government and in the community to advance the status of women in our province. They examine social, financial and societal barriers to women and act to address these issues through collaboration and teamwork.

The changes to the *Residential Tenancies Act* are a prime example of what can be created by working together. Staff at Service NL and in the Women's Policy Office worked in partnership to apply a gender lens and identify how this legislation could be tailored to better address the needs of women experiencing violence. What we have here today, Mr. Speaker, is legislation that is a product of that partnership.

These amendments are one step forward on a road that's going to take a lot of steps towards a more equitable society. There's much left to be done to create the kinds of communities we wish to live in and leave for the next generation. We all have a role to play in violence prevention.

Allow me, Mr. Speaker, as I conclude here today, to also speak a little bit about some of the other things that are happening.

The residential tenancies was one thing that we were following through the ministerial committee that we have organized. We have the

SOME HON. MEMBERS: What a minister.

MS. COADY: – Minister of Health and Community Services – thank you – the Minister of Justice and Public Safety; the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development; the Minister of Service NL. We have the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development all coming together on a ministerial committee where we're tracking the changes, advancing the changes that we all want to see towards ending violence against women and children.

Mr. Speaker, we tracking when the Federation of Labour came to us earlier this year and they made some suggestions. The Minister of Service NL was already on some of the suggestions, was

already working towards improvement. That was, again, another community partner coming forward and saying we could change this and we could do better. And we did, Mr. Speaker; we made the change in this legislation that's a small but important step towards ending violence.

I'm grateful to my colleagues that joined me on the ministerial committee, that we have an aggressive plan – I'll call it that, Mr. Speaker. It's a lot of work, a lot of effort. You've seen some of them. As a matter of fact, Bill 1 here in this House of this session addressed some of these issues that we need addressed when we're talking about violence against women.

Before I conclude here today, Mr. Speaker, I do want to send a thank you. I want to say thank you to all those that are providing service in Transition Houses. I gave the statistics earlier of how many people availed of that service. I think it was 544 women last year, and their children.

Think about the impacts that the people that are working in Transition Houses today could have on a life, on a family, on a future. When I speak to people who work in these Transitions Houses, the gift that they give in helping people to improve their lives, helping them to ensure that they can take the step forward, the step necessary to leave an abusive situation, to ensure that they are safe, to ensure that they have the supports, to ensure that their children have the supports that they need, it's so important and I know that the people of this province – not just the government, not just me, not just the MHAs, but the people of this province want to say thank you to them for all the work that they do.

I also want to thank those who give so much to Women's Centres. We support women's centres in this province, Mr. Speaker. We fund them. But a lot of the work, the foundational work of reaching out to ensure equity and equality for women is done by these Women's Centres around the province. In abusive situations, they have to guide women through to make the arrangements with the Transition Houses. They help incredibly in ensuring an equitable society, of ensuring a violence-free society, and ensuring that government – as a matter of fact, not just government, all of us as Members of this House of Assembly continue to work towards a violence-free community.

Mr. Speaker, when we came into government in late 2015, a new plan had just been put in place for violence-free communities. I'm proud to say that that plan has been 97 per cent enacted. Now we're starting to move toward going out there to consult, to work with the community, again, to say: What are our next steps?

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, along with the head of the Provincial Status of Women, are co-chairing a committee for violence-free communities, and violence against women in particular, and children. We had an incredible session back in December that I attended. It was poignant. It was difficult in some ways because we heard so many sad stories, but we also heard so much hope and so much that we can do to make a difference in people's lives.

We're looking forward to the next phase of violence prevention and violence-free communities. We'll continue to ensure that this government addresses and does all it can do. I ask everybody listening today, all MHAs in this House, and indeed all of the people of this province to please be mindful of the impacts of violence, and please do what you can to address it in our community and ensure that we all have the kind of futures that we all want to have, the kind of life that we all deserve to have.

I'm proud to say that the Minister of Service NL has really taken great steps in this legislation. I commend her and her team for it, and I commend everybody in this House to please vote in favour of it so we can be one step closer to assisting women who are in abusive situations to have a better life.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

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

I am more than pleased to be standing today and speaking to Bill 15, the tenancies of residential premises act. As the Minister for Service NL has said and the Minister for Natural Resources and

other speakers, we've been a long time waiting for this bill – too long, but now it is here. I'm very, very pleased with it and I'm going to be happy to support this bill.

I have some comments I'd like to make and have a couple of questions, but the bill is getting at some very, very crucial issues that have been around for a while in this province. I want to sort of frame what I have to say in a big picture, and maybe some will think a lofty picture but it's the reality of what we're dealing with in this act. We're dealing with something that deals with the rights of people, the rights of our population, the right to housing – I'm reading this from the UN Charter. The right to housing is the economic, social and cultural right to adequate housing and shelter. It is recognized in many national constitutions and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

What we're dealing with here is ensuring that people in our province, whether they are living in their own home or whether they're living as tenants in residential situations that they have adequate housing and have housing that recognizes their dignity. That's one of the foundations again of the UN human rights Charter is the recognition of the dignity of the person. That's why I'm so pleased with some of the things that are in this act because they have to do with the dignity of the person.

I'm going to refer first to the fact that boarding houses, rooming houses and bedsitters are now included in our act. One of the things I've never been able to understand was how government has been paying for really decrepit and dangerous lodgings for very vulnerable people to be living in bedsitting rooms, boarding houses and rooming houses. Because under the *Residential Tenancies Act* that we've had, those places where meals or bed linens are supplied – that's the quote from the current act – were not included in the current act.

When I say that this is something that's been going on for a long while, I'm thinking right back to the first time I ever set foot in a rooming house. It was back in the 1980s. In actual fact, it was a relative, an aunt of mine who had lived in a violent situation for many years, who'd been in

and out of the Waterford Hospital, and was living in a rooming house. We were quite disturbed because we knew where she was, was not adequate, and this is what government was paying for.

I went to see her. I went to see the situation and to see her when she'd only been there a few days and I was horrified by what I found. I was horrified by the living conditions. I was horrified by the fact that she was the only woman in a house with single men.

There was a woman in the house who was running the house. The thing is my aunt, who had lived in a violent situation, was in this rooming house, I think, with four men who all had rooms in the house. She didn't have a lock on her door. I went over at one point where it was suppertime and the food on the plate – I will never forget what was being served for supper: cups of tea, which weren't very warm, cuts of canned meat which looked like Klik or Kam and a slice of white bread. That was the supper and that was constant.

That was back in the 1980s. It is only now that we are finally saying those kinds of situations have to come under our act. It's essential they come under our act because the kind of women – I shouldn't say kind of. The women in situations that the Minister of Natural Resources was referring to – my aunt was one of those and they end up in awful situations sometimes. Of course, back in the 1980s there was no shelter for my aunt to go to.

What we're doing here is extremely important. Fast-forward to the present, I've been in rooming houses in my district and, believe me, they're no better than the rooming houses that I saw in 1980. We have been too long putting up with inadequate housing, putting up with not just inadequate but decrepit housing, housing that doesn't recognize the dignity of the person living in those houses. It's been totally and completely unacceptable.

The issue is going to be now that the boarding houses, rooming houses and bed-sitters are coming under our new act, under the *Tenancies of Residential Premises act* – because that's the new name. Now that that's happening, we have to make sure everything is in place to ensure

these buildings are regularly inspected. That is the thing that's really important because in many of these situations there is nobody living in them who is sort of managing them.

You get people, one that I was in on one street in my district – I won't name the street – not too long ago, just some months ago. The person that I went to see obviously was suffering from a mental condition. After I saw him we eventually got him into the Waterford. He was living in a situation where his room – that's all it was – was being paid for by government. Nobody was sort of in charge of this man. There were, I think, three or four other men in this house. There were drugs in the house, there was violence in the house and he had absolutely no protection.

Now that all of this comes under the act, these are the kinds of things which government is becoming responsible for. The thing is that the way things operate it is municipalities that are responsible for inspections. If government is now recognizing these living conditions in the provincial act, then government really is going to have a responsibility with the municipalities to ensure there are adequate resources, adequate inspectors and adequate resources for those inspectors. They have to be able to enter these premises and have all the support they need in doing the inspections and in reporting on what they find.

Right now, people who live in these kinds of situations don't complain because, number one, very often they're not paying for the situation they're in, it's being paid for by income assistance; and number two, they're afraid if they lodge a complaint they'll be evicted. We are going to have to make sure that now we finally have these housing conditions, these rooming houses, boarding houses and bed-sitters under our legislation, we have the power to make sure they become places where people live in dignity as is under the UN charter of Human Rights. That the dignity of the person is recognized, that they feel this is some place that is my home. Even if it's one room, that it's something they feel comfortable in, they feel that they are treated as persons.

This is so, so important, Mr. Speaker – so, so important. I would say the majority of us in this room, if not all of us, have never ever had to

worry about where we're living. We take for granted having a home, being in a place that's comfortable, being in a place that's warm. That is so not the situation for many people. Many of those people are living in these boarding houses, rooming houses and bed-sitters. Some of them are also living in small apartments and maybe in basement apartments, for example. Sometimes these also have to be situations that are looked into.

People are afraid to complain and that's why I'm so happy the act very clearly spells out what in the act are benefits to tenants and what in the act are benefits to landlords. I understand landlords have to be protected as well, we all know that, but the benefits to tenants are very important. What the Minister of Natural Resources was talking about is I think, number one, the fact that boarding houses and rooming houses are under the act, that's one of the big things about this act; and number two, the act recognizes the women and children who are victims of domestic violence, as the minister spoke to so eloquently.

The fact now that women who are getting out of a violent situation know they can get out of the lease that they have and get out quickly as they move towards safety – that it will happen quickly is so important. If they're in fixed-term rental agreements, they need to know they can get out of those agreements without any penalty because, in most cases, they won't have the ability anyway to even pay the penalty. That recommendation came from the Federation of Labour, actually. I'm really glad to see it here in the bill.

The new bill also decreases the time a landlord can hold a damage deposit by five days. That's important. If somebody has paid a damage deposit and they're leaving, they shouldn't have to wait too long to get their own money back because it is their own money. It used to be 15 days and now it is 10 days. That makes it easier for tenants to get their security deposit back. It's extremely important.

The group eviction notices are also important. These are notices, for example, which have to do with residential complexes or mobile home parks. These were extremely short. They've now been extended to three months. That's also

recognition of the human right to adequate housing and recognizing the dignity of the person; people being given adequate time to do the planning, adequate time to get a new place and not be in absolute fear that they could end up being on the street because a notice has been too short.

It's the same way with the rental increase for other situations – ordinary apartments. That has been lengthened from three to six months. So a landlord cannot give now just a three-month notice; the landlord has to give a six-month notice.

There have been situations – a recent one here in the city and in other parts of the province – where the rent was going up quite significantly and people were being given a three-month notice and they did not know how they could cope with the situation in that length of time. Doubling the time to six months certainly does help the situation for people when this happens.

Now, my concern is that we do not have protection for tenants who are facing extreme raises when it comes to their rent. That to me is a major concern. We brought this up in the briefing and it was explained to us in the briefing why this wasn't being dealt with in the act. The explanation was that when you look at places where, in Canada, there are rent controls and people get protection in those situations, and you look at our situation here in Newfoundland. In actual fact, our increases on average have gone up at a rate that is less than some places that have rent controls.

That doesn't deal with the fact – Mr. Speaker, I hate to do this, but I really can't cope with the speaking. The noise is –

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): Order, please!

The noise level in the House is a little too high. I ask Members for their co-operation.

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

It's bad enough for me normally, but with having a cold, you sort of get that feeling you have to speak over the noise and I can't do that. I know I probably don't need to because of the

mic, but that's still not what happens, you just sort of feel you have to speak over the noise. So thank you.

I was talking about what happens in situations, and we have them, where the rent goes up astronomically. You can't look at the average by which our rent has gone up over the last so many years. You have to look at the fact that there are some situations where it's critical. If we're just looking at the market and we're saying that the market is what is going to drive housing, and we treat housing as a market commodity, then we really have a problem.

I'm very sorry this is not in the act. I'm saying to the minister, I think we have to continue talking about rent stabilization measures, especially where you have a critical situation. When you have a major development coming into a town, for example, like happened to Happy Valley-Goose Bay with Muskrat Falls or if you've had a downturn in a place, like Lab West at one point with a downturn, then all of a sudden, things go well again, work is happening again, all of a sudden, the cost of houses goes up and rent goes up, and we have no way of rate stabilization.

I understand the analysis that was done and I understand the whole thing about provincial averages, but how do we take care of those situations where people literally are left homeless because they can't afford to live in the apartment where they were living? We've had that happening here in St. John's.

So the rate stabilization for me remains to be a big issue. I think, just as it took years to get to today's act, I'm going to see the bill we're dealing with today and the new act as just another step along the way. There are still issues that we will have to continue talking about and dealing with.

Just a couple of more minutes. I think the other thing, there are benefits to landlords. I want to look at that for a minute. As I said, they too have to have their needs and their rights taken care of.

The new act reduces the time a tenant can be in arrears before the landlord can issue an eviction notice. It's gone from 15 days, down to five days. We questioned that, as well, in the briefing

and I didn't hear a very substantive explanation, but we believe five days is too short a time. Being able to give people enough time, whether it's to find a new place to live or whether it is trying to meet their responsibility if they're in arrears. Time is important.

I had a case brought to me today of somebody who was in arrears simply because the bank had deposited the person's money in a wrong account and the person didn't know that his money was in a wrong account, so he didn't know that he was in arrears. It took him nine days to get things sorted out with the bank, so his money got to the landlord. In that situation, he would have been innocent and yet he would've been in trouble with the landlord.

The Act does allow for an appeal, but in such a situation an appeal takes time. The appeal is not going to happen even within the five days. So I do question the five days and when we get into Committee I'll talk more about that with the minister and see if she would not consider 10 days rather than five days.

So having said that, Mr. Speaker, I've hit on the major points I wanted to hit on. I will ask questions when we get to Committee for clarification on some points, but I do thank the department because I know the minister's department has been on this for a long time. Their work went right back to the 2012 consultations, which is six years ago.

So it's been six years of consultations, six years of people bringing forward their concerns. It's been wide consultation and I do compliment the minister on what we now have in front of us. The big thing from here on in will be with any bill that we deal with or any act that put in place, is to make it operational, to make sure that everything is in place in both regulations and in resources, et cetera, to make it an operational act.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. FINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you to the independent Member, understanding the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands certainly looking to lend his voice to the conversation this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, given the hour of the day, normally that phrase starts with we'll adjourn, but, no, given the hour of the day, I'm certainly not going to try and take too much time, as I understand the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands wishes to have a few remarks, and we certainly had quite a long week here in the Legislature.

Bill 15, An Act Respecting Tenancies of Residential Premises. Wow, what a historic day. What can I say, Mr. Speaker. This is something that's been a long time coming. It's noted that it's been a long time coming from the Minister of Service NL in her opening remarks. The parliamentary secretary, the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, the Member for Cape St. Francis, the leader of the Official Opposition and then just a moment ago the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi. Everybody is recognizing this is a long time coming.

I can tell you I'm extremely excited, Mr. Speaker. Most of my colleagues on this side of the House are aware of the background in which I worked prior to being so fortunate to be here in the Legislature.

I spent five years, just over five years, Mr. Speaker, working directly with housing and homelessness in our province, on our province's West Coast, in the area surrounding Stephenville and the Port au Port Peninsula – five years, Mr. Speaker, which I will never forget.

In fact, I can certainly relate to some of the comments by the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi with respect to seeing individuals in very vulnerable situations. The nature of the work, Mr. Speaker, which I did, involved primarily working with individuals with mental health challenges and mental health diagnoses. In addition to that, it also had a broad range of duties around basically assisting anybody who had any needs around housing issues; a very broad context for a job indeed.

At the time, Mr. Speaker, the position I held was one of eight across Newfoundland and Labrador. These positions still exist today; they're funded under the Supportive Living Program which falls under the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. In fact, the Supportive Living Program has actually seen increases under the budget brought in by our Liberal government last year and, I believe, maintained again this year as well.

Mr. Speaker, these positions would assist individuals trying to find accommodations and also assist landlords with respect to challenges they may have with tenants. I would help tenants who were in their most desperate cases. I would drive them in my own vehicle to view rental accommodations. I would try to make situations where tenants who got evicted time and time again for various reasons – perhaps due to their mental health challenges and diagnoses that would see them become evicted from the landlords.

In rural Newfoundland, in a smaller rental market, you can appreciate that if an individual has been looked upon poorly by a landlord that word travels. Multiple other landlords will become aware. Then it becomes an extreme challenge to find suitable accommodations for these individuals. My job was a bit of a broker, if you will, between landlords and tenants to find safe and affordable housing.

One thing that presented significant challenges in this position was the *Residential Tenancies Act*. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, there are some comments in the media today being reported both by CBC and VOXM. One of the outlets has reported this piece of legislation gives broader powers to landlords. We're here stating that it is a balance. I think everybody has stated today there is a balance now found.

What I can tell you is the former Tenancies Act certainly gave a lot more powers to our tenants, believe it or not, despite what many would believe. This would be particularly in situations whereby a landlord is trying to evict a tenant and the tenant would just put up roadblocks. Previously, if a landlord wanted to evict a tenant, they would have to provide a 10-day notice. We've seen instances where the actual tenant would go right to the landlord – the

Residential Tenancies Act – claim hearing and file a notice for a hearing on the ninth day of which the landlord was of the impression that they would be leaving. This would then take another – it could be two weeks, it could be three weeks before we would even get to a hearing.

So I've seen situations where landlords were left in the lurch and out substantial amounts of money simply due to this. One of the measures we put in place here in the act now, one of the measures we put in place is so the director has some influence, and this will certainly eliminate the need for some of these hearings.

The Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville quoted, I believe, 583 hearings last year alone?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. FINN: Five hundred and thirty-eight; sorry, Mr. Speaker. Five hundred and thirty-eight hearings.

I'm not sure if any Member in the House has had an opportunity to represent either a landlord or a tenant at these hearings but they are a very cumbersome process, very time consuming. We only have so many directors that are even able to hold these hearings.

For example, on the West Coast the hearings could be held in Corner Brook, and the same individual who would hold the hearings would have to travel up to Labrador. These are situations where we're now holding a landlord out his rent, and we're now not giving a tenant an opportunity to have his say, either. These things would extend beyond and ongoing and ongoing. Then by the time you would have a landlord actually have a tenant out in these situations, the landlord then has to do significant work to get the place ready again. So landlords could've been out two, three, four months' rent in situations.

Now if you're a small landlord, being that you only own one unit as opposed to multiple units, this is a significant challenge. You can imagine, Mr. Speaker, we have various arrangements whereby split-level homes have a basement apartment. Perhaps that's the only apartment you as a landlord own. You're trying to get to a

situation where you're just collecting the rent that you're expecting from a tenant, and this is no longer possible because of some of the roadblocks. So this legislation is certainly reducing some red tape.

That's just one piece. I'm going to touch on a few others, but I want to give kudos to the Minister of Service NL and in particular her staff for bringing this forward today. Also, the many groups who had a say in the matter, Mr. Speaker. Stella Burry was noted. I had some extensive training with Stella Burry in a variety of capacities. Hats off to the folks at Stella Burry and the fine work they do and continue to do each and every day here for individuals who face challenges with housing and homelessness, disabilities and employment amongst many other initiatives.

Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and Homelessness Network also played a large part in this. I know some of the consultations that were held with respect to the All-Party Committee on Mental Health played a role. There was also consultations held by the former administration in 2012 as noted as well.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke to some of the landlords – I spoke to a couple of landlords today, actually, in advance of this debate. I actually met a number of these landlords just yesterday in the lobby as they were coming in to hear some of these changes. Landlords were consulted on this piece of legislation as well, which is extremely important to note.

Just some small things make a huge difference. For landlords, if you're a landlord that has less than three units, Mr. Speaker, you no longer need to have separate bank accounts for damage deposits; you can hold them into one. So you can imagine if I only had three units, now I have to have three separate bank accounts to hold the security deposit in trust, small measure but a big deal for a landlord who is not a substantial player, if you will, in the market.

There's no need for a tenant to request a hearing if the landlord doesn't give the deposit back. This is huge. Right now under the act as it stands, the landlord can hold the deposit, I believe, up to 15 days after the termination of the agreement. If the tenant didn't get the

damage deposit back – and we've seen this, and I've seen this time and time again – if the tenant didn't get the damage deposit back, they would actually have to file a claim and notice of hearing, which I just spoke about. There were over 500 of these hearings last year alone. So right now what we're saying is that there is no need for a hearing and the director can make an order to ensure that the landlord provides the tenant with their deposit back.

Somewhere in section 15, non-sufficient funds cheques that are charged to the landlord can now be charged back to the tenants. That's certainly something that's huge for landlords. These are the small costs landlords tend to incur, historically, that add up over time, and in particular if you have more than one unit.

The rental increase notice from up to six months that was previously three months. It's certainly substantial. I understand the Members of the Third Party indicated their support for this. The Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi referred to some, I guess, questions around rent control and other things we can do for rent stabilization. I'll touch on that in a moment.

Now having to provide six months' notice, it allows a lot of our tenants to prepare. You can imagine on a fixed income – supposing you're a senior or a minimum wage earner or anyone for that matter on a fixed income – having three months' notice that your rent is now going to increase substantially is not a lot of time. It's not a lot of time to adjust, to budget accordingly and it's also not a lot of time to find other accommodations, if you were seeking other accommodations. So certainly, a great point there.

The 10-day notice issued to vacate the premises is now issued after five days and not 15. That's also a very, very strong measure, Mr. Speaker. The tenant can now terminate the agreement in abusive situations. The Minister Responsible for the Status of Women spoke to that. It's certainly something they've been asking for, for some time. Something that I think is reflective in other provinces, and it seems like a very common sense approach, Mr. Speaker.

To burden someone who's been in an abusive domestic situation and to leave them to carry on

a rental agreement is something they certainly should not have to do. A very, very positive step forward there. Then this lease is terminated, so the landlord can actually remove the abusive party as well.

Section 35, Mr. Speaker – talk about being in 2018, understanding that this piece of legislation was last amended in 2000. Section 35 of this refers to the use of electronic services, and in this day and age we can now have our landlords and our tenants just communicate via electronically. That is significant. To post a request to vacate a premise a landlord would previously have to go to the premises, post it on the door somewhere that it was noticeable or conspicuous to others to see. If they were presenting to someone in person, they had to have someone present. A very cumbersome process, and now with electronic services playing a role certainly very key as well.

Some of the penalties that can be charged; the leader of the PC – well, not the leader of the PC Party, he's not sitting here in this House. The leader of the Opposition, the official leader of the Opposition, spoke about the penalties, and certainly something very important. Penalties were previously maxed at \$400 and now they can range from \$400 up to \$10,000. It's certainly something very substantial. I don't expect we'll see a huge number of cases where a \$10,000 figure is used, but if you incur substantial damages to your property, seeking this type of recourse will be a huge benefit for our landlords.

Boarding houses, Mr. Speaker, boarding houses included – and the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi hit the nail right on the head. If you've been in some of these boarding homes, I don't have words to describe it. You have to be in these boarding homes to actually see and understand how they've historically been operated. By ensuring that boarding houses and rooming houses are enshrined in this legislation, and covered in this legislation, is going to be a huge positive step forward for some of our most vulnerable in society who have no other means and no other places to rent, Mr. Speaker.

Boarding houses sometimes seem much like a dormitory. You would have seven, eight, nine people with an individual room, sharing a

common washroom and a common kitchen. In terms of the Tenancies Act, you could just pick that up and say well this doesn't apply to anybody who lives here. So this is something that's huge. It's something that the non-profit community in Newfoundland and Labrador has been asking for, for years.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm just going move on quickly. I was going to get into a few other things. There's a great piece now with respect to, I think section 23, peaceful enjoyment, will now also include reasonable privacy as well, and again the boarding houses as I noted.

But, Mr. Speaker, on the rent control piece – and the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi referenced that. I understand the department did do a bit of research into this and I actually asked about this as well to the minister and her staff. In terms of review with other regimes in other provinces and what they're doing with respect to rent control, deciding whether or not rent control is effective, it has been a challenge. In fact, we've seen a lot more negative situations occur with respect to having rent control than we've seen positive, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to discouraging any further investment in housing, there are several other disadvantages, most notably ensuring that there's a rent control in place; it could restrict the amount of capital investment that landlords have to upgrade their properties; it provides less incentive for investors to build new rentals or fix their existing units; it certainly interrupts our free market processes which also can negatively impact supply and demand.

It can also lead to – and we've seen this in certain areas of the province, Clarenville is a good example when we look at landlords evicting tenants to try and increase rent. So if we have some type of rent control cap in, it would certainly encourage landlords to terminate some leases so they can get those tenants out to get new tenants in. I've referenced Clarenville, because of the boom in the construction of Bull Arm we've seen exactly that happen. The Member for Terra Nova would certainly know quite well how this played out there.

Rent control can also discriminate against long-term tenants such as retirees. There have been a

number of other studies done – the CIBC has done a study, the C.D. Howe Institute. So there have been a number of instances where studies have been done to speak to rent control.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I just want to take a moment to refer to some of the comments from the leader of the Opposition. The leader of the Opposition in his remarks today – bear with me, I did quote – he said that this is being sold as a new act when it is just changes. I don't know about the leader of the Opposition; we don't sell legislation. I don't know who's selling any legislation or why it would be sold as. He said that it's great that we're acting on dialogue that has occurred four, five, six and eight years ago. It's great that we're now acting on dialogue that occurred four, five, six and eight years ago.

Mr. Speaker, the CBC article which I'm going to quote, that has ran this afternoon, it says: A review of the *Residential Tenancies Act* began in 2012 by the PC government. The report's recommendations were never tabled. However, no changes were debated in the House of Assembly. So we're now acting on something that the PC government sat on for years, Mr. Speaker. The consultations they held in 2012 were just consultations. The request for this change has been going on for years, in 2009, 2010, 2011.

So to stand up here today and say this is good and we're not sure how it's being sold as new, and this has been around – the last time the *Residential Tenancies Act* in this province was changed, Mr. Speaker, was under a Liberal government in the year 2000. Under a Liberal government in the year 2000 was the last time that the Tenancies Act was changed. We changed it in 2000, the PC government took over in 2003 and we've seen 12 years go by with no attention paid to tenants and landlords and people in our province who rent; zero attention paid. Consultations were held, but they could not manage to table a report. It is absolutely astounding.

I'm going to come to one final piece, and I know my time is getting short in the afternoon. This report – I can table it for the Members opposite if they like. This is a report called *A Road Map for Ending Homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador*. It was written by a company called

OrgCode, Mr. Iain De Jong in particular and his staff. It was published in 2014. It was actually commissioned around the same time the consultations, some of the work was going on.

I find this very interesting for two reasons, and I think the leader of the Opposition would be very curious to know. Number one, because it called for changes to the Tenancies Act. But number two, the picture on the front of the report here, the picture on the front of this report – I can hold it up for everybody to see – is actually a picture of the highway that leads from Corner Brook into Stephenville. It's a picture of the highway that runs from Corner Brook into Stephenville.

The reason they chose this picture for the front of the report called ending homelessness was to show how troubled and battered the road has been. They've chosen the pothole-riddled road to show how troubled the challenges with homelessness are.

Mr. Speaker, just like not acting on the Tenancies Act, the Members in the PC government did not act on this road in my district, despite announcing they would do so on three separate occasions. What I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, if you went out to visit this road today, you will see that there is excavating equipment there because, under this government, we act when requests are made, and changes are not only being made to this road –

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is reminded you should not be using props.

MR. FINN: – referenced in this report, those changes are also being made to the Tenancies Act which was ignored under 12 years of the PC administration.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the Minister of Service NL and her staff, and I'm certainly very proud to be a part of a government that is bringing in this legislation. I expect support from all Members in the House of Assembly on Bill 15.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, while I –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm certainly entitled to 20 minutes if I wanted it, I'm certainly not going to take it, and particularly given the hour of the day, I'm sure that Members will be glad to hear that for sure. I don't think I can repeat everything that's been said – I've got no intentions of repeating everything that was said, to be honest with you. I think that it's been covered quite well by Members on both sides of the House.

This is a good piece of legislation. It's a good day for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I will be supporting this bill absolutely 100 per cent. Just a couple of general comments; I would say that I believe that it does strike a balance. We all received the briefing from the department; they did a very good job. I think it does strike a fair balance between the needs of landlords and the needs of tenants in this province.

Obviously it's not going to be 100 per cent perfect for both sides; it can't be, naturally. And there will always be situations where someone might not be happy with a particular aspect on either side. It's impossible to put in a piece of legislation that everyone's going to be 100 per cent totally happy with on all sides.

Generally, I think it does strike a balance; I think it's important, as it's been said, that we recognize – and I like the word that the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi used, when she talked about dignity – dignity of people. It's very, very important that we treat our citizens with dignity. It's very, very important that people who have to rent because, for whatever reason, they don't have a home of their own, they can't afford one or whatever the case might be, that they be treated with dignity.

I think in the majority of cases that does happen, but there's no doubt that when we talk about some of our most vulnerable people that may be living particularly in some of these bed-sitting rooms and so on, and these low-income housing situations. We have seen examples where, I believe, that some of these people have been treated like cattle, not human beings, to be honest with you. And it was totally unacceptable and I'm glad to see that we're putting measures in place to address those situations.

Now, with that said, I think it's also important to note that on the other side of the equation, if somebody has a home – particularly someone who it's their family home and they need to rent it in order to pay the mortgage – I have a lot more sympathy for that situation than I do for someone who owns a dozen houses and they're renting up and down, a for-profit business. Not that there's anything wrong with that either. That's all fine as well.

I would say that I'm more sympathetic to the homeowner who has a family home. In order to pay that mortgage they have to rent their property and then they end up with a bad tenant who could potentially – and we've seen situations, I've seen those situations, where people have literally destroyed their property. Because of the system that was in place and the processes, the time frame was way too long and that person ended up with property that was destroyed.

The person walked away, of course. You can't get blood from a turnip. They just sort of walked away and the homeowner had to eat up that loss. That wasn't fair either. I think this does a good job of expediting the process, all the processes, actually. I think it protects vulnerable people, but by the same token it also protects the homeowners or landlords or whatever you want to call them.

I will also say I was very glad to see, as has been mentioned, that it does address the issue of family violence. There's a significant piece in here that addresses that issue as well. Anything we can do in any legislation in this House of Assembly that addresses that issue, we need to be proactive in doing just that. There is a section here that deals with that to be able to get a person out of a very dangerous situation, to be

able to do it in an expedited manner and to encourage that to happen.

With all that said, Mr. Speaker, I'll be taking my seat. Like I said, given the hour of the day and given the fact that I really have no issues with this legislation, I think it is great legislation. Once again, this is three times in a row I have to say: Kudos to the government.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: If the hon. the Minister of Service NL speaks now she will close the debate.

The hon. the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I'd just like to thank the Members for Cape St. Francis, Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, Conception Bay East - Bell Island, St. John's West, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, Stephenville - Port au Port and Mount Pearl - Southlands for adding to this debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity today to debate this important matter in the House. We believe this bill goes far to modernize and improve the law governing residential tenancies in the province. As we have heard, there are many important issues we have been able to address here today. Most important of these are new provisions to deal with family violence. Our process, modelled on best practices across Canada, would allow for the early termination of a fixed-term rental agreement while working to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of those using the provision.

Responding to the demand we heard in consultations, we are moving to include boarding houses under the act, as well as residential tenancies run by charitable and religious institutions where such premises are not of a transient nature. This will afford the protections provided to the act to a greater

number of people, some of whom make up the most vulnerable people in our society.

We have also taken steps to reduce red tape, Mr. Speaker. We have reduced the time for landlords to return security deposits from 15 to 10 days. We've also reduced the time that landlords need to wait, in order to give notice to a tenant where the tenant fails to pay rent, from 15 to five days. On receipt of this notice, tenants will still have 10 days to pay the rent before an order is issued. Besides these major changes, we have also modified the act with a view to plain language and have included provisions to modernize the act, such as allowing for electronic communications, documents and payments.

I think you will see, Mr. Speaker, that this bill is a significant step forward that will improve the life of landlords and tenants in our province. I am pleased as the Minister for Service NL to have had the opportunity to bring this forward to you today.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

The motion is that Bill 15 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting Tenancies Of Residential Premises, Bill 15.

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

When shall this bill be referred to a committee of the whole House?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting Tenancies Of Residential Premises," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill 15)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that this House do now adjourn.

All those in favour of the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

This motion is carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, the 22nd day of May, at 1:30 p.m.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, at 1:30 p.m.