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

Admit strangers.

I am pleased to welcome to the public gallery today Mr. Wilf Hunt and his wife, Marion. I think Mr. Hunt will be the subject of a member's statement in a little while.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** We are expecting Chief Joe, but I do not see him so I will welcome him when he arrives.

#### Statements by Members

**MR. SPEAKER:** Today we will hear members' statements from the members representing the Districts of St. George's – Stephenville East, St. John's Centre, Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, Humber Valley, Virginia Waters, and St. Barbe.

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

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

Today I rise to pay tribute to the late Ben Alexander, a former Mayor of the Town of St. George's. Mr. Alexander was a successful businessman and very active contributor to the development of his town and the region. He will be forever remembered for his countless hours of volunteer work within the community and the Province.

He and his wife, Heather, were the owners of Steel Mountain Lodge, and his love for the great outdoors brought him many hours enjoyment. Whether he was flying his plane or salmon fishing on the rivers, he truly enjoyed the beauty of the West Coast.

To many people, Ben Alexander was a respected member of his community, but to others he was even more. To others, he was a husband, a father, a grandfather, a brother, and an uncle.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join with in expressing our sympathy to the family and recognizing the contribution of Ben Alexander to our Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** I would also like to welcome to the public gallery today Chief Misel Joe of Conne River.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

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

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

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

I am so happy to pay tribute to Bishops College high school, in the heart of St. John's Centre. Closing for good at the end of this school year, Bishops has been a wonderful example of partnerships, working with others, and supporting every member of our community. Staff members have won countless awards for their innovative approaches to learning and life.

The Pink Committee, which I was honoured to be a part of, was just one aspect of Bishops' inclusiveness – the school led the way in anti-bullying programs and mental health awareness, and had the Province's first gay-straight alliance.

The art program at Bishops is legendary – they had the first high school art gallery in the country. Their educational partnership with nearby Booth Memorial gave students access to many more courses than either school would normally be able to offer.

On June 25, current and former students, teachers, and staff will gather to acknowledge the Last Flight of the Red Baron. They will say goodbye to the building, but keep the lessons they learned there forever. Bishops itself will move on to the new Waterford Valley High School.

I ask all hon. members, many who are alumni of Bishops high school, to congratulate Bishops

College for fifty-six years of educational and social leadership.

Bravo, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

**MS DEMPSTER:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the success of the tenth annual Relay for Life held on Friday, May 29, in the community of Charlottetown, Labrador.

For the past ten years, following the death of my good friend, Ray Turnbull, the Charlottetown relay has been organized by his widow Joyce, brother Boyce and wife Sherry, and with the help of a very dedicated committee, raising over \$200,000 to date – \$17,000 this year alone. What a tremendous accomplishment for a region with such a small population.

This year, we were graced with the presence of His Honour Lieutenant Governor Frank Fagan and Her Honour Patricia Fagan. What a privilege and inspiration it was to have them in attendance. They were in awe of the generosity displayed by the local residents.

Residents from the communities of St. Lewis, Charlottetown, Pinsent's Arm, Mary's Harbour, Port Hope Simpson, Lodge Bay, and Williams Harbour participated in the relay. The regional approach to such an event is a major factor in its ongoing success. Cancer touches everyone. The response to such a tremendous cause is overwhelming.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating the organizing committee and volunteers on yet another successful Relay for Life in Charlottetown.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Humber Valley.

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

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate Darren Langdon of Deer Lake on being named one of six new inductees into the Newfoundland and Labrador Hockey Hall of Fame.

Darren Langdon has enjoyed a tremendous playing career that is the envy of many hockey players in our Province. Darren joined the New York Rangers on February 18, 1995.

Throughout his career, Darren played with five NHL teams, including: the New York Rangers, the Carolina Hurricanes, Vancouver Canucks, Montreal Canadiens, and the New Jersey Devils.

His playing career lasted ten seasons – with 521 NHL games, totalling thirty-nine points and over 1,200 penalty minutes. Darren had the fortune of playing alongside such hockey greats as Wayne Gretzky, Mark Messier, Brian Leech, and Ron Francis.

On June 13, Darren will be inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame Players category – along with Dwayne Norris of St. John's and Darren Colbourne of Corner Brook.

Jim Hornell of Buchans, Rosemary Marshall of St. John's, and Kenny Williams of Bay Bulls will be inducted into the Builders category.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House of Assembly to join me in congratulating the six hall of fame inductees.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize a gentleman who has played a vital role as part of Roncalli Elementary School's family and community.

Mr. Wilf Hunt has been this school's crossing guard for approximately ten years, and his

dedication goes beyond the crosswalk. He has manned the crosswalk for special events, such as the International Walk To School Day and the Terry Fox Walk to ensure the safety of the children.

He knows the children by name, has played his accordion at Christmas concerts, was an honoured guest to read *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*, and even helped with the milk and cookies. You can imagine his surprise when the entire school population came out to sing Happy Birthday on his sixty-fifth birthday.

In 2012, Mr. Hunt was responsible for preventing a child from getting hit at the crosswalk when a driver failed to stop. Without hesitation, he protected that child. The admiration for Mr. Hunt was recognized when he was honoured with Canada's Favourite Crossing Guard award in 2013.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Mr. Hunt for being this school's favourite crossing guard for today and for many years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. J. BENNETT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Lily Perry, aged eighty-four, Daniel's Harbour, is a former teacher, volunteer, and community leader for seventy years.

At age nineteen, Lily married Bill Perry, but remained a teacher until 1972 when she resigned to support three daughters: Dorcas, Sheila, and Bertha.

Freed from teaching, Lily now devoted even more time to the community, including the Anglican Church Women that she joined at age fourteen.

On a recent visit with Lily, my primary school teacher, we talked about all of the children Lily had shaped, including all seven members of the current town council.

Lily was proud to acquaint me with her grandchildren, whose graduation pictures are proudly on display. They are Cathy, school principal; Dallas, a director, Central Health; Nicole, pharmacist; Tobi, business development officer; Veronica, with Revenue Canada; Colette, with Health Canada; Amanda, science teacher; Dion, nurse practitioner; and Melissa, lawyer.

In my work, serving the people of St. Barbe, Lily's zeal for public service is evident in the person of Bertha Brophy, her daughter and my Constituency Assistance. I ask all hon. members to join me in thanking Lily Perry for a lifetime of service.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

#### Statements by Ministers

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Office of Public Engagement.

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

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

I rise today in this hon. House to recognize Penelope Rowe, who was honoured earlier this month and presented with an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Memorial University for her distinguished service to the community. Born in St. John's, Ms Rowe became a driving force with the Community Sector Council in 1976, an organization focused on strengthening the role that voluntary and non-profit community organizations play in building healthy and prosperous communities throughout the Province.

Mr. Speaker, through co-operation and promotion, the Community Sector Council works with thousands of organizations to encourage citizen engagement and provide leadership in shaping public policies. As the council's Chief Executive Officer, Penny mobilizes and inspires those around her to develop projects that improve the quality of life and standard of living for people in need – and she instills the belief that the most important

way of recruiting volunteers is the personal touch. Penny once said: “Volunteers just don’t fall out of the trees. They just don’t happen – you’ve got to be open and have a way for people to communicate with you, and you’re got to reach out.”

Mr. Speaker, by reaching out to youth, municipalities, immigrants, and to those working with our most vulnerable populations, Penny reminds us that giving back to the community is about much more than doing something that feels good – it impacts the economy. Her actions highlight how volunteers and community-based workers in Newfoundland and Labrador contribute millions of work hours every year, volunteering at food banks, providing outreach services for people living on the street, or working with charitable organizations.

Penny’s accomplishments are numerous: she was celebrated as one of Canada’s fifty most influential women; she was the first woman to host CBC Television’s *Here and Now*, which I did not know until recently, and she received an appointment to the Order of Canada in 2002. Mr. Speaker, along with these examples, she inspired all of us in government to renew our focus and bring greater attention to the community sector – efforts which continue through the Office of Public Engagement.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members to join me in congratulating Penny Rowe for receiving her honorary degree from Memorial University, and also in thanking her for her lifelong dedication to giving back to her Province.

Thank you.

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

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

Just in case you were wondering, I say to the hon. member, the applause was not for you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for St. John’s South.

**MR. OSBORNE:** We live in hope, Mr. Speaker – we live in hope.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the advance copy of the Ministerial Statement. We, also, on this side want to join in celebrating the accomplishments of Ms Penny Rowe, and they are many. Her lifelong commitment to the development of the volunteer community is legendary. She is well known throughout this Province by community leaders, politicians, and volunteer organizations – a very well-recognized and respected individual.

Mr. Speaker, she is largely responsible for having the volunteer work done by the people in this Province recognized as having economic value. She was a driving force in government recognizing volunteer work as having economic value. She was the founding Chair of the Capital Coast Development Alliance, which was the Regional Economic Development Board for this region of the Province.

She is largely responsible for training the non-profit organizations and volunteer sector in this Province to ensure that they operated efficiently and properly. Her commitment to working with charities and volunteers has not wavered from the day she started through to today. I have a great deal of respect for Ms Penny Rowe, and I am honoured to have her recognized today in this House of Assembly.

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

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of this statement. Congratulations to Penny Rowe for being honoured in this way by our university and our community. Penny has done so much to raise the profile of volunteers in providing an organizational framework for volunteerism in our communities.

She has actively promoted survival strategies for non-profits to increase their capacity and effectiveness. She has been tireless in speaking out about practical ways to end poverty and maintain a compassionate society.

How lucky have we all been to have Penny's years of brilliance and leadership over the years? Bravo and thank you to Penny Rowe.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, in order to better understand the factors influencing the population decline of the George River caribou herd, and to generate the science-based information required to support management decisions, the provincial government launched the Labrador Caribou Initiative in 2011. Supported to date by over \$2.2 million in funding, along with an additional investment of \$320,000 through Budget 2015, the goal of the initiative is to implement research and monitoring programs designed to inform management of the herd, including the implementation of a five-year ban on all hunting.

One aspect of the Labrador Caribou Initiative is to improve public awareness and stewardship about the George River caribou population. To that end, last year, fourteen stakeholder groups including Aboriginal governments, NGOs, private sector companies, and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador collaborated on a Caribou Stewardship Awareness T-shirt project. Through the project, 500 T-shirts were purchased and distributed throughout Labrador, 200 of which were purchased by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and awarded to youth through an in-school contest as a method of increasing conservation awareness of the herd.

Through the contest, youth were asked to express why caribou are important to them and their families, by whatever creative means they chose. Mr. Speaker, the level of participation was fantastic with hundreds of entries being received in the form of drawings, stories, poems, slide shows, and posters.

Mr. Speaker, through the response to the contest and the passion shown in the entries, it is clear that caribou are of great importance to the culture, traditions and lifestyle of many Labrador families, and I would like to take this opportunity to commend the youth of Labrador for their interest in this critical species. I was extremely impressed by the artistry and creativity of all the entries and am pleased to advise that many are now available on the department's website.

The status of caribou in Labrador is of concern not only to this government, but to all Labradorians. This initiative and others like it aim to initiate conversation about the issue, garner increased support for conservation initiatives, and instill a sense of stewardship in youth – now and in generations to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, all caribou herds worldwide are declining, including the George River caribou herds and the herds that are in existence here on the Island portion of our Province as well.

Although science cannot determine the cause, we as Aboriginal harvesters have been taught that all wildlife species rise and fall in cycles. Caribou, for example, has a sixty- to seventy-year life cycle, whereas other species like ptarmigan and rabbits go in three- to seven-year cycles.

Mr. Speaker, I have harvested the George River caribou herd when it was on the increase to where it peaked in the 1990s at 750,000 caribou to where it is today.

Mr. Speaker, I am glad the minister has initiated an awareness campaign, and everyone should do their part. If the minister really wants to know where our young people stand on caribou awareness, I ask him to come up and visit us and

to find out just how important caribou were to our diet and that young people cannot afford a nutritious diet anymore.

Mr. Speaker, there is one important issue where government has fallen down, and that is the enforcement of its own five-year caribou ban. There is much work to be done to improve the health and populations of our caribou, because there are many new impacts that we did not have in the past.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I, too, thank the minister today for the advance copy of his statement. No doubt getting youth to express their passion for this herd and instilling them with a sense of stewardship are all laudable goals, Mr. Speaker. For that matter, the five-year hunting ban was probably a wise measure as well.

I ask the minister: What is he doing to ensure that this herd survives for the next generation and the generations after that? Where is the strong management plan that groups have been asking government to develop in recent years? When do we seek convictions, for example, for the hunting violations there? What is being done to protect the calving grounds? All these are pretty good questions that we hope the government will have the chance to answer.

Thank you very much.

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

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

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, I recently announced that the Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development has realigned its healthy living, recreation and wellness grants programs to be administered under a streamlined program called the Community Healthy Living Fund.

Mr. Speaker, this realignment brings together funding from a number of grant programs available to communities and organizations and processes them much more effectively through a single application process. The Community Healthy Living Fund is a one-stop shopping approach to grants and will minimize the need for organization staff and volunteers to complete multiple applications.

The \$2.2 million Community Healthy Living Fund will now serve as the single entry point for applications, replacing such programs as the Seniors Recreation Grant Program, the Provincial Health and Wellness Grant Program, the Age-Friendly Newfoundland and Labrador Organization Grant Program, and the Community Recreation Support Program.

I want to make it clear, Mr. Speaker, that there is no reduction in funding available for community programming as a result of this realignment. All organizations eligible for previous programs are eligible to apply under the new streamlined program.

Mr. Speaker, this new approach is also aligned with our Provincial Wellness Plan, our Recreation and Sports Strategy, the Provincial Healthy Aging Framework, the Provincial Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, and the goals and objectives of our Poverty Reduction Strategy. Initiatives funded through this program will help build community capacity and improve access to wellness, recreation and healthy living initiatives for all individuals and families, regardless of circumstances.

The establishment of the Community Healthy Living Fund is just one example, Mr. Speaker, of how the Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development has been able to take initiatives that have previously resided in multiple departments and bring them together under a single, cohesive department focused on common goals.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage community organizations to visit the Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development website for more information on the Community Healthy Living Fund, and to review the guidelines and application process. We have a lot of work to

do, together, to improve the health and wellness of our population – and it starts with support for initiatives at the community level.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. As the minister has stated, this fund will combine multiple grant programs like the wellness grant, age-friendly grants, and community recreation support grants.

The minister said there will be no funding reduction overall. We hope, as well, there is no impact on each specific program funding amount, as various groups now compete for the same pot of money.

Mr. Speaker, the minister says its pooling of grant money is aligned with the Provincial Wellness Plan. Government is now seven years late on launching phase two.

The minister says his fund is aligned with their Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities. We have been waiting for an actual action plan for three years now.

The minister says this fund aligns with their Poverty Reduction Strategy. They were supposed to begin implementation of this new plan four years ago, and it is still nowhere to be seen. Mr. Speaker, spending based on outdated and non-existent plans is not fiscally responsible.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize all the great groups out there working to make their communities healthier and happier, we are grateful for all the work they do.

Thank you.

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

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

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

The \$2.2 million for over 500 communities serving over 500,000 people for a full year for a senior's recreation grant program, the Provincial Health and Wellness Grant Program, the Aged-Friendly Organization Grant Program, and the Community Recreation Support Program does not look so fantastic when you do the math and divide it up. There are such great, great needs in this area. The minister's one-stop shopping takes us only as far as the cosmetic counter, there is nothing substantial here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral Questions.

#### Oral Questions

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

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

Corner Brook Pulp and Paper is in the news with a request by the company to alter their pension plan payments to allow the company additional time to pay back into the plan. Workers and retirees have until July 8 to respond. If workers accept the plan, government will be asked to modify its regulations.

I ask the Premier: What discussions have you had with the company on this proposal?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are all very much aware that we have worked very closely with Corner Brook Pulp and Paper to ensure they continue to provide employment and their operation continues on the West Coast. We know that the long-standing paper mill in Corner Brook and the owners and operators are working very hard to make sure that the mill stays in operation.

We have partnered with them, with a \$110 million investment from us to work with them in order for them to continue that operation, but



they still have serious issues there, Mr. Speaker, and they are working through them. Under regulations, for them to alter their plans in the way that they are looking at doing the modifications to their pay back in their plans they are looking at doing, they need the consent of plan members which are their employees.

They are going through that process, Mr. Speaker. We await the outcome of their discussions with their own employees.

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

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

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

In 2012, workers approved a plan to allow the company a ten-year extension to pay back money into the underfunded pension plan. Just last year, government, as the Premier mentioned, gave Kruger a \$110 million loan. This was something that we understand was needed to be done to stabilize the forestry industry. Now the company wants to modify payments for 2014, 2015, and 2016.

I ask the Premier: Have you agreed to make these changes if workers accept the company's latest proposal?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, the process is that the company with the members of the plan, their employees, have a process to go through. They go through a process of laying out and discussing with their employees what their plan is, what action they want to take, and how they want to respond to this.

Quite often, it is not unusual for employees to say to the company, tell us about your plan and how you are going to sustain the operation, tell us about other parts of the aspects of your plan. Employees have a say in what happens and in the decision-making process.

Until they make that decision, Mr. Speaker, and until the company makes application, we have

made no commitment to do this for them. I have made no commitment to do this for them, but I want to see what happens in the process. We want to hear from employees. We want to hear from the company. We look forward to having further discussions on that.

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

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

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

The Registered Nurses' Union is raising concerns about RN staffing levels at Western Memorial Regional Hospital. They say the emergency department nurses are being cut from five to four for the day shift, and four to three for the night shift.

I ask the Premier: Why are you cutting nurses at Western Memorial's emergency departments?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My understanding is that there was a pilot project underway on a staffing model for Western Memorial that include nurses from the emergency room, and that Western Memorial was now making an adjustment to that.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to look for best ways to deliver services. We look for the best staffing models to provide support to the hard-working staff in all of our health authorities – but it was a pilot project, and there are changes coming as a result of that pilot project in the staffing plans that they are doing. I am sure the minister, in follow-up questions, if the member has any further follow-up questions, the minister can provide specific details of exactly what those numbers look like.

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

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

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

Well, government continues to say that they are actually committed to reducing ER wait times, but they are now scaling back on registered nurses. We all know that nurses play a vital role in emergency rooms, and help tremendously with ongoing wait-time issues.

So I ask the Premier: How do cutting back nursing levels in emergency rooms help address the issue of wait times?

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, as the Premier mentions, Western Health has decided to discontinue a one-year pilot with the Clinical Decision Unit, but there will be no staff layoffs. In fact, seven nursing staff are being reassigned to the emergency department, and one to the interim unit at Western Memorial. So staffing is actually being enhanced in a number of ways, Mr. Speaker.

One additional triage RN will work an additional four hours a day, Monday to Friday; and one additional RN will be added from 10:00 am to 10:00 pm, twelve hours a day, seven days a week. So in fact, we are going to provide better access to the emergency department and greater staffing as a result of these changes.

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

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, as part of its 10-Year Child Care Strategy, this government promised to deliver a centralized child care registry by the end of last year. As with many of this government's commitments, they have failed to deliver on the centralized child care registry.

So I ask the acting minister: When will you finally deliver on the centralized child care registry you know parents need? What are you waiting for?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, child care is certainly a complex business. As the member opposite is quite aware, we do have a ten-year strategy that we are implementing, and a ten-year strategy that is working. We have a significant increase in the number of child care spaces in Newfoundland and Labrador. Our strategy is focused not only number of spaces that are available, but also the quality of those spaces, and the quality of care and services provided to children, and we also focused on affordability.

There are numerous programs that are rolling out as a result of our ten-year strategy, our very effective strategy that is making a difference in child care in our Province. We continue to work with stakeholders, if it be for-profit and not-for-profit. We continue to work with families who avail of these services. We also work with educators who work in the industry to make them better qualified and better able to deliver good services.

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

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier said he had a ten-year strategy. Well, they are six months behind, so they have a ten-and-a-half year strategy now.

Like the child care registry, the government has reneged on its commitment to deliver a revised Inclusion Supports Program by the end of last year. This is an important program that supports the inclusion of children with special needs in child care centres and home-based care.

I ask the minister: When will the Inclusion Supports Program changes that you announced be delivered? How much longer will families with children with special needs have to wait?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am glad to get another opportunity to reference our strategy, as the member opposite has referenced once again. Our strategy is over a ten-year plan because we realize and we understand, on this side of the House, that we cannot go from here to here overnight. It takes a lot of work, a lot of focus, a lot of dedication. A lot of work in consultation with stakeholders in order to make changes to child care and make improvements for families, improvements for children in our Province.

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

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

**PREMIER DAVIS:** The child care report that the member opposite likes to refer to from time to time will demonstrate that Newfoundland and Labrador made better progress than any other province in Canada during the report period. We are going to continue to focus on child care and make better opportunities and better offers of services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

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

On Monday, I questioned the Minister Responsible for the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission about a recent CBC story concerning Mr. Pat Dunphy, an injured worker who is currently hospitalized and who has been fighting with workers' comp for fair treatment for the past seven years. At that time the minister said he would have his officials look into the matter. As recently as a half hour ago, I have been advised that neither the minister, his officials, nor anybody from the Commission have been in contact with the Dunphys.

I ask the minister: When are you going to keep your word and do something for this family?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission.

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Mr. Speaker, first off, I would say it is disingenuous for a member across the way to ask me on the floor of the House of Assembly about personal issues with regard to a particular person. He knows I cannot discuss –

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** If I could finish, please.

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** I will say to the member, I have followed up with my officials in the department. I have asked them to go over the policies and procedures. I am very confident that policies and procedures have been applied consistently to this case, and that will be relayed to the Dunphy family.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. LANE:** Mr. Speaker, the minister has already failed to meet with the Marystown Shipyard Families Alliance and now the minister is playing deferred and delayed tactics once again, this time at the expense of the Dunphy family.

Mr. Speaker, the Dunphy's have now engaged legal counsel who has been given the authorization by them to deal with workers' comp on this issue. Their representative has contacted the minister directly, but the minister was not willing to speak with him.

I ask the minister: When are you going to stop this running around and actually do something for this suffering family?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission.

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Mr. Speaker, I was contacted actually by the legal counsel. I will say it was through Twitter. So I guess that is how people operate nowadays. I did say to the –

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

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** I did say to that person, as I have said to the member across the way, I am not going to get engaged in personal matters here on the House of Assembly floor. He understands that. So when he keeps asking these questions, he knows I cannot speak specifically to that. I go back to referencing with regard to the Marystown Shipyard –

**MR. JOYCE:** (Inaudible).

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** If I can finish, please, I say to the Member for Bay of Islands. You are done, thank you.

Mr. Speaker, if I could speak with regard to the Marystown case. I have said to them, unequivocally, I would meet with them. I actually offered them to come into town and to meet with me. They were not able to do so. So I said when the House closes I will be more than happy to travel out to Marystown and meet with them to hear their concerns.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, last month government warned salmon anglers that it had issued defective angling tags with this year's salmon licences. This development is causing a great deal of concern and angst among anglers, especially given the season started June 1.

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

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** I ask the minister: How many tags were issued and how many were defective?

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

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

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

Unfortunately, we do have a problem with faulty salmon tags. The card portion of the tags that arrived at our offices was faulty. The samples that were provided during the procurement process were fine, the samples met specifications, but when the tags did arrive we had an issue with the cards.

Not all of the cards are faulty on all of the tags. There are about 110,000 tags, I believe, Mr. Speaker, in circulation, not all are faulty. We do not have an exact number on that, but I would suggest the majority of the card portion of these tags are faulty. We looked at ways that we could bring replacement tags in; six to eight weeks it would have taken us to bring tags in.

Mr. Speaker, we did our due diligence around this issue. We are informing the public. We are making the people of the Province aware of the issue, and there are responsibilities to follow the regulations with regard to the fishery.

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

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, anglers have also expressed concern about tags and licences coming out late, saying that government is not planning far enough ahead. If done ahead, there would have been time to test them, review them, and order if defects were present.

I ask the minister: How much will your poor planning and this year's defective tags cost government as your own solution is clear tape?

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

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

**MR. CRUMMELL:** Mr. Speaker, like I said earlier, when the tags arrived – and we are not late getting our licences out there. We are not late getting our tags out there. They went out there just like they did the previous years. The tags that arrived, with visual inspection, look exactly like the tags that we used in previous years. It was impossible to be aware that these faults were part of the components of the tags.

Mr. Speaker, when we started handling the tags and we started shipping out to vendors, we realized there was an issue with the tags. Immediately, we put out a press release. Immediately, I got on the open airwaves and communicated to the people of the Province on the very first day of salmon fishing season, there is this issue with the tags that they have to deal with.

Mr. Speaker, most people in this Province are responsible anglers. They will respect the regulations. They will manage and handle these tags in a proper manner. I have full confidence in the people of this Province –

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

**MR. CRUMMELL:** – to make sure that they manage the fishery and the resource efficiently and effectively. We will continue to do so as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, we understand these broken and deformed tags were manufactured in China.

I ask the minister to confirm this, and whether standards and specifications attached to the contract were not met and, given defective tags, if a refund is being pursued?

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

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

**MR. CRUMMELL:** Mr. Speaker, a local supplier won the contract to supply these tags. These tags were made offshore. China was the place where they were made, just like many things we probably see around here in front of us. So that is not unusual.

They met the specifications. Mr. Speaker, this is not a contract issue – this is not a procurement issue actually. It is a contract issue and we have stopped payment with the local supplier. We are looking into the matter. We have acquired legal advice, and we will pursue it from that angle.

Mr. Speaker, as an angler myself, a long-time salmon fisherman, a lifetime salmon fisherman, I know the people of the Province are concerned about this, but they will take care of (inaudible).

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

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The minister's time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**MR. EDMUNDS:** Mr. Speaker, continued concerns have been expressed about the clear lack of communication between families and CYFS when it comes to the removal of children from some areas in Labrador. These issues include language barriers where families need translation.

When decisions are made whether or not to remove children from their homes, they are not made lightly, and they have to be communicated clearly and understood completely.

I ask the minister: How do you plan to implement measures so that these very serious concerns will be addressed?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the question actually because we have done some great work in Labrador, particularly over the last number of months and years with regard to the work that CYFS does in Labrador.

I bring up the fact that we have community support workers in many of the communities, and that is why they are so very important with regard to the language and being able to access and being able to speak the language. They act as a conduit between the staff and the people in the communities, but also I bring up the fact about the MOUs. We signed Memorandums of Understanding some time ago, and they are actually under review now both with the Inuit and the Innu governments. We are moving forward with those. It is a great piece of work and it is all about collaboration.

I thank the member for the question. I can say, quite confidently, we have done quite a bit and we are going to continue to do more.

Thank you.

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

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

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

The issue is clearly still there.

Mr. Speaker, there are many children removed from the region and are placed in foster homes with no link to Aboriginal culture, language, or traditions.

I ask the minister: Given this is an ongoing problem, how do you plan to increase foster homes to ensure children are protected while at the same time preserving their cultural heritage?

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, we always want to keep children in

their hometowns, particularly when it comes to Labrador and Aboriginal communities because the culture is so important. We do that whenever we can.

There are challenges, however, with foster homes and having appropriate levels of fostering care in those communities, as there is in many communities around the Province. We are taking great steps in being able to accommodate that, and I go back to the Memorandum of Understanding and working towards having those placements right in the community so those children and youth can stay there.

With regard to out-of-province placement, sometimes it is necessary when the proper care cannot be provided – not only in Labrador, it cannot be provided on the Island either and those children would have to go outside for specialized treatment. To remove a child is very serious, and we do not take that lightly. Any time that we can keep that child in the community, we do so.

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

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, a local man recently reached out for mental health treatment for depression and anxiety. CYFS was notified and a file was opened on the family declaring the father a risk to his children. The social workers involved allegedly had no mental health training.

I ask the minister: How do we expect people to reach out for mental health supports when the response from government is so distressing?

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is referring to a story of a gentleman who did present to the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. It is very difficult on the floor of the House of Assembly to discuss any individual case. It would not be appropriate at all.

What I can say is that improving mental health and addiction services is a priority for this government. We have made major investments over the last decade in implementing our strategy on mental health and addictions. We are building a new strategy and we are very committed to the work of the All-Party Committee.

We have made progress, but there is still a lot of work to do. Some of that work has to be done in terms of training and education people within the health care system where stigma continues to be an issue, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, when CYFS put this father under a supervision order, no provision was made by the department for a psychiatric assessment. Two months after reaching out for help, the CYFS file was closed because a psychiatrist reported the man was not a risk to his children or himself. Moreover, the doctor reported there was no need to notify CYFS in the first place.

I ask the Minister of CYFS: Do you think it is fair this family now has a permanent file with your department because of your department's inadequate wait times for mental health and poor co-ordination of services?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Mr. Speaker, I will say I am familiar with this case. When we look at the work that our front-line workers do, our social workers do, it is very important work obviously. They have to make decisions on the ground. Any time that they anticipate that there is a child protection issue, they have to act on that. There is a liability to do so and there is an acknowledgement of that duty to do so.

With regard to this case, while I cannot speak to it specifically, I can say I understand where this individual is coming from. With regard to the

time frames – and actually I had a discussion with the Member for St. John's Centre regarding such.

I acknowledge there were some issues with regard to the protocol, but I certainly do not question the work by our front-line workers. When they perceive there is an issue with child protection, they have to act on that. I would encourage them to do so, and I support them in their actions.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, there is currently a wait-list of 100 requests from CYFS clients for their records, and the wait time is typically over a year. The department has said that they are not governed by ATIPP legislation's thirty-day time limit for response. Time and time again the Child and Youth Advocate has criticized CYFS for poor documentation.

I ask the minister: Would you not agree that making clients wait over a year for access to their records is unjust and unaccountable?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We would all agree records checks and having that work done is very important; however, we are doing work in the department to expedite that process. I go back to my conversation that I had with the Member for St. John's Centre regarding this case and being able to expedite that process.

A year clearly is too long and we want to make sure that we do it quicker. On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, we have to do our due diligence. It is very important to do so, but I will work with the department to make sure those get expedited.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. HILLIER:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier said recently they are seeing the benefits of their plans on seniors' poverty. Let's look at the reality. Between 2003 and 2012, a period of nine years, a period of unprecedented wealth, the median after-tax income of a senior living alone in this Province increased by \$12 a day. That does not factor in the increased cost of living over those years.

I ask the Premier: Do you think it is acceptable that for each year this government has been in power, after spending over \$20 billion in oil money, seniors living alone got an extra \$1.30 a day to live on?

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

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

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, it has been said several times in this House, the creation of a department with a specific focus on seniors tells you where this government wants to be, first and foremost.

Secondly, if you look at the investments we have made in seniors' programs across various departments, the engagements that we continue to have with seniors, we are committed to doing the best for the seniors of this Province.

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

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

**MR. HILLIER:** Mr. Speaker, we already have the poorest seniors among provinces. The Premier said he is aware of the poverty, that is why he created the department.

Given that the department is new and eager to get started, I ask the Premier: If you are so concerned about seniors' poverty, why are you raising the HST?

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

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

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, the one thing we have said, and we have said it continuously, the seniors of this Province deserve two words: dignity and respect. We give them and we provide that to them. We do it through the programming we offer as supports to seniors.

I would say to the member, if he wants a briefing on some of the programs that we have put in place, I would ask him to come across the way, because our commitment to seniors is unprecedented.

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

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

**MR. REID:** Mr. Speaker, the success and popularity of programs such as the Little Green Thumbs and the Rooting for Help demonstrates students and parents want locally grown, healthy food options in schools.

I ask the minister responsible for agriculture: Has he undertaken any initiatives that would result in more locally grown, healthy food options available in the cafeterias of public schools in this Province?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency.

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

**MR. GRANTER:** Mr. Speaker, we all know of healthy living and healthy food options in schools. I come from a background in education, Mr. Speaker, and we have seen an incredible change in healthy eating habits of young people in the Province. We have milk programs in our schools, subsidized milk from the dairy producers of the Province.

As we move forward, whether we move forward with regard to sustainability of food grown in the Province, we will look at and continue to look at how we can achieve better health for the



students of the Province. If it means looking at specific programs as we move down the road, we will do so as a government, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Fishing industry insiders are saying they have lost their livelihood, possibly from the leaks of oil from Shoal Point, Port au Port Bay. The scallop fishery has been decimated. Accordingly, federal fisheries did not test scallops last year from the area for petrochemicals.

I ask the Minister of Fisheries: What action has your department taken on this very important matter?

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

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

**MR. CRUMMELL:** Mr. Speaker, in that area, there has been no significant commercial scallop fishery. That is one thing we have to make sure everybody understands. There has been a recreational scallop fishery harvested by divers. That fishery is not part of the DFO's dockside monitoring program.

We did actually send samples last year – actually, DFO sent samples last year from the area just to see exactly what was going on around that area because there were reports that there were not as many scallops in the water as there were before. They came back, and there was no evidence of any hydrocarbons in these scallops that were tested.

Mr. Speaker, that is where we are on that issue and that is the information we have.

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

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

**MR. MURPHY:** Mr. Speaker, I am told they were not tested for petrochemicals at all.

Mr. Speaker, according to last year's inaction on the spill report, the fracking review panel already has an answer of whether or not to allow fracking now in the Province. Orphaned wells will be an issue in the future, like they are today.

I ask the minister – there is obviously cleanup needed but the companies have long gone. We do not have a company to point the finger at, Mr. Speaker.

The question for this government is: Who pays, and when does the cleanup happen?

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

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

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

Since June 4, we have made three official visits to the site to visit the area. We went with local people who have witnessed some of the seepage that was happening, Mr. Speaker. We were there yesterday as well. The tides were not low enough really to get to where the problem is. This weekend, we expect the tides to be lower.

Mr. Speaker, we have established an environmental science table comprised of DFO, Environment Canada, our Department of Environment and Conservation, the Water Resources Management Division, the pollution protection division, and Natural Resources. We have a team of scientists looking at this right now. We are going to find out what the problem is, Mr. Speaker, and we will fix this.

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

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

**MS ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, I do not expect the minister –

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

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

**MS ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, I do not expect the minister to interfere with the day-to-day operations of Her Majesty's Penitentiary; however, I do expect him to be fully aware of the staffing crisis due to his budget cuts and not to throw it on the back of his superintendent.

Now that he is aware, I ask the minister: What is he going to do about it, especially since we are coming into holiday time?

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

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

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

First of all, for the record, there is no issue with –

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

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

**MR. KING:** There is no issue with staffing at HMP as a result of any budget cuts – quite the contrary. Mr. Speaker, we actually hired thirty new employees for Corrections in December, and we are interviewing more today. So factually, the member is totally incorrect in the premise to her question first of all.

What we will continue to do, Mr. Speaker, is do what we have always done, and that is to work collaboratively with members of the union, members of management. Not so long ago I met with the union, and a number of significant issues were raised. One of which was not, I remind the member opposite, twenty-four-hour shifts.

They talked about pepper spray, the use of pepper spray, stab resistant vests, among other things, Mr. Speaker. The things they raised to me at that time, we have implemented.

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

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

**MS ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, all our correctional facilities face serious staffing shortages.

Obviously, offering people casual positions is not solving the problem. The minister has created a decade of indifference.

I ask the minister: What is he going to do about this?

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

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

**MR. KING:** Mr. Speaker, what we are going to do is we are going to take action like we always do when issues arise.

As I said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, this was never an issue that was raised to me as the Minister of Justice. That is an issue that was percolating in the system. It has now been raised, and my officials – I had given some direction yesterday, gave them further direction today to have discussions with the union. There are all kinds of alternatives, Mr. Speaker.

One that I can suggest to you, that has been rebuffed by the union, was split shifts – which today, in five seconds we can eliminate the use of twenty-four-hour shifts if the membership down there would be prepared to agree to that, but we have to find other creative solutions. As the president of the union asked for this morning on the Open Line –

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

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

**MR. KING:** This is a very serious issue, Mr. Speaker. I do not want to compete for airtime.

As the president of the union asked for this morning, it needs immediate attention. I say to the member opposite, it is going to get immediate attention. I have directed my staff today, immediately, to do an inquiry and to look at the review of the use of medical leave program, review of practices of accommodations, the use of split shifts, and the use of off-site escorts and whether or not there is an alternative means so that correctional officers do not have to leave the facility and free them up to work on the facility.

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

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

The time for Question Period has expired.

Present Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

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

### Tabling of Documents

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

I hereby table the report of the Auditor General entitled, Report to the House of Assembly by the Auditor General on Reviews of Departments and Crown Agencies, dated June 2014.

Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

### Notices of Motion

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

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

I give notice that I will move the following private members' resolution:

WHEREAS the remains of a Beothuk woman named Demasduit, and her husband, a chief named Nonosbawsut, have for many years been in storage in Edinburgh at the National Museum of Scotland; and

WHEREAS the remains of these Aboriginal people of Newfoundland and Labrador should be repatriated to Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, and laid to rest in the place where the Beothuk people lived.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House calls on Government of the United Kingdom to facilitate the repatriation of the remains of Demasduit and Nonosbawsut to Canada so that they may be laid to rest with dignity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

Mr. Speaker, I give notice, under Standing Order 11, I shall move that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, June 15, 2015.

I further give notice, under Standing Order 11, I shall move the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m., Monday, June 15.

I further give notice, under Standing Order 11, I shall move that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 16, 2015.

I further give notice that the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m., Tuesday, June 16.

I further give notice that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 17, as well as 10:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 17.

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

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

The hon. the Government House Leader, just for clarity, the private member's motion that the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune read will be done the next government Private Members' Day, is that correct?

**MR. KING:** Yes, that is correct, Mr. Speaker. I understood I could have given that notice on Monday, so I did not have it on my orders for today.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Okay, thank you.

Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

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

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

WHEREAS many communities in the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde do not have cellphone coverage; and

WHEREAS residents of the district require cellphone coverage to ensure safety and communications abilities; and

WHEREAS cell coverage on many portions of the highway in the district is very poor or non-existent;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to work with the appropriate agencies to provide adequate cellphone coverage to the entire District of Trinity – Bay de Verde.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity this afternoon to enter that petition on behalf of the constituents of the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde. I have entered it many times before and I will continue to enter it until government takes some action.

Mr. Speaker, today I am going to talk about three documents; the 2011 Blue Book where government said, “We will work with service providers to develop a plan to expand digital and cellular telephone access to more regions of the province.” That is 2011.

We come forward now, Mr. Speaker, to March 13, 2015, we have an ATIPP request that says, “I am requesting, under the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, any briefing notes regarding cellular coverage in

Newfoundland and Labrador, since January 1, 2014.” It subsequently goes on to inform the requestor that there has been no action taken on cellphones between the federal and provincial government between January 2014 and February 2015.

Just today, Mr. Speaker, we get another ATIPP request. This ATIPP request was one that I did put in myself to see what has been happening between the provincial government and Bell Mobility. This ATIPP request we got back today says: I am requesting a copy of briefing notes, information notes, fact sheets, et cetera, on Bell Aliant Mobility, Bell Canada regarding broadband and cellphone coverage in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador for 2014-2015.

Guess what, Mr. Speaker? The last time this government talked about cellphone coverage was in September or October 2011. They have not talked about it since. They have not talked to the feds about it. They have not talked to Bell Aliant about it, or Bell Mobility.

Mr. Speaker, what the government has done is they have not talked cellphone coverage. They stand and talk about the need for communications and rural infrastructure, but one of the necessary things for rural infrastructure in this Province is adequate cellphone coverage. It is needed for safety and it is needed for regional economic development.

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

**MR. CROCKER:** The minister across the way is saying now that they talked to Bell this morning. Well, I ask the minister if he could spare me ten minutes a little later today, he can sit down and tell me what Bell is saying because I would love to be able to tell people of Trinity-Bay de Verde what Bell has said to the minister about cellphone coverage for my district.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I have a petition again today related to health care in the St. George's and surrounding area. The petition reads:

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

WHEREAS there is not a permanent doctor in the Town of St. George's; and

WHEREAS the absence of a permanent doctor is seriously compromising the health care of people who live in the town and surrounding areas, causing them undue hardship; and

WHEREAS the absence of a doctor or nurse practitioner in the area leaves seniors and others without a consistency and quality of care, which is necessary for their continued good health;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to take action which will result in a permanent doctor or other arrangements to improve the health care services in St. George's and surrounding areas.

Mr. Speaker, this is a petition that I have presented many times, of course, in this House. It is a situation in St. George's where they have not had a permanent doctor for about half a year now. They looked to the neighbouring community of Jeffrey's and they see that that community has not had a doctor for nearly a year-and-a-half now, Mr. Speaker. It is a serious situation. It is a crisis situation. People are not getting the type of medical care they need in a timely manner, and it has gone on for too long.

I am pleased to hear from the Western Health care board that a nurse practitioner will be taking up a position in Jeffrey's, shared between Jeffrey's and St. George's. So that is a positive thing that is happening there, but I think we still have to continue to look at getting a doctor or another nurse practitioner in this area.

Certainly, some things can be looked after by a nurse practitioner, but I think there are other things that need to be dealt with by a doctor through regular visits to these communities. I

am hopeful that this situation will be resolved soon. I have talked to the minister. I talked to officials at Western Health. I know they are working on it. I have talked with municipal leaders in the area. I am going to continue to push, continue to present these petitions, which people have signed, until we get a resolution to this problem.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS residents, businesses, students, nurses, and teachers heavily rely on the Internet to conduct their work and cannot afford to wait until 2017 or beyond to access a potential plan in partnership with the Muskrat Falls development; and

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, later on tonight I am going to be flying up to Labrador attending the Combined Councils of Labrador. The Combined Councils is where all of the community leaders in Labrador gather together for a couple of days to discuss issues in Labrador that they need to

advocate and lobby to the provincial government with.

I have no doubt when I go up to Goose Bay tonight one of the very first things that I am going to be asked about from community leaders is: What is going on with broadband in Southern Labrador? The broadband issues are just crippling the region – absolutely crippling.

I did hear the Minister of Business say a few minutes ago that he spoke with Aliant this morning. I hope one of the things on his radar when he was speaking with Aliant was the broadband issues, because I do not understand how government cannot intervene and can allow a service provider to charge for a service that the area residents are not receiving.

Another thing that concerns us is there does not seem to be any dialogue between the Province and the feds with the Province lobbying – we do not know what the plan is to leverage federal money. We do not know where that is going to be rolled out in broadband on a go-forward basis.

In my area, businesses are being very crippled. We are coming into the tourism season. You can do very little more with the Internet in 2015 beyond sending and receiving an email. I have said it before, have the people here try living under those stipulations for a couple of days and you will soon find out that the work that you are trying to do is very seriously impeded.

As long as the House is open, Mr. Speaker, I have a feeling that people in my district are going to be continuing to sign the petitions and I will be continuing to stand on my feet and keep the issue front and centre.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day.

### Orders of the Day

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

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

I would like to go right now to Motion 6. I move, as per Standing Order 11, that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, Thursday, June 11, 2015.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion is that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move on to Motion 7. Pursuant to Standing Order 11, I move that the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. today, Thursday, June 11, 2015.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

At this time I would like to call from the Order Paper, Order 2, third reading of a bill, An Act To Amend The Works, Services And Transportation Act, Bill 4. That is so moved by me, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Works, that the said bill be now read a third time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a third time.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Works, Services And Transportation Act –

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

I say to the Clerk, there was a member standing to speak in third reading and I did not notice him.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

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

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

It is a pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to this bill once again. I think it is quite clear the last time I spoke where I stand on it, but I just want to reiterate a couple of points for the record.

As we know, this particular bill was crafted to raise fines for parking on government-owned parking lots. That would include Confederation Building. It would include places such as Motor Registration. It would include places such as – I am not sure about the workplace compensation commission, perhaps; but the bottom line is government-owned facilities, government-owned parking lots.

Of course, the bill was to basically raise all fines up to a maximum on \$100, or give the ability to do so. There were a number of offenses that would be included there. Parking offenses were included on the ticket. The last time I spoke to this, I actually had a copy of one of the tickets that would be handed out by Transportation and Works Security for people who are illegally parking.

Certainly, the minister said at the time that they wanted to create a greater deterrent, because the fines that were placed were quite low. I think we all acknowledge and would agree with that. He talked extensively about parking meters. He talked about the fact that all you would get if you parked illegally here at a meter is a \$10 ticket, whereas if you were to park illegally at a meter in the City of St. John's down on the

waterfront or something like that, it would be higher. So they were going to raise it from \$10 to \$25.

They said it was not a cash grab. One of my colleagues indicated that the timing was somewhat suspect, given the budgetary situation and so on. We have seen fees raised in parks and for motor registration and everything else. Maybe it was an opportunity to raise some more money. I do not know if that was the thinking or if it was not. Certainly, the argument made by the minister was that is not what it is all about, it is about creating a deterrent.

The minister also said it was about being consistent with the municipality. He referenced in the City of St. John's the tickets on the meter are much higher. So meters were raised from \$10 for a meter, if you did not feed the meter in time, or you did not feed it all and it expired. It is going from \$10 to \$25.

Then there were a bunch of other fines on that ticket that were \$10 fines. These were things like parking illegally, parking without a permit, parking on a crosswalk, improperly parked, and there were a few more. We all acknowledge – and those tickets were only \$10. I think we all acknowledge that \$10 is pretty low, and if you want to create a deterrent, and you want to be consistent, then you should do that. I think the plan is to up those tickets from \$10 maybe up to \$50, I think. I could be wrong on the amount, but they are going to be raised anyway.

Then I know there was another fine, which was parking in fire lanes. Fire lanes are a very serious concern, there is no doubt about it. We have fire lanes for a reason. We have fire lanes – it is a life and safety issue. That is why we have them, so that if there ever was a fire, we have a place for the fire department to pull in and set up, and hook up to hydrants if necessary to fight the fire. That could be a life safety issue. That particular fine, I believe, on the current ticket is \$20. I believe the plan is to go from \$20 to \$50 in that regard. We have no issue with that either, no issue whatsoever, and to be consistent.

Mr. Speaker, the bigger issue – and the issue which I raised some concern at the time and I continue to raise, and I have had conversations

with persons in the disability community about this since and they agree – is the fact that the only fine which was not raised here was for blue zone parking. Blue zone parking, currently for the tickets that they would give out here at Confederation Building, as an example, are at \$100.

Mr. Speaker, we can go back about three-and-a-half years ago when blue zone legislation came in. At that time, there were a number of changes made around blue zone parking. One of those changes was the range, was the fines. So one part of that legislation was about creating the blue zones and ensuring it with permanent vertical signage, but then another piece around that was the whole issue of fines.

There were advocates in the disability community at the time who was advocating that the fines should have a strong deterrent. They were advocating for a \$400 fine for anybody who knowingly parked in a blue zone, thus denying access to a person with a legitimate disability who required that blue zone space. They were advocating for \$400.

Unfortunately, the government did not listen to them. They did not listen to them and they decided no, we are going to go with a range. We are going to go with a range of \$100 to \$400, which means by default we are at \$100. We were told municipalities, if they so choose under their bylaws, now had the ability to adopt higher blue zone fines.

They had the ability to go as high as \$400, but as a Province we were not prepared to dictate, if you will, put in legislation, the Highway Traffic Act, that we would be at \$400. We said no, no, we will go the range. Even though that is not what the disability community wanted, we will go with the range and we will let municipalities decide.

I am not certain why that was. I do not know what the rationale was for it. I never did really get any clear rationale. Even when I questioned the minister during Committee of the Whole, basically we feel it is a deterrent. If we feel it needs to be a stronger deterrent, then we will look at amending it down the road.

The people in the disability community are not interested in taking this down the road. They wanted it from day one, and they still do. Based on that, I do not understand why we would not want to have the higher range, the higher ticket of straight \$400 across the board. I do not understand it.

The only thing I can think of is perhaps the politics around the fact that if people get a \$400 ticket – even though they deserved it, they would not get it if they did not deserve it, obviously, or they could fight it if they did not deserve it – but if someone got a \$400 ticket, maybe they would be upset and then blame it on the government: I cannot believe it, this is a ridiculously high fine.

That is the only thing I can think of. Maybe it was like, we will put in the range and then we will let the councils adopt the higher ticket. Then if someone gets a ticket, they can blame it on the council. Then it will be: well, we did not do it. We just put a range in and the council decided to go higher. It was not us. That is the only thing I can think of. I cannot think of any other rationale of why it would have been done. The point is, it was not done.

The City of St. John's – to their credit, and I give them full marks – stepped up to the plate, and through their bylaws they adopted the \$400 ticket. They said, I do not care if the Province does not want to show leadership here. I do not care. We want to do what is right for the disability community within the City of St. John's. We want to provide strong deterrents for those who decide they are going to park illegally in a blue zone. We want to provide access for persons with disabilities. That is what we want to do. They took the lead, to their credit, and they made that happen. I congratulate them for it.

Shortly thereafter, the City of Mount Pearl followed suit. The City of Mount Pearl did the exact same thing. They adopted a \$400 fine for parking in blue zones, the same as what the City of St. John's had done.

Now, according to my colleague, the Member for Conception Bay South, the Town of CBS has also done the same. I was not aware that they had, but according to my colleague –



**MR. HILLIER:** Three years ago.

**MR. LANE:** Okay, he is telling me three years ago. The Town of Conception Bay South also showed leadership and they adopted the \$400 fine. I think I have heard that Corner Brook has done the same. I know I wrote Mayor Pender about a year ago and encouraged him and council in Corner Brook that they should do it. I do not know if they did it or not, but I am told they may have done it. Good for them if they have.

I have suggested certainly through COD-NL that when they are doing their presentations now – because in fairness the Province, through the Minister of Service NL, they did give COD-NL a grant for awareness and education and all that stuff around blue zones. I have suggested to COD-NL – I am not sure if they have done it yet, but I have suggested to them that they need to make a presentation to the urban municipalities at the MNL convention or symposium on the blue zone legislation and encourage them to follow suit as well and adopt, through their bylaws, the higher fine for illegal blue zone parking.

I think it is absolutely ridiculous that we should be having to go through this long, exhaustive process because the easy thing to have done would have simply said instead of a range, it is \$400 across the board, then it is consistent. We did not do it.

Now in this case, for government-owned parking lots, which do not fall under the City of St. John's or Mount Pearl or whatever, if it is a government-owned parking lot, government sets its own fines. There is legislation to say we set it ourselves. So we are choosing to keep it at \$100 and not to be consistent.

We want to be consistent with St. John's when it comes to meters. We want to be consistent when it comes to fire lanes. We want to be consistent when it comes to illegal parking. We want to be consistent when it comes to loading zones. We want to be consistent when it comes to parking without a permit, but when it comes to blue zones, for some reason, we do not want to be consistent. We are going to keep it lower.

This is very interesting as well, Mr. Speaker, when you look at it from the perspective – I am going to use an example that I used in second reading, the Department of Advanced Education and Skills – that is just one government department. It could be any government department, but I am just using that one as an example. It is not about that department per se. In that case, they have an office at the Regatta Plaza and they are actually leasing office space at the Regatta Plaza.

So if somebody visits that department, the Department of Advanced Education and Skills at the Regatta Plaza and they illegally park in the blue zone, then the RNC or perhaps even a municipal enforcement officer with the City of St. John's will come and issue a ticket and that ticket will be for \$400.

If that same individual left that particular office and came into the Confederation Building to the Advanced Education and Skills office there and they parked illegally in a blue zone, thus denying access to a person who needed it, they would only get \$100. So we are in the same department, same city, but because we are leasing a space versus our own space, there is no consistency, so that makes no sense whatsoever.

We are also told, by the minister, that Eastern Health makes up their own rules as well. Eastern Health can make up their own rules. I do not understand why that would be, but apparently they can. If you go and you park at the Health Sciences Centre or the Miller Centre, St. Clare's, and what have you – and I am assuming if it applies to Eastern Health, I guess it applies to Western Health and Central Health and so on. If you park on a hospital parking lot then the fines could be different again for blue zones and for anything else because they can set their own.

Then MUN – well, MUN, they are separate again. MUN can do whatever they like. They can just pick and choose their own fines as well apparently –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** No consistency.

**MR. LANE:** There is no consistency and they can pick their own. As a matter of fact, with MUN, we found out recently if you park in a

blue zone at MUN, you get a \$20 ticket – twenty bucks.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** That is cheaper than (inaudible).

**MR. LANE:** It is cheaper.

What I have been told by people in the disability community is that they have been told I guess by security or people there that people will park in a blue zone and stay there all day and take a chance on a \$20 ticket, because it is cheaper to pay a \$20 ticket than it is to feed the meter all day. Not to mention it is so hard to get parking or to get a permit or whatever. It is really just worth your while. Park in the blue zone and maybe I will not get a ticket at all but if I do, it is only \$20. Well, I would have had to put more than that in the meter, so I am better off because they can set their own.

What we have here is a total lack of consistency. A total lack of consistency between municipalities because they are kind of on their own to do their own thing and adopt what they like. Then the government does what it would like to do and does it here at the Confederation Building. MUN, well they will do what they like. Then the different health authorities will do what they like.

I do not know how it applies to other Crown agencies. I am not sure if there are other Crown agencies. Workers' comp is sort of semi-government, sort of like an arm's length. So I do not know if the government rules apply there, if the city rules apply. Maybe workers' comp has their own rules too, I do not know. There is no consistency.

There should be consistency, Mr. Speaker, I believe, across the board. When it comes government-owned parking lots, health authority parking lots, MUN parking lots, College of the North Atlantic parking lots, or if it is the City of St. John's or whatever, I think we should have consistency. Whatever it is for one it is for the other, for all of it, but in particular, when it comes to blue zone parking because that is so critical to be able to provide people with mobility issues, the ability to access services, in this case government services, educational services, health care services.

It could be you or me tomorrow, Mr. Speaker. It could be anybody. It is not necessarily just somebody who perhaps was born with a disability of some type and maybe uses a wheelchair or whatever. People who use blue zone parking, these could be people who have serious heart conditions, and people who have MS certainly are another. It could be any number of reasons. It could be senior citizens and so on. We could be fine today, but require that particular access tomorrow.

As a Province, if we want to be inclusive, then it is up to us certainly as legislators, as we are crafting any kind of legislation in this House of Assembly, whether it be parking or otherwise, it is incumbent upon us if we want to be an inclusive society to ensure that when we pass legislation that we are looking at it from all the various angles and various lenses. One of those lenses has to be the inclusiveness lens from the perspective of somebody who has mobility issues, somebody who has a disability and so on, and we need to craft our policies around it.

While I have no problem, in principle, with this particular bill in terms of raising other fines and so on, I have to say for the record that I believe we are missing an opportunity – there was an opportunity to also raise those blue zone fines, an opportunity that was already passed. We had the opportunity three-and-a-half years ago; we should have done it then right across the board.

At the very least now, I think we had an opportunity for government facilities to show leadership. We should be the ones leading by example instead of having the City of St. John's and Mount Pearl and so on leading by example and they are up here and we are down there. We missed an opportunity. I am very disappointed that we have, that it is not in this legislation an opportunity to do that.

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

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

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

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

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

I just wanted to take a couple of minutes to talk about Bill 4 here and this piece of legislation. Sometimes whenever a piece of legislation comes to the House, we have the realization that we have to make changes to some pieces simply because of ignorance.

I have to say the word, Mr. Speaker. Because we have people who are out there who take advantage of somebody else's situation. They will go ahead and they will deliberately park their car in a blue zone. They will go ahead and they will park their car too close to a set of steps to the point where they cannot – not a set of steps, sorry, but a ramp, for example, so that they cannot get the wheelchair up over it; or they will park too close to the blue zone, sometimes over the blue zone to the point where somebody who is in a wheelchair cannot open up the door to their own vehicle and get their wheelchair out.

Mr. Speaker, we have this situation out there where government had to deal with a piece of legislation here. There is no doubt about it I think that with – well, pretty much the same thing as what my fellow Member for Mount Pearl South was saying, we have a consistency in violations here right across the Province, right across the world, let's face it.

I just wanted to make a quick note about that at the same time. Sometimes you have to change the legislation to the point where you have to bring awareness more so that people are going to violate it anyway simply for the sake that they can get away with it.

Enforcement, Mr. Speaker, I think is very important in this particular matter. I want to bring up the simple case again for some of the matters of where they are raising fines. Again, I will say it to the minister. Parking on a crosswalk as far as I am concerned is absolutely abhorrent. If somebody is going to do it, it is an accident waiting to happen and should be subject to demerit points.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I do not know about this one, I will have to check this one too, but I think even parking in a blue zone is not subject to demerit points. I stand to be corrected on that. Perhaps the minister can probably correct me on that. The absolute abhorrence of being able to have somebody break the law and

park in a blue zone should be subject itself to demerit points and subject to a heavier fine, as some of my fellow members have been saying.

Mr. Speaker, that is all I wanted to say on it. The other point is thanks to the groups like COD-NL for their advocacy work on this piece and their continued advocacy on pieces having to do with those people who need the assistance sometimes. In some cases like this we have to make the realization that this is an educational process for everybody too. I think that we can all be in hope that we will all be made more aware of both disability and ability issues in the future.

Mr. Speaker, that is all I wanted to say on that particular point, but for government to consider, like I said, some of the points where they did raise fines, perhaps they can go up a little bit higher. Probably the use of demerit points may in fact actually enhance the enforcement component of it.

Thank you very much.

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

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion that Bill 4 be now read a third time?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Works, Services And Transportation Act. (Bill 4)

**MR. SPEAKER:** This bill has now been read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and that its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Works, Services And Transportation Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 4)

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

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

First of all, for the record I would like just to make a correction. When I gave a notice of motion, I think I said Thursday, June 17 for next week, but it was intended to be Thursday, June 18.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**MR. KING:** At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move to Motion 4, ask leave to introduce a bill, An Act To Amend The Regional Service Boards Act, 2012, Bill 14.

It is so moved by me and seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs that the said bill be now read the first time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Was it Bill 14?

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Regional Service Boards Act, 2012, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the minister shall have leave to introduce Bill 14, and that Bill 14 be now read a first time?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Regional Service Boards Act, 2012. (Bill 14)

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

When shall the bill be read a second time?

**MR. KING:** Tomorrow.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 14 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

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

This time I would like to call from the Order Paper, Bill 7, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act. It is so moved by me, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the said bill be now read the second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act." (Bill 14)

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

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

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

This amendment to Bill 7, just by way of a bit of background to the amendment or the issue at hand and to create some context for the amendment itself, it goes back a little ways, back in the mid-1980s actually and further adjustments made in 1997.

There was in place in Labrador, a creation of a Labrador boarder zone. This was a creation of these zones which basically and fundamentally covered the Labrador West region – Labrador City and Wabush. It also then covered the South Coast of Labrador. Those two regions of Labrador share a border with Quebec, where there is population to commute back and forth between the Labrador portion of the Province and Quebec. In particular, there was a huge impact on retail sales, both in the Labrador West area and the South Coast of Labrador, as a result of cross-border shopping.

At that time, there was an assessment completed. The determination – one of the major contributing factors to that draw across the border was around the sale of tobacco. There was a huge price differential in tobacco prices in Labrador West and on the South Coast of

Labrador versus the neighbouring communities in Quebec.

So back then in the mid-1980s there was a change made, not necessarily intended to equalize the issues around the pricing of tobacco, but to create equalization around the taxation associated with tobacco. There are two things that happen in Quebec. One is the rate of taxation, and the products that will get taxed in Quebec versus in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Back then, Mr. Speaker, there was a program put in place to provide for tax rebates, not a reduction in the tax per se but a rebate to retailers who were selling products. That way they were able to compete. In so competing on tobacco, they were able to actually maintain or retain shoppers in their respective communities for other consumer products. As a result of that, Mr. Speaker, this was introduced back in the 1980s initially, and further changes made in 1997.

Fast forward, Mr. Speaker, to 2013. In 2013, the program had been in place for a while. It had provided some ongoing stability, Mr. Speaker –

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

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

**MR. WISEMAN:** A couple of things were in place, there was a quotient. Obviously, it was not intended to create a zone within the Province that provided for the purchase of tobacco at a reduced rate for export to other parts of the Province, potentially. It was not that at all, Mr. Speaker. So to contain and to ensure it was protection for local consumers, people who lived in both Labrador West and the South Coast portion of our Province, adequate protection for them as consumers.

There was a program that offered a cap. At that time, there was a cap in Labrador West, for example, of 110 cartons of cigarettes; 110,000 in Labrador West and 16,000 in the South Coast of Labrador. So there was a cap. There was a quotient put in place, and the rebate would apply to that volume of activity. There was a process put in place to administer the program. It involved a large degree of co-operation between the wholesalers and the retailers in Labrador to

manage the quota, together with the program itself.

In 2003, there was a decision made in that year that there may be an opportunity to make a change, to eliminate that tax. Maybe it was not having such a positive impact as was thought. In 2003, there was a belief that not only was it not necessarily given the kind of protection it was initially intended to, and it may not have a huge impact on retail sales, but also the Province found itself that year in a very difficult financial circumstance. So it was decided that those rebates would be eliminated for that zone. That Labrador border zone would be eliminated.

Over the period of time between that year, 2013, and today, there were a number of things happened, obviously. The dynamic in Labrador West changed hugely. The economy has made a huge change there with mining activity in a very different spot than it was four or five years ago, and retail sales are really taking a hit.

So, on further analysis, and looking clearly at what was happening in Labrador West initially, a lot of the wholesale sale of tobacco information that we had predominantly centred around Labrador West. Basically, Mr. Speaker, when we did an analysis of it, we started to realize that consumer retail sales in Labrador West, not just on tobacco, but many other consumer products had taken a significant hit. Not only did it drop because the economy had changed there, but on close examination this was not just about the economy taking a hit. There was something else fundamentally going on there.

We did a fairly detailed analysis, worked with the retail sector, worked with the wholesale sector. What we found very clearly, Mr. Speaker, we found a connection, a correlation between what was happening with consumers leaving Labrador West and going across the border and shopping in Quebec. Not only were they drawn there for the difference in the tobacco tax, but while they were there they purchased many other consumer products. So almost retailer by retailer in Labrador West you are able to track and identify clearly significant slippage in their sales, and not just because the economy is in a very different spot today than it was four or five years ago. As a result of some

tracking, we were able to clearly tie it to the loss of tobacco sales.

What this amendment is doing, Mr. Speaker, is going back to where we were pre-2013. The Budget was announced back at the end of April. I read into the record here this year's Budget, and commented about this change that we are going to make. When we did the first analysis, the focus was on Labrador, but the information we had at that time confirmed for us that we needed to make a change in Labrador West.

The Budget did not include the South Coast of Labrador in the reinstatement of the Labrador border zone. Since that time, since we introduced the Budget in the House, we have had additional information brought to our attention. We have had officials do a deeper analysis solely focused on the South Coast of Labrador. They came to the same conclusion that this was happening.

The South Coast of Labrador obviously is a much smaller region, a smaller population. Retail sales in the South Coast of Labrador were never as high as retail sales in Labrador West. Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, for those people in business on the South Coast of Labrador, it was having a similar impact on them. So what we are doing here now is making an amendment to Bill 7 that actually puts in place or recreates this Labrador border zone for a tobacco tax rebate for both the Labrador West area and the South Coast of Labrador.

The Labrador West initiative came into effect on April 1, and the one in – oh, I am sorry May 1. Labrador West is May 1 and the one in the South Coast of Labrador will be July 1. So retailers are already getting the benefit in Labrador West because it came into effect on May 1. The South Coast retailers will get the benefit starting on July 1.

Mr. Speaker, there are two amendments associated with this. The first provides for the rebate itself. The second amendment grants us the authority to make regulations with respect to the calculation and the administration of the rebate, and also the calculation of the quota. I said earlier in my comments that when it was initially established there was a quota established and there was a mechanism put in

place for the rebate. So these amendments now give the Department of Finance officials in government the authority to re-establish the calculation of the administration of the program, together with the calculation of the quota.

Mr. Speaker, this is a relatively simple amendment to a bill that gives us an authority to implement that rebate program in those two regions of the Province. This bill is not about the issue of smoking. Obviously, government has been very clear through its policy decisions and other things it has done that we promote non-smoking environments, we promote healthy lifestyles, and we promote healthy choices that people make. Those healthy choices and those healthy lifestyles do not include smoking.

This is not intended to endorse smoking as a habit. Merely, this is a piece of legislation that amends an act that will see us creating an equal playing field for retailers who are in Labrador West and on the South Coast of Labrador who have to compete with a very different tax structure in their neighbouring communities in Quebec. So this amendment is purely and simply just to create an equal playing field for retailers in both the South Coast of Labrador and in the Western Labrador.

I do not think I need to provide any greater elaboration on what this bill is about, what it is intended to do, and the motivation for doing this and what benefit and value it will have for retailers in Labrador. So, Mr. Speaker, I will take my place but, no doubt, when we get into Committee if there are some very specific questions around some components of the bill, I would only be too glad to answer them. I welcome others' comments.

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

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

I am going to speak for a few minutes to Bill 7 since the impacts of Bill 7 – my district has certainly felt the impacts of the changes. I think it was just before I came into the House of Assembly in 2013 – I know when I started at the doors in 2013, I began hearing from people loud and clear that we are not happy with what had just happened in the House. I began to do some

digging, looking in and trying to understand it, and I am going to talk about it over the next little while.

First, for the purpose of the people who might be watching today, just to understand, Bill 7 is An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act and it is a bill that would amend the Revenue Administration Act to provide for a tobacco tax rebate in the Labrador border zones.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I should say right off the mark that myself or our Leader of the Opposition, we are certainly not about promoting smoking. We are not about encouraging the use of tobacco, because I think all of us understand the full implications of smoking. We see it every day. I just did a member's statement on the cancer relay that happens every year in a little community in Charlottetown, a tremendous success. A small region giving a lot, wanting to make a difference in the lives of people who are living with cancer, or hopefully the money will help with research to prevent the ongoing spread of cancer.

Mr. Speaker, this is about something different; the tobacco tax rebate is about cross-border shopping. The Southern part of my district when you come into L'Anse au Clair, you are in very close proximity to another province where prices are very different. What happens there is when people go there, people who are going to smoke are going to smoke and they are going to have the cigarettes. What happens is when they go across the border for cigarettes; they end up buying lots of other things.

This becomes a huge disadvantage to the small businesses, small businesses that are struggling in those rural parts. You have a small population base around you. You have a high cost of getting your freight brought into the region. You have high electricity. There are many times that my colleague for Torngat and myself, we have stood – there is a rate application right now before the PUB that concerns us. So there are lots of reasons why we need to be doing all we can to support small business.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, when this government, two years ago, decided they were going to do away with the tobacco tax rebate,

the people in the Opposition at that time understood the implications and the damage that it would be to small businesses, and they voted against it. They debated it.

I was not here at the time, but I went back into Hansard and I saw that there was some pretty heated debate. At that time, there was all kinds of dialogue here in the House around we are about promoting health and wellness. The Member for Lab West, whose district was going to be very impacted, spoke at length and he said it is not going to be a big impact. I do not think businesses are going to hurt. In fact, I do not think one job will be lost from this. He spoke at length about that. He said sometimes it comes down to choices and you have to make the choice that is right.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** What is he saying now?

**MS DEMPSTER:** I do not know what he is saying right now, but clearly this is a another example – I would be remiss on behalf of the people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair that I represent, Mr. Speaker, I am their voice, I am the voice of the small businesses – I would be remiss if I did not say this is another blatant example, and we have many, many in the House, where this government did something, they did to do their homework, and they went back after and they decided to look and see what the implications to the small businesses would be. In fact, they found out what we knew all along. They found out what was very clear.

You have many disadvantages when you live close to a border, Mr. Speaker, and you can get goods across the border that are cheaper. That leaves businesses there very disadvantaged. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, every day when I am in my district we see examples of how much we are losing to Quebec. Muskrat Falls – we are losing our shirts to Quebec, so much.

This is another example of where businesses have really felt the smart because this was brought in and now two years later we are going back, government recognizes that they did the analysis after the fact. This analysis should have been done prior. So I do not know what the loss was. I do not know what, but I would venture to say that government is not going to compensate those small businesses for that loss for sure.

Budget day – I was sitting here on Budget day when the Finance Minister delivered the Budget and during that time he referenced the tobacco tax being reinstated at Lab West end. I thought that seemed very strange, what about the businesses in Southern – even though Lab West was a Tory district and the Southern was a Liberal, I thought it must be a slip-up.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, it was not. The homework had not been done properly again, and because of that – I have to give credit where credit is due. I am thankful that the minister and his department have been looking into this and that they are going to go back and revisit. It is my understanding that the Southern border – and it is here written in the act now – will have the tobacco tax reinstated.

Mr. Speaker, the businesses in Lab West have been enjoying the benefits of this rebate now since the Budget came down, since May 1. It is my understanding that the best that we can hope for is that the small businesses in Southern Labrador will get to appreciate the value of this rebate in July. Mr. Speaker, what about May and June? May and June because of the analysis being done again after the fact – we have small businesses that are the heart and soul of our community, every small business that employs two or three people makes a world of difference in a small community, but because the analysis was done after the fact and not before, we have a number of small businesses in my area and they are losing out financially.

They are losing out for two months financially. Not to mention this should not have been done in the first place and businesses, for two years – we have two years of damage already done, two years of damage. There is an old saying that says if it is not broke, don't fix it. It was not broke, there was a reason why the tobacco tax was there, and it was to give these small businesses a fair opportunity. It was to give them a fighting chance.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** It was Liberal policy.

**MS DEMPSTER:** It was Liberal policy, as my colleague said, brought in because it was recognized that those businesses at the border, they had a lot of challenges because it is easy for customers to get in their vehicle and drive a few

kilometres. Everybody – consumers loved the benefits, Mr. Speaker. They love the benefits if you are going to save a little bit of money.

We have two years of damage done and then we see the Budget comes down – we are happy to see that the rebate is back, but I am hearing from business owners in L'Anse au Clair, I have heard from business owners in L'Anse au Loup that have been making multiple calls within the departments, a number of business owners. One of the things that was mentioned to me was the business confidence under this government. When this Premier took over, business confidence was at its highest. Here we are now a short time into this, and I think we are down to 6 per cent or 7 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, this is just an example. We need to be setting policy and reducing red tape. We hear that all the time from small businesses. We need to be doing all we can to support. We talk about oil and gas, and that is 4 per cent of the jobs that is created in this Province – 4 per cent. It is the small business owners that we need to be doing all we can to support.

It was just last week when I was – I wrote down a quote. I had an email from a small business owner. He said to me: I struggle with reaching out to my member and asking about the tobacco tax rebate. He said: I, myself, am all about promoting health and wellness. I would love for someone to be talking to me about subsidizing the fruit and the milk and the vegetables here, but it is about my business. It comes down to survival. He said: What really, really irritates me is treating the red and blue districts different. So that is how the businesses are feeling right now in the Labrador Straits because at the Western border, there has been two months of rebate that they will not enjoy.

I do not know what the dollar figure is on that, but I imagine that is it very, very valuable for the businesses in that area. Again, to quote Hansard, the Member for Labrador West said: I do not think businesses are going to suffer. Guess what happened? Once they did the analysis, after the fact they saw that indeed businesses were suffering, and the Southern Labrador businesses will continue to suffer – I do not have a definite date. Maybe I will get a chance to ask the minister that after if the July 2



date is actually an absolute date in which the tax rebate will be reinstated at that time.

I do not have a lot more to say on that. I believe that it was a wrong decision in the beginning. I am glad that they have revisited, but it is always at a cost and just another example of where you cannot be rolling the dice and gambling with people in the Province, gambling with businesses who are working very hard to make a living. You need to be doing your homework first; you need to be doing the analysis prior.

Mr. Speaker, coming out with things like this two years ago with no consultation with the people, no consultation at all, it reminded me of the RFP for Labrador when we have been so desperately waiting and needing a ferry. So we had an RFP that went out and now that is hauled off the table because they understood that they needed to go back and do some more homework. Here is another example of that.

I stood in the House a number of times and I entered petitions on behalf of the businesses. The businesses were calling to have this reinstated. I am happy to see that happen. I am happy to see that government listened to that because small businesses are very, very valuable in our community, Mr. Speaker.

I grew up in a family where we were small business owners, so I understand first-hand. We did not get to do a lot of things, take a lot of days off as a family. It was my observation that running a small business successfully meant that you were working eighteen hours a day for yourself so you did not have to work eight for someone else. I am very familiar, Mr. Speaker, with that lifestyle. From a very, very young age I was expected to work in the family business as well. It did not hurt me. Hard work never hurts anyone. I understand the struggles and I understand sometimes in a small –

**MR. WISEMAN:** (Inaudible).

**MS DEMPSTER:** I am not sure what the Finance Minister is saying over there, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. WISEMAN:** I am wondering where this tied into the bill, but go ahead.

**MS DEMPSTER:** I think, Mr. Speaker, he wants me to go back and talk about that the tobacco tax rebate should not have been cut in the first place. The analysis should have been done. So I am happy to have been able to stand and speak to Bill 7.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say it again, it is unfortunate that small businesses in Southern Labrador right now, today, June 11, are being disadvantaged against their Western businesses for the last four, five, six, seven weeks. I am sure they are very anxiously awaiting the date when all the processes are taken care of in the department and they will have the tobacco tax rebate.

It will level the playing field. It is just about fairness. Cross-border shopping is always going to happen when people live near a border. We need rebates in place like that to encourage the residents who live in the area to shop at home. So when you drop in for your pack of – you have your little bad habits there, you are also going to pick up all of the other things that you need along the way, Mr. Speaker.

It is about supporting small businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador. Every opportunity that we have, Mr. Speaker, I believe we need to do all we can to support the small businesses and the mom-and-pop operations. I know they are certainly valued in my district. We appreciate all that they do and how they give to the community. These are the people who we call on whenever there is fundraising and things like that – health issues, people going away, all kinds of things. So we need to be supporting them.

So, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair and Labrador, I am happy to have had the opportunity to speak to Bill 7.

Thank you.

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

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

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

As Yogi Berra once said, this is “déjà vu all over again.” We talked about this particular piece of legislation back in 2013, and back then when it was repealed. I find it hard sometimes to actually understand why government does things. In the last little while we have seen, I will say it, indecisiveness on the part of the government. We saw the government, for example, talk the other day on the possibility of not putting in an HST increase, then they were in the Budget, then they changed their mind again, and now with this one, of course they change their mind – for good reason, because we told them so. This side of the House, we told them so back in debate in 2013 –

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

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

Thank you.

The Speaker is just having difficulty hearing the hon. member.

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

Back in 2013, just to reiterate, we told government so that this was going to be happening and the possibility was here, of course, that there was going to be some fallback from this. Of course, certainly government learned that – but they did not listen. So we are back to the drawing board again, so to speak.

There is a necessity here for government to ensure in this particular case the survival of small businesses – and large businesses for that matter – that are trying to compete on an equal footing in a market that is next to Quebec. We know that there are challenges with that that people are going to get around, and we know that, of course, people go and they like to shop for the best deal. We all know, of course, that we want Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to spend money at home. That is one of the reasons why they are instituting this again.

We warned you at the time that the \$3.4 million – I think that was the number that was put on it – that was saved on the backs of Labrador retailers who would lose revenue to cross-border sales, people travel to take advantage of cheaper cigarettes in Quebec – we warned government

that was going to happen, that the possibility was there, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately as it is, in Newfoundland and Labrador this year, if you look at the Budget figures, for example, just to give a little bit of a chat on how much taxes are actually collected, government in the budgetary figures – and I think I said this in the House before – they talked about \$157 million in tobacco taxes, that were actually generated last year from tobacco taxes.

This year, Mr. Speaker, they are also targeting the same, \$157 million in tobacco taxes. According to government’s figures, if government’s figures are right when it comes to the Budget, we are not seeing any cessation in smoking, obviously. There is still going to be an issue around that, the same as what there was last year for the amount of revenue collected.

So what I would like to say to the minister here is that while this is not a law directly attributed to the habit itself, it kind of is. Because while we are giving a discount to the retailers so they can compete, I think something has to be said about the amount of investment that government is actually putting into cessation programming here, because it is obvious that we are not seeing a drop in those numbers.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I will say it right now, just to be clear to the minister. It has only been about three weeks since I have dropped the habit, but it is still there in the back of my mind. There is still a need sometimes to pick it up.

I want to say to the minister at the same time, that perhaps what government should be doing is taking some of this tax revenue they are making and put it into more cessation programming, particularly in Labrador. We know we have issues up there and we should be targeting it.

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

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

**MR. MURPHY:** Mr. Speaker, here we are now reinstating this rebate. Could this be finally a case of government listening to what the Opposition side of the House said? It certainly looks that way.

I am just kind of curious, when this legislation came through, how come they did not listen to us back then, Mr. Speaker, when we brought those points forward in the House of Assembly? I certainly would like to hear the government on that.

Government announced in Budget 2013 that it would pass legislation to end the Labrador border tax rebate on tobacco. There is no rebate provided in any other part of the Province for tobacco sales. We know that. There is no other province that offers a similar rebate, none that we can find, Mr. Speaker. It will save government approximately \$3.4 million annually. That is one of the reasons why they did it.

To continue to provide a tax rebate, it serves as an incentive for increased tobacco sales. It really goes against government's commitment to the promotion of health and well-being. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I have to mention the point about putting more money into cessation programming from the money that they are collecting. Like I said, \$157 million from tobacco taxes alone? That is an awful lot of money for this government to be dealing with. I think if they put more money into that, it would probably serve the people well if they did.

Mr. Speaker, since 1998, the amount of cigarettes purchased in Labrador West has more than doubled. We have to ask ourselves some questions here. Perhaps the Department of Health, for example, can get on that and find out the reasons why that is actually happening.

"With the end of the program, it is our hope that cigarette sales will also decrease," government is saying. I am still asking myself questions on it, Mr. Speaker, knowing that the budgetary amount that they are projecting is still the same. It certainly is not looking like that.

I ask the minister today, I guess in summation, not according to the budget figures, like I said, are we going to be seeing a drop in smoking this year. Perhaps government can put in an accelerated program of smoking cessation. Government hoped that ending the rebate would lower the consumption of cigarette sales. Does the government have any idea or any proper data on whether that has really happened or not? I

think not, according to the budgetary figures, the budgetary estimates.

Mr. Speaker, if the tobacco rebate went against government's commitment to the promotion of health and well-being, why are we instituting the rebate in the first place? Now, of course, obviously we can still answer that question. It is basically because of competition with Quebec and people going across, and cross-border shopping. We already know the reasons for that. We are losing revenue in the Province as a result and we are using this to come back.

Mr. Speaker, how much did government's cancelling of the rebate actually cost the businesses of Labrador West? We have not seen any figures on that, I do not think. I think that a proper assessment of actually what happened up there would probably be in order.

Mr. Speaker, just to sum up again and just to reiterate to government; government needs to ask itself – in its own budgetary figures they are projected to collect \$157 million in tobacco tax. We are talking about a drop in taxes for some areas of the Province here so that they can compete. We do not think that is really a wise measure, even though we will support government on it. There is really no other choice here when it comes to competition.

I would certainly like to see government put more money into cessation programming here, particularly in Labrador West, and particularly for everybody in the Province. I think that really needs to be enforced with government.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** If the minister speaks now he closes debate.

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

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

I appreciate the member's comments, both the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair and the Member for St. John's East. Obviously, there have been a couple of comments made that I wanted to just reflect on for a moment.

One of the things that government does frequently – and I think it is not a sign of caving in. It is not a sign of weakness by any means at all. Governments frequently make decisions that at the moment were based on the best intelligence available at the time and the best insights available at the time. Then when circumstances change or other information, the assumptions we made or the calculations we made do not materialize, I think it is a reflection of a government that listens to the people of the Province and reflects they are responding to the needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

So, I say, Mr. Speaker, the critics who want to play politics with it talk about a flip-flop, but I think it is a sign of strength. It is a sign of strong leadership when a government recognizes that an error may have been made or recognizes a change in circumstance requires another deeper dive, a deeper analysis, and are prepared to make a change to reflect that new reality.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today in this House introducing this bill and contributing to the debate, acknowledging this is the right thing to do for the people who are in business in communities that border with Quebec, where they have an unequal playing field. This is an attempt to equalize that playing field.

I want to thank members for their contribution. When we get into Committee now, if there are some specific questions, I will be only too glad to answer. I just want to reiterate something I had said at the beginning.

A number of issues have been raised about the whole issue of smoking and whether we should invest money in programs to support people who want to give up smoking. That is the subject of another piece of legislation. It is not the subject of this bill. This is a revenue administration amendment. This has to do with taxation. This has to do with a rebate of taxes.

Just to reiterate the point, based on our actions and based on the investments we have made, we are committed to supporting people who want to drop the habit of smoking and ensuring that we promote good health and healthy choices.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Is it the pleasure of the House that the said bill be now read the second time?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

When shall the bill be referred to the Committee of the Whole House?

**MR. KING:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 7)

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 7, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

**Committee of the Whole**

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

We are not considering Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act.

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

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Chair, I would like to speak to this particular piece of legislation and ask the Minister of Finance – because I believe my colleague, the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair – what has been put out there is that the current implementation of this piece of legislation allows one area of Labrador, Lab West, to have had an earlier rebate process, which is currently underway for May and June, but not for the Southern portion of the Labrador district which would be in Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair for the retailers that are there. There is an unfair advantage being given to one area of Labrador which both are impacted equivalently when it comes to being at the border of Quebec.

Residents and retailers who have a business in Southern Labrador, whether it be in L'Anse au Clair, or Forteau, or in other areas – and I was in Labrador talking to these very businesses and retailers. They clearly identified and stated they were losing business, because of this particular piece of legislation, to Quebec. They were losing business to Quebec, clearly because those who smoke could generate savings by driving just a few kilometres.

While they were going a few kilometres, not only were they buying tobacco, they were buying other competitive products, or even

buying things that were not competitive. Anybody who runs small businesses and things who look at, like gas stations, and look at the sales somewhat, they get revenue from tobacco sales, from cigarettes, but you make additional revenue by the alternative things you buy, like the bag of chips, like the candy bar, and whatnot that have high margins. If you are losing that foot traffic and that stopping, that does have a huge impact when it comes to small business, when it comes to the retailer.

That is clearly the reason why we are here debating this particular bill. In 2013, I stood up clearly in this House and opposed the elimination because I understand business in a way that this government and Tory economics do not. You make decisions without consulting. You do not understand –

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** You clearly do not understand when it comes to business and what that would mean, that we are back here two years later now and this reversal is being made. It is very, very simple in knowing that this would happen. This is an area where if government listened to the Official Opposition back then, we would not have had to be here today debating this particular bill.

I would like for the Minister of Finance to clarify, and I will give him the opportunity because the question I have is: When will the retailers in the Southern portion of Labrador be eligible for this rebate, and will it be retroactive? Will he make it retroactive so that it is a fair playing field to all retailers? Clarify the date when it is available. Is it July 2 of 2015, and will he have the opportunity to make that available?

I will give the minister that opportunity. If not, I will be back on my feet for another opportunity to continue this.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**MR. WISEMAN:** I appreciate the member's expertise and wealth of knowledge and wealth of

information, and an extensive career in this field. He brings that to the debate, so I really appreciate that. It is always nice to have that kind of valuable and informed contribution to debate. It is always nice to have that, so I do thank him for his comments.

I want to be clear and I want to make sure that I give him a very precise answer. He was very deliberate in the posing of his questions, so I will try to be as deliberate in my response so that there is clarity around the debate. Around the effective date; the effective date for the South Coast of Labrador will be July 1. The effective date for Labrador West was May 1. There is no retroactive application to the South Coast implementation date. Just to be clear on those two points.

The other piece with respect to the difference in the time period between today and the Budget itself when the decision was made about the Labrador West change. We relied heavily on information from tobacco wholesalers. We had information from tobacco wholesalers that were selling in Labrador, the South Coast of Labrador, and in Labrador West.

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. WISEMAN:** The information we had available at the time from wholesalers who were selling tobacco in Labrador West – that was one of their biggest markets, and also into the South Coast of Labrador – did not reveal there was a huge difference between the sales information they had available about the South Coast sales versus the Labrador West sales.

What we have since learned is that many retailers on the South Coast purchased at a wholesale level from other suppliers, in addition to those that were distributing in the rest of Labrador. So when we became aware of the new information – and I want to thank two members in this House, the hon. the Member for Labrador West and the hon. Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair for both bringing to our attention the fact that there were other wholesalers, and there was additional information that was available that could be used in our analysis.

I say, Mr. Chair, that is the rationale for the distinction between the two dates. Hopefully that provides an answer to the member opposite. If not, I am sure he will stand again and pose the same question in another way.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Humber East.

**MR. FLYNN:** Mr. Chair, thank you very much for the opportunity to put another point of view at this. I do not know if I would call myself an expert at this, but I did spend forty years in Southern Labrador in the retail business.

I was president of the chamber of commerce when this initial bill was introduced some years back. The problem with this, in that we are living next to the Quebec border, there has been a dramatic decrease in business. As a result, I think – and I am not criticizing here, but I am just suggesting – that when we are introducing bills that substantially affect the business community, as this one did in 2013, one would think that before making a significant move, you would consult with the businesses before that move was made.

The other question I have for the minister, having operated a grocery store and a restaurant there for that number of years, there is a really long time delay from the time I purchased the product, or did, which then sold it, but after you actually purchased the product until the rebate gets back from government. Being a small business, some of these totals are up to \$10,000 or \$12,000 a month, and that really is a lot of money to be tied up for an extended period of time.

I ask the minister, when you are reviewing this, to make sure that you take into consideration – or I ask, not make sure – some way of turning that around fairly quickly. Not only have we lost the sales of the cigarettes, we also lost sales in the beer, and we also lost sales in groceries and whatever because it was a reason to go to Quebec, you hide the cigarettes and your booze in with your groceries and you less likely to be caught.

I congratulate you for waking up to an error that was made, and thank you for at least correcting it. It may have been too late for some of the

businesses, but I recognize you for correcting it at this time.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

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

I thank the member for his comments. As he pointed out, it is that kind of insight, a man who has operated a business there in that community and that region would be able to speak first-hand experience of the impact of a change like this, or the impact of having this sort of provision in any piece of legislation. I thank him for his comments, and his points are very valid. We do need to be sensitive to the turnaround.

As the second part of this bill does, it gives the authority to be able to put in place the administrative structure to administer the program. Your point is well taken and we will give it full consideration when we do it. Because we do need to make sure we get a quick turnaround so that those applications for rebates – because it costs you money, it ties up your money, and working capital is expensive sometimes.

Thank you very much for your input.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

**MS DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I said earlier, when the Budget came down and the minister reading the Budget alluded to the tobacco tax rebate going back in Lab West, at the first opportunity I had, I spoke with him after and said what about Southern Labrador. He explained to me then what happened. They had consulted with a wholesaler that was selling cigarettes to Lab West and there was an assumption made. There was an assumption made that the wholesaler that was selling in Lab West was the wholesaler that was taking care of all of the business in Southern Labrador

Because this has meant a loss of revenue to small businesses that is really concerning to me, they have felt the smart, they felt the impact –

the profit margins are not always high in small business. I just want to ask the minister how is it that something this important, like a tobacco tax rebate that is impacting small businesses, how is it that we can end up where you make the presumption that they are only dealing with one wholesaler. I guess what I want to ask is: Why at any one point was there no consultation with the small businesses? It seems relatively easy to me to contact – we are not talking big numbers – a few small businesses and say: Where do you do your purchase? We want to do some analysis on this, and then it could have avoided all of that.

I do not know if the minister can help me there.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**MR. WISEMAN:** I am not sure if I can help her, but I can correct her because there was no presumption made, no assumptions made. We did not presume anything. We gathered information from at least two distributors who distribute in that area. So the information we had was precise data based on those two distributor sales in the South Coast. There were no assumptions made that we used anything other than raw data provided by two retailers.

Mr. Chair, there was nothing that was ill toward here. There was nothing that intended to be – to treat one part of the Labrador region different than another. There were a number of wholesalers that sold in the Labrador region. One in particular had the lion's share, if not all of the market in the Western part of the region, but in the South Coast there were two distributors that we had data from and relied on that data to make a decision.

We have since found out after that that there were other means of gathering – and it was not just through those distributors. There were some retailers in the South Coast that were using other sources to buy tobacco products at a wholesale level. When we became aware of that, we acted on it. That is what this amendment does today, embeds the South Coast of Labrador in the change and the reimplementation of the Labrador borders.

There were no assumptions made at all. It was used based on data that we had from two distributors who were selling into that market.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

**MS DEMPSTER:** We are probably going to agree to disagree, the Finance Minister and myself, that there were no assumptions made because, Mr. Chair, when you go out and you talk to –

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MS DEMPSTER:** When you go out and you talk to a couple of wholesalers and you do not talk to all of them, you do not get the complete picture and you end up now with a situation where we have businesses in the Southern part that have lost two months of revenue compared to businesses in the West.

It was actually said to me back and month or so ago when I enquired that – I am sure it was said to me – we assumed that the businesses in the Southern part was purchasing from the same wholesaler as the businesses in the Western part. We all know that Labrador has a large geographic land mass and there are lots of things that are different from one end to the other. That is why we call it the Big Land.

I guess I just want to ask the minister: When this decision was being made, why were the people that were to be most impacted by this – the businesses – why were they not consulted? Why was all the dialogue happening with the wholesalers because it would have been very easy for businesses – the people who were at risk of losing the money and that in fact did lost money, which is why we are back two years later having this debate here in the House today – why was it that the businesses were not consulted at that time?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**MR. WISEMAN:** Mr. Chair, I suppose we can spend quite a bit of time this afternoon talking about the whys and how comes of what may

have happened in the past. I am sure, as the member opposite just said a moment ago, we will agree to disagree. So we can spend a great deal of time on that.

I think what is really important is that this bill now puts in place a process to ensure that the Labrador West area of the Province and the South Coast of Labrador, areas of the Province that border with Quebec and where there is a discrepancy between the tax structure on tobacco products between the two provinces has created a circumstance where, in fact, the retailers in both those areas of our Province are disadvantaged – because people from their communities are travelling into Quebec to purchase not just the tobacco products, which has given rise and the motivation to make the pilgrimage into Quebec, but also as a result of there being present in Quebec, they are purchasing goods and services that otherwise would be purchased back home in Labrador. This corrects that.

So what may have happened that gave rise to it happening in the first place, a re-examination of what took place in 1984 or a re-examination of what took place in 1997 and what took place in 2013, may be somewhat academic, I say, Mr. Chair. Important, yes, and a great history lesson and a great topic of some conversation, but where we find ourselves today, in this House today, in June 2015, there is a bill before it that puts in place a process that has been requested by the member opposite, her colleague next to her, the Member for Torngat Mountains has made representation, and the Member for Labrador West has made representation, and this is government's response to that representation.

I believe it is a fair and equitable treatment for the people who do business in this Province and have to compete with neighbouring Quebec, and that is what this bill does. Whether we should not have done it before, or whether we should have done it earlier, the fact is we responded to what people were telling us, and I think we are providing the kind of leadership the people of the Province expect when you hear something that is right, hear something that needs to be fixed, something that is wrong, move forward and fix it. Then to debate about what had happened and did not happen is somewhat academic.



**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

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

I have to comment further on the Minister of Finance stating that this particular bill and his answer to my question earlier as being fair and equitable treatment. I have operated a small business. I have helped dozens of people start small business. I have mentored people in small business. I have helped dozens of people expand small business in all sectors of the economy. I have worked for international business. I have worked in other provinces, locally. I have a degree in a business.

I talk to business quite a lot, and any business owner will tell you what is being proposed here is certainly not fair and equitable. I do not know if it is Tory economics or what, but for the minister to say that to allow one group of business owners to get a rebate on July 1, and another group of business owners to get a rebate on May 1 – I mean that is one-sixth of your year – it is not fair and equitable.

What should have been done is that both borders should be able to – the businesses that are operating in that vicinity, both of them should have been eligible for the May 1 deadline. They should have available to allow and get that rebate. I think government has an obligation to go back and look at the past two months for May and June for the South Coast businesses that were previously eligible, and allow that rebate.

If this government truly believes in being fair and equitable, and fair and equitable treatment for business, then they will go back and revisit that. It seriously is a significant problem. It goes back – and I guess it is something that the Auditor General highlighted in their report today, the systemic problems that exist within this government about monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on the effectiveness of government lending on money to business.

**CHAIR:** I am going to ask the hon. member to speak to the amendment, please.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Yes, I will certainly, Mr. Chair.

When the Minister of Finance spoke earlier, he said they did not consult with all of the tobacco wholesalers. They did not do their proper research and due diligence. So that is a systemic problem, when you make a policy decision, as this bill is, about reversing and putting back a rebate without doing a thorough analysis. What we are seeing is an unfair and inequitable approach between Western Labrador and the Southern portion of Labrador in terms of how these business operators are going to be impacted. I think that really does need to be highlighted. That is a systemic problem of government of how you can evaluate, monitor, and go back and get this information, why government did not do it with full information, why they did not do their full analysis. It has been highlighted time and time and time again.

I think that when you look at those business retailers and how their business is being impacted, well if I lost one-sixth of my year, two months in terms of the additional benefit and sales that would come from that, then I would have a real problem with this current government and how they are operating. I think that both borders should be fair. That is why I asked about the retroactivity when it came to looking at this particular bill that we are debating here today.

It is about implementing good processes and good practices in government. I remember when we debated the removal of the rebate. Now we are talking about reinstating the rebate. I am not opposed to the rebate being reinstated. I think that it is important for business to be competitive and have every equal opportunity to be competitive, especially if they are given an unfair advantage based on a border. These are types of things that we need to be looking at. I have spoken many times in the House of Assembly about breaking down barriers and allowing business to be more competitive. This is why you have trade deals. This is why you deal with AIT, an Agreement on Internal Trade.

What I see here clearly is something that is not fair and not equitable. I put that up there. Despite what the Minister of Finance stated, I do not believe what the bill is doing is being fair and equitable to both regions of Labrador, both levels of business. It should have included both, not just one over the other. A thorough analysis

should have been done. Proper consultation should have been done. This is where government is showing clearly that they are not understanding and not willing to do the work that needs to be done to arrive at a fair and equitable policy decision.

So that is my commentary on this particular piece of legislation. I commend my colleague for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair for pointing that out, and maybe pointing out the political partisanship that is being made in this particular bill as it was put forward, and the dates that were put forward of May 1 for a district that is represented by a PC member of the government and July 1 for a Liberal member of the Official Opposition.

It is likely politics, Mr. Chair. I put that out there because the people see right through that, they see right through this government, and they see through the partisanship and the political nature of this particular piece and this particular legislation.

Thank you.

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

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

**CLERK:** Clauses 2 and 3.

**CHAIR:** Shall clauses 2 and 3 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 3 carried.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

**CLERK:** An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act.

**CHAIR:** Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services that the Committee do now rise and report Bill 7, An Act To Amend The

Revenue Administration Act, without amendment.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 7 without amendment.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

The hon. the Member for the District of Port de Grave and Chair of Committee of the Whole.

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 7 without amendment.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports the Committee have considered the matters to him referred and have directed him to report Bill 7 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

**MR. KING:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

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

At this time I would like to call from the Order Paper, Order 8, Bill 13 and ask leave to introduce a bill entitled An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Act, so moved by me, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that the said bill be now read the second time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 13, an act entitled the House of Assembly Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The House of Assembly Act." (Bill 13)

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, and many other things.

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

**MR. KING:** Thank you for that kind acknowledgement, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate it.

I am pleased to stand here today on behalf of government and introduce Bill 13, An Act To Amend The House of Assembly Act, into second reading and certainly look forward to the debate that we will have over the coming hours and days for sure.

To give a little bit of background to those who are paying attention at all at home, Mr. Speaker, the current House of Assembly Act provides direction around the number of members who sit in this House, which currently is forty-eight. It also sets out the list of electoral districts and it outlines boundaries that prescribe the districts we currently have defined here for the House of Assembly.

This particular bill – and I will speak to the process a little bit in a few moments, but this particular bill is going to make some changes. It will amend the House of Assembly Act. It will adopt, as well, the recommendations of the recent 2015 Electoral Boundaries Commission work that was shared with me just a few days ago and tabled here in this House of Assembly. It will establish forty electoral districts for the Province, and it will also set out the boundaries that will define each of the forty electoral districts.

Mr. Speaker, by way of background on the process of what we are talking about here, the Electoral Boundaries Review Commission actually started work back in January 2015, and many people would remember there was considerable public debate around the time when the Premier and government announced intentions to do a review of the boundaries to

reduce the number of seats in the House of Assembly.

There was considerable discussion and debate around what we were hoping to do, but certainly one of the reasons put forth by the Premier at the time was we were going through a time of fiscal restraint and we felt that, government felt that the House of Assembly was not immune to that. Just as we were trying to find savings in other areas of government operations and government departments, we felt the House of Assembly was also a place that we should look.

The anticipated savings over a four-year period for this particular electoral reform will be somewhere in the area of \$10 million, Mr. Speaker. In order to make these changes, government and the House of Assembly, the Legislature here is bound to follow the processes that are outlined in the Electoral Boundaries Act.

One of the things that is required in the Electoral Boundaries Act, of course, is the appointment of an independent commission, a group that would be tasked with taking the mandate they have been given through this Legislature, to go out and to develop draft work, to consult, and to submit back to the House of Assembly, back here through the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and into the House of Assembly, a report. That process has been followed, Mr. Speaker.

As per the Electoral Boundaries Act, the Chairperson was appointed by the chief justice of Newfoundland and Labrador. The requirement is it has to be someone who is either a judge of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal, or the Trial Division. In addition to the person who acts as the Chairperson, four other members are appointed by the Speaker of the House of Assembly. Those are what often would be termed as ordinary residents of the city. They are appointed by the Speaker of the House himself.

As well, in this process the Commission, once established, has the power to determine and had the power to determine the resources that they required to complete its work. That would include support staff, technical staff, and any other professional support services that they may have required in the carrying out of their work.

So, as an example, as I understand it, at least in this particular case, there was extensive use of electronic data. There was expertise from individuals who had the ability to manipulate electronic data very quickly, to work with maps and to move boundaries around, and those sorts of things.

The point being, just for those who are paying attention, is that once the Commission was established they are provided whatever resources they require. There are no restrictions placed on them by this Legislature saying you can only have this amount of money or these numbers of people to help you out. They determine the resources they require.

Mr. Speaker, when the Commission set out to do their work, they are also guided by a number of guidelines in the legislation. One of those is around – in determining the boundaries in section 15 of the act is that the weight of the voters, every voter in the Province ought to be given a fair weight in determining the size of the electoral district.

In laymen's terms, Mr. Speaker, what happens essentially is the Commission would take the population of the Island portion of the Province – because in this particular case, as members would recall, it was determined through this Legislature that the four Labrador seats would remain and the rest of the Island portion of Newfoundland and Labrador would be affected.

So, back to my point. What had happened is they would take the population of the Island portion and they would simply divide it by the number of electoral districts to be established, which in this particular case the Legislature determined that it would be forty, and they come to a number. That then would be the average size of the districts that they were able to work with.

Now, there were some provisions provided in this legislation. One of the provisions is that districts could have what was called a plus 10 per cent or a minus 10 per cent quotient. I do not recall the number, but if the average was, we will say 13,500 voters, then they could certainly go above that by 10 per cent or below that by 10 per cent in certain circumstances.

There were also what we called extenuating circumstances – I think was the term that was used, I stand to be corrected – where districts could exceed a quotient of higher or lower by 25 per cent. There was provision for two such examples to be used if the Commission chose to use them. Normally, the expectation would be they would use that for extenuating circumstances like geography, coastal communities, or one's ability to have access to communities, those sorts of things. As you are going to see in a few moments, there are two districts, I think, that applies to in the current legislation. That would be Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune and Burgeo – La Poile.

Mr. Speaker, the Commission in the mandate was required to, as I said a few moments ago, divide the Province into forty, one-member districts, and retain the four districts in Labrador. They had the authority to propose not more than two districts on the Island portion that varied from the quotient by 25 per cent.

The act also required, in this process, that the Commission present its report to me, as the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, within 120 days after the appointment of the Chairperson. An important distinction, Mr. Speaker, it was not 120 days after the Commission was appointed. The clock started ticking once the chief justice appointed the Chair of the Commission. So there was a 120-day window by which the Chair of the Commission had to work to get the rest of the members appointed, to get the work done, and submit the report to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Once the report was received by the minister, by myself, I was required in the legislation by law to submit that to Cabinet immediately upon receiving it, and there was a provision that within ten days I was to lay that report before the House of Assembly here.

Mr. Speaker, back to the makeup of the Commission. Folks may recall that Justice Robert Stack was appointed as the Chair on February 9, 2015. On February 13, the Speaker here of the House of Assembly appointed four additional commissioners, and they were: Bern Coffey, Q.C. Queen's Counsel, Mr. Allan Goulding, Mr. Bill Matthews, and Mr. Shawn Skinner. I want to take a moment to thank those

individuals, Mr. Speaker, for their efforts on behalf of the people of the Province. It is not an easy task they had before them, not much different than the task we have before us now to debate that in the Legislature and to make some decisions as we head into the fall provincial election.

Each of the five individuals, Mr. Speaker, gave a strong commitment to work on behalf of the people of the Province. It was taxing of their time and taxing of their energies, I am certain. I did say this to them personally when I met with them just a short while ago, but I wanted to say it publicly here for the record, to say thank you. Because it is never easy when you engage with the public, whether it is as we do here in this Legislature as elected members or in any other capacity. When you work with the public there are trying times, when you are trying to meet the demands that people have while at the same time, in this particular case, meeting the requirements of the legislation.

I am certain that in this instance there were lots of times where the Commission was bound by the requirements in the legislation, the expectations that were laid out in the legislation, while at the same time listening to audiences who had maybe other broad and more varied concerns that were outside of the scope of their mandate.

I want to say thank you to them for the efforts they put in on behalf of all of us here in the House and all the people of the Province. In my opinion they did a great piece of work. That is not commentary on what is in the report, as much as the fact of the work they did, the process they went through, and the engagement that they had. I certainly say thank you to them for that.

Mr. Speaker, once the Commission started its work – I will just touch on a couple of time lines very briefly. The initial proposal that was developed, the Commission went to work and developed a proposal – let me back up a tiny bit in the process. Before they went to public consultations, the Commission met and started work. With the help of support staff they developed a proposal. The proposal was – sometimes the teacher comes out of me, what we used to call story starters back in school. You

put something out to your class and then you would ask them to have a look at it and give you feedback on it. That is what it was, really. They developed a report and they put it out to the public.

That report was developed on April 10, 2015, as a draft indicating forty electoral districts for the Province with the geography defined and the new names attached to the districts. That went out to the public on April 10, 2015. Subsequent to that, there were twelve public sessions held across the Province to provide citizens with the opportunity to share their views on the process in general, to respond directly to the recommendations contained in the report, and in some cases just to offer some commentary around the electoral process and the whole process of defining the districts in the Province.

As I understand it, there were a number of occasions where individuals presented. Where they did not really offer reaction to the report or suggestions on how the district should look, but they gave more commentary around the electoral process and how they felt things should be changed and a much bigger picture.

Having said that, there were twelve sessions. These twelve sessions were held from April 22 to May 1, 2015. The sessions were held both in person as well as through video link. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, of course there were many other opportunities for individuals to participate in this process besides simply showing up to a public meeting.

So a total of 189 submissions were received from the public. Sixty-five submissions were received directly at the public sittings themselves that the commissioners attended or did through video link. The remainder – the other 120 or so – were through a combination of email comments, comments on the Commission's website, faxed in submissions, regular mail submissions. There were even some that they simply received telephone calls, where someone called up and said I want to give you some feedback on the report, on what you may do.

There were a total of 189 submissions received. After that, Mr. Speaker, the Commission went back to work and took the initial draft proposal,

gave consideration to all the feedback they received, and as the judge explained to me, they did what, in their wisdom, they felt was the best decision they could make based on the feedback they received, keeping in mind that they were once again constrained by the parameters outlined in the Electoral Boundaries Act and the House of Assembly Act.

Once that piece of work was completed, the report was shared with me on June 8, 2015, which is not more than a week ago or so. I received the report, I think somewhere around 9:30 or 9:40 in the morning. I immediately shared it with Cabinet, as I was required to do by legislation. I also shared it with my colleagues across the way and provided an opportunity for some briefing and questions and answers. Of course, the House was tabled here the very same day.

So that brings us up to where we are today, which is a consideration of a new piece of legislation based on the report and the work that has been submitted.

What we do have, Mr. Speaker, is we have a report with forty one-member districts, a recommendation for forty districts, and they are – I am going to read them, so bear with me, Mr. Speaker. I am going to read them into the record just so they are represented as part of the transcript.

The districts would include: Baie Verte – Green Bay, Bonavista, Burgeo – La Poile, Burin – Grand Bank, Cape St. Francis, Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, Conception Bay South, Corner Brook, Exploits, Ferryland, Fogo Island – Cape Freels, Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor – Buchans, Gros Morne, Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, Harbour Main, Humber – Bay of Islands, Labrador West, Lake Melville, Lewisporte – Twillingate, Mount Pearl – Southlands, Mount Pearl North, Mount Scio, Placentia – St. Mary's, Placentia West – Bellevue, Portugal Cove – Bell Island, St. Barbe – L'Anse aux Meadows, St. George's – Grand Lake, St. John's Centre, St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, St. John's West, Stephenville – Port au Port, Terra Nova, Topsail – Paradise, Torngat Mountains, Trinity – Bay de Verde, Virginia Waters – Pleasantville, Waterford Valley, and Windsor Lake.

Mr. Speaker, those are the names of the forty electoral districts that have been defined and submitted to the House as part of the report. There is a definition of the geographical definition of what comprises these districts, and that is attached to the report and will be attached to the legislation. I am not going to take the time to read that, but it is there and it is available on the website for anyone who wants to see it.

Mr. Speaker, where we are today with the legislation, in order to give effect to the recommendations of the Commission and to make it law and to enact it before the next provincial election, we have to bring it before the House of Assembly here which we are doing, and we have to change the House of Assembly Act. We are proposing that here today to change and identify the new number of seats that the Legislature in the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador will be comprised of, the new district names and the new district boundaries.

There are a number of changes that will be required. Section 4, which defines the number of members in the House of Assembly, section 4 in the act will be amended. Section 5, which talks about the names of the districts that I just read into the record, must also be amended to reflect the report's recommendations. As I said a few moments ago, the boundaries of each electoral district, the description of the boundaries will be attached in the appendix – it is in the report and will be attached to the appendix of the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, there are also a number of consequential amendments as a result. I will not get into any detail except to say the House of Assembly Management Commission has a responsibility for dealing with budgets to districts and budget allocations through the Members' Resources and Allowances. There will be a piece of work that the Management Commission will have to do. My understanding – I do sit on the Management Commission, my understanding from our last couple of meetings is that the work has been drafted. I think right now we are really just waiting to get some confirmation on what the names of the districts will be – to determine that once the House of Assembly makes the decision on that.

The other rule amendments that have to be changed – many of the members here would be familiar, but a lot of people following the debate would not. When we define districts in the Members' Resources and Allowances there are provisions there around what members are entitled to claim based on whether your district is in the capital region or outside the capital region. So those definitions have to be updated to reflect the new districts that would now be contained in the capital region.

Those are some of the changes that had to be made as a consequence to this legislation. Mr. Speaker, it will not be work that will be done here. This is more about the policy and the legislation. That is a piece of work that the Management Commission will do, which I sit on and my colleague, the Opposition House Leader, sits on, and several others of us. We will be confirming that immediately upon the conclusion of this debate on legislation.

I am very pleased to stand and take a few moments to speak to the legislation, and simply to provide some context for the people following the debate at home about what this is all about, why we are here today, how we got here, the process, and what is really going to happen from here on in.

So, as we move into the debate, I will take my seat in a few moments and my colleague for Burgeo – La Poile will respond and kick off the debate. There will be an opportunity for members to contribute. Like any legislation, if members want to propose amendments to any of this, there will certainly be an opportunity to do that.

It will be my hope, Mr. Speaker, that members of the House embrace the legislation and support it so that we can move forward. Part of what we want to do is to get on with moving towards a provincial election in November. We need to get this legislation passed and put behind us so that all of us can get on with the other business that we have to do.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to introduce the legislation. I will conclude my remarks and invite my colleague from Burgeo to follow up.

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

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

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

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

I am happy to have an opportunity to stand here in this House and speak to legislation. This is a particular bill that, I think, much of this Province has been waiting for and anticipating since January of this year.

I would say that, as the first speaker, I do have a significant amount of time. I have an hour to speak to it. I am unsure at this point how much I will use, but I do know that one of the bad things about going first is that you do not get a chance to gauge what people have to say. The good news is that during the Committee stage, if there are questions and points that arise during the debate, you get plenty of opportunity to respond to those. I certainly will, as I have done in the last number of years, four years, I will speak to those as they arise and I am sure I would encourage each member to stand give their point of view on this very significant piece of legislation in this House.

I have a number of different ways that I wanted to approach this. Again, I will try my best to stay coherent and try to stay on some semblance of a straight line on how we approach this, but I may diverge from that track at certain points as I move off into different territories.

What I want to do is discuss again – and when you think about it, we are debating Bill 13, which is a very ominous number to be putting on this bill which in some ways is an omnibus-type bill. It is an omnibus-type bill because then again we have become familiar with omnibus bills because, as we know, especially as done by our friend in Ottawa, Mr. Harper, it is a way of combining a number of aspects into a bill and forcing people to vote for things that may agree to or want while at the same time, having other issues that you do not particularly like. This bill is an example of that. Again, it is something that we have seen arise in this type of bill in Ottawa, and unfortunately we are seeing it surface here in this House of Assembly.

What I want to do, I am going to go back and forth in sort of a timeline. I am going to start off in January, but I am going to have to back roughly ten years and then move forward. I want to go back to January. January 2015, most people are just having finished celebrating Christmas and the New Year, moving forward, looking forward to 2015 and then in a political point of view I guess it was the start of the next election year is what we had.

We all know that the election was in October of 2011. Many of us, myself included, was our first election and it was what they called the second fixed election in terms of a fixed election date; the first one being October 2007 and this one having been October 2011, for which all the members here took part and won their seats.

Actually, sorry, a mistake already – some members did not run, but they won by virtue of by-election after members elected in that general election stepped down for various reasons.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** A lot of by-elections.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** There have been a lot of by-elections, and that will be relevant when I refer later on to comments that were made years ago by members past.

We know in January everybody is looking to – we knew there was an election coming in October 2015; we knew the date on it, it was the second Tuesday in October; and we knew back then that there would be forty-eight seats. Then, the other thing that we found out – and I guess it all sort of came together. We also knew that we were having a bit of rough fiscal situation, a very rough fiscal situation. It is funny that we time it today – the Auditor General just released his report today showing significant mismanagement in a number of government departments, money, millions and millions that have been wasted and how this bill, which I believe the Premier brought – I may get the dates wrong, it was in January, but the Premier brought up: I would like to see House of Assembly reform.

Now, this is important too because we are going to talk about the Premier. This is a gentleman that is Premier not by virtue of having being selected by the people of Newfoundland and



Labrador, but by having been selected by the people of the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is relevant when we talk about the history of fixed elections which is a part of this bill.

We hear about the House of Assembly reform coming and I believe it was towards the end of the week that the Premier – and again, members opposite and members on this side if I get my days and dates wrong, they will correct me. It was later in the week that we hear we are going to reduce the House from forty-eight members down to thirty-eight members, and it was done under the guise of savings. There were numbers listed. The Government House Leader may have listed the numbers there. There were numbers of so many million per member and this is why this was done.

Then it was also announced that the House of Assembly would be reconvened later January where we would debate this situation. Now, it is funny when it was all said and done – and we know how January played out. We know what happened. A bill was brought, we had a week's worth of debate, there were amendments that were suggested by us in the Opposition, amendments that were accepted, and at the end of the day the bill succeeded because it was passed by a majority of members of this House. Before members on the opposite side have to say it was you, well it was members obviously on both sides but not including the three members of the Third Party; I will put that there.

Again I only say that for purposes – I do not want people on every side to say well you did this, you did that, I am trying to lay out the facts as I recall it.

We voted on it. I can say that I stood here in my place and I voted for that after that week of debate because of the amendments that were put forward, amendments to not cut it to thirty-eight and to raise it and members to keep an election date this year so that there would be an election, as the majority of people in this Province want, and also to save the seats in Labrador.

It is funny after all this that a CBC report came out. It was a story done by a gentleman named Peter Cowan. I do not know how he got this access or if it was ever disputed, but he came out

and said: No, no, this was not done because of saving money. This was the government's chance to throw a curveball at the Opposition. How can we come up with something? We need a knockout punch. This is his story. It is not my story. This was reported by the CBC.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** A swing and a miss.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** That was the case.

We have to provide a bit of context for those who might be listening and those who may read this someday. Why was that said? Well, you go back to the election of 2011, and at that time in the Official Opposition there were six members, there were five NDP, and a vast majority of the PC government was elected. Over that period of time, things have changed.

The Official Opposition has grown from six to sixteen. The government caucus has decreased by a number of members. The NDP has decreased in size of the members that they had elected as well. I am not trying to belabour that or give a history, but the reason we have to say that is because it was a case of there was a fear. I am not one to subscribe to polls because you know what? The fact is, as we have heard a number of times, at the end of the day, it is what happens when you vote. It is when you vote, that is what matters.

Public polls were showing that our fortunes were rising and the government's were going down. The government went through a tumultuous time. Some people say when did it start? Some people say it was Bill 29. I go back to the day after the general election when it was said the House would not open. That is when I would say it was.

This is what CBC said: this was their chance to throw a curveball at us because we were getting ready for that general election. We were getting organized, as you would do, putting together your team of candidates, as every side does. Everybody does that. You put together your ideas, your team, and everything else.

This happened, and there is some saying that is the reason why this was done. It may also have been done to delay the general election, which was scheduled for, I think, it was October 14, to

delay that. Members opposite have said: No, no, no, that was never our intention. We see now with the tabling and the debate of this bill, that is exactly what happened because one of the sections of this bill changes the election from October 14 to November 30.

Now there is a reason for that, that by virtue of these changes and the work that has to be done you would not be able to – well there are two reasons. One is there is also the federal election that is happening in October. We do not want to conflict that. Now, again, you have a number of opinions on whether that is real. Would that conflict or not conflict? Everybody has their opinion, as they should. It was our opinion, this is why it was being done, is to delay.

The other thing I want to talk about is a bit more of: How did we get here? So we have to go back – and I think the history is necessary to show how we are here. We all know that October 2007 and 2011 is our fixed elections, but prior to that there were no fixed elections. It was the government's call when to dissolve the Parliament, drop the writ and go to an election. I cannot tell you all of the years. We go back and there are members in this House on both sides that ran in 1996, 1999, and 2003. Before that it was 1993, 1989, and back in history.

So what happened is that the government that came in in 2003, which was led by Danny Williams, Premier Williams, that government came in and one of the things that – this is all stuff that is all documented. I mean, members on both sides can say what they want, but back in 2000 or 2001 – I may get my dates wrong, but I think everybody gets the gist – Premier Tobin left. Now, what happened after that was that spurred on a leadership convention. The leader of that convention was Mr. Grimes, Mr. Roger Grimes, very much a gentleman.

Now what happened after that was that the Opposition at the time, led by Mr. Williams, called and said: He has no mandate, no mandate from the people and because he has no mandate from the people he should not make decisions. He should not be making decisions. He should go to the people of the Province to get that mandate. Actually, this was said by a couple members on the other side who were there back

then, but it was the calling card of the government at that time.

What happened was, obviously, this was said all during 2002 and 2003: You have no mandate. The election happens. The PCs come in. Now I will say there are a number of people on the opposite side that were not there. They were not there in 2003. Sometimes you would not know it by the way they talk about 2003, when they refer back to it. What happens is a new government is elected, and a new government does what any new government does. They come in with their platform and their mandate and they are going to run and govern the Province.

Now, I may get the dates wrong here, but I believe it was 2004 – the 2003 general election in the fall. In 2004 there was legislation brought forward to fix the House of Assembly Act to put in a fixed election date. Now I may be wrong, but I think it may have been supported by members on both sides at that time. I am not sure. It could have been. I guess the logic was, look, we need to have fixed elections because voters want and need certainty, and governments should govern. They should not be worried about dropping the writ and going to an election. They should not be worried about taking good news or manufacturing things to make things good and drop the writ and get another mandate and go ahead.

You know what, Mr. Speaker. I am fine with that. I think the people of the Province want and deserve certainty as well. I do not think anybody has a problem with fixed election dates. Now there may be others out there certainly wiser than I and can tell you why or why not you should not do it, but to me, a fixed election date is not a bad thing.

So the legislation was brought in. It worked in 2007 and 2011, but what happened then in 2011, the Premier – we have to lay all this out. I just laid out what stemmed all this. Members on the other side have taken great delight in talking about Roger Grimes and Tobin and, I think, Beaton Tulk was the interim Premier for a while.

So what happened then was in 2011 Kathy Dunderdale was elected and sat across from us, but then, I believe, it was January or February –

I might get the date wrong – of 2014 that Ms Dunderdale left politics, as was her right. Nobody doubts that the job of that person sitting in that chair is a tough job. I do not care what stripe you are. Sitting in that chair has to be tough. I can only imagine it. We all know the pressures we face as MHAs. The people on the other side have the pressures of Cabinet. The Premier has that ultimate duty.

What happened was most people thought that when Ms Dunderdale left, what would happen then is there would be an interim Premier. Then after the selection of a new leader you had one year – you had that fixed date. Now, what I am going to refer to – and this is the current House of Assembly Act, the one that is being changed. Section 3.1 says, “Where the leader of the political party that forms the government resigns his or her position as leader and as Premier of the province before the end of the third year following the most recent general election, the person who is elected by the party to replace him or her as the leader of the party and who is sworn in as the Premier of the province by the Lieutenant-Governor shall, not later than 12 months afterward, provide advice to the Lieutenant-Governor that the House of Assembly be dissolved and a general election be held.”

I am no scholar when it comes to legislation, but I think the average person, or the common person reading that would say if you lose your leader, you put in a new leader, and twelve months after that you have an election. The logic being, according to what was said back then was, you do not have a mandate, go to the people and get the mandate. You do not have any right to be there. This is what was said by members opposite, specifically the Minister of Finance.

Now, not everybody said that, because not everybody on the other side were there at that time. I will say, the Minister of Finance looks pretty good over in that chair right now. This was what was said. Not everybody was here then.

Going back to that, Ms Dunderdale resigns and Mr. Marshall, Tom Marshall, stepped in as the interim Premier with the hope that they would have a leadership, like parties do in times of

renewal. We have had them. The NDP have had them. The Progressive Conservatives had them. That is what you do, you have a leadership and the party picks a new leader.

Again, as we all know, that is not the people of the Province, that is the people of the party. There were people declaring for leadership, but what happened was only one person came forward. We all know that was Frank Coleman.

Frank Coleman came forward and said I want to lead the PC Party and be the next Premier. Nobody challenged him. The date to declare passed; therefore, he became – as referred to by members opposite, referred to by the press, and referred to by the Premier’s office – the Premier designate. This was in March 2014. The plan was, I understand, that in early July 2014 there would be a leadership convention at which point Mr. Coleman would be officially installed as Premier. Using my understanding of this legislation, that meant there should have been a general election no later than early July 2014. There should have been an election by then.

As we all know now, Mr. Coleman, who came in – look, we saw him driving around in the Premier’s car. We saw it. We know that staff were replaced in the Premier’s office. So we know there were apparently decisions being made, but through the jigs and the reels Mr. Coleman quit. What happened was then – again, I will let others talk about why Mr. Coleman quit. I am trying to lay out a timeline. I am sure all the members in this House and all people of the Province can have different reasons as to why Mr. Coleman did not continue on.

What happened was Mr. Marshall stepped back in as the interim Premier. I think I made a reference in this House to a movie, *The Godfather: Part III* where he says every time I get back out they pull me back in. Mr. Marshall comes back in and a new leadership convention was convened for the governing party, the PCs, in September 2014, at which time there were, I think, three candidates. They went through the leadership and then in September the current Premier, the Member for Topsail, was elected by between 300 – I think it was 300 and 400 people of the PC Party to be the new leader and by extension, the new Premier.

What happened then was – well, when does he officially become Premier? These were the questions that were asked. When will you call an election? If I recall correctly, we know there was about two weeks passed to when he was sworn in as the Premier, which was September 25-ish of 2014. There is a quote somewhere, and the media I think reported it.

**MR. WISEMAN:** (Inaudible).

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I hear the Minister of Finance opposite. I am coming to your part in this soon enough. Just let me keep going because you will get an opportunity to speak to this too, and you will get to regale me with stories also.

We go back to the current Premier. There was a quote. What happened in that quote was that – and I hear the Member for Exploits opposite. Perhaps he will stand during his time and tell us his thoughts on it as well. I hope he gets that opportunity. When he does, I will make sure not to interrupt him.

Anyway, there is a quote that the Premier said when he was asked: Will you call an election by September 25? He said: Yes, I am sure I will live according by the current legislation. So that was September.

I have told everybody what happened in January. I have gone back to how we got the legislation. Then I have gone forward to the current Premier. That brings us forward again to where we are now, which is debating Bill 13, the new House of Assembly Act.

Now, as the Minister of Justice very ably elaborated, there are a number of changes to the current House of Assembly Act. One of them is the electoral boundaries. Instead of forty-eight members, there will now be forty members and forty seats. That led to the change in seats, for which there was a commission appointed led by Justice Stack. They went out and they certainly did a lot of work in a short period of time. They came back with forty seats, forty districts. I cannot say forty new districts. Some stayed the same, such as Burgeo – La Poile.

I am not going to talk a whole lot about everybody's seat, because do you know what? I

can guarantee you that the people on this side will talk about their seats and the process and their feelings about it. They are going to talk, and they are allowed to talk. Do you know what? Every member in this House has the right to stand up and speak to those districts. I will leave that to the members, because I cannot speak better than any other member about their district. They can do that. I can talk about mine. I will come back to that.

That is the first part under section 3. Section 3 is going to be changing. We also have to change the number of members. There is a change of the seats. Then we also have a change here to the election date. The election date, which was scheduled for October 14, will now change to November 30, 2015.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Yes, and I hear there may be amendments made to that yet. We will see. Stay tuned. This is Thursday. Who knows what Monday brings?

There are also other changes there. One of the things that have been brought up, whether you agree with it or not, is this election, as it was scheduled, would have an overlap with the federal election. So there is a formula there to avoid future overlaps, which discusses the fact that if there is said overlap, April 1 of that year the Premier and government at that time has to come out and say, we are going to change the election. This is when we will change it to.

There is also a change regarding by-elections. Right now if somebody resigns, I think the way it works is you have to call a by-election within sixty days and hold the by-election by ninety days. That is my understanding. What is going to happen is that this is going to change to in a general election year; there will be no by-elections within six months of that general election date.

Now, the fact is that some people might look at that and say the timing is funny. The timing is funny, given that we know of at least one government member who will be resigning; there may be more – this is what the Premier said. If you look at it, also there is the consideration of money. By-elections cost

money, so there really is a weighing factor there that has to be considered. It is like a lot of things here. We have to look at the timing – we have to look at the timing. So I put that out there for people to chat about, take that, and hold forth.

I am going to continue on. We look at the different parts of this – and what I want to do is I want to come back to the forty new seats for which the Commission went out and they did a significant amount of work in a condensed period of time. There was the Commissioner, Justice Stack, and the four members and they went out and met with people in person, met with people on the phone, they had email submissions, there was video link, and they came back with an interim report, I believe, April 20. I am only going to speak about my district now. The Member for Cape St. Francis may talk about his – and I do not know how each district changed. I do not know the geography of each district.

Burgeo – La Poile, in the initial report, did change. It did change in that right now the district is on the South Coast and it goes from Grey River over to Ramea and Burgeo and all along the South Coast over to La Poile. Then there is that boat ride over to Rose Blanche-Harbour Le Cou; you have Diamond Cove, Burnt Islands, Isle aux Mort, Margaree-Fox Roost, Port aux Basques, and then it goes as far as Cape Ray.

It is a bit of an anomaly in that you have to drive through another district to get back down to your district in Burgeo. It is a bit of an anomaly like that, but that is how it has been. Again I love my district; I am used to it – just like every member here loves their district. It changed. In my case, in the initial draft, the Codroy Valley was included. Again, I, like everybody else, watched this process and I read it and you look at it and you say wow – it is like anything; a change brings excitement, it brings nervousness, but in my case it was all for not because when the final version came Burgeo – La Poile was kept as is.

I understand the logic of that being that it is due to the geography, due to the isolation of parts – I have three communities that you can only access by ferry or by chopper. They said we are going

to leave it. The population in my district is nothing compared to other districts. It is just not there. I think it is 8,933. I fit into what they call the over 25 per cent quotient. I think actually specifically mine is 34.1 per cent below the quotient.

This is the final report and there it is – and I can make the argument that you know what my district is isolated in many ways. Right now, my hometown is 890 kilometres from this place right here, this House of Assembly. I have districts, La Poile and Ramea and Grey River, they are hard to reach. I will put one thing out and I am hoping that the people who handle legislative drafting and put this together will reference – I am actually asking; this is a question: In the report that is in the legislation here – because one thing it does, it lists all the different communities, but two of the communities that are actually referenced in mine are Grand Bruit and Petites. The problem is both of those communities have been resettled.

Those communities do not exist. The reason I put that forward is that I am hoping somebody who is listening from the department that drafts this – I do not know if we need to redraft that to delete the reference to that. I just put that out there to make sure that it is – because you notice these things, and I am sure that every member who looks at it notices these things. I noticed that they still include two communities that were resettled. So I put that out there.

Anybody out there from my District of Burgeo – La Poile who is listening, the district has stayed the same. I will certainly be running again in the District of Burgeo – La Poile. There are no changes to that. For what it is worth, it is what it is, and it stayed the same.

I am going to continue on – I still have a bit of time here – because I want to go back to – again just to come back to it, people are going to have a chance to talk about these districts and how they feel about it and the forty new ones. What I can say is I stood in this House and I supported forty. I voted for it; I own that. I own that vote.

I want to come back, though, to one of the big things that we find interesting, that we are combining the realignment with what I think may have been the real reason for this, which

was to delay a general election. It is funny; I heard a wise man once say you should burn Hansard. There was a very wise man said that. It is funny – and again, I hope I am in this House long enough that somebody someday will come back and say look, this is what you said at a various point about something. We know why we have fixed elections and the rationale because it was outlined by the government of the day. One member in particular, the Minister of Finance, spoke very passionately in favour of fixed elections. This individual, being quite wise, I figure that I would reference some of those comments. I can say, Mr. Speaker, that this is straight from Hansard.

It starts off saying he wanted to comment on the legislation and the first part being fixed terms was a significant issue – it is; it is a significant issue. I agree with fixed terms. In this case, it talked about elections in 1993, 1996 and 1999 and rapid successions and rapid calls, and how “there was a significant amount of staging, a significant amount of manipulation that took place in advance of those elections. One could say that it was a manipulation of the electorate.”

Now, here is the thing – and this was the logic, which I agree with – “... it forces government to focus on governing the Province and not positioning itself for an election, or continuously thinking about how it may be opportunistic and call an election at a time when it suits their circumstance best.” “As a government, our responsibility is to provide good, sound governance today, create legislation that reflects a progressive government, reflects the protection of the people of this Province.”

These are very eloquent reasons, very well spoken as to why you would do it, why this was brought in. It is funny how it might contrast today with the stuff that we are dealing with today. It talks about how there was a number of by-elections. If you look at the by-elections that occurred in Bonavista North, CBS, The Straits – White Bay North, and St. Barbe, all of those by-elections saw the districts going an extended period of time without representation, and that should never happen.

We have a similarity here now that we have had a number of by-elections and we may see by-elections coming. We may see them; that is

what I hear. Here is where I want to continue on because this one thing – I have already referenced this – in 2001 when there was a leadership of the Liberal Party and the current Leader of the Opposition was elected as leader, there was a massive outcry in this Province. When he – and I believe he is referring to Premier Grimes – became leader of the party, the people of this Province were demanding he call a general election.

It moves on – I think it got a little dicey then; I think there might have been some back and forth. It was a massive outcry by the people of Newfoundland and Labrador for his behaviour upon getting elected that caused this government and this party to want to bring in such a bill to assure that what we saw and witnessed through 2002 and 2003 does not get repeated.

We saw an individual take power in early 2001, took power at a point in time when the Province had some very critical decisions to be made, and as a result of that we had a government in power trying to, in fact, hold onto power and trying to, rather than renew a mandate, make some decisions, major decisions, on our future resources.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, it is a little case of déjà vu right about now, or to quote the great ball player: déjà vu all over again. I would say that what happened then is exactly what is happening now – exactly what is happening now. We are changing the section dealing with the number of seats, we are changing the section dealing with the allocation, and we are also changing the fixed election date part, but not this time. My question is – and I can ask it now and I can ask it again in Committee: Why? Why not now? Why?

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I say to the member opposite I will sit down, but not for a few more minutes yet.

They will get an opportunity to answer that. Why – it says right here. I think the wording is: Notwithstanding that section, in the future, this is what we will do. We saw an argument made in 2003 why we should have it and we see an argument made in 2015 why let's not use it this

year, but in the future go back to it because it is good. I find that – what is the word I would use, Mr. Speaker?

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I am hearing some good words in the background. I will use the word and just say interesting. I find it very, very interesting that that portion of this bill is not changing, given what I have outlined. We will be – about the same time that the election will occur, according to this bill – almost two years since the Premier, Premier Dunderdale resigned.

We had Premier Marshall in between, we had Premier designate Coleman in there, we had Premier Marshall back and now we have the current Premier. Yet the people of the Province have not had an opportunity to ask for that new mandate, that new mandate that we are supposed to have because God forbid there be major critical decisions to be made. There are none of those going on right now. There are no critical decisions going on now, like the biggest deficit in the history of this Province. That is not going on now, is it?

There is still more good stuff in there, but I think I have hit the point. In fact, I think the big debate going on back then was Voisey's Bay. I think the Opposition at that time said no, that is not a good deal and how should a Premier without a mandate make a decision on that deal without letting the people have a say if he should or should not be there.

**MR. HILLIER:** There is no Voisey's Bay now.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Voisey's Bay now – I think I actually just heard a Ministerial Statement the other day saying how good it was, but that is what they call an aside.

Going back to the main point, Mr. Speaker, the main point is that the law was changed back then, changed very quickly by the new government to say look, if you change your leader, give the people an opportunity to give that individual a mandate. In this case, we are neglecting to exercise that particular aspect of the law, and I find that very interesting, Mr. Speaker.

I am going to continue on here. I have so much here that I could refer to. I do want to say, sort of just some notes, we have had an opportunity – the staff of the Department of Justice did take the time to give us a briefing on the first part of the bill, which is the electoral boundaries. That is going to get a significant amount of attention because that was something that generated a lot of attention in this Province, as it should. It is a fundamental change in the House of Assembly when you go from forty-eight seats down to forty. One that obviously – and there is no sense to deny it. The Premier of the Province wanted it, our Leader of the Opposition spoke in the past and spoke in debate and said it was good, and the then Leader of the NDP also said in the past she supported it as well.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** No.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Yes, the then Leader of the NDP, who is also still a sitting member – because we cannot have revisionist history here in this House, can we? We cannot have it. The then Leader of the NDP said yes, I can see a reduction in the number of seats. If I am wrong, I would suggest that we roll the tape from that interview.

We come back to what this bill is trying to do – and look, I appreciate the fact that this debate is going to take some time. Let's not confuse the matter. Some people get confused and think when a debate extends over a period of time it is a filibuster. It is not a filibuster; it is a debate. The member introducing it gets an hour, the Opposition member responding gets an hour, and every member in this House, on second reading, gets twenty minutes to speak to it. They get twenty minutes to speak to this bill. It then goes into the Committee stage where you get an opportunity to speak for ten-minute intervals and speak to the bill and ask questions.

We have had some debates where you ask questions and you do not get any answers. We have had some debates on less contentious bills where you ask a question and the minister pops right up and gives you an answer and it goes back and forth, because that is the point. We have had occasions in the past where that Committee stage of the bill leads to positive changes in the amendment that were likely not contemplated at the time. It was not

contemplated. That is the whole point. As an Opposition, our job is to review this and to provide a strong Opposition to government which drafts the bills and presents the bills and wants to put the bills in place.

I do have some questions here and one of those questions – I put this out there and this is a sincere point. We are reducing the number of seats from forty-eight to forty, but the number for quorum stays at fourteen. The number for quorum – that part is not being changed. I put that out there because I do not know if the members opposite have an answer and I have actually gone and researched this. I have been told that at one point there were thirty-six members of the House and the quorum was twelve, the rule being one-third.

I ask, and I ask in all sincerity, if we have a forty-eight member House or a forty-member House, why is the quorum fourteen? That, I can guarantee you, is probably boring to the vast majority of the people who are watching this right now, but it is a question that should be posed.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** The member opposite says that it was fourteen. I appreciate that because if we are going to make legislation let's understand why we have done stuff, so I put that out. That is probably better answered during the Committee stage, but I put that out there. I have also put out the one about my district has communities listed that are no longer in existence. They are in existence and people have summer communities there.

I am sure there are going to be suggestions made by members, especially on to this side, as to the districts, as to the names of districts, as to why this happened. That is our job to suggest that and to get some answers from the other side as to why we are that way.

I would like to know why we are using the six-month by-election rule in this particular election, in this situation. I would be interested to know that. I am also interested to know why the Premier could not call an election according to the law. I am interested to know that. Is it part of a plan to manipulate the electorate, as was

stated before, or is there a good reason for it, one that benefits the people of the Province?

If you can satisfy me that you are doing this with the best intentions of the people of the Province in mind, I say bravo, good for you, but sometimes I question as to why decisions are made. Because I can guarantee you – and I do not have to go half way here – there are a lot of suggestions made by this government that are not for the best intentions of the people of this Province. It is for the best intentions of the members opposite. There is no doubt about that. So I put that forward again.

There has been a money reason put forward here, but if they were so concerned about the money belonging to the people of the Province, we want to know why millions of dollars were given back as part of the labour market development. We want to know why they spend tens of thousands promoting their Budget. We want to know why they spend money the way they do. In fact, I think I saw in the Auditor General's report today one contract went 4,000 per cent over. If you are so concerned about the people of the Province, these are other issues that should be addressed as well.

Mr. Speaker, I think what I have done here, or certainly I have tried to do – I am going to take just a moment to sort out my notes here because this is a significant bill. I do not want to rush it and miss anything.

One thing that I have to ask is, in terms of timelines, from the conception of this idea to where we are right now, this government has moved in relative lightspeed compared to how they have acted – there is one bill, it was about public tenders that, my God, I think it has been years now and we have not seen anything on that. If you want to go to something more recent, back last month I asked about legislation concerning tobacco and e-cigarettes. Oh yes, we are working on that. Now that is legislation that would protect lives – not so fast. But this legislation, man this government is moving. They are moving fast. It is amazing.

I think the people of the Province, at the end of the day, whether it is in politics, whether it is in health care, whether it is in their day-to-day lives, people want certainty. There is a fear of



the unknown. People do not like not knowing what is going to happen. Some people do but I think the majority of people do not.

I would suggest that certainty is also something that is needed when you figure out the individuals who are going to run your province for the next number of years. That is why the government opposite said: Let's give them certainty. Let's make sure they have a mandate and a period of time and if something changes, a mechanism to make sure that you get back to having certainty.

I say it is amazing how things have changed from back then to right now because this government has gone completely backwards on everything they said in that debate. Not all the members. A lot of the members were not here and certainly they cannot take any blame for that, but there were members opposite that were here and were a big part of it.

I am interested to know why what was good back then is not so good now. I would be interested in hearing that and I am sure I will over the next period of time as we continue on in this debate on, as I said, the ominous Bill 13. I say it is ominous because lucky number thirteen. It has those ominous aspects to it.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I think I have spoken to the bill. I can sit comfortably in my chair knowing that I will get further opportunity to speak to this bill, after hearing members opposite express their points of view. I have heard some members opposite expressing their point of view while I was speaking. So I look forward to them standing in their place and doing it when the camera is on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER (Verge):** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

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

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

It is indeed an honour to stand in this House and speak to this piece of legislation. It is very

important because it is about carving out the history of this Legislature. It is about carving out what the people of this Province have told us, what our political scientists have told us, and what the media have told us around the size of our Legislature and how we represent people.

Mr. Speaker, while I have been sitting here for the last forty-five minutes listening to the member opposite, I was sort of a little bit baffled. While the member opposite is not always cordial to us, he seemed to have a different taint on what he was doing today. He went out of his way to pick the five or six things over the last number of years that he felt we did not do right. He forgot to mention the 500 or 600 that we have done great, that people have applauded us for, and things that have been beneficial, not only to this House of Assembly but to the people of the Province.

I could not get my head around where he was going with this and what was driving it. Maybe it is because we are in the last number of weeks of the House of Assembly and he wanted to regenerate all the emotion on that side and he wanted to go out on a high note before we go to the polls, Mr. Speaker. That is fine. Then it really hit me what this was about.

This was about sour grapes, Mr. Speaker. Purely, sour grapes. The sour grapes here are simple. We foiled their master plan. Their master plan was to take over the world. They had it all worked out. They were putting people in place in the last number of years. They had a supporting cast there, the regular cast of characters. They had MPs ready to jump ship, all ready to go. They had their business people. The people part of their big LEAP program, all ready to go; their members in waiting, the second and third leaders. All these people were ready to go. Danny Dumaresque was ready to go.

Mr. Speaker, Randy Simms, they even brought him in. They brought him in as being party – to get him closer, because all of his cast of characters has to be ready to go. Keep them all close, because there is a reason for that. The conspiracy theory is out there. Do not forget, the conspiracy theory is out there.

Keep all of the groups closer because you do not know who may want to be the leader. We already know there are three or four of them. They have already made it clear. They are going to make it very clear over the next number of months of who wants to be that leader. They will make that clear when we get close to the next election, and that is fine.

That is why now I realize the member opposite was trying to take the last kick at the cat. To get the last bit of credibility to see if they have something over there that would resonate with the people of this Province, but that is not going to happen. The people of the Province are quite happy with what we have offended them. As we get close to the election, Mr. Speaker, we will bring that our also.

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

I ask the minister to speak to the principle of the bill.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Around this bill, he neglects to note the fact that in seven months, under legislation, this bill would be reviewed anyway. That would be part and parcel of the process we would use, as we do in reviewing other things. This is not the first bill that we have done earlier because it makes sense. It makes sense in this case because, apparently, on that side, looking at what people have told us around the legislation and the size of the House of Assembly and how people should be represented, it is not important to them. Apparently, on that side, saving \$10 million for the taxpayers that could be invested in other important areas in this Province around health care and education, it is not important to that side.

Mr. Speaker, it becomes confusing, because you will get one leader over there who will say: No, \$10 million, we need to borrow more, spend more, drag it out longer, borrow more, and let's have our mortgage payments for a longer period. You have the other leader in waiting who talks about: No, no let's cut it all down now. Let's cut the House down to fifteen or twenty members. Let's get rid of rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Let's finish the job she said, that

one time Joey started. That is not how you represent the people of this Province, Mr. Speaker, and it is an insult to get to that level.

What we are talking about here, Mr. Speaker, is an agenda. The Opposition have an agenda, particularly the Official Opposition. Their agenda is simple, let them have free rein. Let them have free rein to the electorate. Let them have it. That is what they want, free rein.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Nobody else is allowed to oppose them. Nobody else is allowed to put forward their thoughts, their processes, and their policies. They are not allowed to have that. That is not allowed. That is not acceptable, and that is why they are chirping over there now. The truth hurts. They are seeing it for what it is, and we are seeing it. It was an eye-opener for me here today.

Fair enough, politics is a good game. It is all about adversity. It is all about challenging everybody else, but sour grapes is not what it is supposed to be all about, Mr. Speaker. Shame on you. Shame on you, but that is fine. I will outline exactly where we are, Mr. Speaker, and why this piece of legislation is important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is where we are with this.

It is pretty simple when we go back and talk about what it is that we are doing here. We are giving the people an opportunity to be represented based on a principle of our population and our geography, but particularly around where we are now with technology, the fact that people have access to MHAs. They have access to policies. They have access to programs and services, Mr. Speaker. We want to bring it in line with other jurisdictions because it makes sense, but we also have to be fiscally responsible.

We cannot just throw money out the window for the sake of throwing it out. This is a long-term investment. If you look at a lot of the programs, Mr. Speaker, if not all of them, they are long-term investments. Mr. Speaker, this is part and parcel –

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** – this part of money is no different than what we are doing with Nalcor, long-term investments so the people of this Province save. That part of the issue here, Mr. Speaker, is very important. It is about driving that. It is about rightsizing the House of Assembly, and rightsizing from an economic point of view and from a representation point of view.

That is what this Premier brought in. This is not a willy-nilly overnight process. This Premier spoke about this nearly a year ago. We as a caucus spoke about this years earlier, Mr. Speaker. We talked about this. This was a discussion ongoing, and the hon. member who was on this side can remember that. He can remember those discussions, because I can guarantee you they took place. All of a sudden he has amnesia now. He cannot remember any of those. He cannot remember any of it, but we all know where we were with that. We all know where we are.

The question I ask on the other side is, what are they afraid of? When you right size something, what are they afraid of? Are they afraid of the fact that the leader who is there now had the support of all the caucus at the time, that by reducing that caucus, that maybe some of the people who supported him, now it might be a worry? Because I mentioned earlier, there are a number of leaders in waiting, Mr. Speaker, a number of other people who might run for these seats when we reduce it to forty; who might be a fear factor over there to some of them. They might be a challenge, Mr. Speaker.

That is fine, but that is not how you should make decisions around the Legislature here, and how people should be represented. That is not the way we do it on this side. It is about fairness. It is about how we better represent the people of this Province and that is where we have gone with this.

The Member for Grand Bank earlier, when he spoke, talked about the process, how it was open, how it was engaging, how we brought in an outside entity, how each party had fair

representation, how the general public were engaged and how, at the end of the day, what started here, moved to here, and was adjusted to make sure that it represented the best needs of the people there, with input from the people; but still, looking at from a process point of view of what works, Mr. Speaker – a piece of legislation that already exists. It makes it look like we have changed the world, and we deliberately went out and did something askew. Not at all.

The people at home need to know this is a piece of legislation that exists. This is a process that exists. It is seven months earlier, Mr. Speaker. We are saying for seven months, give us due diligence, let us go out and do it, let's engage it before the next election, and we can save \$10 million – \$10 million dollars, what an opportunity to show good due diligence and fiscal responsibility.

I thought it was a reasonable process here, Mr. Speaker. My constituents and a number of other people I have talked to from other districts, including some of the Opposition, think the same way. We will save \$10 million, we will rightsize the House of Assembly, and we will have a process in place now that better represents how we do business. It makes sense. We are in the same boat then with other jurisdictions, so we are all on an even playing field, Mr. Speaker.

When the Opposition gets up and talks and goes off on a tangent on stuff that has no relevance to what we are doing here, no relevance whatsoever to what we are doing here, then it makes me think they are afraid of something. They are worried. I thought they were worried more about what was happening with our party and the Third Party, but I do not think so. I think they are worried internally. I think they are literally worried internally about the changes to the seat structure over there.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this is purely about who is going to lead the pack at the end of the day. That is what they are more afraid of here, Mr. Speaker, about the number of seats we are going to have here and the process here because they did not speak up against the process; they were all in favour of it. Only a number of months ago it was all a great process, let's do it, let's put it through.

We came in this House of Assembly and in a matter of a couple of days we had it passed. Everybody knew where it was going, it was an open process, and it was agreed to, not an issue. Then again, certain things did not fall in place. There could be a couple of members, a cast of characters, who may now have a little bit more influence and some of the ones who supported, certain people may not have as much. A little bit of a worry there if you start changing the seat configuration, Mr. Speaker, and that is where it came from.

That is why when I sat back and started listening and started really analysing what the Member for Burgeo – La Poile was saying I am thinking okay, he is echoing something here. This is a little hub here, let's put the protective mode around it, let's control, and make sure our fence is included so that only the people we want inside are allowed inside. That is fine, Mr. Speaker. That is not how we operate. We operate a little bit more open here, Mr. Speaker. That is what politics is all about. It is called democracy. We let everybody have their fair opportunity. You battle it out on election day. That is how that works. That it fine. They can mode it anyway they want.

We will have our opportunity here on this side to speak. Our members will get up too and speak about the importance of this legislation and the changes here and how we are moving something forward for the people of this Province, how we are going to be fiscally responsible for what we are doing, and how this is another part of our platform that has been outlined by this Premier and this Administration over the last number of years that we are moving forward – another one of the hundreds of things that we have completed, Mr. Speaker.

That is what this Administration is about. It is about continuing to do the proper work. It is about doing the right piece of work. It is making sure that the people we serve have input in that piece of work.

On that, I will take my seat.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that we adjourn debate.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion is that the debate be adjourned.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

On motion, debate adjourned.

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that the House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

This House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

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