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HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA

Wednesday

March 7, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Orders of the Day

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

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

From the Order Paper, I call Motion 1, to move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply to consider a certain resolution for the granting of Interim Supply to Her Majesty, Bill 36, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House that I have received a message from His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

MR. SPEAKER: All rise, please.

I am in receipt of a message from His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor dated 2nd of March, 2018:

As Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I transmit a request to appropriate sums required for the Public Service of the Province for the year ending 31 March 2019, by way of Interim Supply, and in accordance with the provisions of sections 54 and 90 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, I recommend this request to the House of Assembly.

Sgd.:_

Lieutenant-Governor

Please be seated.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Government House Leader, that the message, together with a bill, be referred to a Committee of Supply.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the message, together with a bill, be referred to a Committee of Supply and that I do now leave the Chair.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

This motion is carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are considering the related resolution and Bill 36, An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2019 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

Resolution

“That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2019 the sum of \$2,806,552,200.”

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I rise in the House today to speak to Interim Supply. It's an annual bill that we're required to pass in the House of Assembly to allow for the financial administration of ongoing

government operations during the interim period while budget 2018 is being introduced, debated and approved by the Legislature.

When we introduce budget 2018, we'll be seeking approval for funding to spend for the entire fiscal year, but it normally takes time to allow for debate and approval of the budget. During this interim period, we need to provide funding to the government departments so that the ongoing work of core government and public service can continue without disruption. This is the purpose of the Interim Supply Bill.

Mr. Chair, today we are seeking the approval in Interim Supply for the sum of approximately \$2.81 billion. This represents an increase of approximately \$102.9 million from last year's Interim Supply bill. While Interim Supply is based on the 2017-18 budget figures, in some cases allowances are made for anticipated increases in 2018-19.

There are increases in numerous areas through the normal course of business. The primary increase relates to the anticipated severance payouts resulting from the collective agreements which is currently being finalized, the one with NAPE, and severance has led to an increase of \$205 million for Consolidated Fund Services.

As I've stated on numerous occasions, the removal of severance through our collective agreement with NAPE is a significant achievement. Many governments have attempted to eliminate severance through collective bargaining and have not succeeded. We've been able to achieve this, and in doing so have eliminated a significant financial liability.

A few months ago, there was some misinformation spread about severance that I'd like to address here. Severance has been recognized by our own Court of Appeal in 1997 as an earned benefit, and to suggest it is a gift is factually incorrect and misinformed.

Our own federal government spent approximately \$3 billion to pay out accrued severance starting in 2010 to eliminate their growing financial liability. The federal government recognized how valuable this was, and so do we. While we are seeing an increase as a result of this in our Interim Supply, I submit

to the House that the long-term benefit of this far outweigh the short-term increases.

This legislation, Mr. Chair, must be passed to receive Royal Assent by March 23, 2018, in order to allow sufficient time to ensure payroll, Income Support and other expenditures are funded effective April 1, 2018.

Interim Supply provides departments and public bodies with the necessary cash to manage expenditures for the period from April 1 to June 30, 2018; essentially, the first quarter of the new fiscal year. This includes ongoing housekeeping expenditures, including funding for upcoming pay periods and ongoing project funding requirements applicable for the 2018-19 fiscal year.

This Interim Supply bill makes provisions for the transfer of funds from the Department of Finance to other departments for expenditures for compensation, benefits and other associated adjustments; transfers from the Consolidated Fund Services accounts to other departments for special retirement or other payments, should they be necessary; and transfer of funds to and from various heads of expenditures to facilitate expenditures for financial assistance, as may be approved from time to time by Treasury Board.

Interim Supply is an important bill that is intended to provide for the continuation of ongoing government programs, services and projects. The bill needs to be passed to continue routine and ongoing operations while budget 2018 is going through the Legislature for debate and approval.

As we approach budget 2018, our province continues to face a serious fiscal situation. We, as a government, have been transparent about this since very early in our mandate. I've said on many occasions that our government is taking a balanced approach to fiscal management. Our focus, as a government, is on delivering programs and services that are important to the public in smarter and more efficient ways.

We know that there are some services that people in the province rely on with great regularity. Services such as health care, education, transportation and others that affect the daily lives of people in Newfoundland and

Labrador. As MHAs, it is incumbent on us to ensure that the people we represent have access to the services that are needed. This becomes a significant challenge in times of fiscal restraint, but it is a challenge that must be addressed head-on.

For measures such as reducing the size of our public sector, primarily through attrition, through zero-based budgeting and implementing a risk-based approach to estimating revenues, our government continues to look at creative ways to correct the course without significant fiscal pain. The cost of delivering reasonable services to a widely dispersed and aging population remains a cost challenge.

Mr. Chair, I know that it's a procedural motion, but it is nonetheless an important one. The funds allocated under this bill go towards the work of our departments who are moving forward with our balanced approach. We recognize that we need to identify the best approach to secure better outcomes and provide better access to programs and services. Successes in this area include actioning our vision for health care on the West Coast, and advancing a much-needed long-term care facility and new hospital in a manner that strikes a balance between the need to deliver better services and our fiscal ability.

Another example of smarter government is found within ServiceNL who have partnered with other Atlantic provinces to secure a new service provider for driver's licences. By working co-operatively, we've achieved cost savings and secured a product with improved security that prevents identity theft and fraud.

This replacement photo driver's licence system builds on other recent enhancements to Motor Registration Division's services, including the introduction of online driver's licence renewals, the move to a 10-year validity for driver licence photos, continued discounts for online renewals of driver's licences and vehicle registrations and a customer flow management system implemented at the Mount Pearl location.

Guided by *The Way Forward* we are supporting job creation and industry growth in rural and urban areas. We are also making investments in transportation, health and education, and many other areas to create an environment of business

success and job growth. Our approach to economic development has also led to boosting new employment opportunities in such industries as oil and gas, mining, aerospace and events.

Some examples include: Husky Energy's West White Rose extension, which will create upwards of 5,000 person years of employment and economic benefits exceeding \$3 billion over the life of this 25-year project. We have provided a \$2.25 million forgivable loan to Provincial Aerospace, which will help create 150 person years of employment over five years; a \$17 million loan to Canada Fluorspar, supporting 3,000 person years of employment in the first 12 years of the mine's operations, and another 525 spinoff jobs are anticipated to be created as a result of the mine reopening.

Helping to create new jobs and successful business is essential to strengthening our communities, so too is investing in infrastructure projects that support the delivery of public services and maximizes their potential to encourage greater economic activity.

Over the next five years we are allocating nearly \$3 billion for new and existing schools, health care facilities, roads, bridges, municipal infrastructure and more. This sizable investment will help stimulate the economy, creating more than 4,900 full-time jobs annually for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It will foster business development throughout the province and ensure access to modern facilities where public services can be delivered. New facilities also help make communities more attractive places to live which support efforts to increase the province's population.

By laying our solid plans to advance infrastructure initiatives, as well as programs and services, we are open to finding new ways of doing things. It also puts in a more strategic position for the province to balancing our goal of supporting access to important services while stimulating the economy.

Mr. Chair, I'm sure that there are other examples within our government and I'm sure that the hon. colleagues in this House will take their opportunity to speak to this bill and to highlight some of the successes that they've had this year.

I'm sure we'll hear from the Opposition as well, and I look forward to their comments as we move forward with this.

With that, I'll conclude my remarks by saying that it's an honour to have the opportunity to speak to this important piece of legislation and I look forward to hearing from all colleagues in the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.

The hon. the Opposition Leader.

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

I know it's early, Sir, I know it's early. That's the new glasses, Mr. Chair. I have a feeling you may be going back and forth a bit today before you move to the next question, but thank you for giving me a chance to address Bill 36 today.

Bill 36 is known as Interim Supply. For those people who are tuning in and not familiar with Interim Supply, essentially Interim Supply grants funds to the government to continue to operate as the government until a budget is approved.

Interim Supply allows for the continuation of programs and services and very important ones. I want to use this first opportunity just to acknowledge that it's actually the public service who runs government on a day-to-day basis from snow clearing to health care, to education to our justice system. It's the public service and public servants individually who make that happen and make that operate.

Mr. Chair, without Interim Supply, our public service wouldn't be compensated for the work they do and government would come to a halt. In the United States, we've seen it happen a couple of times in recent months and over the last decade there have been a few times it's happened where the federal government essentially have come to a halt because they

couldn't finalize budget allocations to allow that to happen.

I suppose theoretically that could happen here. If we were to continue Interim Supply debate, which as an Opposition Party we can, and the process we have here we can continue to debate in Committee repeatedly Interim Supply. If we were to run the Interim Supply debate into April 1, then the government wouldn't have any funds to operate. They wouldn't have an opportunity to continue to pay their bills or keep the lights on for that matter.

That's what Interim Supply does. It's an annual event or an annual bill that usually comes through around early or middle of March. It then gives lots of opportunity for the Opposition and government to have a debate and discussion about Interim Supply, for the government to continue to operate and for public service to continue to do the job that they have.

One of the significant parts of Interim Supply debate that we're quite aware of is that every year for budget debate there's a fixed allotment of time. I think it's 70 hours. Is it? I'm looking across the way if someone –

AN HON. MEMBER: Seventy-five.

MR. P. DAVIS: Seventy-five hours allotted for budget debate. One of the interesting parts of that is that time used for Interim Supply comes off the budget.

MR. HAGGIE: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: What was that, Minister?

MR. HAGGIE: You don't have to use it all.

MR. P. DAVIS: Don't have to use it all. Okay. The Minister of Health says: We don't have to use it all. Maybe we'll only use three or four hours. It would be better. However, I think we're going to be close on 75 this year. I anticipate we'll be close on 75 hours this year, as we are most years.

The time used, Mr. Chair, on Interim Supply, on debate of Bill 36, is part of the budget time. So it comes off the budget debate. Historically,

Opposition Parties don't tend to use a lot of that time because right now we don't know what the fiscal plan is for the government for the year coming. We don't know what the plan is; not only fiscal but fiscal plan drives the plans of programs and services for the government in the coming year.

As an Opposition, we don't know what that is yet. We quite often look and say we're best off to use our time to use for the budget debate after we know what the budget is going to contain, what's going to be in the budget and how government plans on providing services and programs, some of the ones that I just referenced, into the coming year.

We know, Mr. Chair, that the government doesn't enjoy the price and value of oil as they have in the past. Oil has stabilized and increased since the end of 2015. That's been a benefit.

I remember 2014 and 2015 when oil crashed. I quite often refer to Bloomberg when I'm talking to people in the coffee shops and around the province. They talk about all of a sudden the oil money went, can you tell me what happened. I'll pull out my phone and I'll look up Bloomberg. I'll look at the price of oil, I'll look at the five-year price of oil and you'll see the oil high above the \$100 mark.

Right around the same time I announced I was going to run for the leadership, which was the first of July – July 2, I think, was the actual date I announced I was going to run for the leadership – 2014, around that same time the price of oil started to drop, and there's a graph – I know we can't use props here in the House of Assembly, but if you go on Bloomberg and look at the price of Brent crude and look at the five-year pricing, you'll see the graph comes along over \$100. Then all of a sudden it dropped, and it continued to drop until the fall of 2015.

Through my time in the office as Premier, it dropped and dropped and dropped. Then right after the election in 2015 things started to stabilize and came up. It was nowhere near where it was, Mr. Chair, but it started to stabilize and come up. That's good for the province because it provides more resources to the government to provide those programs and services, and I'm sure it was a breath of relief.

As that stabilization continues, there's slowly a climb back which creates revenue for the province and for the government and helps drive the economy. The reality is we're tied to natural resources. That's what our province is tied to.

Recently, we hear talk of the province is going to go bankrupt. I don't believe it for a second, Mr. Chair. I don't believe for a second the province is going to go bankrupt. Bankrupt is when your debts exceed your assets, but if you think about our assets –

AN HON. MEMBER: It's not even close.

MR. P. DAVIS: No, it's not even close, I say to the Member opposite. It's not even close.

If you look at our assets in Labrador, where he represents, there's huge, huge untouched potential in assets in Labrador. A group of people, a workforce and a community very well know how those assets are to be extracted and can be utilized, and they're very, very good at it. They're very, very good at that. There are untapped resources in Labrador.

If you look at our offshore resources, which are probably two of the most mega-resources we have today that we look at and talk about with our economy, the offshore oil resources, only 2 per cent of expected or suspected reserves offshore right now are tapped into. Only 2 per cent of the offshore potential.

In the mapping that was done while we were in government, and I know the current government and the minister will maybe speak to this at some time during Interim Supply, but we know due to the work done and exploration done off the Coast of Labrador, that there's the potential for oil fields larger than the Gulf of Mexico right off our own coast in Labrador.

So when you look at what we believe our assets to be and what they contain and the value of those assets, there's no way our debt is reaching anywhere close to the value of those assets, and that's what it is. What the province has today is they have a liquidity problem. They have a cash flow problem. They have a problem whereby you can't extract the value of those resources and assets today to meet the demands of the province.

I remember back long before I got into politics, I remember back in the '80s and '90s. Times were tough back in the '80s and '90s as well. I was a public servant, and I tell you, it was a hard thing to do to be a public servant back in those days.

In policing, I remember we had cars that weren't fit to be on the road. That was the bottom line. Police cars we used to respond to emergency calls that shouldn't have been on the road.

I remember days, back in those days, Mr. Chair, sitting in the police station at night waiting for someone to take a break so we'd have a police car to get in to go out and respond to calls in our own area, because we never had enough police cars to do the work back in those days, back in the late '80s and into the '90s. That was reflective of the tough and difficult times the government was facing at the time.

I know back in the '90s, when the government was taking what was seen as a value and an equity stake in the operations of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, instead of putting that back into improving those resources had to use those for day-to-day operations. Government was looking for every opportunity to put it into the day-to-day operations.

We were able over those years as a province, and this is not a partisan comment by any means or anything, but as a province and as industry and so on were able to grow and grow the economy, then things started to turn and become better for us. Hibernia was probably the turning point for that. We look back now when we talked about: Should we put more effort into exploration versus our focus on production? Yes, we probably should have. If you look at what happened overseas and how they approached it a little bit differently. Yes, it probably would have been in the long run a little bit – but it's still there. The assets are still there.

I know the minister and the Premier have talked about expediting and speeding up time from exploration to production. I fully agree with them. We worked on that as well. We have to find a way to reduce that timeline and red tape and process. You do that by establishing a standard of expectation for oil companies so they know exactly what the rules are at play. Not do one-offs, but have a standardized approach so

that companies can be – but it has to be one that's inviting so companies can know: Why should I go there and make investments?

We've seen recent investments by oil companies here in property development and so on, which shows they have a long-term view, that they're here to stay. I know if you look historically through history and time, you'll quite often see that when the value of oil drops off, companies are looking for that next opportunity for exploration to get those wells going for long-term sustainability for their own companies.

That's where it's a great opportunity for Newfoundland and Labrador today. While it does drive the economy, when exploration goes up – and we've seen good interest in exploration over the last couple of years – that means people have to service that industry and that drives our economy. Someone has to feed the workers and supply the rigs and the drill rigs. That helps to drive the economy.

People are true when you look at our economy that over our history it's gone like this. That's the nature of being a society, an economy and a province that relies so much on the vast wealth of natural resources that we have. Of course, what every government has ever talked about is: How do we smooth that line out? How do we stop those highs and lows and how do we smooth that out for longer sustainability?

Alberta tried that. They started taking some money and putting it away and saying when times go bad now, we'll have this fund to help us. They burned through it so quickly when oil dropped. They burned through so quickly but, fortunately, it was a buffer. I don't think it's the answer in itself; you have to find those stabilities.

We look forward to the budget. We're going to speak some more on Interim Supply and some of the things that the government has done recently. We're probably going to give them some views. We've all attended budget consultation sessions.

There's only one budget consultation session that we never had a representative from the Official Opposition and that was one in Labrador. In fairness to everyone, I think it was

scheduled and cancelled twice. It was scheduled to happen and cancelled. I think it was weather or some other reason for that, but I'm sure there's a good reason. It was cancelled twice and it was finally held. We never had anybody there but we had fully intended to have someone attend that one as well. We did have someone at every budget consultation session other than that one.

Between now, through Interim Supply debate, and we get through budget debate, then we're going to talk more about what we saw and what we heard during the budget consultation process, which was an important one. It could have been done a little bit differently and we're going to talk about that as well. We'll discuss was it the right way of doing it and so on.

Governments come in and try things differently. Maybe next year they'll change it, but they'll only change it maybe if they hear feedback that there might be a better way of doing it in the future.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to sit down. I've up my time at this point in time. As I said, while our Interim Supply time comes off our budget debate time, we'll have some comments to make during Interim Supply for some time. We're going to spend a little bit of time in Interim Supply; it won't be just a give me and walk away. It's important that we talk about Interim Supply and how it can be utilized, the importance of our public service and some of the thoughts and ideas that we'll have on the current operations of the government today.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BROWNE: (Inaudible) it's a pleasure to stand in the House of Assembly as always to represent the people of my district. It's been a very exciting place as of late. Of course, Marystown has been swept with Olympic fever, as I have so often said. We're very looking forward to Kaetlyn's return back to Marystown, more details to follow.

Mr. Chair, there's much happening in the District of Placentia West - Bellevue that I'm very involved with and very proud of: the ongoing collaborations that we have between myself, the various ministers, municipalities and not-for-profit groups. I want to provide an update to Members of the House on matters pertaining to my district, one of the most, if not the most, industrious district on the Island of Newfoundland, certainly.

I want to talk about where we have come, where we are and where we are headed. Where we have come, I think it's important to look back to two years ago when government was formed. We're here discussing Interim Supply, a budgetary matter, Mr. Chair. The people of the province were sold a bill of goods during the last election and told there was a \$1.1 billion deficit. I think it's important, not to cast blame or aspersions on anyone else, but just to speak of facts and remember where we were at that point of time in history.

We discovered, upon forming the government, that number would have been \$2.7 billion. I think it's important to recall that, Mr. Chair, because it colours all of the other decisions that had to be made in terms of finding and achieving savings and raising revenues. So swift, decisive action had to be taken. We had to reassure bond rating agencies and lenders that we wouldn't go bankrupt, as it was a concern at the time, Mr. Chair, and it was very difficult. It was very difficult for many of us personally. It was difficult for the people of the province. We understand that but it was necessary, unfortunately, due to the PC mismanagement of a decade.

Mr. Chair, there is more than doom and gloom in this province. In fact, there's a lot of bright positivity happening and that's what I want to focus my time today on. Despite all of those challenges, Mr. Chair, the Seniors' Benefit was increased by some \$250 and spread over quarterly payments. I've been getting feedback from seniors in my district saying that this is helping them better manage their finances and it's become easier for them. We've also introduced the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement for senior citizens, low-income families and persons with disabilities for them to better achieve what they're trying to do.

Also, Mr. Chair, and I will preface this account by saying the Member for Burin - Grand Bank and I, the Minister of Fisheries, the Premier have been dealing with the issues surrounding surf clam on the Burin Peninsula. It's something that we're very concerned with and very active on that file to ensure that the people we represent, their voices are heard on that issue with the federal government.

I do want to commend the federal government for the many partnerships that we've had with them in terms of funding arrangements and cost sharing. For example, in my district, over the last two years we've seen nearly \$10 million in capital works and infrastructure projects. We have secured hundreds of millions of dollars in infrastructure spending from the federal government that we've been able to do meaningful projects throughout many of our districts, including my own.

We look at Marystown, Parkers Cove, Terrenceville, North Harbour, Come By Chance, Arnold's Cove and Chance Cove, all of these communities that benefited from agreements that we have signed with the federal government to enable cost-sharing arrangements on those types of projects.

We've also announced economic development projects, such as nearly \$100,000 for expansion of the Marystown Industrial Park which will, please God, be home of the largest aquaculture salmon hatchery in the world that Grieg will hopefully build –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BROWNE: We have our fingers crossed. I know that some Members across the way are against jobs on the Burin Peninsula and against that kind of economic development. I can tell you not to take your leadership campaign down there because that's not what the people of my district want to hear, I can guarantee you that, because we are very supportive of sustainable, environmental and economic development. We respect the environment but we also respect the fact that the people of the province – we need jobs, Mr. Chair.

I can tell you as the MHA from Marystown and for the Burin Peninsula and for Placentia Bay,

I'm very concerned that we do things right and we will be doing them right, and I'm very confident that this project is going to be a roaring success.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BROWNE: Mr. Chair, we've also made investments in tourism and culture and heritage; \$68,000 I'd like to highlight for the Marystown museum and Jerome Walsh heritage site. Mr. Chair, the Jerome Walsh Museum, as many who have visited Marystown would know, is a living testament to Mr. Walsh and the stories that he told and there's so much history there. We had a \$155,000 for the 50th anniversary of resettlement in the Arnold's Cove region. They even have an app, Mr. Chair.

I think this is interesting for all Members. They have an app developed that you can download to your phone and as you're walking about the community, different stories will be told of the different homes, of where they came from, whether it was Bar Haven or Merasheen, or Tacks Beach or Isle Valen, the number of communities that came into Arnold's Cove and it tells that story, so it is a really good example of intangible heritage.

We also saw a very big investment of \$814,000, Mr. Chair, into the Smallwood Crescent Community Centre. It's in an area of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units. That's very important as well to invest in those types of community operations and ensure they have a good, robust foundation moving forward.

Of course, many of the investments that we made were in such good strong partnership with our former MP Judy Foote. I just have to say again, I thank her on behalf of the people of the province for her contributions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BROWNE: Mr. Chair, there are other investments being made, of course. My district is seeing over \$10 million in road maintenance and repair work.

We had a great announcement, the Member for Burin - Grand Bank and I, \$1.3 million to support shipyard workers in Marystown for

retraining opportunities. As we bridge from the Hebron Project, now many of them are engaged with Husky.

We had, as was mentioned by the Minister of Finance just moments ago, a \$17 million repayable loan for Canada Fluorspar in St. Lawrence; such a success story happening in St. Lawrence. It's a file that's been around for quite some time. I don't know why it didn't get off the ground. I know that the former premier and her former Cabinet were there for a large ribbon cutting in 2011. I have no idea why it took an extra five years to get it off the ground, but we're very proud that we got that off the ground, took it across the finish line and people are back to work.

Mr. Chair, where we are now and where we are going there's much anticipation for the future. As I mentioned, the Marystown Shipyard, we're working with a potential owner now, a new buyer to come in and buy the shipyard. It will bring stable, meaningful employment back to Marystown. The Cow Head facility now is undergoing the living module for the West White Rose Project.

That's very important, Mr. Chair, but I think it's important also to get back to our history of shipbuilding and have a stable base of employment. Two hundred or 300 jobs at a shipyard over 20 years are more positive in the long run than 1,000 jobs for one year on a megaproject. So we want to have that stable base and still be able to accommodate the large projects, but have that stable base.

We look at Bull Arm as well; there are two proponents that are in lease negotiations with Nalcor. We're looking forward to expansion there because there's so much opportunity that Bull Arm can provide to the people of the province.

As I've touched on as well the Grieg project, Mr. Chair. Something the Member for Burin - Grand Bank and I - we've worked like dogs on this. How many calls on Sunday mornings did we have with Grieg trying to settle a deal between government and them? Of course, we understand now it's in the courts. We're awaiting that decision very anxiously. I certainly look forward to the day when we can stand up

and cut a ribbon on the Grieg project and have sustainable aquaculture.

We were down on the South Coast with the Cabinet committee on jobs and we toured the sites down there. It's a wonderful story on the South Coast of the province, and I congratulate that area for really taking it and running with it because I believe there are many solutions for the future that we can avail of, that we can focus on, that we can do it right in many ways and aquaculture is going to be one of them.

We have a shipyard on the cusp of development. We have a mine now at the construction phase in St. Lawrence. We have the Grieg project, hopefully, coming through in the next number of months. We have the Husky living quarters being built in Marystown.

There are a lot of good things happening in the economy, Mr. Chair. We've turned the corner and as has been reported here in the Chamber, and I will continue keeping Members informed, our Olympic spirits are being lifted, as well as our economic ones, and we look very forward to having our hometown champion Kaetlyn Osmond home in Marystown in April.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's indeed an honour to stand for the eighth time to talk to Interim Supply, after eight years of being in this House, to talk about the budget lines that will be proposed. As the Member for Topsail - Paradise had outlined explaining to those who may be listening at home, the process of what Interim Supply is all about, it's a financial support mechanism to ensure, until a budget is debated and a passed, that there is adequate finances to be able to continue the operations of government, to meet our payrolls, to meet our expenditures when it comes to our contractors and to ensure that the civil service, which are the heart and soul of how we operate government in Newfoundland and Labrador, are not having to worry about where their

paycheques are coming from or having to hold back on projects or programs or services that they provide the people of Newfoundland and Labrador with, as part of that.

I've had the privilege of being, this coming fall, a civil servant in some way, shape or form for 35 years and have very diligently followed every budget and, in a lot of cases, sat in this House in the gallery as part as my responsibility in my positions to look at interim funding and look at the debate that was going around there.

Sometimes it's an opportunity for the government side to get up and tout all the positive things that are going on and it's an opportunity for the Opposition to get up and tout all the negative things that are going on. But for the betterment of everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador, this is about ensuring that the people who run our province, the people who on a daily basis provide the services, who go out of their way to do due diligence to ensure that Newfoundland and Labrador and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians move forward, and that's what they do.

So we need to ensure that there are no stress levels there, particularly at middle and upper management because they're the ones who have to dictate exactly what monies flow down to front-line services. And you can't start cutting front-line services when there's an expectation, unless there's been a full, open debate. So the norm has always been, give or take a certain amount of money, from 30 up to potentially 40 per cent interim funding could be allocated to offset what a particular budget may be. It depends on the time frames that you're expecting your budget debate to go on.

I might add – and the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue has outlined a lot of the potential positive things that are coming, and I hope they all come to fruition. Nobody more than this side of the House wants everything that's been outlined by government and all the potential positive projects and the positive new programs and services to work. And we're confident, there's no doubt. All these things can be good, beneficial entities for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. But we have to have an approach to make these work.

There's no doubt through proper negotiations, through supports, through in some case, compromise, to opening up dialogue and listening to what stakeholders particularly have to say, you get a better understanding of exactly how we can make things work, and what's in the best interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians; but particularly, what makes us equipped to be able to compete nationally and internationally so that it's not about us trying to go somewhere to sustain a living, it's about us sustaining our living here, but drawing people back to us. That our base here grows from what we do. One, we bring back ex-patriots; two, we bring in, through immigration, new people who want to be part and parcel here, but we give them opportunities.

It's a simplistic approach; it may not be the easiest to do it because there are all kinds of factors. But a proper plan and proper inclusion and proper dialogue can make that happen. When we have conversations around developing an industry, if we have conversations around partnering with other jurisdictions, these are all positive things. When we talk about the one thing that we all have and we all agree to, we have, by far, the most productive, the most talented, the most committed workforce anywhere.

It's unfortunate that a lot of those skilled individuals are working somewhere else for companies outside of Newfoundland and Labrador, but with proper vision, the proper investment in our economy and growing some of those industries, there's no doubt – we saw what happened over the last decade when the oil industry boomed, how many expats came back. How many of them used their skillset to help grow Newfoundland and Labrador.

No doubt, we've had a financial challenge the last number of years, and it has been mentioned here, a lot of it, unfortunately or fortunately, depending on how you look at it, related to the cost of oil and the revenues generated from that. While that can be a blessing on one side and a scorn on the other, it's a reality of what we deal with in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Every government for the last decade and a half, and no doubt for the next decades going forward, will have to take into play the revenues

that are generated from the oil industry and have a system in play, or plan in play, that fluctuates with the upswing and downswing of the oil industry. That's part and parcel of being prepared for good governance. That's part of that, and it's part and parcel of talking about how you diversify your economy.

You still have to do your day-to-day operations. That's what Interim Supply is all about, the day-to-day things you're committed to. You can't deviate from them. There are things that the taxpayers expect, the citizens expect, and that you've committed to as a government, particularly for a period of time. Those periods of time will deviate from 60 days, 90 days, 45 days, depending on the process you're going to push out.

There's no doubt, in budget debate – and I suspect now the budget line is done – of what has been carved off as investments in new areas or decreasing spending in another area, or an elimination of a program or services has to be taken into mind when you determine what you're going to use for your interim funding. That's how the process works.

There's no doubt, there are negotiations that go on with the unions. That's already taken place. There are other parts and parcels of that, that will unfold as the months and the next year goes forward.

As we talk about interim funding, the key to interim funding is let's be stable until our budget is down which outlines the plan of action to address, particularly, how we deal with – if it's a financial crisis, or if it's about overspending, or if it's about investing in different avenues, or if it's about growing the economy. In a lot of cases you take all of them into account, and it becomes a happy balance in how you make that work.

As we debate this, and we'll have an opportunity to talk about it. It's not only about touting what's not working or what is working. It's having that holistic approach here, that there's a balance of finding things that work in some regions and may benefit those regions. That investment there might be an immediate return and be of total benefit to the residents living there, and the companies and the businesses and

that, and even from a political point for those who represent them, but the spinoff from that may be seen and felt five, six, 10 years down the road in other areas in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The same way when we partner with outside entities, when they come in here and do an investment – and I know the Northeast Avalon becomes the hub of a lot of the initial investments, but the plan has to be that this is going to be the hub where the discussions become and the partnerships are developed, but the entities that are going to be able to deliver those services, and benefit from them can be vast and geographically cover the whole part of this great province of ours.

We have to have these types of discussions and those types of plans when we look at how we invest our money and how we set a plan that talks about diversification. That means training in our educational institutions. I've seen a couple of the institutions now that are doing wonderful work in trying to attract people who come from an entrepreneurial background and have different approaches to outlining what would be great services.

We're talking about attracting back people who have been very successful in other jurisdictions who are connected to Newfoundland and Labrador. It's about looking at other types of industries that are out there, particularly high tech. We're talking aerospace or biotech. Things that could be done here.

You do not need massive manufacturing, but from revenue generating and from employment based, can be very effective here. Because they bring back specialists who can open up other kinds of avenues for diversification. They are also – in most cases, if not all cases – extremely well-paying positions, which in turn means more money into the economy, more taxes paid and more people then generating part of the next level of our growth strategy and our population moving forward. They bring a skill set then that adds to it.

As we look at how we invest our money, and no doubt as we get into the debate on the budget and it becomes fine-tuned as to exactly what programs are going to be there, how government

are going to outline their investments to move the economy forward, we'll get a better understanding. I'll be the first to stand up and pat government on the back if I see a program or hear of an investment that I think is in the best interest of the residents of this province. I'll say kudos to you guys, keep doing that, we'll support that. I have no problem, as part of that whole process, supporting that if there are ones there that we're going to question the challenges about a particular program that serves benefit to the people here.

In any case, and I go back to my days as a civil servant, when you were giving briefing notes to executives or ministers, you would talk about – particularly in years when there had to be cuts. When there was a spending challenge versus a revenue income, that you'd have to say: While I understand it's easy to cut this program, the benefit of cutting this program is only financial. It's immediate financial. It's not financially beneficial in the long run because if you cut here, it will cost you more down the road. Sometimes you have to be cognizant of the balance on two of them.

Mr. Chair, I will get a chance to speak to this again.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

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

(Inaudible) House of Assembly and it's, of course, my first time standing to speak to Interim Supply this new fiscal year. As our Finance Minister outlined, Interim Supply certainly is important to speak to and it's important that the cash flows to our perspective districts to provide services and infrastructure to our constituents and whatnot.

On that note, having said that, I am certainly happy and excited to give an update on Coley's Point Primary school replacement, the project. As we know, this is something that's been ongoing, something that's been needed for years and years. Well over a decade this structure should have been replaced.

Just a little brief history again on the structure. As we know, this building exceeds 65 years. There are currently students in that building who can say my great-grandparents attended school and were educated in this very building.

I made a recent visit to Coley's Point Primary, as I do frequently, happy to be there on National Family Literacy Day, the annual event. Of course, I'm invited to read there every year and it's a great opportunity. When I go, I get to speak with the young students, the staff and it's very, very exciting.

Let me tell you, as a school community they certainly do their part in doing the best they can to promote healthy living, education and whatnot. It's great to get on the ground and actually have some fun.

Let me tell you, there are young, bright minds coming out of Coley's Point Primary School. The great feedback, of course, that was also given on full-day kindergarten. I'm happy to say it was this government that brought that forward, and lots of great, positive feedback. They say the learning level and the success of the students who graduated from their first year of all-day kindergarten, going into grade one, of course, they're very well prepared and their reading levels are much higher than previously; before the time, of course, that all-day kindergarten was introduced.

Again, the building is 65 years-plus. We have a student population of just over 300. The principal informed me that about 315 students are currently attending primary school at Coley's Point. It services areas such as Port de Grave, Bareneed, Butlerville, Shearstown, even Clarke's Beach. Some students come there from Clarke's Beach and, of course, Bay Roberts proper and Coley's Point. They're certainly looking forward to that.

As we know, this will take several years and is a multi-million dollar project. Money was announced last year of \$750,000. I am reassured by the minister in a recent meeting that this project is on track. As a matter of fact, I invited the Town Council of Bay Roberts to attend a meeting with the minister and the department and everything is on track. Hopefully, we can go to tender this fall, 2018, for that school.

I also outlined, and I will remind, in *The Way Forward* document a multi-year plan for infrastructure investments. We have a completion date of 2021 for Coley's Point Primary School. I'm certainly looking forward to that. I'm going to speak about this until we turn the sod on that project. I invite all hon. Members to come and to be part of this because it is a long overdue, awaited event to happen here in the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

Again, a bouquet to that school community out there, the principal, the parents, even surrounding residents. Everybody supports this initiative. I'm very proud of the students coming from Coley's Point Primary and all schools in the district.

I'm also happy to make a visit to all my schools in the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave: St. Francis in Harbour Grace, St. Peter's of Upper Island Cove, Holy Redeemer school in Spaniard's Bay, Coley's Point Primary, Amalgamated Academy in Bay Roberts and, of course, Ascension Collegiate – the high school where I graduated from – for teacher and education staff appreciation week. It's nice to go around and to get feedback and to make those personal visits. It certainly is appreciated on all ends.

I also want to talk about some good things that are happening in Harbour Grace in particular. I want to talk about in Harbour Grace we get to celebrate the second oldest continuing sporting event in North America, second to the Royal St. John's Regatta, we have the Harbour Grace Regatta. I'm happy to say that recently by working with the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development and the volunteers on the ground in Harbour Grace for the boathouse out there at Lady Lake, that I'm happy to announce \$10,000 to go towards equipment and infrastructure upgrades and whatnot to support this committee.

Also at this time, I'd certainly want to throw some recognition out to Mr. Bud Chafe. I used to be a rower actually back in those days, in my high school days in Harbour Grace. Bud Chafe was by coxswain out there, as well as (inaudible), a friend mine who I went to school with. It's something that we can celebrate out

there and, as I say, it's the second oldest continuing sporting event in North America, the Harbour Grace Regatta.

So some well-deserved funds to head out there: \$10,000. If you have an opportunity, by all means, certainly drop out to the regatta. It's a wonderful annual event, attracting rowers from all over the province. I know that Placentia also has a rowing team out there and we have teams that come from all over the Avalon and across the province that come out and take part in this event. So happy to say that.

Also, as we know, roads are a major focus and the road conditions across our province. I'm happy to say I've had regular meetings with the minister and the department really lobbying and advocating for Cranes Road and work on the Thicket Road throughout my District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

Cranes Road is certainly a major thoroughfare that connects Spaniard's Bay to Upper Island Cove and even adjacent to the Thicket Road, which connects the Town of Harbour Grace. I'm told that we will be getting work on those roads this coming fiscal year. I know that the crew at the depot, who I also visit regularly, the highway depot in Bay Roberts, they'll be happy to hear that there will be good work, of course, moving forward on that.

I know that the residents and the volunteer firefighters in Upper Island Cove are very excited as well. I'm happy to announce that we just recently announced this past spring, myself and the minister, a long overdue medical unit fire truck for the volunteer department in Upper Island Cove. I will tell you about Upper Island Cove not only are this crew responsible for the well-being and protection of properties and residents in the Town of Upper Island Cove, but they're also responsible for the municipalities of Bishops Cove, a neighbouring community, and also Bryants Cove.

Given the geography of this particular area, they respond to a lot of medical calls and it's proven record times that the volunteer firefighters are able to respond actually faster than the ambulance in the area, given the geography. So they've worked hard for this, the volunteer firefighters: volunteer Chief Harvey Mercer,

also Darren Mercer, just to name a few. They are very dedicated to what they do, and they're very well received by the residents. They're a big player and they help out the community. Everywhere you can see them, you can see the volunteer firefighters if there's something going on, whether it be a benefit, or whether it be a parade in a neighbouring community, you'll always see them there. So I'm very proud of the volunteer firefighters that we have throughout the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, and we can't wait to get the keys and get to that new vehicle.

Again, as I mentioned, it is a medical unit rescue fire vehicle, so long overdue. I know they have been lobbying for that for quite some time for years, but I'm happy to say that it's our government and our minister that were going to be bringing that forward. The minister just walked in; I know he made the trip to Upper Island Cove out there and we got to make that announcement, and again, it's something they worked very hard for, and we're happy to see these things coming forward.

We know we are arguable facing the most difficult time economically in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador, but as the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, and I can safely say it's the same for all hon. Members here in this House, we're certainly dedicated to doing the best we can for our residents, bringing the best services forward, advocating for them where possible. That's the number one priority of any MHA or any elected official in any jurisdiction of the world. You're here to represent your people and I'm certainly honoured and grateful for the support that I continue to receive in the strong District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

So I certainly will be keeping the House and the public informed about updates for Coley's Point Primary school. Again, it's a long, long, long overdue project. Like I said, a 65-year-old structure. We know it should have been done years ago, years and years ago, but I'm happy to say it's this government that will bring this forward. I look forward to the day where we will turn the sod on that project, and again hopefully anticipating going to tender this coming fall, 2018.

On that note, also, Mr. Chair, I want to make recognition to tomorrow is International Women's Day, and as we look around we still need to increase the numbers of our female politicians from every level, municipal, provincial and obviously federal. Let's do what we can and when that opportunity comes up to take that chance or to take that risk, let's do everything that we can to advance women and to reach out to other women who want to get involved.

So tomorrow is International Women's Day. We certainly will be recognizing that. I think the official colour is purple, so I'm sure it'll be a purple House of Assembly here tomorrow. I'm happy to say I will be speaking at an event in my district in Harbour Grace tomorrow to recognize this. So again, let's do what we can. A great Canadian hockey player once said: We miss 100 per cent of the shots that we don't take. To women out there everywhere, to our male colleagues, to everybody: Take those shots, do what we can to advance the cause.

On that note, Mr. Chair, I certainly will take my seat. It's always an honour to speak and to represent the great people of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

I, too, am happy to stand to speak to this bill on Interim Supply. I listened very closely to the words of the Minister of Finance where he talked about this is a balanced approach to a fiscal situation and that they are looking at the cost of delivering reasonable services. He said a few times this is a balanced approach. Mr. Chair, I would like to speak to that in terms of one particular issue. He said it's also about making smarter government decisions or making governments smarter.

Mr. Chair, I want to talk about the issue of bus passes for people who are in receipt of income

support or people who are in very, very low income. Last month, a letter was sent to the Minister of Finance with a copy to the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, a copy to the Minister of Health and Community Services, a copy to myself as MHA for St. John's Centre and a copy to the St. John's Transportation Commission, Metrobus.

It was signed by 60 individuals. A number of individuals are physicians who are serving our citizens in the St. John's metro area – a number of doctors, a number of nurses and nurse practitioners and a number of social workers. So these are front-line workers as well as a number of community activists or people speaking on behalf of community services throughout the St. John's metro area and Mount Pearl, Paradise, Kelligrews, Kilbride, all those areas.

Mr. Chair, it's a matter of urgency. It's a matter of human rights. It's a matter of dignity. It's a matter of the social determinants of health and they're all spelled out very clearly. So far they have received only one response, aside from my response to them. I've been in touch with them a number of times.

If we're talking about smarter government, if we are talking about balanced fiscal decisions, a balanced budget and fiscal decisions that approach our financial situation in a balanced way, this is a very serious issue because it is about people having to access our health care system. As it stands now, the policy for people in receipt of AES – and let's look at income support, the situation. If you are a single person in receipt of income support, if you do not have a rent subsidy, you may be paying the majority of your income support on shelter and on heat and light.

Some people are left with anywhere from \$100 to maybe \$150, or sometimes less, for food, transportation, clothing, personal items, hair care, over-the-counter drugs – because the over-the-counter drug program was cancelled in the last budget. We're talking about senior women who need calcium to prevent osteoporosis or those who are in the process of osteoporosis. People who need iron supplements. If you need iron supplements, those are expensive. You may then need stool softeners because of the effect of the iron supplements. Then also the adult dental

care program was cancelled. Some of these, government can talk about saving money, but mostly it disadvantages in a disproportionate way the people who are living in abject poverty. It further entrenches them in poverty.

Now, the issue of a bus pass, what is happening is that people have to prove they have at least eight medical appointments a month in order to get a bus pass. If you only have \$100 a month for your food, for your incidentals, for your over-the-counter drugs or if you have to get some dental work done, which you can't, so people end up in emergency because they can't afford dental work because the dental program has been cancelled, you have no money left. There is no money for buses.

One trip in the metro area is \$2.50. Well, that doesn't seem like a whole lot. But if you do one return trip a day, that's \$5. If you do that three days a week, that's \$15. If you do that three days a week, four times a month, that's \$60. That might be half or more than half of the money you have to live on. It's not tenable; it's not possible.

So let's look at what that means. It means people miss their medical appointments. It means people are becoming incredibly socially isolated. Oftentimes, people in receipt of income support are people with multiple problems. Sometimes it's mental health issues. What we see then are people cannot get out to their support groups, to The Gathering Place, for instance, where they can avail of medical appointments, where they can avail of food. We have stories of people not being able to go to the food bank to be able to get extra food that they can't afford and bring it back home because they have no transportation. We know that transportation is a basic human right.

We also hear stories of people who are – I have people in my district calling me because they can't get out at all; they have no transportation. They can't afford the bus pass. We know that our buses are very underused, and that there is a possibility to partner up with Metrobus, with the city, and with the province to look at providing bus passes to people. Not just a little bit of extra money, or not even a cheque for a bus pass, but again you have to have eight medical appointments.

So we see people going to their doctors and begging their doctors to write that they will see them eight times a month so they can get a bus pass. Doctors are furious about this because they are so aware of the social determinants of health. One of the social determinants of health is poverty, isolation and lack of contact with support groups. What happens is maybe a doctor will write on behalf of – and the doctors are saying it in these letters. I would like to table these letters, Mr. Chair, so that the Members of the House of Assembly can see these are doctors who are saying that they know that the people they are seeing need this assistance.

People can say oh, well there you go; there's that bleeding heart again. This saves us money in the long run. It keeps people healthy in terms of their mental health because they are able to access programs all over the city. It means they can go to food banks. It means they can go to The Gathering Place. It means they can visit their family and their friends. What if your friends live halfway across the city? Can all of us imagine not being able to get out to visit those who are part of your social and family support network?

Again, we're talking about some of the most vulnerable people in our society. If people aren't seeing this so much as a human right, about a dignity situation, it's economic justice, it's social justice, it's all about saving us money in the long run. It's making sure people have the support that they need to be well and to attend groups.

What happens, we have people making multiple visits to their doctors in order to qualify for a bus pass. What happens if you miss two of our appointments in March? Does that mean then you no longer have your bus pass for April?

So we're having people use very expensive services in order to get a bus pass that will help keep them well. These are front-line workers: doctors, social workers, who are begging government to do the right thing.

There is also within this letter – and I would like to table this letter so all Members of the House have the opportunity to read this letter. I know that our Minister of Health and Community Services absolutely understands the issues of the

social determinants of health. I know he does because he has spoken to me about this. He understands it. As having been the chair of the mental health and addictions all-party committee, he had also heard these stories. He also knows how important this is.

I believe we can do the right thing here. This is about smarter government. This is about fiscal balance. Mr. Chair, I can tell you that the additional comments made by doctors, by health care providers and by social workers, who are added to this letter, really reveal how important this is.

Mr. Chair, I see that my time is up. Again, I beg my colleagues in the House to look at these papers, to really get a good picture of what this request is all about.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR (Reid): The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's certainly a real pleasure for me today as well to speak. This is the third time, I guess, in three years in preparation of the budget that I've had an opportunity to stand on Interim Supply. I know for sure, Mr. Chair, that the time allotted will not be sufficient for me to talk about some of the issues and concerns that I have.

I just want to make a quick reference to the consultations that were held, and I think the Leader of the Official Opposition made mention of it. I want to recognize the fact that my hon. Member and colleague across the way for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune attended the consultation in Grand Falls-Windsor. It was very positive. It was great to have colleagues attend that event as well.

I know that the Leader of the Official Opposition said that he was going to bring forward some ideas on better ways to do consultations. I hope he has better ideas than they had when he was sitting in the previous government. As mayor, Mr. Chair, I attended many of those consultations with the previous government.

I would not consider them to be consultations because consultation gives you an opportunity to discuss and talk about issues. That never, ever happened. All that their idea of a consultation was to bring as many people in, sit down, give you about five minutes to talk about what you want or what you'd like to see. Then they would talk about – with their doomsday clock and everything else they had up there – issues that concerned the government. That's not consultation.

I have seen, from my experience in consultations prior when I was mayor of Grand Falls-Windsor, that if you had seven people or six people attend these consultations, you had a large number. Mr. Chair, in the last three years we have done it differently. We have consultations where we engage stakeholders, people of interest. We give them an opportunity, we sit into a dialogue and we're seeing attendance increase.

In our most recent one we had in Grand Falls-Windsor we were probably – I think if the hon. Member would serve me correct on my memory – about 25 or 28 people which is exceptional. Last year we had about 30 to 35 people. This is an opportunity. These consultations work and I'm going to be anxious to see what other ideas the Leader of the Official Opposition would bring forward to improve on what we are doing versus what they did when they did their consultations several years ago.

As I said, this is the third budget that we are preparing for. As I reflect on the abysmal situation that we were faced back three years ago, and to see where we've come three years ago to where we are now, it's been exceptional. We're not there yet, Mr. Chair. We have many, many challenges we're facing. I know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the last three years, as we've worked through these, have been very, very difficult.

Mr. Chair, it was unfortunate in a sense because sometimes you want to talk about shock treatment. What we received when we were elected back in 2015, and then trying to put together a budget for 2016, will certainly classify as shock treatment. Nobody, I don't think – anybody, I'll use the term anybody – really realized the impact that \$2.7 billion had.

I know some people argue and say Members of the Opposition who were in government at the time should have known. That's okay, should have known. Maybe they didn't know the full extent.

Well, I know on this side of the House we surely didn't know there was a \$2.7 billion deficit that we had to address. We didn't have five years or 10 years to address it. We had to address it within several months. That was an unfortunate situation, Mr. Chair, and obviously from that we had to make some really, really tough, tough decisions. I firmly believe that as we move forward, I believe we do have a better future.

Mr. Chair, last week I attended the Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Association, they had their 50th anniversary. I attended a function last week where I spoke to a group of young people, apprentices, post-secondary students that are looking at getting into the trades. I must say, I was so pleased with the comments from Rhonda Neary and also James Loder. James was the chair of the convention committee. I must say, hats off to James because he talked about the fact that there is indeed a bright future for our young people. There is a bright future in our construction industry.

Mr. Chair, it's very important for us to realize that we cannot forever be talking about doom and gloom. We've had too much doom and gloom, and doom and gloom does have an impact on economy. Because if you do not have confidence in the markets, if there's no confidence in the markets, if it's doom and gloom, markets are impacted. As soon as you have a positive attitude, you'll see an improvement.

So, Mr. Chair, it's time for us to start looking at reality and listening to industry sectors. People who are out there that know and certainly are putting out information, as Mr. James Loder has done, from the Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Association, talking about a positive future for our young people.

Mr. Chair, not only that, but over the last number of years the Premier has put together a Cabinet committee on jobs. All of us in government, and I'm sure Opposition agree, that

it's important for us to work together in partnership. We all have a job to do. I believe if we work in collaboration and we work in partnership with each other, I believe in the end we will have results and they will be positive results.

The Cabinet committee on jobs are now looking at – we have gone through three very successful summits. We started in Gander with the aquaculture summit where we had the industry sector come together. We had a combination of young people. We had a combination of people that are working in an industry. We had academia. We had a partnership, a collaboration of people to discuss the future and look at opportunities in the aquaculture industry. I believe we have a bright future in the aquaculture industry. I believe there are significant opportunities, and I believe we have a future for our young people.

Mr. Chair, we went on from there, where we did the agriculture summit in Grand Falls-Windsor. Again, a very similar format, a very similar setup, whereby we had people who are in the industry. We had academia and we had people in research. We came together and talked about how we can improve and how we can increase opportunities in agriculture. I know our minister for forestry and land resources is making a significant impact with regard to providing agricultural opportunities for those that are interested in getting in the industry.

So, Mr. Chair, I believe we have a bright future in the agriculture industry as well. I think the challenge for us now is to encourage more young people to get involved and to look at other opportunities and engage immigrants into the agriculture field as well.

The third summit that I consider to be very opportunistic for all of us is the technology summit we held two weeks ago. It was a great opportunity where we had industry; we had companies that are working day after day after day with our young people, with young entrepreneurs to provide opportunities. One of the glaring things they said is that we cannot find enough skilled workforce to be able to provide the expertise we need to do the research and provide opportunities.

Mr. Chair, that is another opportunity. It's a significant opportunity for us to find and work with the industry to provide opportunities for our young people. Again, it's important for us to work with our post-secondary education to make sure the skill sets are there for our young people to get into the technology industry.

So, Mr. Chair, that's just a couple, or three examples where I believe that we do have a bright future for this province –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HAWKINS: – and I am so pleased and confident to be part of this government to do that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

It certainly is a pleasure to rise in this hon. House on behalf of the fine folks of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune and bring the views of rural Newfoundland and Labrador to this hon. House, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to come back to my colleague and the conversation around doom and gloom in just a second, but first I want to pick up where my colleague for St. John's Centre picked up. She talked about the struggles and challenges of our seniors in this province, struggles and challenges that have gotten far worse in the last three years.

I was in the Avalon Mall this weekend and I stopped to buy lunch. I still haven't been able to get this gentleman out of my head. We struck up a conversation; he was an elderly gentleman, perhaps in his eighties. We were talking about what we were going to buy for lunch. I said: I think I might get a Mozza Burger. He said: I'm going to have the Buddy Burger. I said: Yes, they're good too. He said: Yes, and they're cheap. He said: I can afford a Buddy Burger because they're only \$2.50. He said: I have my drink because I bought it at the Dollar Store before I came over.

It broke my heart, Mr. Chair. I bought him an ice cream and I made his day, but to think that an ice cream is a luxury for a senior is very, very disheartening. To see measures in previous Liberal budgets that cut supports to seniors, cut their diabetic strips, yet we continue to see money like \$22,000 spent on a study to ask people why they're not moving back to Newfoundland when we all know the answer is because of higher taxes, Mr. Chair. That's the reason people are not coming back to Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS. PERRY: Going back now to my colleague – and I've started the heckling, Mr. Chair. If you're going to raise these points, then prepare to be countered because doom and gloom, I think, has been perpetuated in this province far worse than it ever has under Liberal governments.

In fact, Mr. Chair, thank goodness I had no floods and fires this year in January and February. I had the opportunity to sort through some old papers in my office. I came across an article called the rural lament. I thought, oh my, Liberal times are always about the doom and gloom. They like for people to think oh, the sky is falling, that's why we had to raise your taxes. Not true, Mr. Chair, the sky is not falling.

In 2007 and 2008, Newfoundland and Labrador was recognized as a star province because we rode the downturn in the oil industry, which did happen in 2007-2008, all across the globe, similar to what was happening in 2015. But this province threw its tax incentives, tax breaks that fostered business growth, supported the private sector, actually enabled us to ride that wave without doom and gloom. The last three years, not so much.

He referred to coming into an abysmal situation in 2015. Well, this government was quite aware of the challenges that were coming in oil. That is why this government was honest with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and told the truth. We stated HST would have to increase by 2 per cent. We stated an attrition plan would have to be followed to reduce the size of the public service. We did not want mass layoffs. We had a plan of attrition.

That was the worst thing possible – the worst thing ever. We're not going to cut taxes. We're not going to cut jobs. Lo and behold, what happened when they got in? None of that was true. It was the slash and burn. Not only did they raise HST by 2 per cent, they introduced 300 more taxes, Mr. Chair. That is what created an abysmal situation for Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: I stand here today in the face of all of this heckling from my colleagues and I say –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask all Members to show some restraint so we can all hear what the speaker has to say.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair, for your protection.

I can honestly say that the people on this side of the House, all Members of government opposite, believe in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PERRY: We believe in the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We believe in the potential of this province and we believe that in 2019 people will stand up and say: Do you know what? We're going to vote with logic. We're going to vote in what we believe in. We're going to vote in the people of the province and the future that we all know is there if we all work towards it, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PERRY: The message of doom and gloom is not one that we believe in. We believe in the people and our ability to turn things around, Mr. Chair.

There's so much I want to talk about this morning and we don't have a lot of time. So I'm also going to talk about the budget consultations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: Again, we have differing opinions on what the budget consultations have been like in years past versus years today. Like my colleague, I worked with a Regional Economic Development Board and budget consultations were always a very big thing. We spent months consulting with communities, municipalities, local stakeholders and we prepared submissions to the government of the day outlining what the priorities of the people were. What we're finding instead, in budget consultations of the last three years, is we're being led to think a certain way and guided in a certain direction by the nature of the questions that are there.

I, personally, was very alarmed about the focus on ferries. Rural Newfoundland and Labrador has contributed a great deal to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The capital city of St. John's exists in large part because of the contributions of rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I, for one, will stand in this House each and every day in support of our rural communities, which I believe make up the fabric of who we are. I strongly believe in supporting them, Mr. Chair. They will continue to hear me advocate on their behalf for their continued existence and continued support.

I took it upon myself to look at the budget consultation documents over the last three years. There was a lot of talk in 2016 about attrition; in fact, there was a 30 per cent reduction target over three years. Here we are now, Mr. Chair, we're two years in; we don't hear anything about these targets. One of the things that I hope someone will stand up and tell us, over the course of the budget debate, is exactly where we are with these attrition targets.

Have we actually increased the number of employees in public service? Or have we really gotten down to 20 per cent and we'll hit the 30 per cent mark by next year? I don't know, Mr. Chair, because it's really hard to clarify that. It's

very difficult to get the facts. Hopefully, that will be discussed by Members opposite and shown in their budget documents just where they are in achieving those targets.

They also talked about eliminating waste and identifying opportunities to do things better and more efficiently. Again, Mr. Chair, we fail to see where this has taken place. We certainly do hope this budget will bring some clarity to what their plan actually is, because three years in we are still waiting to see what that plan is going to look like for turning things around in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I will say we do have confidence in the people; we do have confidence in the entrepreneurs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PERRY: It is the entrepreneurs who will turn things around and it is the entrepreneurs who are going to make Newfoundland and Labrador a better place for all of us to live in once again.

I plead to the people who are contemplating leaving this province: hang in there, times will get better. This province is robust with opportunity and abounds with natural resources.

With the right leadership, Mr. Chair, we will achieve the prosperity that Newfoundland and Labrador has within its reach, and 2019 is only a year away, Mr. Chair. It's time for everybody to really take a close look at what was promised versus what was delivered and to look to a new government in 2019.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's a privilege to stand in the House this morning, particularly after such a passionate oratorical from the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune. There was some pretty interesting bits of information that she threw out

during her comments and I'll certainly look forward to addressing those.

Mr. Chair, we stand here today talking about Interim Supply. As Members of the House certainly understand, but for those who are watching at home, this is really about a cash management practice. The budget, as the Finance Minister had articulated earlier today, budget 2018 will be brought into the House for all of us to debate. The work I'm sure is ongoing in preparations for budget 2018. There's a huge amount of effort, and I'm sure passion, being brought to the work not only by the public sector employees that are involved but certainly by the Premier, by the Finance Minister, by the Cabinet and all those involved in the decision-making process around the upcoming budget.

I want to take this opportunity to wish the Finance Minister strength and resilience as he does the hard work of leading government's efforts to bring forward a budget, but I must address the comment from the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune when she talked about her government's choice in 2007-08 to spend money.

In 2007-08, I'd remind the Member opposite, was the highest price of oil that we had seen in decades. The former administration, at a time when the rest of the country was experiencing a recession, we weren't in Newfoundland. There was no economic downturn in Newfoundland.

If you go back and look at the facts, you will see that the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador during 2007, 2008 was moving along as expected. There was no recession in the province. The government of the day chose to spend money – as a member of my district said to me one day – like drunken sailors.

Not only did they spend that money, but they also had the responsibility and oversight for public sector pension plans that at the time, in the course of a four-year period, lost almost \$2 billion. The same amount of money that I believe a former premier stood up on the escalator at the airport and proudly displayed as the cheque that he brought back from his lobbying efforts in Ottawa, Mr. Chair – that same money evaporated from public sector pension plans.

The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune can go back and talk about history. What I'd like to do today, Mr. Chair, is to talk about today's situation and the facts.

When we look at the cash flow challenges that this particular government faces, which as the Minister of Finance reported in his mid-year update, about an \$820 million deficit –

AN HON. MEMBER: What did you say?

MS. C. BENNETT: An \$820 million deficit. I'm very proud to be a Member of a government that worked hard to get the Roads Plan out –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. C. BENNETT: – so that contractors and the employees in this particular work can do a better job of bidding and we can get a better return for taxpayers' dollars. That's because of the work of this government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. C. BENNETT: I was also pleased to hear recently the Premier say the fiscal targets that our government established were important and remain a priority, and I have said that to him. I am pleased that's his position.

Our government continues to be transparent around the oil forecast, whether it's the price of the oil per barrel, whether it's US exchange. Certainly, I look forward to hearing the production numbers when the upcoming budget is released in the next number of weeks.

I'd also like to make clear at this particular moment I have many constituents in my district that work in the offshore oil industry. I want to say, in a very distinct way, that I support the actions of the C-NLOPB in reprimanding Husky for its actions in allowing 84 people to be put at risk because oil extractors put money before people's lives. Our responsibility as a government is to call them on that.

While the Member for Topsail - Paradise did a very eloquent job of talking about the history of oil price, we know all too well on this side of the House, as do all the people in the province, the impact of oil price as part of our revenue. That's

why I'm really proud of the transparency that our government has provided with that information.

I'd also say that I'm very proud of the transparency around the information we're providing on debt. I respectfully disagree with the Leader of the Opposition when he made reference to the comment he did while he talked about potential bankruptcy. He didn't mention provincial debt, that I remember hearing him say.

Our provincial debt is significant, Mr. Chair, but let's be frank about where that debt has come from. I spoke about the 2007, 2008 spending from the previous administration. Nobody in this House can deny that a project that doubled in price and is going to be now laid at the taxpayers' and ratepayers' feet to be able to pay for this is going to be a significant, significant, impact – \$12 billion, Mr. Chair, for Muskrat Falls.

The debts and liabilities that this province have are significant, Mr. Chair. When we have to look at how the budget is going to impact the economy of the province, we have to also take into account – as I'm sure the Premier is, as I'm sure the Minister of Finance is, as I'm sure the entire Cabinet is – the global economy.

When we look at the impact on things around the oil price, for example, whether it's fracking in the US, whether it's the global shift to more climate friendly power sources, and the world's understanding of climate change, we also need to understand the global geopolitical environment.

As recent as today, we're seeing stock markets react because one person left the White House. One person who is rumoured to be holding the reins of a trade war in our world that could significantly impact, not just Newfoundland and Labrador's economy, the Canadian economy and the global economy.

Mr. Chair, I have had many conversations with constituents in the last number of months about the financial situation of the provincial Treasury, about the provincial economy. I have many members in my district, many constituents in my district who are raising young families who want

their children to stay here. I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that this government, that this side of the House is going to do everything we can to ensure that mothers like me have the opportunity to say to our children: Yes, this is a place for you to choose to stay and live and work.

But hope comes from action. That's what this government is going to continue to do to make sure that the things that need to get done, like the roads program that I mentioned earlier, like the investments in infrastructure that are going to be driving economic activity in parts of the province that need that economic activity, that those efforts are the ones that we focus our attention on.

Mr. Chair, let's also be clear that as we face these challenges of deficit and debt, that we also recognize the significant impact that demographics is having on our province. Demographic challenges are going to continue to affect service delivery. They're going to continue to affect how we provide the services such as health care and education to the people of the province. Those are the reasons why passionate debate is important and partisan rhetoric is important, but the facts have to be dealt with and have to be addressed.

Mr. Chair, as long as I'm sitting in this seat in the House and as long as I represent the District of Windsor Lake, I will not forget that we have a responsibility to the 5,000, roughly, young kids who entered full-day kindergarten last year, who have their lives to live based on the decisions that this House makes over the next coming weeks.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Everybody has trouble remembering the name of the new district, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

I'm happy to speak in the Interim Supply debate because it gives us an opportunity to look at how

we are spending our money. What we're doing here today is getting ready to approve the expenditures that need to happen in the interim between now and when the new budget is put in place. We can't have March 31 come without having approval for monies to be spent after March 31. So for those watching, that's what this is about.

It is a time in looking at this bill, a bill that is going to be spending over \$2 billion, that we look at the importance of assessing of how we spend our money, not just looking at debt and deficit, which are going up under this government, I would point out, but how we are spending the money and how we are taking care of people. One of the issues that I want to talk about right now is something that's very serious, Mr. Chair, and I hope that I'll be able to speak to it without having to work my way through a wall of sound because we are dealing with serious issues in here. What I want to talk about today does have to do with health of women. In actual fact, I say to the government, what I'm putting forward would actually be taking care of women and saving money at the same time.

Recently, all of our caucuses, all three, had the opportunity to meet with the medical students from Memorial University. Every year they have a campaign; issues that they think are very important, serious issues. They come and they meet with our caucuses and talk to us. I don't know if they've met with the Minister of Health and Community Services yet, but they will be I think – yes, he's nodding his head. That appointment is set up and they have met with our caucus. I understand they also met with the Official Opposition.

The issue that they are looking at this year is the issue of the fact that access to abortion in our province is not something that's the same for women throughout the province. If you live in the St. John's area, for example, in the general area, then you can have access to abortion services both through the hospital, Eastern Health, the Health Sciences, as well as through the Athena clinic.

If you're living in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, it's a different issue. It means paying money to come into St. John's, travel expenses, the expenses of while the woman is here, being

taken care of. It's very, very expensive, approximately \$1,500 for an abortion and an expensive process very hard on women in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

The interesting thing and what has been presented to us by the medical students is information about a pharmaceutical that is available here but it's not covered by MCP. Mifegymiso is a pill; it's actually a combination of two pharmaceuticals that can be taken within the first nine weeks of gestation and creates an abortion that is non-surgical. So physically, it's much easier on the woman than going through a surgical procedure.

The pill, the cost of it, is \$350 as compared to a surgical abortion, which is \$1,500. If this pill were used as it is in more than 60 countries in the world and if it were available here, universally available under our MCP as it is in six provinces in Canada – so it's universally available under the medical program, our health care program, in six provinces in Canada, and in other provinces there's partial coverage.

So what the medical students are asking for is not for something that's strange. It's for us to come on line with what's going on around the world and in our own country. It is something that would be safer because when you have a surgical procedure if you have to have a full anaesthetic – general anaesthetics are always dangerous. So it's easier on the woman. Then the fact that it would be able to happen in the woman's community, she does not have to go through the stress – the financial stress, number one, of getting into St. John's and the stress of travel, et cetera.

Now, there's more to this than making the pill available. I think it should be made available under our health care program. It should be on the list of pharmaceuticals that are covered. We also have to make sure that – an abortion is an abortion, and I would bet there's not one person in this Legislature who doesn't know a woman who has had to go through the struggle of making a decision about a pregnancy. It is not easy. It is not easy at all. And I know several who've made decisions for abortions. And it's not a flip of a coin, it's something they've put a lot of thought into, circumstances that cause

them to make the decision to have the abortion, and it has an impact on a woman.

We just can't talk about abortions, whether it's surgical abortions, or whether it's an abortion that's caused by the taking of this pharmaceutical, we can't talk about it lightly. We know that there needs to be services provided to women who have abortions. It doesn't matter how that abortion is caused. You need services prior to help you make the decision, you need support while going through the procedure and you need support after. That's a proven fact.

When you have a clinic, like the Athena clinic, that's certainly what happened there. I find that there's something very interesting going on in Corner Brook, and some of my colleagues may know about it. In Corner Brook it was a combination of the Corner Brook Status of Women Council working with doulas – doula is the name for people, who are mainly women, who are birth coaches – to give them the opportunity in Corner Brook to support women who get abortions. They've gone through special training. The training they've gone through was through the Atlantic Abortion Support Services in Halifax. They're specially trained to work with women who decide to have an abortion. It's an extension of what they do as birth coaches and I think it's an important extension.

What these doulas are trained to do is exactly what I said a minute ago: to work with women during the decision-making time, to be there with them when the procedure is happening, which could be surgical or which could be drug induced and to be there afterwards as a support for however long a woman may need that. Right now, the drug is available and women can use it here in the province. It's just that it's not covered by our health care plan so then it's limited. Low-income, single women in rural Newfoundland, for example, are not going to have \$350 to pay for this drug.

In Corner Brook the doulas, along with the Status of Women Council who worked with them, are there and ready to put a plan in place so that they would be ready to work with women who need abortions and be there for women, whether it was surgical or drug induced. They can't go ahead with their plan, especially when it

comes to the support of the use of the drug – they can but they really do need to know that they have support of physicians and they have support of pharmacies. If it's going to be a universal service that they're offering to all women who have decided to have an abortion, then they need to know this drug is being covered by our drug plan.

I stand here supporting what the medical students are saying. I think it's extremely important. It's important, as I said, for uninsured, young, low-income-earning women in rural communities in particular. I think it will be something that would offer women some sense of security, not having to go through a surgical procedure when they could go through this drug-induced procedure.

So I ask the government to seriously consider what the medical students are talking about.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's amazing what you have to listen to on a Wednesday morning with that crowd over there. At least the NDP had something sensible to say in both their speeches. Just to let the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi know, we, as a caucus, will be meeting with the MUN medical students tomorrow morning at 10:30. We look very much forward to having that conversation with them.

Getting back to what the Opposition had to say, it's a revisionist history. The Oscars were on Sunday and the original screenplay winner couldn't have come up with a better script than they had come up with. I can't believe they actually believe what they're saying.

The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune can't actually believe that. She was laughing the whole way through her speech. It was like an inside joke to get us roiled up and pretend that the previous 12 years didn't happen.

The Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island gets up and says we have a shortage of skilled trades here in Newfoundland and

Labrador because they're all gone; yet he is the one who signed the contract to build two ferries in Romania. Even the Romanians wouldn't buy Romanian ferries, Mr. Chair. They've been lemons the whole time and the only bought a one-year insurance policy.

I mean if you go to Best Buy, they try to get you a three-year plan.

AN HON. MEMBER: They forgot the wharf.

MR. KING: Then they forgot to buy the wharf; yes, that's right. They bought the ferries – my friend, the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue, talk about skilled trades, all those skilled trades could have been kept here in Newfoundland and Labrador if they built the ferries in Marystown.

You wouldn't have to go to the federal government with your hand out and say can you please forgive the tariffs because apparently they forgot to ask for that too. Boy, oh boy, oh boy, make no wonder we're in the situation we're in today.

Then the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune talks about how bad it is right now, how bad the Liberals are. They wasted \$20 billion of oil revenue.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. KING: Twenty-five billion dollars in oil revenue and then another \$4 billion in lost tax revenues so Danny Williams could give his rich buddies a break.

That's where it all went. It didn't go to the lower income people. The biggest benefactors of that tax cut back in 2007 were the wealthy, the people who didn't need it. And then they get up here and wonder why we're in the state we're in today. That is why we're in the state we're in today. They spent like drunken sailors, Mr. Chair, and I know a thing or two about drunken sailors.

AN HON. MEMBER: You spend your own money.

MR. KING: Oh, that's true. They weren't like drunken sailors. At least drunken sailors spend

their own money. They spent the money of the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Then we get into the boondoggle of Muskrat Falls. How great that was going to be, it's going to bring clean energy to Newfoundland and Labrador, solve all of our problems. Do you know what? It was going \$6 billion but that's okay because power rates aren't going to go up. They're only going to go up a little bit to cover off a small cost.

Where did that expand to? Twelve billion dollars, double. Where are power rates going to go? They're going to double.

AN HON. MEMBER: What about Humber Valley Paving?

MR. KING: Oh, I can go on and on about Humber Valley Paving.

They get up so self-righteous and stand in Question Period and talk about what Members over here do when they gave their buddy, a former leader, the pseudo premier of the province of 2014, a \$19 million writeoff for Humber Valley Paving. That's the stuff they're at and they wonder why we're in the situation we're in today.

Then the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune says well, times will get better, wait until 2019. Well, times are already getting better. We've made changes that are actually having a positive effect on Newfoundland and Labrador.

We've seen great investments here in this province. We've invested \$3 billion into an infrastructure plan. We've created a five-year paving roads plan – that the Member for Conception Bay South got up and asked a question last fall. Yes, he actually asked that question. So if you're spending less money, how are you getting more pavement? Because it's called having a plan. It's not doing 100 metres here, 100 metres there, a kilometre there and a kilometre there to try to win votes, like they used to do. I can tell you from my district, they certainly didn't do a very good job of it to see the conditions of the roads out there. The worst roads where the former Finance Minister's

roads, and we got to work on that. Unbelievable the stuff they get on with over there.

What we've seen actually in the District of Bonavista is some significant investments in infrastructure. Through municipal capital works Clean Water and Wastewater Fund, we've seen infrastructure investments in the district. The water tower in Bonavista is one example of that, a multi-million dollar project that was long overdue. It was announced by that crowd about two or three times but they never did get around to doing it. Do you know what we did? We actually did it with water and sewer upgrades through Phase I in Bonavista.

We had a section in Bonavista, Route 235, the Birchy Place area, which had been without water and sewer for 40 years. Where were your investments in water and sewer, I ask you? There were none. This past year we had Phase I done and I've been advocating very hard to get Phase II done. Hopefully we'll see that soon.

We're seeing the replacement of the Bar Bridge in Catalina. I can tell you one thing; if the former Member was there we certainly wouldn't see the Bar Bridge done in Catalina. He read the riot act to council apparently.

We've seen new lift stations in Trinity Bay North, a water line replacement in Trinity Bay North, the second biggest community. We're going to see paving upgrades there. We've seen water upgrades for George's Brook-Milton.

Now imagine, they've had problems with the Lily Pond connection in Milton for about four or five years. That was the former Finance minister's community. You mean to tell me in four or five years that crowd couldn't get the funding when the Member was the minister of Finance. Apparently, if you're a Cabinet minister on that side then you can have as much money as you want.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's how we got bankrupt.

MR. KING: Well, that's true enough, that's how we got bankrupt. Do you know what? We were able to get Milton finally on a stable water supply through George's Pond last year; a \$1.6

million investment, Mr. Chair. We're looking at other upgrades for that area as well.

We're looking at building upgrades in Port Rexton. We're working with the town of Trinity to help them with a new town hall. We have emergency funding for Upper Amherst Cove. Those are significant investments in infrastructure in communities, in municipalities and local service districts in the District of Bonavista, Mr. Chair. That's just two short years.

When the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune said: Don't worry, times are going to get better, I think that's a pretty good investment. They haven't seen that in the previous four years, that's for sure.

We've seen commitments to road and brush cutting. We talked about our five-year Roads Plan.

To the Member for CBS, the reason we can get more paving done for less is because we actually do bigger projects. We're not out there looking for votes and trying to please everyone. We're taking a large project and we're doing the works of it. One example of that is the neck across from George's Brook over to the Bonavista highway. That's been bad for 20 years.

AN HON. MEMBER: Just 20?

MR. KING: Well, it's been bad for a long time.

A former member for Trinity North and a former member for Bonavista South couldn't get along, couldn't see the benefit of actually working together to get a good road done. I got it done through our five-year Roads Plan, and lobbying hard for it, within two years. It's unbelievable.

We've seen road improvements along Route 230, another two kilometres in Port Rexton. We've seen levelling done in Trinity East. We've seen another six kilometres done at Father Morris Pond to Port Union. That was long overdue. It was supposed to be done years ago, but due to political interference from that crowd, they said, no, we'll go do something else. We'll do a kilometre here, a kilometre there and try to win a few votes. That was long overdue.

I hope to get another chance to get up and speak to the benefits of Interim Supply, and I look forward to speaking again.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

I recognize the hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to get up after a couple of interesting debates, Mr. Chair. It's all part of the process. I respect it and it's entertaining. I'll have a few comments to make in a little bit, but I figured it was more appropriate in this conversation on Interim Supply to talk a little bit about my district at first.

We all get up and say – I know my colleague from Cape St. Francis has great pleasure in getting up on the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis every opportunity, and I respect that. I think we all represent beautiful districts and we live in a beautiful province. My district is no different, Mr. Chair. Conception Bay South is quite a beautiful district and I'm very proud to represent it.

I know the Premier has the virtue this year of having the Winter Games coming out in Deer Lake. We just, in 2016, had to showcase my own community. I think they did a great job. I certainly hope, and I'm sure the community of Deer Lake will do the same this coming winter and I wish them the best.

Mr. Chair, we talk and we listen to a lot of rhetoric, and I may have a couple of comments as time goes on. I'd rather try to keep it a little bit contained for now, but we all come in this House and do our part, whether in Opposition, whether on the government side, whether in Third, independent, whatever role we play we all advocate for our own districts and do what's best for the people who elected us to represent them in this House.

I get up in this House and I'll ask the ministers or I'll speak to the minister regarding roads, or I'll speak to the Minister of Justice regarding policing. I'll speak to various ministers regarding any issue that's important to my district. Because each one of us represent the area because it's important to the people we represent and it's our obligation to the people.

In saying that, I have an issue in my district. I know the Member for Bonavista was just commenting on all the roadwork. He had pavement done in his area and he's very, very proud of it. So he probably should be, but my district is in dire need. The main route runs through my community and it's – I spoke in the House on a petition the other day and I said there were 20 tires ruined, there's probably more than that. That was in a 24-hour period.

People come to me and I respond to them. It's one of the promises I made upon being elected. I said I would never shy away. Sometimes those conversations are not easy when you get people wanting their car fixed, this fixed or complaining about the roads. They're coming to you wanting you to intervene. It's a challenge but I've always been one of those people, I feel that – my virtue has always been honesty will set you free.

Sometimes being honest is not the easiest thing. It's not the easiest thing to do sometimes because people don't like the answer, but I always promised when I used to knock on doors, you'll get an answer. You may not like it, but I'll tell you the truth and I'll do my best. That's gotten me to this point and it's going to carry me through, Mr. Chair, because I'm one of those people that conscience – they're not providing the other alternative. So it's the only way I can be set free. I live on those grounds.

I enjoy the back and forth debate and I enjoy listening to some of the commentary. Fair game, some comments are made against the former government and us. It's fair play, and some of it you just tip your hat. You go in and you have your bout and you tap gloves after the fight.

Some of the commentary said opposite – I'd like to point out, and it's not meant to be a to and fro, but the Member for Windsor Lake got up and spoke passionately after my colleague from

Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune had roiled up the troops across the way. She talked about the gloom and doom comments and whatnot.

In December of 2015, I remember it. People came to me and people remember the day. She was part of the gloom and doom that came over the province in December of 2015. She was sat at that same table, at the news conference that said we're in big trouble.

AN HON. MEMBER: And you were.

MR. PETTEN: No one is arguing if we were in big trouble or not, Mr. Chair.

It's the commentary; it's the lasting effect of those comments. I've heard it for almost going on three years. We're in the third year now and people still talk about it.

It put a fear in people. People are afraid to spend. I hear people have money but they're afraid to spend it. That's a line I hear, and I'm sure a lot of Members in this House hear the same thing. They're afraid to spend, not knowing what the future holds.

Consumer confidence is down. We all know that. We hear all these anecdotal stories. We hear it every day. Consumer confidence is down. You talk to business owners – I'll give you a good example. I have an automotive garage in my district. I have several, obviously. This one has been around for a long time, pretty reputable place, always had what I consider decent business. It employs I don't know how many people, probably half dozen people.

Several weeks back I was talking to another automotive garage in my area and they said this guy took in \$300 last week – \$300. It's a sign of the times. I guess people are going elsewhere, they're not getting stuff done that needs to be done and this was just one of the many stories that we hear.

Our economy is struggling under this tax burden. I won't get into my rant. I could go on about taxes and all that and everyone over there will be shouting. I don't want to do that. What I want to try to do is speak from the gut on it because I talk to people in the district – and

everyone here in this House, I'm sure, does the same thing. There has to be a better way.

We say that all the time. I know people say this crowd here – and I won't point out the Member for Bonavista. I always refer to the government as the government whether you're Liberals, but you're the government. We are the Official Opposition, the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador. I think that proper language in this House should be referring to us in a proper tone. I don't think anyone here are the other crowd. Anyway, I just wanted to correct him on that.

In saying that, there has to be a better way. We go and we always argue equalization and you listen to the debates going on and on. We don't have a revenue problem; we have a spending problem. We've heard Members opposite criticize that the money that the former administration wasted and whatever – and I don't agree that we wasted that money, but that's the commentary that was said in this House. But the spending has not changed. There's been some tinkering. The spending has not really changed much, Mr. Chair.

It's been reported you will not qualify for equalization because of the revenue; your revenues are too high. You have to change the formulas and what have you. So what else can you do if you're revenues – if you have a household and you're taking in \$200,000 a year and you can't afford to pay your light bill, what do you do? The \$200,000 is not changing. You got to do something with your expenses. You got to cut that one vehicle or you got to cut the one phone or you got to change how many times you're going out. You got to change your lifestyle. You got to change your spending habits. Those are not easy decisions, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: I don't advocate for people to be losing jobs; I'm not one of them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: I don't advocate for those things, Mr. Chair, but I know there are tough decisions. Governments, no matter what stripe, are faced with those difficult decisions. I always say actions need to match words. When I hear the opposite criticizing what this crowd –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: – as the Member for Bonavista kept saying “that crowd,” but what's being done differently today when it comes to that than what was done when the former administration was in power, I've yet to see. I don't know what the answer is. I think that taxation is not the answer. I'm not a believer in taxes. I never believed in excessive taxes. As much as last week I stood in this House on a private Member's motion on carbon tax because I don't believe in taxes.

Everyone here can disagree with me. You can all have your opinions. I have big shoulders. That's irrelevant. That doesn't matter. That's my opinion. We agreed as a caucus, we felt that way. We're paying our fair share. We took a stance. Agree with us or not, that's irrelevant. Three hundred taxes and fees were not the way to rejuvenate this economy.

I'll go back to my comment just a few moments ago there, people feel that there's lots of money there – people have money but they won't spend it. That's the reality. A 15 per cent tax on insurance is crippling people. That's a crippling tax.

I, personally, in my whole household I have two daughters, vehicles, your home, everything else. It's costing an extra \$1,000 just in my household. Fifteen per cent on taxes – I have two young girls driving, their premiums are not very cheap, trust me. I think anyone here can attest with having children. That is a burden upon us.

Again, Members opposite can criticize and look and question me, that's fine, but I'm not making this stuff up. Anyone here who has a young child or a young person driving around, you're looking at \$3,000 for insurance plus tax. That extra tax is affecting businesses, not only young

people, it's affecting families. The remainder of the taxes – and you got the gas tax. The carbon tax could be coming sometime, too, and that's going to affect everybody.

Those are all features. Like I said, I could have gotten up and there's lots of time in the budget debate, I'm sure I'll have a couple of rounds yet. I could have gotten up and fired up the troops and done it, but I think the most important thing, the message I personally feel – and I really feel it, it's not pretend – that we have to try to find a better way to do things.

I don't have all the answers, Mr. Chair, but I'm willing to provide input in finding the right answers. I don't believe the way we're heading now is the right direction.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Chair, I'm going to speak pretty low because I don't want to be classified as a bully today if I raise my voice a bit and speak up. People sometimes take things way out of context and make statements which aren't true. I'm going to keep myself low so the Member for Mount Pearl North won't have to feel bullied today. I won't bar any doors. You can rest assured I won't bar any doors.

I heard the Member who just got up speaking. We have a lot of issues. But do you notice the one thing he never gave? One solution, not one. Do you want to talk about it and tell us what we wouldn't have done? Muskrat Falls.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Do you want a second one? The Roddickton pellet plant never developed one pellet. Why not talk about the big oil down in Parson's Pond somewhere, the \$10 or \$12 million holes drilled? Not one bit of oil.

Do you want me to continue on? Do you want to talk about the \$40 million for the hospital in

Corner Brook when there wasn't one piece of steel put into it? Do you want me to keep going, of stuff you shouldn't have done?

Mr. Chair, this is the kind of stuff that I try to stay calm because I don't want to intimidate anybody, but you just can't take it because I lived through it. I lived through the seven announcements for the hospital in Corner Brook when they walked out there and made seven different announcements on the hospital.

I can tell you one thing, the Premier of the province made a commitment while he in Opposition that he will find a way. Guess what? The long-term care has been awarded. Guess what? The RFQ for the acute care hospital has been put out. Guess what? We're working on the Waterford Hospital. Do you know why? Because our Premier of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador said he's going to do the right thing for the people and not squander their money. That's why, Mr. Chair, we support the Premier of this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: I heard you talk about the Member for Windsor Lake – doom and gloom. Do you know what she did? Do you know what the Member did? She spoke the truth and you can't handle the truth.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: When she stood up when she was Minister of Finance and said here are the issues with the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, that was the truth. They did not walk in one day and say there's a \$2.7 billion deficit. That never happened overnight. You hid it. Your government hid it and when we got into government, when we got it, about a week later, the full amount of what the deficit was, it was unbelievable.

I can go on and on, but I won't raise my voice because I don't want to make anybody feel intimidated, Mr. Chair. That's the type of guy I am, I like speaking my mind but I don't want – so if you want me to keep going, I'll just give you a few things. The capital works programs and the Roads Program that were started and are continued on. The business groups, they love it.

There are plans put in place that they know next year they can plan it out.

Mr. Chair, I heard the Member talk about the roads. One of the things that I never got over yet was the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island in 2015, there was money allocated for the District of Bay of Islands, at the time, the Humber - Bay of Islands, and they took all the money back in the tender, two days before the tender.

AN HON. MEMBER: Where'd they put it?

MR. JOYCE: They put it out in some PC district. I even pleaded with the minister. I put it in writing. I said, look, forget the rest; there's one piece of road on Plant Hill, the ruts – I even sent pictures in to show, please do this here. There are going to be accidents. It's major, it's major. Do you know what they did? Nothing.

So don't anybody over there tell me about how you treated people on this side. Don't do it, because I was there. I wrote the minister seven letters on it. Seven letters, pleaded with him. I'll forget the rest. I even went on *Open Line*, I said I'll even stop talking about it, just do this piece of road because it's dangerous. Guess what? He laughed. So don't anybody over there tell me what happened to Humber - Bay of Islands, I was there. I was absolutely there, Mr. Chair.

This is why I'm saying when the Minister of Transportation and Works comes out with a five-year Roads Plan and says 50 per cent of that is going to be done this year or this year, it's done on priority, not on who you know and who's got the most influence in this government. It has gone on need in this province. The construction association, that's why they think it's the greatest plan that ever came out in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Do you know who came up with that idea? It was the Premier of the province, Mr. Chair. He is the Premier who said we have to treat everybody equal. We have to put a plan out for the business community, and we're doing the same thing in capital works.

Mr. Chair, I have to go on. The Member over there, he's laughing over there. Do you want to know something else that was done? Get this

now. They had a 20-year program, from Municipal Affairs over three years. Guess what? Before the election, do you know what they did? They spent the whole \$60 million. That's one thing. It probably went to some project. I know what districts it went through. Don't worry, we never got too much over here; have no worries about that.

Do you know the part about it, you want to talk deceit? Do you want to talk about how the people of the province were led down the garden path while holding your hand? At the same time they had the \$60 million spent, they put out applications, asking for applications for capital works. There wasn't one cent in the fund to put toward the applications they asked to see. And you wonder why we're over here so happy that you're not in control anymore?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: But just think about that. The 268 municipalities in the province, gave out the applications, here are your applications, bring it in, we've got money for you. There's no money there. It was all spent.

Mr. Chair, you think about \$34.6 million from the federal fund sitting on the desk. All you had to do was sign it off and the people of the province could have used the funds. Would not sign it off, because you were mad at Stephen Harper – wouldn't sign it off. It's unbelievable, it is unbelievable.

So when we stand up and we make plans for the roads, for Municipal Capital Works, we have to make tough decisions, Mr. Chair. I remember when we all met as a caucus and we said here are some of the decisions that we have to make. Politicians want to be liked in the province, but you have to do the right thing.

I always remember Clyde Wells. I said this before about the Premier of the province, Clyde Wells and our Premier. I said this before, he reminds me of Clyde Wells. In 1992, Clyde Wells had to make some cuts. They were going to have a few disturbances in the public, Mr. Chair, and I'll never forget this. Everybody is saying we're going into an election in 2003, we can't have these big fights going on; we can't have it.

Clyde Wells said: No, we have to do it. I remember – and this is what reminds me of this Premier of the province and I said it many times. People knew I was very close to Clyde Wells and I spoke my mind to him. I went to him. I said: Premier, a lot of people are concerned. We were going to a firemen's ball in McIvers, it was in Gillams. I said: A lot of people are upset and concerned about that. His exact words – and this is what reminds me with this Premier of the province and I said it many times. His exact words: Eddie, he said, I'd rather lose with honesty than win with dishonesty.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Those were the words that reminds me so much. Mr. Chair, that's why when the Premier of this province said we have to make the tough decisions, this is not for us in this room. We're all going to make it. It's for our kids and grandkids.

If we don't make the tough decisions, if we don't set the base now, if we don't end up, Mr. Chair, in this province having a strong foundation, it's going to finally whittle away. So when the people talk about decisions we made, I always go back to decision that Clyde Wells made, that the premier of this province said we have to be honest with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We can't put our heads in the sand. We can't put applications out if there's no funding. We just can't say we're going to pave 100 feet here or 100 feet here because it might get us a few votes or something, we have to do what's right for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: I'll tell the people of this province right now, Mr. Chair, I'll tell everybody in the province right now, I'll tell all the caucus, I'll tell the people opposite, this is one Member who's been around. This is one Member who's going to stand behind the Premier of the province because I know what he's doing in this province is for the good of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Chair, have you seen what's said in the polls? It shows people don't like what we're

doing, but they understand it and they know it has to be done. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador are not hiding their heads in the sand like the Opposition did for years, go spend like drunken sailors. I can name a hundred examples.

I'm not going to stand here on a regular basis and let the Opposition talk about what we did. I can tell you what we did was a reaction from what you never did, which was to be honest with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Put your head in the sand, Mr. Chair, and just spend, spend, spend because you had one goal only: get elected in 2015.

That is why I am so proud to stand with this team over here, Mr. Chair, to do what's right for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. If the polls show we're going to move on, well we can walk away and keep our heads high, be proud because we did what's right for Newfoundlander and Labradorians, not for the PC Party and not to get re-elected, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I would ask that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): The hon. the Chair of Committee of the Whole.

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again on tomorrow.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, given the hour, I would move that this House recess until 2 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: In accordance with paragraph 9(1)(b) of the Standing Orders, the House is in recess until 2 o'clock this afternoon.

Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

In the Speaker's gallery, I would like to recognize Mr. Shawn Best, Fred Best, Louise Best, Betty Neal and Paul Neal. These are family members of Victoria Best, whose life will be celebrated in a Members' statement today.

In the public gallery, I would also like to welcome additional family members and friends of Victoria Best: Major William and Marcie Hopkins, Dennis Pynn, Marion Forsey, Robert and Daphne Best, Renee Best-Cooper, Joyce

Best, Beryl Saunders, Alex Saunders and Ruby Boone.

A warm welcome to you all.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today we will hear from the hon. Members for the Districts of Terra Nova, Ferryland, Bonavista, Mount Pearl - Southlands and Mount Pearl North.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to share the story of community advocate, tireless volunteer and entrepreneur, Victoria Best. Victoria was a prolific writer who openly talked about her personal struggles with mental illness, in the hope that others would find support from her social media postings.

Victoria was also an avid sports fan, for she loved to watch the New England Patriots. She also volunteered at the local SPCA. Victoria had a special gift for music. In 2016, she bought her first home and developed Belle Music Studio. She had the ability to recognize the uniqueness in others, especially her students, so that their individual strengths became their assets.

As part of Canada's 150th birthday, Victoria was one of the first 20 recipients to receive the 150 Faces of Clarenville Recognition Award. This prestigious award recognizes individuals who have made a measurable impact on the community through their contributions and accomplishments.

On December 11, at the age of 27, Victoria lost her battle with mental illness. In her honour, Pawsology, a local animal service dog support group, has named its most recent recruit, Tori.

In such a short time, Victoria accomplished so much.

I ask all Members to join me in celebrating a life lived, applauding my friend, Victoria Best.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for the District of Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize a young constituent of mine from my district, a grade nine junior high school student from Baltimore School in Ferryland.

Luke Shannahan is the junior high winner for the Heritage Places Poster Contest. His poster was unveiled on Monday, February 19, 2018 in St. John's. Luke's poster was a drawing of R.J. O'Brien's General Store, which is a registered heritage structure in Luke's hometown of Cape Broyle.

Luke's school, Baltimore School, will also receive a monetary prize in the amount of \$300. Approximately 1,000 students from 50 schools across the province produced submissions for the contest. The winning submission is featured on the foundation's poster promoting Heritage Day 2018 in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would like to congratulate Luke on his accomplishment and recognize him for his talent and the winner of the junior high school division.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all my colleagues of the House of Assembly to congratulate Luke Shannahan and all the winners of the 13th Annual Heritage Places Poster Contest.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, It's truly an honour to stand in this House to recognize great people, organizations and events from my district. That is certainly the case with the Tourism Excellence Awards from Hospitality NL, where three of the eight award winners came from the District of Bonavista. Long being a leader in the tourism

and hospitality sector, it is wonderful to see that key players on the Peninsula were recognized.

The Tourism Champion Award was received by John Norman of Bonavista. This award is presented to an individual that has worked diligently to ensure that the tourism industry prospers, and has given freely of their time and energy to champion interests and enhance the tourism industry.

The Tourism Innovator Award was received by Alicia MacDonald and Sonja Mills of the Port Rexton Brewing Company. This award recognizes a company that demonstrates ingenuity and creativity in their business activities.

The Cultural Tourism Award was received by the Bonavista Biennale – Encounters on the Edge. This was an innovative, rural-based, month-long contemporary visual art exhibition, presented at 23 indoor and outdoor sites. Plans are already in place for a return in 2019.

Please join me in congratulating the recipients; their awards are well deserved.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my privilege to stand in this hon. House to offer congratulations to two individuals who have made a significant contribution to sport in my community. The Mount Pearl Sports Hall of Fame was founded in 1995 by the Mount Pearl Sport Alliance and, since that time, has inducted 82 tremendous individuals.

Today, I would like to acknowledge the achievements of two others who have been inducted into the athlete category. Noel Keough has been inducted, primarily for his accomplishments in the sport of baseball as a tremendous pitcher, first baseman and hitter, with such accomplishments as being the only Mount Pearl player to win the Rookie of the Year Award in both St. John's junior and senior baseball leagues in the same year. He also

displayed great skill and enjoyed significant success in the sport of ice hockey.

Derek French is another all-around athlete who played soccer and baseball, but is primarily noted for his skill and contribution to the sport of hockey in Mount Pearl both on the ice, as well as a member of five provincial ball hockey championship teams.

I would ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating these amazing individuals on this significant accomplishment and wish them all the very best in their future sporting endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Mr. Speaker, in our own community there's a great need for emergency food assistance. I rise today to acknowledge the two food banks in Mount Pearl and their wonderful volunteers on the valuable service they are providing by donating food when needed.

The food banks serving Mount Pearl are both run by the St. Vincent de Paul Society and are operated out of Mary Queen of the World Parish and St. Peter's Parish. Food is provided to families and individuals in need without regard for race, religion or national origin. Families are asked to provide identification and proof of residence in the community and may return monthly if needed.

Mr. Speaker, these food banks provide vital services and allow people to make ends meet when it may not be otherwise possible.

I now ask all Members present to join me in recognizing and thanking the St. Vincent de Paul Society food banks for all they do to help when needed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

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

On March 16 the Department of Justice and Public Safety will host its third justice summit. Similar to the previous summits held in St. John's and Happy Valley-Goose Bay, the upcoming event in Corner Brook will bring together key players in the criminal justice system to identify issues and determine possible solutions and action plans for improvements.

Mr. Speaker, I believe our justice summit in Corner Brook will be just as informative as the previous summits we have hosted, and I am very much looking forward to hearing what my colleagues on the West Coast have to say about how we can make our justice system stronger.

Having such a diverse group of front line and management employees in the same room, including judiciary, police, mental health advocates, representatives of indigenous organizations, staff from various justice and public safety divisions, as well as other community members, is crucial to addressing the challenges that we face.

To directly hear about the experiences these people have working in the justice system in our province has been enlightening. While the views expressed and experiences described are often different, they are all connected, Mr. Speaker. I believe we can all work together to make the justice system in Newfoundland and Labrador stronger by examining it through these different perspectives.

In St. John's, participants discussed underlying issues with offenders, lack of alternative processes, and court-related delays.

In Happy Valley-Goose Bay, participants discussed lack of alternatives to the current criminal justice system, delays within the courts, and the recruitment and retention of staff.

Also, at our summit in Happy Valley-Goose Bay last fall, we were fortunate to welcome the hon. Justice Malcolm Rowe, Newfoundland and

Labrador's first Justice named to the Supreme Court of Canada, to participate in this discussion. The results from that summit will be available on our website in the very near future and people can see what was discussed and the issues that have been identified by participants.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that we continue these conversations on how our work is connected and how we can better co-operate to improve the justice system. These constructive dialogues will inform us as we determine the most efficient policies and practices moving forward.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement today. We're quite pleased to see government reach out and seek options on ideas from outside stakeholders, such as this this summit that's being held on the West Coast in Corner Brook. Anytime government includes and engages with the public, it's certainly beneficial and quite often brings great value to public service and to how our justice system will operate.

I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't, on a personal perspective – everyone knows my background in law enforcement within the justice system, but I spent five years of my career actually serving the people of Corner Brook and the West Coast. I'm sure they'll greatly appreciate the opportunity to participate in such a stakeholder session locally in the area.

I wish the minister and the department all the very best. I hope the summit is helpful and informative.

I'd like to take the opportunity, very briefly, to acknowledge all those who work in our justice system in Newfoundland and Labrador because I know firsthand, that sometimes and quite often it can be very, very challenging, very, very

difficult and I wish them all the very best. We thank them for their service.

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. I was fortunate to attend both these summits and heard very clear messages, especially from indigenous governments and agencies about how the justice system is failing them. The issues range from not enough indigenous court liaison workers and translators, to lack of treatment for mental health and addictions issues while incarcerated and after release, and lack of affordable safe housing for people being released from prison and poverty.

Every correction facility is overcapacity and there is no relief in sight. There is something very wrong with this picture. It is imperative that government put into action the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that are in our scope.

Yes, let's keep meeting and talking, but we also need to see action.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to feature Newfoundland and Labrador's presence at the Prospectors and Development Association of Canada (PDAC) conference in Toronto this week where I heard it exclaimed on the floor of our province's pavilion that "discussions were being had and deals were being made."

An example of a project with good news was Minfocus Exploration which extended its zinc portfolio on the Great Northern Peninsula with

an agreement to earn 100 per cent interest in their Round Pond Zinc. It was an exciting time at PDAC with in excess of 25,000 participants representing over 100 countries.

I, along with the parliamentary secretary for Natural Resources and MHA for Labrador West, met with over a dozen exploration and mining companies as well as international leaders interested in learning more about Newfoundland and Labrador's mining industry and the opportunity here.

We were happy to celebrate Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who received awards during the PDAC conference. Acoustic Zoom Inc. was the winner of #DisruptMining 2018 after they impressed judges with their ultra-high-frequency 3-D drill hole seismic imaging. Heather Bruce-Veitch of IOC won the Women in Mining Canada Trailblazer Award – the first of its kind to recognize the achievements of women who have made a significant contribution to Canadian mining.

I also joined the federal minister of Natural Resources to announce the development of a national framework for a Canadian Minerals and Metals Plan.

Mining is a major contributor to the Newfoundland and Labrador economy, with a forecast in 2018 of 6,000 people employed in the industry over \$3.4 billion in mineral shipments. Just recently, the Fraser Institute ranked Newfoundland and Labrador 11th worldwide in its 2017 international mining survey as one of the most attractive jurisdictions for investment. That's quite an improvement, Mr. Speaker, from the ranking of 25th just a couple of years ago.

We'll continue to work with industry for responsible development of mining in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. Our caucus wishes to congratulate our Newfoundland and Labrador companies such as Minfocus Exploration who, through the PDAC conference, acquired new markets and promoted their products.

I also wish to congratulate Acoustic Zoom Inc. on winning the #DisruptMining award and Heather Bruce-Veitch of IOC for winning the Women in Mining Canada Trailblazer Award.

The mining industry of this province is a bright spot in our economy. We have dedicated exploration in mining companies who are continually making new discoveries and exporting our metals and minerals all around the world.

However, I would be remiss if I did not raise concerns about our ability to export iron ore with the potential for tariffs on steel being imported in the United States and, certainly, about NAFTA. It is important that our government strongly lobby the Trudeau government to take the necessary action to protect our industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. But I must point out that last night workers at IOC voted to go on strike, citing draconian changes to sick leave, pensions and retirement. These are only a few of the issues workers have been facing since IOC was taken over by Rio Tinto.

Disregard of Canadian labour values by multinationals was identified in the 2011 report of the industrial inquiry into the strike at Voisey's Bay. I say to the minister that government must ensure that an erosion of workers' labour rights is not what would be an attractive thing for people to come here and use our resources.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

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

Mr. Speaker, \$400,000 of taxpayers' money was awarded by the Liberal government to a company owned by the Premier while he was Premier and a sitting MHA. The Premier has said that he sought a conflict of interest opinion from the Commissioner for Legislative Standards back in 2016 on this \$400,000 grant.

Will the Premier waive privilege and table that 2016 opinion today?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I think it's worthwhile to remind people what the former premier is actually talking about. This was his announcement. This was something that his government approved. As a matter of fact, his minister announced it. His CEO that he appointed announced this.

Mr. Speaker, I proactively disclosed my connection to this company. That was widely known when they had made the decision which they did make. As we all know that when we form government, part of the requirement for me becoming Premier was to set up a blind trust. In doing so, I reached out to the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. He could go and speak to whoever he wished on the issues that connected to my business interests. He did this. Mr. Speaker; everything was suspended.

Some of the things that have said publicly by the Leader of the Opposition, things like money

flowing, completely false I say, Mr. Speaker. That did not happen. The finalization was done by the CEO that he put in place, and I'll be more than willing – once the Commissioner for Legislative Standards finishes his work, that will be publicly released.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, what I say to the Premier is what he said is false. It's not so, Premier, that it was approved in 2015. It was conditionally approved in 2015, subject and meeting the conditions. It wasn't finalized until he was in the Premier's office in July 2016. That's a fact, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the Premier stated that he actually suspended the process while he was Premier to make sure that there were belts and braces in place – his words, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Premier: Why have you refused to make the 2016 opinion on conflict of interest public?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think right now what we've done, what the Member opposite has asked for is to let the Commissioner for Legislative Standards come in and do a complete review from start to finish. Mr. Speaker, I've made it quite clear that we will make that publicly available once the Commissioner does his work from start to finish, which is a complete review of the decision that he made and anything that would have been made subsequent to the conditional approval that his government gave to this particular company.

I will say this, too, Mr. Speaker. When we talk about what is outstanding and all the language that's been used in the last few days, I will this: When it comes to benefits, it goes to the people that live in those units. That loan still exists on that company.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

All MHAs, all Members of this House of Assembly, including ministers, are required to submit an annual disclosure of personal and business interests. MHAs are going through that very process right now as part of their annual process. Maybe that's what the Premier is talking about. Maybe he didn't seek out an opinion on this particular matter at all.

If the Premier proactively disclosed the details and got an opinion from the Commissioner for Legislative Standards then why is it, Premier, that you're withholding this opinion from release?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: As I said, Mr. Speaker, everything was proactively disclosed to his government before they made the decision, before they made the conditional decision on this particular issue.

I've also said that this loan that they have put in place would still exist. It exists simply, Mr. Speaker, so that people that live in those units, the seniors and so on – as you would in any of the affordable housing units in this province, they get a lower rent than market rents.

The benefit to this, the loan is still there. Not forgiven as the Member suggested, still there. The benefits, Mr. Speaker, go to the residents that are actually living in those affordable housing units.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

A \$400,000 grant was given to the Premier of the province while he was Premier of the province. It was given to him by his own

government in July 2016 while he sat in the Premier's office, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, the Privacy Commissioner was not consulted by government on Bill 35, the *Public Inquiries Act*. Section 112 of ATIPP 2015 legislation requires the ministers to consult with the Commissioner on proposed bills that could have implications to access to information and protection of privacy.

I ask the minister: Why did you not consult with the Privacy Commissioner on this important piece of legislation which will impact the release of information by government involving this inquiry?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have to address the preamble because the Member opposite knows – he clearly knows – that the language he used a few minutes ago or a few seconds ago is wrong. It is factually wrong, Mr. Speaker.

This was not a grant, and he is well aware of this. He is deliberately using this language, which is not factually correct. That is a loan. It still exists as a loan, and the Member opposite is acutely aware of the conditions and the criteria. So what he just said is absolutely false.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, if he wants to split hairs, he's saying it's a loan. It's a forgivable loan, Mr. Speaker. That means it will be forgiven and then it becomes a grant. So it's a grant for \$400,000.

I'll once again ask the Minister of Justice: Why did you not consult with the Privacy Commissioner? This is a very important bill before the House that deals with information.

The debate yesterday afternoon was significantly focused on access to privileged information and protection of privileged information.

I ask the minister: Why did you not consult with the Privacy Commissioner, as required to do under section 112?

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

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

The Member opposite was wrong in the language he used in asking questions of the Premier and he's wrong in this. His interpretation of section 112 is actually incorrect.

Again, this is not just mine, what I did was actually seek the guidance of various lawyers within the Department of Justice, civil servants, public servants who have been there for some time. What they have clearly said is there was no duty under section 112 of this piece of legislation to do that consultation because it is not an information issue. It's a privilege issue, for which there's no duty to report. Again, this I something I answered last night as well.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

He just said he sought the opinion of officials in Justice. If you have that opinion, will you waive privilege on it and table it in the House?

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

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

What I can say, and I'm not trying to be facetious here, but we can go out and get an opinion. He could actually seek out some of his lawyer friends – Mr. John Ottenheimer, he could probably ask him and he'll probably get the

same opinion. It's a pretty simple interpretation of section 112.

Now, we had another piece of legislation where he disagreed with our interpretation and it was the Information and Privacy Commissioner that came out and said he was wrong. He was wrong then. He's wrong now.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, let's talk about the Privacy Commissioner because in his annual report he referenced in his own report and reinforced what section 112 says, where ministers are required to consult with the office of the Privacy Commissioner on all proposed legislation that could have implications to access for information.

The Privacy Commissioner actually went on to say that the office of the Privacy Commissioner will review, if requested, any draft legislation, as it is sometimes challenging for drafters to identify potential implications for access to information or protection of privacy. That's the words of the Privacy Commissioner.

The discussion and debate yesterday was heavily focused on information. I ask the minister: Why did you ignore your duty to consult?

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

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

I'm certainly aware of the debate yesterday; I participated in it. What I would say is that the first speaker to the debate from PCs who didn't attend the briefing spent an hour saying stuff about the bill that was completely inaccurate.

So I have no doubt that they have a misunderstanding of that piece of legislation, and they have a misunderstanding about a lot of legislation. What I'm saying – and this is

coming from solicitors within the Department of Justice whose expertise lies in this – is that section 112 does not apply.

But let me reiterate to the general public. We called an inquiry into the Muskrat Falls Project. We are going to put all the information over and we are going to participate fully. I hope that co-operation exists on the other side as well.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Yes, the government did call an inquiry, only after we and others pushed them to do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Please proceed.

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

Bill 35, while providing –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. P. DAVIS: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I can't hear myself.

Bill 35, while providing an opportunity for government to share important information with the commissioner for the Muskrat Falls inquiry, it also allows government to decide themselves what information will be shared, no matter if it's information that was produced prior to the election of 2015 or information after the election of 2015.

I ask the minister: What safeguards are in place to ensure that the current government cannot politicize this very important inquiry?

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

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

The Member opposite continues to impress me because he stood up with a straight face and said: Thank us for making this inquiry happen. But I'll tell you what I won't thank him for, is for making the Muskrat Falls Project happen, the biggest debacle –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: To stand up with a straight face and talk about this inquiry is absolutely amazing.

But again, we made the inquiry happen. We're going to put all the information there and that information is going to go from 2006 up to now. There's no cut off at November 30. This government didn't sanction it; didn't stand up on this side of the House proclaim it and say it was the best thing since sliced bread. We're putting it all out there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm glad the minister is taking the time to acknowledge and confirm the words said earlier because the Premier has told us that they have nothing to hide. I've said we have nothing to hide. We want to put all the information on the table, Mr. Speaker. They can send it all to the commissioner. I'm glad they're doing it.

The part that I don't like is that government holds the sole decision power to decide what actually is waived for privilege and what's not waived, and herein lies the problem.

I ask the Premier: Will you follow through with your promise and ensure that all the information is made public?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite can be assured that we're going to put all the information out there. And I can tell you

what, I don't lose any sleep at night over it, I can guarantee you that.

Now just so people know, this is legislation that's found in Ontario, that's found in British Columbia and it's found here. It's probably the biggest access to information request ever made in the province's history. There are 36 gigs of data just from this department. By putting in this piece of legislation, which we will be supporting in third reading tomorrow, we're putting all that information out there in a timely fashion so this inquiry can happen, it can have all the information and it can be done within the time period, which is what Justice LeBlanc wants.

Again, if the Member opposite is worried, I can guarantee you all the information's going to go out there.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It is interesting the minister raised BC and Ontario, because yesterday in debate I asked him what are the similarities or differences in the legislation they proposed versus what BC and Ontario are doing, and he didn't know. He didn't know what the difference was or what the similarities were.

I asked him: What will the process be to decide what privilege is waived and what privilege is not waived? He didn't know, Mr. Speaker. So he wonders why we may have a concern with it, because we want all the information out there.

Minister, I'll ask you: What safeguards are in place to ensure a fair and balanced approach, other than just your government deciding?

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

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

The Member opposite, again, I guess he wasn't listening to the briefing that was provided to him

or maybe he just didn't ask the questions. It's funny, in fact, because in some cases the Opposition sends their researchers and they agree with what we're doing, but then when the Opposition Members hear it they disagree. Maybe there's a bit of confusion going on over there.

The legislation is virtually identical between Ontario, BC and Newfoundland and Labrador with this amendment. The process has been outlined. All the information is going to go over there. What we're doing is we're protecting solicitor-client privilege so we avoid any future disasters for this government. I know the Opposition doesn't care, but they just gave us the biggest one in our province's history. This government is going to make sure that we protect it, we're going to co-operate and I hope that satisfies his concerns.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister met with representatives from Port Blandford Council and the Concerned Citizens group, after which the community group made a statement that no information will be released or published until a public meeting took place this coming Thursday. However, soon after the meeting concluded the minister spoke to the local media.

Why would the minister not respect the wishes of the community to consult and share with the residents before going public?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, what an excellent meeting we had, the Town of Port Blandford with the action committee and with the local Member of the House of Assembly. We had a fantastic meeting because we spoke about the opportunities to compromise, the ability for not only those who make their living from the forest – this is an active forest, a working forest – but also the needs of the community itself.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, there was never any discussion about whether or not we should come forward and express those kinds of positive messages. I was contacted by the local newspaper, *The Packet*, and offered those just a general consensus or a general review of the overall tone and tenor of the meeting.

I found it to be an absolutely excellent discussion and an exchange of great ideas. I appreciate the hon. Member's question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Mr. Speaker, in that interview the minister said he had personally met with wood harvesters.

I ask the minister: When did these meetings occur? How many harvesters were involved?

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

MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

They happened the day prior. There were about 17 different harvesters that actually came and wanted to meet with me. It was basically on the same issue itself as to whether or not there would be permissible forestry activity.

As the hon. Member is aware, there was a process in place, through the environmental assessment, through our own management strategies. We produce a five-year forestry management plan for each and every district. This came forward as part of that five-year planning process. We had previously engaged with the Town of Port Blandford. Some of them had put forward some amendments to the five-year plan.

Now, of course, we have a situation where they'd like to see some further amendments. I am fully prepared – fully prepared – noting that this is a working forest, to look at and consider any compromise options.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Mr. Speaker, last December I asked the minister if government had given any consideration to lifting the rental subsidy cap. The minister replied: They are going through a full review of all programs and services offered by Housing and there will be something coming in the very near future.

Could the minister update us on her progress?

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

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

I guess the Member opposite is asking about the *Residential Tenancies Act* and where it is. We are moving forward on the act. I expect to enter it into the House of Assembly soon, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Actually, Mr. Speaker, if I could clarify my question, it was specifically regarding the rental subsidy issue to seniors. If you could clarify that, please.

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm always happy to stand and answer a question regarding housing in the province because safe, stable, affordable housing, as we all know, is fundamental to the social and economic well-being of the residents of our province. We have just gone through a thorough review of our programs and services looking for efficiencies, looking how to deliver better services.

Rent subs is something, Mr. Speaker, that we have heard information back, we have listened and I would say to the hon. Member, stay tuned for positive news coming on that.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Minister, we understand that the Five Nations Clam Company president issued a statement yesterday stating that the company has signed MOUs with indigenous communities in Quebec and each of the Atlantic Provinces.

Can you confirm this?

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

MR. BYRNE: (Inaudible.)

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Minister, it is reported that there is a Labrador indigenous group with former Liberal MP Todd Russell may be partnered with the Five Nations Clam Company.

Can you confirm that?

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

MR. BYRNE: No, Mr. Speaker, we have received no official notification of any such signing of a formal arrangement or contract.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development said that the number of children and youth in Level 4 care has doubled since 2014.

Can the minister provide this information for Levels 1, 2 and 3 care as well?

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd first like to correct for the record here, the number of children in care have not doubled, Mr. Speaker. The number of placements may have doubled over a period of time, but the number of children in care has stayed relatively the same when we look back over the last number of years.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about children and youth in care it is a very complex issue, and the safety and well-being of those children is a fundamental core value with this government.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to work with families. Whenever we have to take children from homes, the number one goal is always to reunify those children with their families.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Of the increased number of youth who have been removed from their homes in Level 4 care, how does this break down across regions of the province?

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, the number of children and youth in care, we get updates every quarter. I mentioned it has stayed relatively stable. The number of children and youth in care, the numbers are actually down a little bit. The latest stats we have are that we have 1,005 children in care in our province, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue to work as a department with our social workers to look at what are some of the – many of the issues, Mr. Speaker, are very complex. My colleague, the Minister of Health, is doing a lot of wonderful things around drug addictions. He's working with different types of crisis and mental health issues.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development often find

themselves dealing with those children of those people.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The department offers a wide range of programs to provide support and keep children and youth in their homes.

Minister, given that the number of placements outside of their homes is doubling, do you believe that these programs are fulfilling the needs of our children and youth?

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the Member – I don't know how thorough her research is, but it's important for the record here to note, 75 per cent of the children that my department works with are in foster care or we're working with them in their own homes – 75 per cent of the children are in foster care.

So what we're talking about is there are 25 per cent who have very complex issues or they're large sibling groups, Mr. Speaker. In the best interest of the children, sometimes, to keep brothers and sisters and those people together, we have to find alternate living arrangements for them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Have you ordered a review to determine what is going so wrong?

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, we are always reviewing the work that we are doing in the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development. Since I came to this department, I have been out, myself, in eight or nine different offices. I have visited a number of indigenous communities. I have been on First Nation Reserves, meeting with staff to deepen my understanding, going through the records, always with a view of when a child has to be removed for their own safety and protection that is always with a goal to reunify them back with their families.

When we have to take them, we continue to work with that family to provide wrap-around services, but not always a two-minute answer here can really explain what we're dealing with, with some of these complex issues.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Liberals promised a cardiovascular center of excellence in their campaign red book. It was in the minister's mandate letter in 2015 and again in 2017.

I ask the minister: What have you done to fulfill your mandate letter with respect to cardiac disease?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, a good question.

I have met on several occasions with cardiologists across the province, including those in St. John's. The Member opposite may know that there were some indicators from CIHI suggesting some issues with our cardiac surgery and cardiac care program.

There is an outside team from Kelowna, the best performing centre on the CIHI data, who have come in to Eastern Health who runs the

cardiology program, to examine it. When that report is delivered to me I think it would be then appropriate to have that analyzed and to see how best we can feed that in to the concept of a centre of excellence.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Cardiac disease affects one in three Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, killing more people in this province than any other disease. Based on that stark reality, we need action.

What evidence can you provide that shows you're any closer to setting up a cardiovascular centre of excellence as was outlined in your mandate letter?

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

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

Indeed this morning I was speaking at a forum at Memorial on chronic disease, among other things. We have initiated a Chronic Disease Action Plan. We have, through the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information, set up a chronic disease registry. Under that, our first limb of that registry is a diabetes registry, the single biggest chronic disease in this province numerically; over 11 per cent of the population has diabetes. That diabetes registry is up and running.

It is the difference, Mr. Speaker, between a telephone conversation and an answering machine. We can go out, we can proactively start looking at diabetics and making sure their care is up to the best standards nationally.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development said yesterday in the House that the English School District is changing its policy with respect to the Safe and Caring Schools protocol and government is looking at changes to the *Schools Act* to support that. We seem to have a chicken-and-egg situation here.

I ask the minister: How does he expect the school district to do its work before the changes are made to the *Schools Act* which is the legislative guide for the board?

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said in the House of Assembly yesterday in Question Period, we have tried – the previous administration and this one – to do our best to eradicate bullying in our schools. As I said yesterday, sexual harassment and this sort of abuse is dehumanizing.

When individuals treat each other that way, it is absolutely dehumanizing and the most extreme form in manifestation of bullying. We will do whatever we can to work with our partners in the school district, across the departments in government, to ensure that we provide the best support we can to survivors of sexual violence. We will not stop, we will be relentless and we will see this through.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, the minister said yesterday the department is bringing in amendments to the act to make clear to the school districts what their policies and practices should be.

I ask the minister: If the changes to the act are so important, why is he not moving quickly and in a coordinated manner with the school board, whose protocols get authority from the legislation?

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, we are working in coordination with the school district. We have been since mid-January when this came to the attention of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. We have met with stakeholder groups including the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis Centre.

We've been engaged in a continuous conversation. I didn't say any of what the Member just said yesterday. I said that we will be making changes to the *Schools Act* in response to her question. I also said, in tandem with that, in coordination with that, at the same time the school district is reviewing their policies on the Safe and Caring Schools anti-bullying protocols. That's what I said yesterday. They're not separate from one another; they're very much in mesh.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, government has created confusion and chaos with their totally unrealistic and unworkable approach for cannabis sales. Bizarrely, government clearly stated their preference was for tier-one, stand-alone retail stores, but made it impossible for local, small businesses to become sustainable tier-one stores.

Given the meager 8 per cent commission a store would need to sell over 500 grams of cannabis in single gram quantities every day just to cover expenses, no one except Canopy Growth who is a grower could absorb that loss.

I ask the minister: How can he keep his commitment to no co-location of alcohol and cannabis in a retail space, except in extenuating circumstances, when he has made it economically impossible for a tier-one retail space to even cover its expenses?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is, as I've said, a brand new area of business for the NLC. As a regulator of controlled substances, they were the best choice to take on this role of selling cannabis. I trust that they know what they're doing with the sale of regulated products, Mr. Speaker, but I did give the Member opposite the assurance that we will continue to monitor this as it rolls out. I'm just as interested in making sure that these businesses are successful as you are.

We all want to ensure that these businesses are successful, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to monitor the 8 per cent, we'll continue to monitor the number of people that have replied to the RFP and the number of people that are interested in setting up shop.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, Ontario is doing further public consultation in order to establish reasonable, workable and enforceable laws regarding where cannabis can and cannot be consumed. Our public engagement process did not deal with this issue. Arbitrarily, government decided that cannabis can only be consumed on private property. People are concerned and have many questions. For instance, can people smoke cannabis at their campsite where they currently are allowed to drink beer and smoke cigarettes?

I ask the minister: Will he commit to additional public consultation to determine what the people of the province believe is the best approach?

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

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

I certainly appreciate the questions on cannabis because we all know this is the biggest public policy debate that we've had in decades. It's a huge issue and one that every province has been dealing with, and in many cases it's something

that, it's not a province that has decided to do it, it's the feds.

I disagree with the notion that there hasn't been enough public engagement in the sense that we had an online public engagement process that was the most successful one this government has ever done. There were thousands that took an opportunity to participate. One of the issues we did discuss was where cannabis could and could not be used, and there's more to determine.

What I would say is a big component of this will be education. That's going to be put out there into the public soon, led by the federal government, and we will do what we have to, to encourage the public to be educated as well.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The time for Oral Questions is over.

If I could have Members' attention, please.

Order, please!

I would like to welcome to the Speaker's gallery today – I'm very pleased to welcome Inuk Elder Emma Reelis. As most of us know, she led the House of Assembly this morning in very wise words and prayer as our MHAs are today fasting and supporting the Moose Hide Campaign. This is an indigenous led initiative addressing violence against women and children. Nakummek, Emma.

I also want you to know I have a special message that's just been delivered to and for you from British Columbia thanking you for your efforts. You have some good, solid friends in BC wishing you very well.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think I was supposed to do this under the Tabling of Documents. If I could have leave?

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, you can.

I can back you up.

Tabling of Documents

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you.

Pursuant to section 265(a) of the *Financial Administration Act*, I'm tabling one Order in Council relating to a funding pre-commitment for the fiscal years 2018-19 and 2019-20.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for Which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS a year has passed since the tragic event of January 17, 2017, where our school was completely destroyed; and

WHEREAS we have 250 people in a building which is only equipped to handle 150; and

WHEREAS we do not have a science lab, library/resource room, cafeteria, computer room,

student support suite, no wheelchair accessibility washrooms and no multi-purpose room; and

WHEREAS we have classrooms which require co-programming but this cannot happen because of space issues in the building; and

WHEREAS government has a legal responsibility to ensure our students have access to the best education;

WHEREUPON your petitioners humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to commit to a new state-of-the-art K to 12 school for the students of Bay d'Espoir, announce funding in the 2018-2019 budget to begin the design and tender process, and we would like the construction to be expedited.

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

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start by thanking the minister for rising to his feet last week when we presented this petition and informing us that \$13 million has become available from the insurance. It certainly was a moment of great elation for all residents of Bay d'Espoir; but, Mr. Speaker, this issue is very, very important to us. There's nothing more important than our children, and nothing should be more important than ensuring they have the best quality of education possible.

On Friday, there was a *Telegram* article that caused the elation to turn to fear, Mr. Speaker, because there is grave concern there might be some rebuilding of the burnt 60-plus year-old structure that's still standing.

Mr. Speaker, I have been asked to bring forward, by the school council, the fact that the students of Bay d'Espoir cannot endure being put back into a wooden structure that is 60 years old, that has burn damage. A new school, Mr. Speaker, that will take care of the children for the next 50 years and provide them with the best possible education is the only acceptable solution.

One thing for certain, both sides of the bay are in consensus in wanting a brand new school. Anything less than a brand new school, Mr. Speaker, is totally unacceptable to them.

As a parliamentarian and as a person who represents both communities, first and foremost I represent the children. This decision can't be about emotions. It must be about the children and what is best for them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the Bell Island ferry provides a vital transportation link; and

WHEREAS the Bell Island ferry is only eight minutes from port at any given time; and

WHEREAS government's recently implemented policy relating to mandatory exiting of vehicles will put people at a higher risk of injury than the possibility of having to evacuate the vessel due to an emergency; and

WHEREAS Transport Canada regulations do not require individuals to exit their vehicles during this commute;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to conduct a full and thorough risk assessment to clearly identify all risks and liabilities associated with such a policy decision, after which public release any and all results and details of the review.

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

Mr. Speaker, I've talked about this over the last period of time about the importance of really looking at safety. Nobody more than me

understands the necessity of ensuring people, when they travel, are safe in their endeavours.

The issue here becomes, as was noted here by this petition, at any given time these vessels are eight minutes from port. They're not out in the North Atlantic 500 kilometres off where there would have to be a helicopter come in to get them. They're eight minutes from port with the ability and trained personnel to be able to do an evacuation in a timely fashion.

Most timely fashions, the evacuation of the boat to deploy the lifeboats and that are 20 to 30 minutes, keeping in mind the vessels are only of a certain size. But when you take into account the physical ailments that a number of these people have who travel back and forth for this eight minutes from being from port – some are going for dialysis on a daily basis, some are having cancer treatment, some are having surgeries.

As a result, due to the ferries themselves – getting in and out of cars, going upstairs, having to take an elevator that only gets them to one level, then they've got to walk to areas where there are other stairs to get to another part to be part of the muster station – puts them at more peril than the odds after over one million trips of never having to evacuate one of the vessels of a physical ailment or a physical condition that would be detrimental to their health.

What we're saying is do a full-fledged risk assessment. I know we've pushed; we used that as leverage when we held the boat back in November. That was one of the things I managed to negotiate that it would be done. The previous minister had committed to it. I know the present minister is committed to it, too, and I know it has gotten delayed and we're pretty close to it now being awarded and put out there, but it has to be expedited. Eight months later, we've seen people who have gone through unbelievable hardship in having to get in and out of vehicles.

We've seen hundreds – not hundreds, thousands of stories about the impact it's had on their loved ones and the impact it is having on health. We have people who will not travel because, physically, it's impossible for them to have to get out of their vehicle for that eight minutes.

The impact it has on their lives has a detrimental effect.

Mr. Speaker, I'll get to speak to this again in the near future to talk about we need to expedite this and get it done so people can travel in the fashion that it is not only safe, but it shows a bit of dignity and it helps their livelihood.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works, for a response.

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

I thank the hon. Member for the question. As committed to last fall, we are doing the independent risk assessment with a third party, and we should have the results of that by the end of this month. But, Mr. Speaker, it's important to note here, this is a provincial-wide policy. The Member referenced an eight-minute ferry ride. We have a three-minute ferry ride on the West Coast of this province where people are expected to get out of their cars.

Mr. Speaker, these are vessels where the lifejackets and lifeboats are on a separate deck. For the Member to get up here today and say a million trips and nothing happened. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not willing to take numbers of something happening because it didn't happen, one in a million. There were people in Long Harbour two weeks ago that went to bed and didn't know they were going to win the lottery, but it happened.

For the chance to us to take people's safety – just think about it, you're on the deck of a boat and that boat begins to list, the elevator becomes inoperable and you have to get to another deck. If you asked people who were involved in the tragedy in British Columbia a few years ago how long it took for that vessel to list and capsize, I'm not willing to take that risk with people's lives in this province.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

This being Wednesday, I now call on the Member for Torngat Mountains to introduce the resolution standing in his place, Motion 1, and I also would like to again express appreciation to our elder for participating in this debate.

Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour today to reintroduce such an important private Member's resolution. I'll start by reading the resolution again, and it was seconded by my hon. colleague the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

WHEREAS gender-based violence remains a reality for many women and girls in Newfoundland and Labrador; and

WHEREAS indigenous women across the country experience a rate of violence three times higher than non-indigenous women and are murdered at a rate six times higher; and

WHEREAS the Moose Hide Campaign is a grassroots movement of indigenous and non-indigenous men taking a stand against violence against women and children across Canada; and

WHEREAS the Moose Hide Campaign promotes the wearing of a small piece of moose hide signifying the wearer's commitment to honour, respect and protect the women and children in their lives, and to work collaboratively with other men to end gender-based violence; and

WHEREAS the Moose Hide Campaign movement has spread to over 350 communities across Canada and distributed over 1 million moose hide pins;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House encourages all Members of the House of Assembly to support the Moose Hide Campaign and work toward ending violence against all women and girls in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, it was an honour this morning, when we started the kickoff of this very important PMR, to have hon. Members from all sides of this House of Assembly join in the Speaker's office to begin the process of the Moose Hide Campaign. Part of the Moose Hide Campaign is to start a non-violent protest in the form of fasting. I was glad to have everyone there join us for breakfast and that we would not eat anymore until the close of business today.

I was especially proud to welcome an Inuk elder to join us to give a prayer and words of wisdom, and to hand out the moose hide pins. Along with you, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome Emma Reelis to the Speaker's gallery and to thank her for taking part in this campaign this morning.

It was also enlightening to get a message from the founders of the Moose Hide Campaign, from the Lacertes, who actually addressed our group while in the Speaker's Chamber this morning. It had a personal touch to it. It was actually very nice to hear them recognize us as a supporter of the Moose Hide Campaign.

When we look at some of the statistics, they are very moving. Not only in our province, not only in our regions, but across the country. Those stats are more alarming when you differentiate between women and children in our province and go to Aboriginal or indigenous women and children in our province. Those stats become much more alarming.

Just to go back to talk about how this Moose Hide Campaign was founded and how it went about. As I said earlier, it's signified by wearing a square piece of moose hide. I'm glad to see that everyone in this hon. House today is wearing the pin and supporting this campaign.

The inspiration for the Moose Hide Campaign actually came from a hunting expedition in Northern BC. Paul and Raven Lacerte were hunting moose on Highway 16, which is a highway in Northern British Columbia that's

also known, unfortunately, as the Highway of Tears and it references some 40 Aboriginal women who've disappeared along this stretch of highway in Northern BC.

As this family was harvesting the moose, they kind of got the idea. Why don't we use the moose hide from this animal to try and emphasize or address the violence against women that's going on in our country. They took it upon themselves to launch this campaign.

If you look at some of the reasons why this idea came to them at this particular location in 2011 is because the highway itself has been the site for a string of murders and disappearances in BC that stems back to the late 1990s and into 2000. As I said earlier, the number of Aboriginal women who are missing from BC and this particular area are as high as 40. I guess where Paul and Raven were in close proximity to this area, it was the very issue that sparked the idea that moose hide could be used as a symbol to end violence.

I guess they thought about it a little more and they decided if they take the moose hide and they tan it and they cut it up to little squares, they would give it to men as a token of their commitment to end violence against women and children in this country, and as a promise to never commit a violent act towards women and children in our lives.

You ask, why moose hide? Once you look at many of the pins and many of the emblems that represent different chapters in our lives – we've had pink ribbons, we've had many, many different kinds – I guess the hope was that seeing such an unusual pin, that piece of tanned moose hide, it would spark conversation, it would generate interest. It would focus on violence against women as an indigenous effort and an effort on behalf of many in our communities.

If you look violence against women, as I said earlier, there are some concerning stats, some statistics that we're not happy with, but they are there. We can't deny the fact that some of these statistics about violence against women in our regions and in our country is not something that we can be proud of. This whole campaign is

another initiative that I'm hoping will increase the focus on addressing violence against women.

Indigenous women, Mr. Speaker, experience violence at a rate that's almost three times higher than violence reported by non-indigenous women. In our country, every six days there's a woman that's killed by her intimate partner – every six days. That is not something that we can be proud of in a country as free and as good as Canada is.

In colleges in our country, Mr. Speaker, one in four women will be sexually assaulted by the time they graduate. Twenty-five per cent of our women in college will be sexually assaulted before they graduate. The rate of domestic violence is likely much higher than reports indicate. Reports indicate that 70 per cent of spousal violence is not reported to police. An extremely disturbing fact from the RCMP is that there are over 1,200 murdered or missing indigenous women in Canada.

As I said earlier during the Moose Hide Campaign, that fasting is an important ceremonial practice because it demonstrates a personal commitment to honouring and protecting women and children in our country. The Moose Hide Campaign men's fast is simple; they fast from sun-up to sundown. The fasting begins 20 minutes before sun-up and it ends 20 minutes after the sun goes down to ensure that there's a full fasting day. It's a symbol of a strike or a public protest, a non-violent protest that shows that we are supporting this cause. We don't condone violence against women or violence against children, and this is our form of protest, a non-violent protest to work towards that.

Paul and Raven, their initial vision was to have a million men fasting with them to end violence against women and children in Canada. It was also their goal to distribute 100 million of the moose hide pins across the country in order to raise awareness. They've actually, on the 15th of February, presented their one millionth pin. The whole campaign is growing.

This morning with my colleagues on both sides of the House in the Speaker's boardroom, as I said earlier, it was really good to see a united effort and a common stand against violence from

this Legislature. When we look at the numbers of people that are getting on board – like today, this Legislature is the fourth in Canada to stand and support the Moose Hide Campaign, and I couldn't be more proud than to see us jump on board. The other three provincial legislatures have stood in support of the Moose Hide Campaign: British Columbia, Alberta and Northwest Territories.

In our communities in our province, I think the communities of Happy Valley-Goose Bay have climbed on board with this campaign. The Friendship Centres in St. George's and Stephenville have hosted support events on Valentine's Day, I think, on the 14th.

In October of last year, the federal government announced that it would be supporting the Moose Hide Campaign and a national day of fasting and support. They encouraged all men to abstain. Prime Minister Justice Trudeau delivered a congratulatory message to the Moose Hide Campaign stating its purpose and especially how important it is as government moved forward with reconciliation and the Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women. Mr. Speaker, it's my hope that after today's event, communities right across Newfoundland and Labrador will join this campaign and help eradicate violence against women and children.

I guess in my closing remarks – and in the opening, Mr. Speaker – I'd just like to point out that bringing this private Member's resolution forward today is very timely and coinciding with some special events that are ongoing in our country and in our province. For example, tomorrow marks International Women's Day. It's an honour to bring forward a resolution that campaigns against violence against women leading into the day that we honour the women in our country.

My last statement, Mr. Speaker, is that the inquiry for murdered and missing indigenous women is actually in our province. They're in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. The inquiry started today. I'm certainly looking forward to actually going up to Happy Valley-Goose Bay tomorrow to take part in this inquiry and to lend my support on behalf of all hon. Members in this House.

In closing, I'd just like to thank everyone for being there today and to ask everyone in the province to do their part in supporting the Moose Hide Campaign and ending violence against women.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank my colleague for Torngat Mountains for bringing forward this very important resolution to the House of Assembly here today. We are certainly quite pleased to stand here as the Official Opposition in support of your motion here today. Mr. Speaker, it's very alarming that in this day and age we still have to shine a light on violence against women, but we will continue to do so until such behaviour is eradicated from our society.

More and more people are learning about the Moose Hide Campaign which started several years ago as a grassroots effort of an indigenous father and daughter, as has been outlined by my hon. colleague for Torngat Mountains. For those of you who'd like to know more about it, you can find out more online at www.moosehidecampaign.ca. It's a worthwhile site for everyone who has an interest in this topic to go online and check it out.

They were on a hunting trip, actually, Mr. Paul Lacerte and his daughter, Raven. They were hunting, as my colleague as outlined, along the Highway of Tears, which is the stretch of highway in Northern BC where many women have been murdered or gone missing. They harvested a moose and as the daughter was preparing it, they had a moment of inspiration to tan the moose hide and cut it into squares to engage men in efforts to end violence against women and children.

The inspiration came from the land, from the loving relationship between the father and daughter, from the stretch of highway where violence has taken so many loved ones and from the spirit of the moose. It's quite heartening to hear my hon. colleague say they have distributed their one-millionth pin, Mr. Speaker. That's

quite a feat to have accomplished and hats off to them.

Prince Rupert is on the BC coast about halfway up the length of the province immediately south of the Alaska border. The highway travels inland around the Skeena River through mountainous territory and winds its way almost to the Alberta border. The route itself is beautiful, but the stories of women who have disappeared along that highway are deeply etched in people's minds.

The Highway of Tears is just one of the roadways across this country where women have encountered violence. Many have found it in their own homes or in places they considered to be safe. When we hear about the #MeToo movement and the TIME's UP campaign, we need to link them to all the other campaigns that are shining a spotlight on violence. It's not enough to be aware, though that is the beginning; it's important to be active and vigilant, to draw the line in the sand and send a clear message that things need to change.

This is a difficult time for our society. As people speak up about hidden pain and suffering, it's difficult for many to know what to do. The only thing that's certain is that not doing anything, or doing the same old thing, will no longer be tolerated.

This campaign comes against the backdrop of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. In response to calls for action from indigenous families, communities and organizations, as well as non-governmental and international organizations, the Government of Canada launched an independent National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in September 2016.

The inquiry's interim report issued last November stated: "There is no doubt that the loss of Indigenous women and girls to all forms of violence is a national tragedy. It has traumatized generations of families, and it will continue to traumatize communities if we do not commit to action and change.

"Shining a light on all the causes of violence, murders, and disappearances is a daunting task."

It also stated: “With all the information we have, we still don’t know how many Indigenous women and girls are missing or have been murdered. We don’t know what happened to many of them, or how to make sure we don’t lose any more Indigenous women and girls to violence.” These words are haunting and terrifying. Imagine the nightmare situations that they found themselves in.

I believe that it’s by trying to imagine their plight on that Highway of Tears that Paul Lacerte and his daughter, Raven, decided to do something about it. The Moose Hide Campaign is about inspiring people to make it personal. The Moose Hide Campaign is a grassroots movement of indigenous and non-indigenous men and boys who are standing up against violence towards women and children.

Wearing the moose hide pin signifies your commitment to honour, respect and protect the women and children in your life and speak out against gender-based and domestic violence. Participating in the campaign is also an act of reconciliation.

The Moose Hide Campaign is an indigenous-led initiative rooted in culture and ceremony. What started as a movement to get men involved in ending violence against indigenous women and children, has since grown into a national campaign to engage all Canadians in ending domestic and gender-based violence. To date, as my hon. colleague has said, there have been 1 million pins distributed. Again, I say hats off because that is such an amazing feat. We have to continue in our pursuit to increase the awareness and take the action to make sure violence is eradicated.

Violence against women and girls touches every community, every ethnicity and every nation. It is not confined to any one of them. It touches every profession, every religion and every socioeconomic stratum of our society. It can be overt and extreme or subtle and insidious. It can be something that anyone would recognize to be wrong, or something that led some to believe to be tolerable, not really all that bad in the greater scheme of things. It can be a single incident or a progression of incidents. It can be committed by someone under the influence of drugs or alcohol,

or by someone who is stone-cold sober, but it is never okay.

People need to reflect on what this means. They need to learn what’s not okay and what crosses the line. They need to be educated and they need to make a personal pledge not to do it, and as well not to stand by when someone else does it. They need to be a part of the solution. This campaign is solution-oriented. The fasting aspect of the campaign adds gravitas to the experience. Fasting focuses the mind. Fasting in groups focuses conversation.

As my hon. colleague outlined – and it was nice to see the House picture this morning – at sundown there was a fast breaking meal that reinforces the sense that something has changed. That happened right here in our House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and it’s a very important step. But we also need to realize that it’s not going to be enough. It is just one step of many. More steps will be needed.

I’m reminded, Mr. Speaker, of the story of Loretta Saunders. Loretta was upset about the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in this country and she vowed to make a difference. She was working on an honours thesis on this very topic. On February 13, 2014 she was trying to collect rent money from her tenants. For the sake of \$430, she was murdered. They dumped her body along a highway in Nova Scotia, where she was found two weeks later. She was trying to make a difference to help others who are missing and murdered and, in the end, she herself was missing and murdered.

There are so many stories that break our hearts. We have to be outraged. We have to be mobilized. We have to change something fundamental about the society that we all live in. Some of these changes will be hard to adjust to for some, but things just can’t go on as they have. No one has all the answers. No one is completely sure what will work and what won’t, but the status quo is not working for a great many of women and girls. More, it turns out, than many have realized.

Stories are being told that were kept under wraps for year. Many were simply not believed. Imagine being victimized and not being able to tell for fear of not being believed. Imagine being

victimized and not being able to escape because of the power structure of the relationship or some other reason. Imagine your loved ones disappearing, never to be heard from again. Wouldn't you move heaven and earth to find the one you love?

Loved ones are missing right now, and families are distraught. Some of our loved ones who aren't missing are suffering because of things that were done to them. We cannot be in every dark corner of this world, but we can unite to make less and less room for darkness. Our resolve to stop the violence and adjust attitudes about behaviour can make our communities safer and more sensitive to what's going on, more vigilant and interventionist, and less willing to turn a blind eye to bad behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, I think that is one area in particular where each and every citizen has a responsibility. Turning a blind eye is not acceptable. Things will never change if we sweep things under the rug and we turn a blind eye.

I know we're going to be bringing in legislation later in this session dealing with sexual harassment, for example, within core government. For the record, I'd like to state again, I really don't think there should be any time limit on when a person comes forward.

These circumstances are very traumatic and people have various reasons why they may or may not feel comfortable coming forward. I think things like imposing 90-time limits is going to restrict the number of people to come forward. I believe we should do everything we can to encourage as many people to come forward because that's the only way it's going to stop, Mr. Speaker, is when we hold perpetrators accountable for their behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to conclude my comments here today by, once again, commending Mr. Paul Lacerte and his daughter, Raven, for the one small idea that turned into a million people across this country wearing a moose hide pin in honour of missing and murdered indigenous women, and in honour of making a commitment towards ending such violence. It's a small piece of moose hide.

Shared experience can make a difference, so let's all embrace it.

I commend my colleague for Torngat Mountains. I'm quite pleased to stand here with him and all Members of this hon. House because I am extremely confident that it will be supported by each and every one of us. I truly look forward to each and every one of us not just speaking to this today, but by demonstrating in our actions that violence will no longer be tolerated and that we will see the legal system, over time, strengthened to demonstrate that violence towards women and indigenous persons will not be tolerated.

Let's tell the story to others in our indigenous and non-indigenous communities and encourage people to participate. Let's all make a resolve to put an end to violence wherever we can find it, Mr. Speaker.

I can certainly assure you that all Members of the Official Opposition will stand in support of this motion. We thank the Member for Torngat Mountains for bringing it to the House today. We all commend the work of Paul Lacerte, his daughter, Raven, and the million people who wear these pins and stand up and say time's up.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Order, please!

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

MR. FINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure to stand today. A heartfelt thank you to the Member for Torngat Mountains for taking me to second the private Member's resolution we're debating this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to being the Member for the District of Stephenville - Port au Port, I'm actually an Aboriginal myself and a founding member on the founding members list for the Qalipu First Nation Band. My grandmother was actually a first generation Mi'kmaq originally born on Woods Island.

At the time – and it was many years and even up until before she passed in 2005 at the age of 102 – it was shunned upon. The identity that her and her family had was something that was shunned upon. It's only through the last number of years, the last 10, 11 years in particular, through the Federation of Newfoundland Indians and then on to the formation of the Qalipu First Nation Band, that there is some recognition and acceptance amongst many others.

As a result, I've actually now had the great opportunity to meet relatives I never knew existed throughout this process, so as a young Aboriginal man it's a pleasure and honour to support this motion today.

I actually first learned of the Moose Hide Campaign just over two years ago. I'm not sure what the numbers of the amount of hides distributed at the time were. Just over two years ago a good friend of mine – from the district of the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune – Kayla Stride, a young Aboriginal artist from Conne River said: If you're into politics, John, you'll be wearing a number of pins and I would like you to have this one. At the time she presented me with that pin.

Over the next year or so I started to see it more and more, particularly at various gatherings of Qalipu and various sharing circles, amongst many other areas. As I wore mine it did exactly what it was intended to do. You'd be surprised how many people – and people in the Legislature will soon to come to know if they wear the hide – how many people ask you: What is that for? The common response is: That's exactly what it is for. The intent is so you can ask me what it's for so we can begin a conversation about how we can end violence against women and girls. It's certainly done a good job of that.

In addition to originally learning of the campaign there, Mr. Speaker, you may recall you had brought this in your former role as a minister with government and debated at our caucus. I indicated to you at the time that I was certainly aware of the campaign. It was something we had discussed and quite proudly, as well. Again, since then, to see this campaign now move to some over 350 communities across this country and with, as the Member mentioned

previously, 1 million hides presented just last month, is certainly astonishing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for having us for a breakfast as we begin our fast. They call it a simple fast. I guess there's no real way to define anything about fasting as simple, but I think it's the very least we can do as a commitment, as a recognition and as you had mentioned this morning, to acknowledge some of the pain felt by those who have suffered violence at the hands of men. There's no place for gender-based violence in our society.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FINN: There's no place for it.

I think it's extremely important for us, as leaders and as legislators, to take a stand and to make this commitment. It was an absolute pleasure to join – as the other provinces mentioned: BC, Alberta and the Northwest Territories – as now the fourth Legislature in the country to support this campaign.

As the Member mentioned, indigenous women are more susceptible to violence and experience violence at a rate that's three times as high as those non-indigenous women. It's a very serious issue in our society and a serious issue in Newfoundland and Labrador as well.

It's an issue that our government is committed to addressing. There are a number of things we've done as government over the past short while, if you will, and there are a number of great initiatives. I have to applaud the Official Opposition, while they were in government, with some of the initiatives under the Violence Prevention strategy as well.

I'll mention a few and I understand my colleague, the hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, will perhaps acknowledge some of the initiatives that our government has undertaken as well. This one started with the former administration and it certainly moved into ours, it's the Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence in Newfoundland and Labrador. In this, Mr. Speaker, is just another startling statistic. The Member for Torngat Mountains had mentioned some statistics and this is just something to ponder for a moment.

Between 2006 and 2014, there were 46,830 violent crimes reported against adults over the age of 18. That's over 46,000 incidents in an eight-year period that were violent in nature. The majority of victims of these violent crimes were women and children, representing some 55 per cent of all adult victims. It's absolutely astonishing.

Unfortunately, the more troubling piece from that statistic, Mr. Speaker: Sexual offences, as well as kidnapping, hostage taking and abduction, in those categories female victims outnumbered male victims 87 per cent and 89 per cent respectively. It is absolutely disturbing. We can certainly do better.

In that action plan are a number of initiatives that have been outlined. I'll touch on a couple of those in a moment, particularly as they relate to the District of Stephenville - Port au Port and some of the groups that are doing some wonderful things to address violence against women and children.

In addition to the action plan, we recently had the Minister of Justice and Public Safety establish the Minister's Committee on Violence Against Women and Girls. Mr. Speaker, there were a number of priorities identified; in fact, there were actually over 2,000 thoughts and ideas that were recorded by volunteers when this committee first met.

The committee was with representatives from all sides of the House. It was with representatives and ministers from the Departments of Health, Education and Early Childhood Development, Children, Seniors and Social Development and Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

Mr. Speaker, violence against women and children touches every single department in this government. Members from government, members from the community alongside Linda Ross, who is the president of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, have gotten together over 2,000 thoughts recorded. Of the four priority areas that were noted, one of them in particular was around what we can do with indigenous communities.

So, certainly, to that end, I know the minister's committee is moving forward. I understand

they're looking forward to some legislative changes. They're also now having established a steering committee, a website and feedback can continue to be inputted.

In addition to the action plan as noted, and in addition to the minister's committee, we've also had the Premier most recently, just a few short weeks ago in February – the hon. Premier came out and announced a harassment-free workplace policy for departmental government employees. In reviewing this particular policy and understanding that implementation and training will take place now by June 1, it's going to put Newfoundland and Labrador as a leader when it comes to other jurisdictions in a harassment-free workplace.

In addition to that, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development has also stated – and, in fact, he stated just this afternoon here in Question Period – that there will be changes forthcoming to the *Schools Act* as we look at how we can work with our school district, our schools, our administration and how we can ensure that our children are safe in our schools. They'll be looking forward to some changes coming on that note as well.

Mr. Speaker, in the District of Stephenville - Port au Port, prior to myself taking office and having the great opportunity to represent the folks there in the Legislature, I spent five years working with housing and homelessness. In that five years I actually sat down and helped many women who were fleeing violent situations find and secure safe and affordable housing, but I didn't do so alone. I have to give the highest compliment to the Bay St. George Status of Women and the Bay St. George Women's Centre.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FINN: It's very exciting for the Bay St. George Women's Centre. Tomorrow, for International Women's Day, they're actually celebrating the end of their mortgage of the building.

The Bay St. George Status of Women was actually founded 30 years ago, incorporated in 1987. Then some five years later in 1992, they purchased their own building. It was an

emergency housing shelter for women and children fleeing violent domestic situations.

Twenty-five years has passed. So tomorrow they're actually having a very exciting celebration in which they're going to take out the original mortgage documents and they're actually going to burn them, Mr. Speaker. They're calling it a mortgage-burning ceremony. It's a celebration and it happens to fall on International Women's Day. I'm very proud of them there.

They also work very closely with the Southwestern Coalition To End Violence. The People of the Dawn Indigenous Friendship Center, as the Member for Torngat mentioned, have also supported the Moose Hide Campaign. There are two Friendship Centers. There's one located in St. George's, the neighbouring district of mine, the hon. Member for St. George's – Humber, and the other Friendship Center is located in Stephenville. The folks there have celebrated this campaign as well.

I'd also be remiss if I didn't mention the Newfoundland and Labrador Aboriginal Women's Network and some of the great work they do there. The office that they have there is actually in partnership with the Friendship Center. I've had the great opportunity to volunteer with NAWN and the representatives there over the last couple of years in various capacities as well.

Mr. Speaker, that's just a few things and a few groups, if you will, in the District of Stephenville - Port au Port that are doing what they can to make a contribution towards the eradication of violence against women and children. As a government, we have to continue our support to these groups.

I understand that our Women's Centres across the province, in *Budget 2016* and in *Budget 2017* did receive an increase in funding. I also understand that the Southwestern Coalition To End Violence has received some additional funding and sustained funding as well.

It's important for these groups. The Coalition To End Violence, in particular, just recently – if it wasn't in latter December I'd be mistaken, it may be in early January – the violence and

action awareness training, and the initiatives that they provide – and they just don't take in your commonly known stakeholders in the community, they also include our youth and the Community Youth Network. They're a group that are heavily involved with the Coalition To End Violence and some of their initiatives as well.

Mr. Speaker, our indigenous groups, and as I mentioned being a member of the Qalipu First Nation Band – there are also other bands in the area, the Flat Bay Band. The Member for St. George's - Humber and I, actually just last week, had a chance to sit down with Elder Calvin White, who is one of our newest recipients of the Order of Canada. Calvin White and Chief LaSaga sat down with the Member and I for a great conversation around some of the good initiatives that they're doing. Odelle Pike, another individual and prominent elder, working with NAWN and the folks at our Friendship Center, also a recipient of the Order of Canada, Mr. Speaker. Certainly these individuals are making a difference each and every day. I don't think that we would be able to do our job as effectively as we are without being informed and led by the information that they provide to us.

Mr. Speaker, on that note I'm going to conclude my remarks. I'm very pleased to be here today to discuss this important campaign. It's exciting to see we have co-operation from our Members opposite and I'm certain we'll expect some co-operation from the Members of the Third Party as well.

For those who may be listening or may be watching or tuning in at home, if you wish to learn more about the Moose Hide Campaign: moosehidecampaign.ca. It's as simple as that; it's a one-click Google away. If you go to the site there's a very profound and moving video about eight minutes in length. There's also some information around the foundation, the campaign and how it began. I won't get into those details as the Member previously alluded to them.

Without Paul and his daughter, Raven Lacerte, I wouldn't be on my feet today talking about this. To think that in seven years with a vision to distribute 1 million moose hides and they've

already achieved that, and now they're on the way for the goal to distribute 10 million, is just certainly astounding.

I think by taking this step today in our Legislature, as leaders in our province, we are certainly setting the foundation. I would expect nothing less and if anything, Mr. Speaker, in your role as Speaker of the Legislature, to reach out and encourage the other legislators across the country to embrace this campaign as well.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to support this campaign. We certainly can do better, we will do better and we must do better to end violence against women and children.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to rise to support this resolution. I'd like to commend the Members opposite, of Torngat Mountains and Stephenville, for leading the charge on this, as well as yourself, Sir, for your interest. I would also like to thank the respected elder for making time today to come in and facilitate our feast this morning in observance of the fasting.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of living in a small rural community in another province which shared a boundary with an indigenous group 40 years ago. At that time, I was just going to school. I was in grade one. Many of the children that were in my class were from this indigenous community. While I was a child there were a lot of situations that, now, looking back on, I realize the challenges the people of this community were experiencing.

I remember there was a little girl next to me. Her name escapes my memory. Many days she would come to school and she would cry the whole day. I look back on it now and I wonder what kind of torment and situation that child had. I used to share my lunch with her every day and by the end of the school year we had become good friends. But now hearing these statistics that we've been exposed to today, a big

concern of mine is: Is my schoolyard friend one of these missing indigenous women? That's why I stand here today to support this.

It is a very beneficial campaign and we have to move forward with it. It's something that for far too long has been not ignored, but not given enough attention. The thoughts of the young women walking down that Highway of Tears, while many people would drive up and look at the scenic landscape along it but, then, when you picture those individuals standing there alone and what their future held for them, it was very short. That's a big, big issue that we all have to take responsibility for.

The initiative of the Moose Hide Campaign began in 2011. It's absolutely commendable that we're up to 1 million pins distributed. We're very close to getting that participation goal of 1 million men fasting, but it goes beyond the scope of the indigenous communities, it goes beyond the scope of our own Legislature. It is important to note this campaign and this resolution applies to all communities in our country.

No community bears the scourge of violence alone, it is all our responsibility. It's everywhere. It is not about overt violence, it's also about attitudes and behaviours that hurt in other ways; this lack of respect and consequences have taken centre stage around the world in recent months. I really hope it will empower more people to not only come forward with their issues and their stories of their own past, but others to rally around those who do. In that, I would like to acknowledge the strength and the courage of the people today sitting in Labrador participating in the federal government's commission on indigenous violence.

This campaign is one vehicle for mobilizing people at the grassroots to take ownership of this issue and in their own lives. Since the Moose Hide Campaign began in 2011, as I said, there have been hundreds of Moose Hide Campaign events across Canada. The vast majority of these events have been self-organized at the community organization level, with little or no direct engagement with the Moose Hide Campaign organization. This is great news.

Key to the vision of the Moose Hide Campaign is that the individuals become inspired to do something about the tragic reality of gender-based violence and domestic violence, and find their own ways of sharing the campaign with their friends, families, communities and organizations. This is what continues to happen all across Canada. If you're thinking of hosting a Moose Hide Campaign event, know that very successful events have been held in all kinds of contexts and all kinds of ways, from a small group of men coming together to hundreds of people gathering for the day.

The campaign identifies four elements that will be central in the campaign's success, the foremost being learning. Campaign events are an opportunity to learn about domestic and gender-based violence and how people can help prevent them. They're also cross-cultural learning opportunities. To build understanding of indigenous cultures, learning can take place in many ways including through elder teachings, workshops on a range of topics and group discussion.

Experiential; Moose Hide Campaign events have the capacity to impact people on a deeper level because participants are engaged in various practices such as fasting, witnessing, ceremonies and sitting in circle. Most moose hide events can be a transformational experience for participants.

Thirdly, the culture; the Moose Hide Campaign is rooted deep in indigenous culture and the spirit of reconciliation. Respect for local protocols, elder guidance and indigenous practice will help ensure the intent of the day.

The Moose Hide Campaign is a grassroots movement of indigenous and non-indigenous men and boys who are standing up against violence towards women and children. Wearing the moose hide pin signifies your commitment to honour, respect and protect women and children in your life and speak out against gender-based domestic violence. Participating in the campaign is also an act of reconciliation. The Moose Hide Campaign is indigenous-led, rooted in culture and ceremony.

Violence against women and girls touches every community, ethnicity and nation. It is not

confined to any one of them; it touches every profession, religion, every socio-economic stratum of our society. It can be overt and extreme, subtle and insidious. It can be something that anyone would recognize to be wrong or something that some people convince themselves is intolerable and not really all that bad in the greater scheme of things. It can be a single incident or it can be a progression of events. It can be committed by someone under the influence of alcohol or drugs or by someone who's stone cold sober. Do you know what? It's never okay.

People need to reflect on what this means. They need to learn what's not okay and what crosses the line. That falls on all of society to make sure people stay within those lines. They need to be making a personal pledge not to do it and not to stand by while someone else does. They need to be part of the solution. Each one of us in this Legislature needs to be part of the solution.

The fasting aspect of the campaign adds gravitas to the experience. Fasting focuses the mind. Fasting in groups focuses the conversation. At sundown, there's a fast-breaking meal that reinforces the sense that something has changed. This is an important step, but we also need to realize that's not going to be enough. It's just one step. More steps will be needed.

This is something that has to go beyond the walls of this House. It has to go beyond the walls of our own houses at home in the community. It has to be something that we proudly are willing to stand up for; something that we cannot tolerate any further in our communities, in our homes or in our whole country.

I'm proud here today to stand with all the other Members of this Legislature and the Member for Torngat Mountains and support this resolution.

I can relate to the power of a daughter-father relationship. I also have a very close relationship with my daughter. We do some pretty, I guess, adventurous things at times on the farm. We often reflect on different issues, and violence against women is definitely one of them.

Every time my daughter walks out the door, it's always one of my concerns: What is she going to

be faced with in this world today? One day I hope to watch my daughter walk out that door and not have to think about that. This is one of the first steps to do that.

Once again, I congratulate us all and I'm proud to support this resolution.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour today to stand to speak in favour of this resolution. I certainly know and I'm hearing that everybody in this House feels strongly that this is an important, a very important private Member's resolution.

I honour my colleague from Torngat Mountains for raising it. I honour the Speaker for hosting us this morning and for ensuring a very personal ceremony. I also want to thank the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port for seconding this, and all Members, really, for speaking so eloquently to this very important issue.

Mr. Speaker, it seems over the last short period of time this issue of violence against women, harassment and any form of bullying has now seen the light of day. Mr. Speaker, we need to continue to talk about what's happening and we need to continue together to find solutions to those problems.

Mr. Speaker, I support, obviously, the Moose Hide Campaign. It's a grassroots movement, a very important one, of indigenous and non-indigenous men taking a stand on violence against women and children across Canada.

I listened intently when the Member for Torngat Mountains was talking about the significance of the moose hide and the Highway of Tears. I was moved, Mr. Speaker, to think about the women who have been harmed along the Highway of Tears and all the women and all the children that are currently being harmed.

The Moose Hide Campaign promotes the wearing of a small piece of moose hide signifying the wearer's commitment to honour,

respect, and protect the women and children in their lives, and to work collaboratively with other men to end gender-based violence. I thank us all in this House for recognizing the significance of this event today.

Gender-based violence remains a reality for many, many women, children and girls in Newfoundland and Labrador. We all must work together to end it. Indigenous women are particularly susceptible to violence. Indigenous women across the country experience a rate of violence three times higher than non-indigenous women and are also six times more likely to be murdered. I'll let you sit and just think about that for a moment – six times more likely to be murdered.

Mr. Speaker, it's shameful. As a society, we can do better and must do better. As a government, we support campaigns such as the Moose Hide Campaign which brings awareness and support to these very real issues of violence happening in our communities. Since the Moose Hide Campaign began in 2011 there have been hundreds of events across Canada. Three other provincial and territorial legislatures have stood in support of the Moose Hide Campaign including British Columbia, Alberta and the Northwest Territories. I think Newfoundland and Labrador is proud to stand with them and work towards a better tomorrow.

The campaign has also garnered national support. In October of 2017 the federal government announced it would be supporting the Moose Hide Campaign's national day of fasting and support in encouraging all men to abstain from eating and drinking for the day. Prime Minister Trudeau delivered a congratulatory message to the Moose Hide Campaign last month. He drew attention to the alignments with reconciliation and the need to do better with the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

In Newfoundland and Labrador organizations have also shown their support for the Moose Hide Campaign. The People of the Dawn Indigenous Friendship Centre in St. George's hosted an event in support on February 14, 2018. I was really happy to follow my colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port and to hear his

expressions of support and the work that's being done in his community.

However, Mr. Speaker, we have to continue to ensure that we're collaborating, that we're working together as a community and as a government to prevent and eliminate violence with all the measures that target this issue on all fronts. We provide support, as you know, to community organizations. At the same time, we partner within government to make progress on policies and programs which result in more inclusive communities for everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador.

In particular, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to draw attention to the continued implementation of the *Working Together for Violence-Free Communities*, our action plan for violence prevention initiatives. Progress has been made within that plan and we are now moving towards the next opportunity to refresh that plan. It is a living document and we'll continue to work within that plan.

The action plan has helped to guide our work in preventing and eliminating violence in the province. It's just one of the ways government works with partners to identify areas that need further efforts. While we've implemented many of the actions of the plan, we know we must continue our work to prevent violence and harassment in our schools, in our workplaces and in our communities.

I've stood in this House often, Mr. Speaker, and said harassment, violence and bullying is not acceptable in any way, any shape or any form in our homes. It's not acceptable in our communities. It's not acceptable in our schools. It's not acceptable where we play or where we work.

Working Together for Violence-Free Communities is a living document, as I said, which is responsive to the needs of our communities. This allows us as a government to respond when action must be taken to prevent and eliminate violence. This year we'll begin to explore how we can build on our progress so far.

One way we can do that is by working with other departments on policy and program change. To that end, Mr. Speaker, we've

established a ministerial committee comprised of many of the ministers here in government responsible for: Justice and Public Safety, Education and Early Childhood Development, Health and Community Services, Children, Seniors and Social Development, Service NL and Advanced Education, Skills and Labour. They have all come together in this ministerial committee. It's chaired by myself as Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. It really is an oversight to many of the initiatives that are happening within government to ensure that we're progressing on timely basis.

The Women's Policy Office provides ongoing support to other departments; for example, in efforts to address violence. Some recent examples include working with the Department of Justice and Public Safety on the new Justice Minister's Committee on Violence Against Women and Girls and working with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to implement reforms to the *Schools Act* which will better support girls and boys who have experienced violence.

We also work to address root causes through initiatives such as the mental health and addictions initiatives, including implementing recommendations from *Towards Recovery*, a report of the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions; through housing, including the upcoming provincial housing plan to end homelessness; the Poverty Reduction Strategy and other measures to reduce income inequality.

Mr. Speaker, there is much happening with community partners who do essential work in the field of violence prevention. Every day staff and volunteers of community organizations are providing front-line, much-needed and important services directly to the survivors of violence. I'd like to take a moment to thank them for their efforts. It is a difficult task, it's an emotional task, but it is one that they do willingly, caringly, and lovingly, if I can use that term, because they are caring for people who are in much distress.

The Women's Policy Office provides annual funding to organizations throughout the province that provide valuable services to our communities. It includes eight women's centres,

10 regional violence prevention Newfoundland and Labrador committees, the Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre, the Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network, the Multicultural Women's Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador and Safe Harbour Outreach Project. They're very important organizations in our communities, Mr. Speaker. These organizations undertake great work in our communities. We're proud to partner with them to improve the economic and social status of women in our province and to continue to prevent violence.

We also recognize that indigenous women and girls are particularly susceptible to experiencing violence. That's why we provide specialized support to our indigenous organizations and work with them to find culturally appropriate approaches to violence.

Late last year, the Women's Policy Office, in collaboration with the provincial Indigenous Women's Conference steering committee hosted the 10th annual provincial Indigenous Women's Conference. This year's conference brought together women representatives from indigenous governments and organizations to discuss the direction of the three-year empowering indigenous women for stronger communities project funded by Status of Women Canada. The conference provided an opportunity for indigenous leaders to discuss and identify strategies related to four issues acknowledged as priority areas in indigenous communities: Violence against women, mental health, homelessness and reconnecting generations and engaging youth.

Another way we support indigenous women, as well as men, girls and boys, is through the Indigenous Violence Prevention Grants Program. This program provides project funding to indigenous organizations and governments to identify and implement culturally appropriate responses to violence. Over \$200,000 in project funding was announced in February during the province's Violence Prevention Month for this important program.

Many projects are eligible to receive funding through the program, including those with a focus on developing violence prevention action

plans, public awareness and education materials or activities, providing healing programs in relation to the effects of violence, improving programs and services at shelters for indigenous women, developing community capacity in leadership and improving cultural strength of indigenous communities with the objective of reducing violence.

These grants engage indigenous men and boys in the prevention of violence, much like the Moose Hide Campaign, Mr. Speaker. It's essential that we all work together to recognize, address, prevent and eliminate violence. Oftentimes, it's through movement like today – the Moose Hide Campaign and comments like today – that really does shine a spotlight on the serious challenges we have around violence against women, harassment and bullying. That's why it so important we support innovative initiatives such as the Moose Hide Campaign, which specifically engages men and boys and calls upon them to take a stand against violence.

I'm encouraging all Members of this House – and I don't think I need to encourage them. I think they're really willing to bring forward their strength and their commitment to support the Moose Hide Campaign and work towards ending violence against all women and children in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It's time, Mr. Speaker. I think the hashtag #TimesUp says it all. It's time for us to really focus on violence against women, to stop harassment, to stop violence and to stop the bullying. I know the Women's Policy Office also funds the Intimate Partner Violence prevention unit by about \$500,000. They really do help to follow protocols and working to ensure that both RNC and RCMP officers are working in tandem to ensure intimate partner violence is addressed.

Mr. Speaker, there is so much more that we, as a community, have to do. There's so much more that we, as a government, have to do. But we're taking steps; we're working towards that end. I implore all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and indeed all Canadians, to join with us today in this House of Assembly to recognize that violence against women is still very prevalent in our society, to recognize that harassment and bullying are not to be tolerated.

Tonight I'm going to be joined with my female colleagues on this side of the House. We're having dinner in advance of International Women's Day to talk about how much more we can do and how the TIME'S UP campaign and the #MeToo campaign are really driving societal change. Mr. Speaker, so is the Moose Hide Campaign.

I thank you for your leadership; I thank the Member for Torngat Mountains for his leadership. I thank my hon. colleagues in this House for standing together to address this very important issue.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I feel honoured to have the opportunity to stand and speak to this private Member's motion. I, too, would like to thank the Member for Torngat Mountains; nakurmiik for introducing this private Member's motion.

What we are talking about today, Mr. Speaker, is a very harsh reality for the majority of women and children in Newfoundland and Labrador, for the majority of women and children in the country of Canada. One of the harsh realities, when we speak about violence against women, is it doesn't just happen out of thin air. We have to talk about the harsh reality of violence against women and children. The harsh reality is that it is male violence against women and children.

It means it's our brothers, our uncles, our grandfathers and our sons. It means it's our neighbours and our colleagues, sometimes a stranger; more often than not, not a stranger. That is the harsh reality we face, that we are talking about male violence. We're not talking about monsters, we're not talking about tigers; we're talking about the men in our lives, the men in our communities. It's only by acknowledging where the violence is coming from that we can truly address the problem.

It is only by working together, like the Moose Hide Campaign. Their goal is for men to take responsibility. Their goal is for men to use their resources, for our brothers to use their resources, their systemic power, their love and their passion and their compassion to address this issue.

We as women, as feminists, have been speaking out, have been organizing, have been voting, have been dedicating our time, our expertise and our money to solve this problem. We know we cannot do it alone.

That's what the Moose Hide Campaign is about, Mr. Speaker, and I celebrate that today. I celebrate that today on the eve of International Women's Day and I also celebrate my indigenous sisters for making representation, who are speaking to the inquiry for murdered and missing indigenous women and girls in Happy Valley-Goose Bay at this very moment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. ROGERS: All day today on the eve of International Women's Day, all day tomorrow on International Women's Day and it is tough. It's not an easy thing to do because some women will talk about their own experience and oftentimes women who have spoken again and again and again, women who have told their stories again and again and again, stories of rape, stories of battering, stories of poverty with courage.

Women who are speaking, although their voices are trembling, they are speaking with courage, with the trust that those who have been tasked with listening, with the task to listen with the real intent to hear will actually effect change. It's not enough for us to keep telling our stories of rape, of violence, of poverty, of homelessness again and again and again unless we see direct action. Hopefully, that is what's happening in our House here today as well. We cannot one day a week or two days a week listen to stories and say thank you and then move on. We have to effect real change.

I also want to say thank you to elder Emma Reelis who joined us today. She joined us today because we have made a social contract with her. The women are speaking out today in

Happy Valley-Goose Bay because we have made a social contract with them, that we are listening with a real intent to hear and with a commitment to social change.

Our justice system is not working well for women. Particularly for women who have been sexually assaulted, it is not working well for them. We know the statistics. We've said them again and again and again in this House. They're in the papers, they're on the radio, they're on the TV. We know the statistics. It's very hard to stand up and criticize the justice system but we know the justice system does not work for women who have been sexually assaulted. There must be change.

We also know our economic system is not working well for women. Newfoundland and Labrador women have the highest gender wage gap in the country. Women in Newfoundland and Labrador on the average make 69 cents for every dollar that a man makes.

We also know our social safety nets are not working well for women, that we still do not have universal accessible child care, which is one of the very foundational pieces of equality for women in our province. We still don't have it. No matter how many stories we tell, we still do not have it.

We also do not have enough safe, affordable housing for women, another foundational piece that makes it possible for women to live safely and affordably in our communities. We know that's a problem, and we know often that women will stay in abusive situations because they know that at least there's a roof over their heads but, more importantly, they feel there's a roof over the heads of their children. Women put up with social determinants of health, with the social determinants of justice to house their children, to feed their children.

We cannot talk about violence against women unless we also address the issues of poverty. Unless we do what we need to do to lift women and children out of poverty, they will not be safe.

I am happy and I am encouraged, Mr. Speaker, that my brothers here in the House, because of the private Member's motion brought forth to

this floor by the Member for Torngat Mountains, I am happy that my brothers, along with the women here in this House, have said: We also will not stand for it. This is not good enough. I am assuming they are making a social contract with the women of Newfoundland and Labrador to do everything in their power as elected representatives to tackle this issue of violence against women and children.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, as well for identifying this program and introducing it to the House, for bringing the Moose Hide Campaign here.

Women want to live side by side, work side by side, love side by side with our brothers in Newfoundland and Labrador. What can they do for us? It's not enough simply to wear your moose hide. I know my colleagues here in the House know that, but there are some very specific things men can do on our behalf to work side by side with us.

First of all, please listen. Please listen, not just to our stories, but please listen with the intent to really hear because those who are closest to the problem often know are closest to the possible solutions. Hear what we have to say about our justice system. Listen to us and hear what we have to say about our economic system, our education system. Hear what we have to say. Hear some of the solutions. Listen to some of the solutions we are putting forth and listen.

The same as indigenous women; indigenous women testifying before this inquiry today and tomorrow have some very clear ideas on what is needed in our society in order to tackle the horrendous, horrendous situation of violence against indigenous women and girls. So listen to us.

If you are at the table where decisions are being made, look around that table and see who is missing. Are there indigenous women at the table where decisions are being made? Are there any women, period, at the table where decisions are being made? Who is missing? Use your voice and raise that issue and say: Just a minute, there are no women at this table, there are no representatives from indigenous communities at this table, there are no representatives from the disability community, there are no representatives from the LGBTQ community, or

racialized people, or people who have become immigrants.

Look around the table and see who is missing and make sure that their voices are brought to the table. Speak to other men. That is one of the goals. Don't tolerate any kind of sexism banter in the workplace, or among your friends. Speak to other men and, for God sakes, teach your sons how to be good men in this world. Also, be the role model to your daughters to show them what a compassionate and a loving man can be in our society. Teach them to settle for nothing less than a man who respects women, who loves women, who is willing to work side by side for women. Be champions with us on our team,

And lobby – use your position, whatever it is, to lobby, to change our justice system, to ensure that we have equal pay for work of equal value, to ensure that we have pay equity, to ensure that our daughters have the same access to education, to ensure that our daughters have the money that they need to fulfill their own dreams of what they may want to be, whether it's firefighters, whether it's fish harvesters, or whether it's politicians.

In your own parties make it a safe place, an encouraging and a supportive place for women to run in your parties because when we look around this House there are still only 25 per cent of women who are elected in this House. This is where a lot of decisions are made. So please, look at who is not at the table and do something about that. The majority of minimum wage earners are women which means we have women, sometimes single moms with children, who are living in poverty.

We need a task force. Women across the province in the last few days in preparation for this debate and in the last few days in preparation for International Women's Day, I've spoken to women's organizations across the province and they are almost without exception calling for a task force on violence against women and children because they know the urgency. We're talking about lives. They know they have the expertise. They have seen the good work that has been done by the educational task force and, once again, they ask the Minister of Justice to strike a task force to deal with this crucial problem.

Mr. Speaker, I have to take my seat. I want to say, once again, that I am heartened by my brothers here in the House who have committed themselves to work on this issue. It is a social contract that you have made with the women and children of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Tshinashkumitin, Wela'lloq and Nakummek.

Thank you.

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

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

It certainly is an honour to speak to such a private Member's resolution and I want to commend, of course, my colleague for Torngat Mountains. I know his wife, Lori Dyson, is very proud of him for bringing this forward and to commend all speakers for this because this is something that, obviously, we are unanimous on. It's a no-brainer.

I'm also proud to partake today in the Moose Hide Campaign. Again, it's simply not a campaign that lasts a day. It's something that should last a lifetime in everything that we do. When we see an example or we witness this for ourselves, the onus is on us to stand up – women and men, boys and girls united.

I want to speak to my experience. Prior to becoming an MHA representing the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, I was a journalist for about 10 years. As a journalist, and many journalists can attest to this, there are some stories that will stay with you forever. There are a few of those stories that I would like to talk about today.

One that comes to mind is the case of Ann Marie Shirran. If you think back, it was the summer of 2008, 2009, around that time, a woman was reported missing by her then common-law husband. I remember as a journalist, we were sent to the area, where search and rescue were searching, for the media scrum. This went on day after day, week after week, for a number of weeks throughout the summer. Every day, this was my assignment. So I became very familiar with the victim's family, with the situations surrounding this case. This lady had a new-born

baby. I'll never forget that. I'll never forget that little boy, at the time, who will grow not knowing his mother.

Lo and behold, first reported as a missing person's case, but it was then later determined, some months later, when campers from out of province, out of Newfoundland and Labrador, discovered remains in a gravel pit in the Town of Cappahayden, and we'll just never forget that.

Also, one of the very first stories that I covered as a young journalist starting off, I was sent to the Supreme Court of the province and I believe it was an Aboriginal woman who was killed and murdered and her body was stuffed under a staircase by the man she was seeing. So these are just some examples. Everyone, every hon. Member in this House, our friends, our neighbours, we can all attest to this; we've all experienced it whether directly or indirectly. In this time we see a movement now, the #metoo movement, which we see started in Hollywood. We see it at the Oscars, just this past Sunday night, the Oscar Awards. The Emmys, the Grammys, celebrities everywhere are standing up and it's time that we all stand united against this, women and men.

I'll also use an example of a popular band in the United States, the Dickie Chicks. One of their biggest hits is "Goodbye Earl." It's a great song. It's a great, fun melody, but let me tell you that message in that song, those lyrics, they came from somewhere. They came from an experience. And it's not funny, but it's time that we stand up, the onus is on all of us here, every one of us here in every profession to stand up for this, violence against women and children, or anyone for that matter, is not acceptable whether it be bullying, whether it be sexual harassment, sexual misconduct. We must stand up. It is 2018.

Again, I'm proud to speak to this PMR. I'm not going to take all my time. I know there are some other Members that want to speak to this very important cause. Again, thank you to the Member and I look forward to the support of all Members of this hon. House to support this private Member's resolution.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure for me to rise here today to have a few words on this very important private Member's resolution. Private Members' resolutions or PMRs, as we know them, are entered into this House every Wednesday, and some are more important than others. I think today's PMR is one of utmost importance to us and this House of Assembly as we embark on the Moose Hide Campaign.

I want to thank my friend, the Member for Torngat Mountains, for bringing this PMR forward today. As a representative of many indigenous people in Labrador, it's certainly appropriate for him. I know that you, as Speaker and before you became Speaker and as a Member for Lake Melville, have been involved quite heavily as well in this campaign. I want to thank you for what you've done with regard to bringing this to our attention and to the House today.

I think a lot has been said today. There's not much I can add. The only thing I want to say – this is why I stood here today – is that it's okay to enter a PMR. We started this debate at 3 o'clock today. It will end very, shortly, at 5 o'clock, which is two hours debate, and a lot of things have been said. I think the fact that we now need to put what we've said, in the last two hours, into action. Unless we do that, then everything that we've done here today is in vain. We need to take action.

We all know that violence against women and children is not acceptable in today's society. The speakers who have spoken before me today have certainly said that very well and have gotten their message across quite well. So I need not say more about that, but the fact that we stood here today and offered our support to this very important issue is a testament of our commitment that we must do more, as a society and we must do more as leaders in this House of Assembly, leaders in our province, to advocate for the many women and children who continue to be abused and harassed in our society. It's time that we stand up and be counted and put our words into action.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say, thank you to you, thank you to the people in British Columbia who initiated this initiative. I want to thank you and the Member for Torngat Mountains for pushing this issue through and making sure that this issue came to this floor of the House of Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just take a few minutes, not that this is not an important issue that could be debated for hours and supported, it's because I know there are other Members here who want to speak to this very important issue. I want to thank the Member for Torngat Mountains for bringing this forward because the experience this morning sharing with yourself, the Speaker, and my colleagues here in the House was second to none when it comes to an awareness.

I think we've done a great thing in society over the last decade or so in awareness around violence against women and, particularly, indigenous women. I don't think we've done anywhere near enough to start solving that. That becomes the real issue here. We need to start moving things forward, faster, with more support from every sector of society, but, particularly, the male sector. They have to take onus on this. Not only onus for those who are the abusers, they need to be addressed in different manners, but particularly those who see abuse taking place and stand back and do very little or nothing about it. We need to take a stake in what is happening in our society. It's part of our responsibility in life as it is.

This morning was moving for a number of reasons. One, when you got to see how this movement happened, how the Moose Hide Campaign happened. I remember being – when I was Minister of Transportation and Works – in BC to speak at one of the conventions out there, driving along, seeing the signs and having very little idea of what it meant. I had heard in the background but really didn't know what it

meant. Obviously, when we were sitting down after with the delegation and we're having a drink and having a discussion, I asked the question what it meant, really, at the end of the day and so explicitly how it was explained to me because they were living it.

That was the highway where it all began. Even though it's happened for decades and centuries and people have been around, that's where it became so relevant that this is not just an isolated situation. This is something extremely serious here, that for some reason, whatever way, shape or form, some demented mind here has it embedded that women are being physically abused and murdered, that it wasn't going to be acceptable and that a campaign had started.

When I heard the story of how a father and a daughter had come together and came to a unified approach that they were going to work together to start a campaign to stop violence and make awareness to the rest of the country and start something with little steps. I thought then, you know, there are little things that can happen that make big results.

What I saw this morning was – because I hadn't really kept in touch with what had happened. Unfortunately, in our lives we get too isolated from that component of it, but to really realize that this movement has gone so far, that one million tags are being used and worn today out of respect and support.

It tells us that our society does have the ability to change things, to change people's lives, do the right things, but we have to do that on a unified front. People have to take the lead in it. People say: I'm only one person. I'm only one community or one group. I can't do too much. That couldn't be further from the truth. This is an example of what we saw happening here today, us being unified here in this House, all speaking and supporting something that we know is to the benefit of everybody.

This morning when the elder spoke and talked about the impacts, when she said a prayer for us all, we were all united here. Politics is secondary to doing the right things. This is a movement that does the right thing, makes proper awareness, but more importantly – as my

colleagues here have very eloquently talked about – finding ways that we prevent this from happening to anybody else.

Not only is it unacceptable. It's something that should not even be thought of. We shouldn't have to have these debates and this discussion, but it's a part of reality. How do we prevent that 10 years down the road we don't have to have this anymore? We're celebrating that everybody is treated equally, everybody is treated fairly and nobody is in fear, particularly, indigenous women or women from any race, as part of that, and anybody in our society.

We all have a responsibility. We all have a stake in this, but when you look at a particular program like this and a campaign that signals out, there's no political gain for anybody. There's no big financial support from corporations and that. It isn't somebody putting their stamp on it. It's grassroots that talks about moral beliefs that people should have and the way that we should conduct ourselves as human beings.

No doubt, as part of the male race, we have to take a big part of the responsibility here because it's part and parcel of the group that we're connected to, who are the ones who are causing this turmoil or causing the pain and suffering to families and individuals, for no cause. It's absolutely mind boggling of why people get to that level and why they have that mindset.

We need to make a stance out there. We need to start with our younger kids. I coached a lot of hockey, particularly, the late teens, early 20s, and every now and then – and it's alarming, it's confusing and, in some cases, it makes you push back – you'll always find one individual who shows a lack of respect for females and, unfortunately, doesn't realize what message they're sending out there. Every now and then, it's our responsibility, when that is identified – it's our responsibility all the time, but every now and then you have to stand up and call that person out and make it be seen that it's not acceptable. It's not acceptable at any level and we all have that responsibility to do that.

I, myself, have two daughters in their 20s and, as my colleague had said earlier and we've all talked about that, the fear that they wouldn't be

treated with total respect and that in any way, shape or form they would be fearful of anything in their life when it comes to any kind of violence, but when we look at it and we're talking 10 and 20 and 30 times the norm that indigenous women and children are having to face violence, then it makes you more aware that we, as a society, have to make a bigger effort to improve exactly what's happening here.

I just wanted to touch on some of those points and say, again, we all support what's happening here. We all need to do more. We've come a long way but, hell, we have a long way to go and that's reality when you're dealing with something that's so devastating and has such an impact on people.

I just wanted to again thank the Member for bringing this forward. No doubt, listening to everybody who had support for this, what it means to our society and what we need to do to ensure that we eliminate, now, this devastating plight on our society. I thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains to close the debate, please.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like thank all speakers for their, I can't say anything but overwhelming support to this resolution.

I'd like to touch on a little bit of what Members had to say in their support of this. The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune talked about the trauma and the daunting task ahead for the inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women, and I'm hoping to take part in that inquiry tomorrow.

She talked about questions remain on the numbers of Aboriginal women that are murdered and missing and how the stats are alarming. She talked about the different levels of where violence can occur. She talked about the different races, different cultures, different

religions and the levels of severity in violence against women.

She referenced Loretta Saunders, who is the most recent and the most impacting example of violence against women, especially for this young lady who was quite a spokesperson in an anti-violence campaign. It's unfortunate to see such things happen.

My colleague for Stephenville - Port au Port talked about quite a few of the initiatives that are happening in his district and his colleague's district: Daughters of the Dawn, the Newfoundland and Labrador Aboriginal Women's Network, and the South Coast Coalition on Violence Against Women.

So there are a lot of issues that we take part in in our own districts that work toward our provincial efforts, and certainly there is not enough time here today to mention them all.

He talked about some of the elders, like Odelle Pike, Calvin White, and Chief LaSaga who are working together to bring that Aboriginal initiative forward.

The Member for Mount Pearl North commented on the one million pins that are handed out, such a vast accomplishment from such a small, novel idea. I noticed many of the Members touched on that, this little idea that's turned into something that's growing bigger and bigger.

The Member for St. John's Centre spoke very passionately about the harsh reality, and the reality is these men are their fathers, their brothers, their colleagues, and they're not those monsters that are out there. These are our own people. Women have been standing up for this issue for a long, long time but they can't do it alone. They need help. It's important why this little, small men's initiative, if you may, towards ending violence against women has gone so far. I'm certainly glad to hear mention of that and take sides with it. She talked about the shortfalls, and my hon. colleague from Lab West talked about the need for action.

We heard the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave share some stories of some of the cases that happened in her district that she was part of during her role as media. She talked about, that

not only is this an issue coming from Aboriginal people or non-Aboriginal people, celebrities are jumping on board. She referenced some of the people in Hollywood. They had the bands that are taking an initiative on this stand against violence.

My colleague, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, talked about some of the initiatives we're doing as a government. I was glad to listen to her talking about programs like Working Together for Violence-free Communities. She talked about the departments that are on board: Justice; Public Safety; Early Childhood Development; Health and Community Services; Children, Seniors and Social Development; Service NL; Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

She talked about the Department of Justice and Public Safety under the new minister's committee on violence against women; working through some of the concerns that came from the all-party committee on mental health and the plan to end homelessness. The women's centres in our province, the 10 violence prevention NL committees, I'm proud to say that my wife actually chaired the violence prevention committee chapter in Labrador, and I was very proud of that.

There are a lot of initiatives that are out there, and the echo we seem to hear is that we need to do more. I'm glad to see that as a government we are stepping up, we're working towards this initiative. Is it going to happen overnight? No, we all know that, but every little initiative like the Moose Hide Campaign is going to work towards it.

Mr. Speaker, we often talk about the time when society didn't recognize women as an equal part of society. It took a lot of work but we got there. So why can't we do the same with this Moose Hide Campaign? Why can't we do the same to end violence against women and children in our province?

I'd like to reference two people who are very important in my life who have, I guess, played a major role in addressing violence against women in my area. One is my mom who passed away a couple of years ago, who was the first, I guess, president of the Labrador Inuit Women's

Association. She stood her ground on many occasions protecting the rights of women. The other one is Charlotte Wolfrey who actually lost a daughter to murder. She is in Goose Bay and actually presented at the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women this morning.

In terms of stories, I went to a vigil last fall here in St. John's where they read out the names of murdered women in our province. What struck home to me, Mr. Speaker, is when they got up around the 1970s and up-to-date, I was surprised that the names that were read out were people that I knew, people that I grew up with and people that I went to school with.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk about a couple of them. Henrietta Millek, who actually led me around the university grounds when I came here in 1981 to go to university. She went missing the second year after that. To this day, no one knows where she went. Sharon Murphy, who I went to school with and grew up with on the North Coast. Loretta Saunders, as I mentioned earlier, is another one. There are others like Susie Merkuratsuk and Ida Kohlmeister who were friends of mine that I knew.

I think, Mr. Speaker, we all share this common approach now that we support this initiative. I'm reaching out to everyone in our province to jump onboard, go to the website and get engaged.

Just to follow up in my closing remarks, I'm actually going to be travelling to Happy Valley - Goose Bay tomorrow morning. I will be taking part in the inquiry and lending support to those people who I represent who are probably going to be presenting.

When you talk about such tragedy in your life, we've all faced it at one time or another, we look around for supports and we look around for programs that will help end it. Certainly, we'll all be looking forward to the recommendations that do come out in the inquiry.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank everyone who stood and spoke on this topic. I'd especially like to reach out and thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your hosting the event, and your former role played a lot in getting this PMR brought forward.

Last but not least, I'd again like to thank our Inuk elder who came in, Emma Reelis, who offered words of wisdom and kind prayers.

Thank you, everyone, for your support in pushing this PMR forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

I guess just from my own perspective, I would like to say that I think there was one ask of myself, as the Speaker, and I will be very pleased to reach out to my counterparts across the country and share with them the experience of today.

I'm very proud to be a Member of this House of Assembly with all of you today. I would invite you – as you participated this morning – to join me in the hallway and we will break the fast together.

It being Wednesday and consistent with Standing Order 9, I now adjourn until tomorrow at 1:30 o'clock.