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Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

I will now rule on a matter of privilege raised yesterday by the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands. As Speaker, I am required – as indicated in Bosc and Gagnon 2017, on pages 144 to 145 – to ensure that four elements are addressed in the written notice – namely: that the Member is writing with the intention to raise a question of privilege; that the matter is being raised at the earliest opportunity; that the substance of the matter to be raised as a question of privilege is described; and finally, that the text of the motion to be proposed is included with a proposed remedy for the problem.

All of these elements must be satisfied before one rules as to whether there is a prima facie case for further consideration.

I have carefully reviewed the text provided by the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands that describe a series of events during April 25 and 26 of this year. In issuing this ruling there are two points I would like to make: Number one, the Member has not raised the issue at the earliest opportunity.

While the Member states that “it was only Tuesday, October 23rd of this past week that the reports were tabled in the House of Assembly,” the statements at issue were uttered publicly – again in this Legislature and in the media – six months earlier. The matters raised by the Member occurred prior to the complaint which is the subject of the report being filed. The House of Assembly was in session at the time those matters occurred and it would have been possible for the Member to raise this matter at that time.

In addition, and number two, the matters raised by the Member do not relate to the exercise of the Member’s parliamentary duties.

In his submission yesterday, the Member raised matters relating confidential caucus and Cabinet discussions. These are not matters to which parliamentary privilege extends, and as such are not within the purview of this Legislature. They

do not relate to the exercise of the Member’s parliamentary duties.

Therefore, and as such, I rule that a prima facie matter of parliamentary privilege has not been established.

MR. JOYCE: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands on a point of order.

MR. JOYCE: Just two points, Mr. Speaker. On your point that it was raised six months ago, you gave me leave from the House. I was not in the House when the House was open. You personally gave me leave for that.

The second point on that, Mr. Speaker, even if it was a caucus, you could (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the Member that the Speaker’s ruling is final and there is no opportunity for appeal.

Thank you.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members’ Statements today, we will hear from the Members for the Districts of Burin - Grand Bank, Conception Bay East - Bell Island, Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, and Conception Bay South.

The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when the *SS Caribou* was torpedoed by a German U-boat on October 14, 1942, only 136 of the 248 on board survived the ordeal.

Today, as far as we know, only one of those survivors is still with us, and that’s Mr. Hedley Lake of Fortune, who, Mr. Speaker, turned 100 years old this past August.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. HALEY: At that time, Mr. Lake was serving in the Royal Navy and was on the way home for a month's leave when this horrific event occurred.

As a measure of Mr. Lake's humanity, he managed to escape the *Caribou* by jumping in the frigid water, wearing a lifejacket, which he willingly gave up to a woman in the water next to him.

Mr. Lake attributes his longevity to hard work, and tended to his own vegetable garden right up to just about two years ago.

This past summer, the Premier and I dropped by to see Mr. Lake. He greeted us in his legion uniform decorated by a host of medals attesting to his service during World War II.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in recognizing this remarkable man, and to once again say thank you Mr. Lake for your service on behalf of us all.

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.

Most communities have lifelong volunteers who have been the cornerstone of supporting individuals, groups and causes without looking for acknowledgement or accolades. Bell Island has one such citizen and her name is Kay Dolmont Coxworthy. Kit, as she is affectionately known, has for nearly five decades been a leading volunteer and trendsetter for the volunteer movement on Bell Island through her tireless commitment and her engaging way of getting the community behind a cause.

She has been a key founding member of numerous organizations over the years and continues to be a leader in such organizations as the Community Development Co-operative, the Co-operative Bakery, the Seniors Housing Co-operative, the Bell Island Breast Cancer Support Group and so on.

It was this past September that Kay took on another volunteer role as volunteer coordinator for the first annual Bell Island walk in support of kidney disease – all as she approached her 77 birthday and deals with her own medical issues. Not only did she rally the community behind her but made it so successful that they more than doubled their expected \$3,000 goal to nearly \$8,000, of which Kay raised \$1,000 herself. She is a tireless volunteer whose ultimate reward is that people's lives have improved due to her involvement.

I ask all to join me in thanking and congratulating Kay on being an inspiring volunteer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I would like to congratulate the volunteers of the Town of Bay Roberts on hosting their very first Light the Lamp event, a street hockey tournament for children ages five to 15.

During the weekend of June 23, Recreation Director Ian Flynn, along with 150 local volunteers, successfully organized 120 ball hockey teams, over 1,100 participants from across our province.

When it comes to hosting visitors and events, our communities in Conception Bay North are known for coming together, to offer outstanding hospitality. Numbers of volunteers donated their time and skills, and more than 25 local business owners sponsored the event.

Mr. Speaker, local residents and visitors alike continue to provide positive feedback and share their personal stories about their experience in Bay Roberts at the Light the Lamp this past summer. The town has recently announced it will again host this tournament this coming June. The only way events such as this can happen successfully is with the dedication of our volunteers.

For the first time, the provincial Newfoundland and Labrador Summer Games will be hosted by Bay Roberts and surrounding communities in the summer of 2020. Volunteers are, once again, gearing up in anticipation to host the athletes, volunteers, fans and visitors from across the province.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all my colleagues join me in congratulating the dedicated volunteers of Bay Roberts and Conception Bay North.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House to pay tribute to Rencontre East's Mayor Peter Giovannini for his 35-year Long Service Award from the Department of Municipal Affairs and Environment in September 2018. Residents are very grateful for his steadfast dedication and, today, it is an honour to congratulate Peter for his service as councillor, deputy mayor and mayor during those years.

Residents can attest that Peter's commitment and passion has served his town and our province very well. He has a long record of giving selflessly to his community and his neighbours sing high praises of this man of few words, with great integrity, who likes to help out anyone that he can.

For 35 years, his sure-fire reliability has been demonstrated by always being the first on the scene and always lending his hand and skills to any job, big or small.

I, and your fellow residents, thank you for your many years of volunteerism on council, and with the fire department, recreation committee, Harbour Authority and the list goes on. Your efforts do not go unnoticed and are very much appreciated.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating Mr. Giovannini and we

encourage him to continue his commitment to his community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday, October 19, my colleague, the MHA for Topsail - Paradise and I attended the 7th Annual Bright Business Awards Luncheon ceremony at the Manuels River Hibernia Interpretation Centre.

This annual event is hosted by the Town of Conception Bay South and is a great opportunity for local entrepreneurs to network and showcase their individual businesses in our community. This year, 51 nominations were received and, in fact, 44 businesses have opened, relocated or have come under new ownership in 2018.

The Bright Business Achievement Awards help recognize the contributions of local businesses that have gone above and beyond. This year's award winners are Beautiful Business: Dawe's Plumbing and Heating, Single Tenant; Regular Power Clarke Bennett Lawyers, Multiple Tenant; Community Pride and Partnership: Sobeys; David Murphy Chamber Leadership: Platinum Construction; Glenda Noseworthy Award: Gordon Byrde from Shawn's Muffler and Brake Shop; Established Business of the Year: Invested Mama; Main Street Business Improvement Member of the Year: Sobeys; New Start Up of the Year: The Wee Gym.

I would like to extend my congratulations to the award winners, nominees and sponsors. Conception Bay South had grown significantly and it's great to see the business community has shown tremendous growth as well.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to talk about the significance of Orange Shirt Day in acknowledging survivors of the residential school system.

The colour orange is connected to Phyllis Webstad who was just six years old in 1973 when she attended her first day at a residential school. Her new orange shirt was taken away from her. For Phyllis, orange became a constant reminder of the hurt and loneliness she felt while attending residential school.

Last month, I was pleased to speak via Skype with Patrick Ballard and his classmates at Bayview Academy School in St. George's. Patrick submitted the winning design for an orange shirt through a contest organized by the Bay St. George Cultural Revival Centre.

Proceeds from the sale of the shirts were being used to purchase a traditional Mi'kmaq teepee on the grounds of the school. Patrick's design was exceptional in that it reflected elements of all Indigenous cultures in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I also acknowledged a challenge from Abby Carroll of St. George's and pledged to her that every Member of our caucus would wear orange next year on September 30. I call on all Members of this hon. House, in the spirit of reconciliation and revitalizing our relationship with Indigenous peoples, to join me in recognizing September 30 as Orange Shirt Day in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I thank the hon. the Premier. We can all applaud, Mr. Speaker, the sentiments

behind Orange Shirt Day while guarding against sentimentalism. As a former class counsel in the Labrador residential school's case, I point out that while the federal government finally made tender of amends in money damages and an apology from the prime minister in Goose Bay, the provincial government has not.

Residential school survivors in this province await the advice of the Premier as to when such promised tender of amends may occur.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the Premier. As a province, we must work to redress the colonial legacy of residential schools and advance the process of reconciliation. Recognizing Orange Shirt Day is a positive step in acknowledging survivors and it is one of the many actions we must take in working toward reconciliation.

I remind the Premier the Truth and Reconciliation Commission also calls for changes to the K-12 curriculum, the Indigenous post-secondary programs, public monuments to honour survivors and more. I look forward to seeing progress on these and other initiatives soon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the positive work of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador in recently bringing together over 275 municipalities across the province. Municipal leaders and volunteers are on the front lines of our local governance and earlier this month, I was very pleased, along with the Premier, to attend the 68th annual MNL Conference, Trade Show and Annual General Meeting in Gander. I would like to thank

President Tony Keats and CEO Craig Pollett and the organizers for planning a fantastic gathering. The meeting provided nearly 500 delegates with the opportunity to learn from each other and collaborate on how we can all work together to make our province and our communities better places to live and work.

At the AGM elections, newly elected members included: Trina Appleby as the new Avalon Director; Amy Coady-Davis, re-elected as the Central Director; and Roger Barrett, re-elected as the Western Director. Elected by acclamation to their respective positions on the board were: Eastern Director Paul Pike; Labrador Director Didier Naulleau; and Northern Director Dale Colbourne. I would like to acknowledge the other members of the board for their work as well: Sheila Fitzgerald; Sheilagh O'Leary; Rob Anstey; and Andre Meyers. I wish these members all the best of luck in their roles.

Over the past few months I've had the pleasure to meet with MNL a number of times and we've worked together on issues of importance for our communities. Those meetings and co-operation are paying off as we saw recently with how we are prioritizing municipal infrastructure projects and implementing a new cost-share ratio that will make it easier for communities to construct roads and build community centres via the Investing in Canada Plan. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank MNL for their dedication and commitment to providing improved municipal service to residents.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. It was an honour to attend this year's MNL convention. I, too, was very impressed with the event and with the representation from so many municipalities of all sizes. I certainly enjoyed my conversation with a multitude of mayors and councillors. I was also extremely impressed with the quality and the variety of resolutions put forward on matters such as

infrastructure, mental health, better co-operation between municipalities and a multitude of other topics aimed at improving the lives of our citizens. A provincial ban on single-use plastic bags was also discussed and we look forward to seeing some action on this issue in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, we would also like to congratulate and thank the Members of MNL for their continued commitment and dedication to making our communities, towns and cities better places to live and work for everyone.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

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

I too thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I'm delighted to congratulate President Keats and CEO Pollett for their hard work and once, again, the excellent conference that I too experienced.

The minister notes he has worked together with MNL on infrastructure issues. I encourage the minister to work also with MNL on the concerns expressed at the MNL women's caucus, which was a public event, on bullying and harassment women serving on municipal councils experience, as here in this House government must show leadership in setting guidelines to protect people from bullying and harassment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Before we start with Oral Questions, I will remind all Members that if you have a negative, disparaging comment when a Member opposite to you is speaking, I'd ask you to internalize it. I do not want to hear heckling.

With that, we will start Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure if it was intended in particularly for my benefit or general benefit.

MR. SPEAKER: It's a big House.

MR. CROSBIE: Sir, my question today is for the minister responsible for The Rooms.

Yesterday, the minister said that any staffing action at The Rooms must come from him as minister to approve.

So I ask the minister to please table the legislation that gives him the authority to make hiring decisions at The Rooms.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very pleased by the question that has been asked, because as the Minister responsible for Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, with any hire that comes within my department there is a request for staffing action that is done, that is requested by the head of that division and then would go to the deputy minister and then would come to my desk for signing when it comes to staffing. This is normal human resource, HRS, policy.

When it comes to the Arts and Culture Centres of this province, any requests for staffing, whether it's somebody on a casual call-in list, theatre, any level of position, that will come to my office for signing – no different at The Rooms.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, may I ask the minister how that answer squares with what appears to be stated in section 8(4) of the *Rooms Act*, namely that the authority to hire is vested not in the minister but in the board of The Rooms.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of TCII.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, the same process that has been used for hiring for The Rooms since its existence and operation in 2004, for any hiring that has taken place has followed the process where requests for staffing action would be required and that request for staffing would come forward, the CEO would sign that and then it would come forward to the minister who would be responsible for The Rooms and would require that signature for any staffing action to be hired.

As I said in the House previously, The Rooms is a bit of a different organization in the fact that all salaries follow the salary pay scales within government, within that band, for management, for directors and that is a process that is quite normal. It's the same with the Arts and Culture Centre, which is a division within my department.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you.

I'd like to loop back to that, Mr. Speaker, but first of all I'll ask the minister – he said yesterday that he did not see a résumé but determined the 'hiree' to be the best person for the job.

If the minister did not review the résumé, how did he make the determination that Ms. Foote was the most qualified person to fill that role?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of TCII.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to put forward and correct some of the information that has been put forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition because he's made statements that has said it's not usual for somebody to move from an executive level role from core government to be in an agency, board or Commission. Well, that's happened time and time again.

I can cite an example of former deputy minister of business that moved to become the CEO of WorkplaceNL today, in 2008, and stayed in that role as CEO until the Independent Appointments Commission replaced this person through an independent merit-based process. And that is something that our government instituted when it comes to CEO and the boards that are taking place. They are responsible for the bulk of spending within government.

Now, executive level and lateral positions –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I remind the minister that we're questioning today on the basis of the policies, policy statements and laws as they exist under his administration and not some past one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: I ask the minister again, because I didn't hear an answer, you said yesterday that you didn't see a résumé but determined the 'hiree' to be the best person for the job.

If you did not review the résumé, how could you determine that Ms. Foote was the most qualified person?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was explaining the whole point around the Independent Appointments Commission, the merit-based process that exists for appointments for the board of directors and for the CEO. When it comes to executive level positions within government, this was a lateral move.

The person that is in the position of executive director of The Rooms is eminently the most qualified person. She came from running for government in terms of marketing and communication, the top executive within government. She is more than eminently qualified, and these transfers have taken place.

I just highlighted one example of WorkplaceNL when it comes to an executive level position. I want to highlight that the –

MR. SPEAKER: Sorry, I remind the Member his time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I still didn't hear an answer to the question about reviewing résumés, but I guess we'll leave it there and listeners can draw their own conclusions.

Section 8(4) of the *Rooms Act* states that the board may employ people necessary in accordance with the budget approved by the minister for the financial year in which they are employed.

Did the approved budget for 2018 for The Rooms include a budget allocation of \$132,000 for Ms. Foote's position?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of TCII.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify as well, when it comes to the board of The Rooms, the board of The Rooms has recently gone through an independent appointments process. They've all been hired for these positions in their merit. I'm very proud of the talented team at The Rooms.

When it comes to The Rooms, they are responsible for the oversight and direction, and under the CEO, and that is the staff person of which their responsibility. When it comes to the signing off of any staff, to start a request for staffing action, to hire any individual within The Rooms, my department, or the Arts and Culture Centres within my responsibility, it has to come from the head and then it requires my signature – not the board.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, that's all very interesting, but the question was: Did the approved budget for 2018 for The Rooms include a budget allocation of \$132,000 for Ms. Foote's position?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of TCII.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very proud of The Rooms and the initiatives that they've undertaken. They have raised over \$11 million in their capital campaign. They've been generating additional revenue through their revenue-generating activities in terms of their café, their gift shop, their programming, the parking that they have implemented.

They've been generating more and more revenue and reducing their reliance on government subsidy. That is a very positive thing. When it comes to the envelope of funding which they have, they certainly have an allocation to be able to support the two executive-level positions, because one thing that was done is that two director positions were collapsed. This would've been over \$200,000, so there are savings there.

This was put into adding a curatorial position, a curator, and be able to add additional programming. This is meant to be a good move. This was all done in consultation with HRS.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

I remind the Members, my patience is very thin. I can shut you down in a minute if it continues, so let's respect each other when I'm addressing you.

The Opposition has the question.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, it would be very easy for the minister to say either yes or no, the \$132,000 was included in the budget allocation for the year, and I haven't heard an answer to that. I haven't heard an answer to that, so we can all draw our own conclusions that it was not.

The minister said that the original position at The Rooms, which I understand had the salary of \$100,000, was different than the position that Ms. Foote is now in.

I ask the minister: Would he table both job descriptions?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of TCII.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the organization at The Rooms, I said since 2016, since we went through this House and debated Bill 56, we had gone through a process, a very consultative process, of which we did outreach with the community, we also looked at reducing silos within The Rooms so that we could have better synergies within the corporation, but also a better connector with government so that The Rooms can implement its strategic plan and develop and initiate.

The director of marketing role would not be the same as an executive director of marketing and development. Having the calibre of person that's there, and the creation of another executive director position, will allow The Rooms to achieve its mandate.

This was done in consultation with the Human Resource Secretariat and approved by the board.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I take from that that the minister either doesn't know the answer or does not wish to answer the question.

It's a simple one: Will he table both job descriptions?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of TCII.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, as I said in this House, the important piece that has taken place as we've consulted with the CEO and the board of directors, is that The Rooms has moved beyond with its exhibition development and also with fundraising to be more public engagement, very much people-focused, program-focused. We've seen a lot of good things transpire at The Rooms when it comes to things that have been done by the director there in terms of being able to recruit over 260 volunteers and to be able to engage in highlighting cultural connections and experiences.

Having somebody who is an executive director in marketing and development, working with the agency on record is going to be able to elevate the status of The Rooms to achieve so much more, focus on our regional museums and many other initiatives –

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I have no choice but to take from that that the minister is refusing to table a job description.

Did the minister provide – let's clarify this point – additional funding to The Rooms to pay Ms. Foote in the 2018 year?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of TCII.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said previously, we give an appropriation to The Rooms. The Rooms has been generating its own revenues on top of the appropriation that they were given, and there is certainly sufficient allocation within The Rooms budget to make these positions available. They like any other agency, board or commission, as with any department as well, would make a submission to government during the budgetary process.

What I will say is I want to go back to a point of what the Member opposite was talking about, people who are in executive-level positions that never get moved. So, Mr. Len Simms was appointed chair and CEO of the Housing Corporation in 2005, resigned as chair in 2007 to run the PC campaign. Then, after election day, was reappointed as chair and CEO of the Housing Corporation (inaudible) –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I suspect the minister would have an easier time with overrunning his allotted time if he just answered the question asked.

Yesterday, the minister said that Ms. Foote's role as ADM had broad responsibilities for marketing and communications for all of government and now she's getting paid the same amount, as you have said, for more narrow responsibilities at The Rooms.

So, how did the minister determine how much Ms. Foote would be paid, and can you justify paying the same?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of TCII.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, when it comes to somebody, the calibre of this executive level and her talents, she was responsible for reforming the marketing and communications division within government, the brand division and ran that across all departments to make it more efficient, make it more productive and was a key part of *The Way Forward*.

She has eminent knowledge about all of the activities within government and would be a great connector for our cultural institution that does so much business as well. There is an incredible opportunity for the activities that are unfolding to tap back to government and those synergies.

When it comes to a lateral move within government, people who receive a salary receive the same salary when they move; that is not uncommon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, my question is now for the Premier.

The decision by the Supreme Court of Canada on the province's appeal of its good faith case against the Upper Churchill contract with Quebec will be handed down this Friday at 9:45 EDT.

What is the government's strategic plan if we win the case?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the big focus that we've been giving as a government is how we deal with electricity rates in our province. We've actually, as you would know, sent this appeal forward to go through the necessary steps that would be required.

But, Mr. Speaker, right now the strategic focus for us in Newfoundland and Labrador is not just about winning a court challenge; it's actually fixing the mess that the people that you now sit with created for the people in our province. We spend a considerable amount of time working with a number of people in this province to fix up this mess.

I would still like the Leader of the Opposition to let the people know that he took a position about saying that the insurance rates through the PUB, he didn't need to exhaust that, he would wait and he made a decision before that (inaudible), yet he wants (inaudible) –

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

I ask the Member to – your time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I'd suggest to the hon. Premier that he'd have less trouble overspeaking his allotted time if he as well answered the question asked.

This is not an insignificant matter. This case, the decision of which is about to be handed down on Friday, is a pivotal case in the history of the Churchill River and power development there.

I again ask: What is strategic plan if we win the case?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, we, as I said, are dealing with a number of issues within the province right now. A strategic plan would be based on the decision that we will get. But let me tell you this, one of the things that we've been able to deal with is a number of the issues that face people in Newfoundland and Labrador. And I understand why the Leader of the Opposition is waffling on making a decision. I understand that, because he's actually sitting with individuals that have made that decision. So I understand the waffling on the part of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with the issues in this province. Key to that is what the former administration left around doubling electricity rates. That will not happen whether we win or not on Friday. Hopefully, we will win. Then how we make the necessary steps will then be (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Perhaps a more straightforward question with what should be a straightforward answer to wind this up with the Premier. Mr. Speaker, has the Premier been in communication with Quebec's new premier, Mr. Legault, on any substantive issues; if so, on which issues; and are there active plans for a meeting between these premiers?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, I take every opportunity to meet with the premiers all across this province, every opportunity that I get. As a matter of fact if you go back to the Canadian Free Trade Agreement and the free transmission of electricity through Quebec, that was a big focus for us at that time within the transmission of electricity.

My job as Premier of this province is to build and strengthen relationships with all provinces that exist within the Confederation. Mr. Speaker, when the opportunity comes and presents itself, I never miss an opportunity to advance issues with other provinces that benefit Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Your government committed to an autism strategy following the 2015 election. As you enter your fourth year of government, when can

the people of this province expect to see this rolled out?

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

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

I'm delighted to be able to stand here in the House. We have been working diligently around a disabilities strategy, under which we'll form an autism plan. My staff advised me that I will have the final draft of that within the next three weeks.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What we've heard, we've been planning for three years, we're now getting there but people need these services. You getting a copy of the plan after three years as you go into your fourth year doesn't help these families be provided services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: When can the minister tell us that there will be services provided under that plan for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the families who need to avail of these services?

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

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

The plan simply draws together, among other things, a whole series of threads we already have. We are one of the leading provinces in the country, for example, with Joint Attention, Symbolic Play, Engagement & Regulation therapy, also called JASPER, to the extent that in actual fact the course developers and the program developers have partnered with this department in running trials of further steps in that program.

We are actively engaged in that, we are disseminating that, and it's out there already. There are services out there, and we are working with the Autism Society on how best they can bolster their support services for families.

We are doing these things; we're simply drawing it together this month.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We all agree that organizations out there, particularly the Autism Society, are doing great work in filling the gaps. But community organizations are filling service gaps as needed but continue to grow; core funding from government does not.

What will happen to families who are relying on these supports if organizations are forced to cut their offerings as a result of funding challenges?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, our aim as a government is to ensure a spectrum of services. It is our hope that we will have a comprehensive system whereby we have shared services between support offerings and peer support and family support which can only really be provided by those with lived experience, something we found extremely valuable in mental health, in addition to evidence-based, standardized protocols that would be the same across the entire province, hence our reliance on things like JASPER and bringing the whole concept of ABA to children at a very young age.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We encourage the minister to move this along as quickly as possible. People can't wait.

Can the Minister of Health and Community Services explain the recent changes with the assessment guidelines for personal care homes?

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

MR. HAGGIE: I am delighted, Mr. Speaker, to be able to stand in this House and correct some factual errors, shall we say, that have emerged over the last couple of days when we made our state of the union, as it were, on seniors care.

There have been no changes, Mr. Speaker. Today's standards and level of care framework are exactly the same as last year's, and indeed exactly the same as the ones the previous government put in place. Level I subsidies: 26 issued in October; 24 issued in September. They are still going out there. We have not changed anything at all.

We're working with the industry on a needs assessment to find out what it is we actually need in terms of beds.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So the minister is saying there have been no change in the criteria for eligibility to receive a supplement for Level I entries. Okay, fair enough.

So, Minister, would you agree that the social isolation, loneliness and psychological supports are a significant concern for many seniors in our province?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and that's why one of the things that wasn't clipped in my interview yesterday by the media was exactly that discussion on how to deal with social isolation and inclusion of seniors. We are in active discussions with personal care home operators to supply day programming for people who are not their residents, so that they may

come in and provide those services to enhance both the personal care home experience and the lives of our seniors.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: So you're in discussions with the personal care home owners to provide other services while you're cutting the first entry level of the supplements for level I. So, I mean, that becomes an oxymoron there when you come to that discussion.

The mental health of our seniors is a very –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: – important concern. I think we all can agree with that.

Can the minister explain why mental health issues like loneliness and depression are no longer considered in the assessment for personal care homes?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, there has been no change in the criteria. Level I, II, III and IV are still assessed consistently now across the province by the same criteria that the crowd opposite put in place. They have not changed.

Level I subsidies are still being issued: 26 in October; 24 in September. The bulk of people that are waiting for placements are waiting for homes of their own choice. We have 17 per cent vacancies in personal care homes across this province; highest in one of our regions at 21 per cent. We have capacity. We have subsidies.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister admitted he completely orchestrated the

hiring of Ms. Foote for the position of executive director of marketing and development at The Rooms.

Can the minister tell us the exact roles played by Dean Brinton, CEO of The Rooms, the board of The Rooms, the Clerk of Executive Council and the Premier's office in this orchestration?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member opposite for her question and the ability to again clarify the matter of which we've been talking about in particular The Rooms. The Rooms has been going through a strategic review of the human resources and the flow of activity within its entity since we passed Bill 56.

This has been done in consultation with the CEO, with the new board, and also with Human Resource Secretariat to look, with the new strategic plan that is taking place at The Rooms, what is required and what will be the direction of the directors in management position.

It was determined that two executive director positions were required for The Rooms to fulfill its mandate. As I said previously, I signed the RSA, as per normal ministerial practice.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, yet again, we have no answer to the questions. I asked him specifically, I asked the minister, what was the role of the CEO, the board, the Clerk of Executive Council, I heard nothing.

Mr. Speaker, how does the minister believe he has the ability to determine someone is amply or most qualified for a professional position in a field in which he personally has no qualifications?

Does the minister believe he is more qualified than the CEO and the board of The Rooms to

determine who is best for such a position? Because he has not told us exactly what their role was in this.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of TCII.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have to say, I have all confidence in the board of directors and the work that they do. They were appointed by a merit-based process. They know their roles, they know their responsibilities. They're responsible to the CEO and that position and providing oversight.

The CEO would have provided me with a request for staffing action. That is required as for any staffing position within the Department of TCII or within The Rooms itself. In order for a position to be hired, I would have to sign off on that position. I've made that very clear.

When it comes to creating the positions, they were approved through a consultative process through Human Resource Secretariat to determine that two executive level positions were required. One, the executive director of Galleries and Museums, and the other, executive director of Marketing and Development.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The minister keeps referring to these executive positions. He said that the new position of executive director at The Rooms was in the strategic plan for The Rooms; yet, we cannot find any explicit evidence of this in the existing publicly available strategic plan. Perhaps it's another secret strategic plan somewhere that we're not privy to.

Nevertheless, I ask the Premier: Can he point out where and in what strategic planning document is this executive director of Marketing and

Development position identified and noted as essential?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of TCII.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, one of the executive director positions that have been created is for museums and galleries, and this is as part of combining two director positions that would have a savings of nearly \$100,000. Money went back into being able to do more exhibits and to hire a second curator, which is going to benefit the museum and the art gallery in terms of the exhibitions that it can do, focus on regional museums.

The executive director of Marketing and Development will implement and work closely with the CEO to implement the strategic plan, focus on our regional museums on program, on public engagement. All of these things are listed and publicly available. These positions were created in consultations with the Human Resource Secretariat, the CEO, approved by the board, and I've –

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I say to the minister, he has not answered where the word executive came from. It's not in the strategic plan.

So did he himself make these – determine, deem that these are executive positions?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of TCII.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, as I've said numerous times, this was done in consultation with the CEO, with the board of directors, the Human Resource Secretariat, and

looking at the strategic plan, the work flow, the activities and all the positions that are at The Rooms, those that have been newly created as executive level, and that the salary envelope is there to support this.

These are lateral moves. These are good people who are in these roles. They're going to do incredible work on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and it is not unusual for executive transfers to take place, as is the case with The Rooms for the two executive positions.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Time for Oral Questions has ended.

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I'm not disputing your ruling that you made, but on Friday, October 26, you told me that it didn't meet – it was the earliest possible time to hand you the written statement before Monday. Did you misquote when you told me that last Friday, or what has changed since last Friday?

MR. SPEAKER: As I indicated earlier to the member, my decision is final. I've made my ruling. There is no prima facie case. I have explained my rationale for it, there were two key points. I'm going to leave it there and say the matter is finished.

Thank you.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to draw your attention to 2:02 p.m. in Question Period. The Minister of TCII referenced and appeared to read from a document in his hand that he had stapled. Normal protocol here in the Legislature, if a minister is answering a question and specifically

quotes or references a document, that document would be presented here in the House. So I'd ask the minister if he could present those documents.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation if you have a comment.

MR. MITCHELMORE: I have no issue with tabling the note of which I read, which highlighted that the CEO of WorkplaceNL was appointed through that process, and the Ross Reid appointment. I can actually read it or I can table it. And since I have the ability, I didn't have the opportunity to finish it and I can do it when we do Tabling of Documents – but on February 23, 2005, appointed as chair and CEO of NL Housing Corporation, Len Simms.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: I ask for order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: September 10, 2007, resigned as chair and CEO of the Housing Corporation; campaign manager for the PC Party on election day on October 9, 2007; October 18, 2007, reappointed as chair and CEO of the Housing Corporation; September 13, 2011, resigned as chair and CEO of the Housing again; campaign manager for the PC Party October 11, 2011, election day; October 25, 2011, reappointed as CEO and chair of the Housing Corporation.

That's the contents of this information.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I'd ask the Page to collect the document, please.

I ask for some order in the House, please.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: I'd ask you to check the video. The actual one single paper, it wasn't what we were referring to. He had a number of pages there that were stapled. We ask that the – without verbatim, that he just present. That's all we're looking for. We're not looking for a

speech from him, we're just asking him to table the documents if we could, Mr. Speaker.

Thanks very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation to please table his document.

MR. MITCHELMORE: So, Mr. Speaker, I will table the documents for appointments in the fall of 2015 prior to the election. Appointments by the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, Clyde Jackman, 20 appointments. The Member for Ferryland, 19 appointments when he was minister on the dying days of going out of office. We created the Independent Appointments Commission for a reason.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

I don't need any discussion.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order in the House, please!
Order in the House!

Okay, let's get back with the agenda.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order in the House, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: I ask for Order in the House.

Thank you.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 26(5)(a) of the *Financial Administration Act*, I am tabling seven orders-in-council relating to funding pre-commitments for the fiscal year 2019-2020 and beyond.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the lowest minimum wages in Canada, and minimum wage workers earn poverty incomes; and

WHEREAS proposals to index the minimum wage to inflation will not address poverty if the wage is too low to start with; and

WHEREAS women and youth, and service sector employees, are particularly hurt by the low minimum wage; and

WHEREAS the minimum wage only rose only 5 per cent between 2010 and 2016, while many food items rose more than 20 per cent; and

WHEREAS other Canadian jurisdictions are implementing or considering a \$15 minimum wage as a step towards a living wage;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to legislate a gradual increase in the minimum

wage to \$15 an hour by 2021, with an annual adjustment thereafter to reflect provincial inflation.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition was begun in 2017. So it actually gave almost five years for government to reach \$15 an hour. It wasn't a shock to the system – it wasn't proposing a shock to the system, or a shock to small business owners.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to posit that this government doesn't have a war on poverty, but, in fact, this government has a war on the poor. They are actually waging a war on the poor to make their final balance sheets look better. They cut the Adult Dental Program, they cut the over-the-counter drug program, they're cutting home care hours and they're cutting medical transportation program. What, in fact, is happening, they will not step up and do the right thing around minimum wage, so we have increasing numbers of people within our own province who are working full-time who are falling into poverty.

What this government is waging is not a war on poverty; it's a war on the poor. They are not doing anything to help the poor of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we're seeing that that number is increasing.

Mr. Speaker, people know that the price of living has gone up. The cost of living has gone up for them. Their wages have stagnated and it's not matching the galloping increase in the cost of living.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour for a response, please.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stood yesterday in my place and responded to the petition. We all understand and fully appreciate where the Member for the Third Party is coming. I did make mention yesterday that, in fact, in 2017 and April 1 in 2018, we increased

the minimum wage by 25 cents to now \$11.15, and will be increased April 1 again this year on the national CPI.

She also makes mention that this government has done nothing when it comes to poverty reduction. I'll just go over a couple, Mr. Speaker, that I have here – the highest in history – \$65.1 million for Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement, \$56.3 million for the Seniors' Benefit, for a combined total investment of \$121 million which benefits 155,000 individuals and their families receiving Income Supplement and 47,000 seniors and their families receiving the Seniors' Benefit; \$8.3 million for the Supportive Living Program; \$4.1 million in funding for the Home Energy Savings Program. Mr. Speaker, I can go on.

We have made significant changes and we're also changing legislation to improve within labour standards and we're making changes to that as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, getting up and saying that we've done nothing is certainly not something – very disingenuous for them to make that comment and it is not something that we want to sit and appreciate on this side.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Mr. Speaker, these are the reasons for this petition:

Children in Newfoundland and Labrador deserve to have eye examination coverage. The cost of eye exams averages about \$80 and this is not affordable by many families in this province.

Newfoundland and Labrador is the only province in Canada that does not cover some form of vision care for children. This illustrates a lack of recognition by the government on the importance of children receiving routine eye care.

Any undetected vision problem can have a significant impact on infant and childhood development. The earlier a problem is detected and treated, the less likely it is that other areas of development will be compromised.

Given that 80 per cent of classroom learning is visual, specialists in the field of optometry stress the importance of routine eye care for children.

Studies indicate that many children who start having trouble reading in elementary school begin to improve upon having eye examinations and receiving glasses.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows:

We, the undersigned, call on the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure adequate vision care for the children of our province and cover the cost of children's eye exams.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from St. John's Centre alluded to, in the past three years we've seen our cost of living in this province increase by substantial amounts on the everyday goods and services that have been taxed by this current government. Between the deletion of the adult dental care, the over-the-counter Prescription Drug program and the neglect of not covering eye care and flu shots, not only is this a war on poor, this is a war on the middle class that are often having to take these funds out of their pocket.

It's creating a tidal wave of unattended medical issues that are going to come crashing ashore on our medical system in a very short period of time. I, therefore, support this petition and would like the government to give it some serious consideration.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services for a response, please.

Thank you.

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

I will confine myself essentially to the topic of eye care, although the Member opposite's comments about flu shots are wildly inaccurate, but that's always the case.

We do actually have a vision screening program for children in this province and, in actual fact, 94 per cent of preschool children have at least one, if not four, eye screening visits as part of a holistic developmental assessment. We have been working, in actual fact, with the optometrists association to see what potential improvements we could make to those screening examinations. Of those 94 per cent, approximately one-fifth has a referral, either to an optometrist or to an ophthalmologist for further examination.

So, is it perfect? We're working with the optometrists to find out. But to go out there and say we have waves of people who are being neglected is patently, factually inaccurate, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Many families face scheduling challenges getting their children to and from school, so they must send their children to a child care provider before or after school; but current school bus policies does not allow a school bus to drop a child at a child care provider's location.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to allow children to avail of courtesy busing and enable parents to indicate a drop-off location in addition to the family home.

Mr. Speaker, we've had this discussion in the House and we've come a long way when it comes to courtesy busing because the environment has changed dramatically particularly in growth areas, or particularly in the changing in our society where right now there are smaller families, older siblings, there's not a bigger gap there, the other family members don't live within the vicinity, people have moved, the geographics have changed, got the

same supports that were once there for someone to be take care of a child, or help supervise or help them in support when after school is not available.

So, parents have to avail of the services of child care providers, which in a lot of cases, particularly in larger communities, may be on the opposite side of where the individual lives. As a result, what was always the standard was the kid could get on a bus and get dropped off wherever. I know for safety reasons and, again, because of the numbers on buses in particular growth areas, and there hasn't been an investment to ensure that busing is in accordance with the growth areas, that we have some challenges, that people who fall within a certain category or availing of the courtesy busing can't avail of a second stop.

There's still only the one stop in that evening but, as a result, they are now losing time at work, their kids are either not being able to get to certain programs and services, or it's become a stressor on the families themselves trying to provide a service in a dangerous setting. In the middle of the winter they have to come out, a senior or a neighbour has to come out to try to pick up that child or a child has to wait longer than normal to be able to avail of that particular service.

So what we're asking here, it's a simple fix, is that you have two stops. One gets you from your home to school, another one gets you from school to the child care provider. You're not taking any other seat from any other student. There's a coordinated effort – and it happened in my district a couple of years ago when we were over the allotment of seats.

A message was sent out to parents saying, can you tell us when you really need a seat for where. And with the coordination of the different coloured buses, we managed to accommodate all 104 people who were looking for courtesy seating. Because of the collaborative approach, some parents only need to be dropped off – or their kid only in the morning, or don't need the service at all.

The issue becomes now, the school district has outlined that that policy is no longer acceptable, that you can't have an alternate site other than

your home address. That becomes the challenge for people as we're promoting – you know, more people getting back in the workforce. We're asking certain parents who are off as child care providers to get back in to do it.

So, Mr. Speaker, we'll get to speak to this again. This is a very valuable issue around home care and health care and for providing proper education.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. A. PARSONS: Oh, is there a response there? I apologize, I apologize. I didn't see him. By all means, respond.

MR. SPEAKER: All right, let's retrace the history.

The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour for a response, please.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you.

I know I've been losing a little bit of weight, Mr. Speaker, but I didn't realize I'm getting to that point – but anyway. I wanted to make a couple of comments because I respect the hon. Member opposite and the comments that he's making.

The 1.6 kilometre, and the busing – busing is very emotional for everybody, particularly parents who have to send their children on buses. We all realize that and understand that, and I understand that fully myself. That was one of the reasons why we have done a fair amount of work since September in recognizing some of these requests, and the courtesy seating is in place.

We have worked – I worked with my hon. Member, MHA for Exploits, and one of the

situations that we have worked out through the school board is being able to in fact drop some of these children off at a centre where they're getting extracurricular after school. So it's not something that's unheard of.

I just encourage parents – we have made it clear to the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District, school board, that we don't want buses passing by students when there are empty seats. Courtesy busing is in place. Also, the 0.8 has been put in place as well. So we have right now some of the best busing in the entire country – and we have the best, actually, in the entire country with the 0.8.

So I encourage parents that are in situations like that, to get in contact with the school board and try to work out the courtesy busing.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I would call Orders of the Day now.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day, Sir, go ahead.

Orders of the Day

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 2, third reading of Bill 9.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 9, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2, be now read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

This motion is carried.

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2. (Bill 9)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 9)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act, Bill 32, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act, Bill 32, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act," carried. (Bill 32)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act. (Bill 32)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

Thank you.

On motion, Bill 32 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 8, second reading of Bill 31.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 31, An Act To Amend The House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act, be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 31, An Act To Amend The House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act." (Bill 31)

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

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

I'm happy to stand here today and speak to this particular piece of legislation, Bill 31, which is An Act To Amend The House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act.

For sake of clarity, if sometimes I refer – this act is a bit wordy, a bit unwieldy in its title, so sometimes we will refer to it as HOAAIA. For the purposes of anybody actually listening or trying to transcribe this downstairs, if I use that phrase then people will understand, hopefully, what I am saying.

We're speaking to a piece of legislation today to amend a pretty important piece of legislation. Now I'm not going to stand here today and belabour the genesis of the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act – see, HOAAIA is just so much easier to say, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to belabour it, but I think everybody has a general understanding where this particular piece of legislation comes from and what its purpose is, but it basically guides us as Members of this House of Assembly.

One thing I want to put forward is just maybe a bit of understanding to the people out there about the House of Assembly Management Commission. I'm going to read a section here. Section 22 of the act assigns responsibility to the Speaker, assisted by the Clerk, for the development and delivery of appropriate training and orientation programs for MHAs and Members of the Management Commission. The Management Commission itself is a body that is made up of, obviously, the Chair, being yourself, Mr. Speaker, and made up by Members of all three parties of the House. There are currently three Members of the government on it, there are two Members of the Official Opposition and one Member of the NDP. It acts as a body which guides decision-making as it relates to Members of the House of Assembly, and it deals with a whole number of things.

On a daily basis we deal with claims made by MHAs for expenses incurred in their day-to-day duties. We deal with the rules and regulations as it applies to MHAs, things as mundane as advertising and what is allowed and not allowed. We deal with pension-type issues, and we also deal with the rules and training that apply to all MHAs.

I guess the vessel through which this legislation travels into the House is through me, as Government House Leader. Now, I've had times during the past where, for political gain, Members of the Opposition – and I'm not going to point anybody out, but I've had Members say, well, I can't believe the government's doing this. When they know full well that it's not government doing something. This is something that's gone in to the House through the Management Commission which is made up of Members of all parties.

I don't anticipate that this will be the case today, but people need to realize it is multi-partisan or bipartisan. It's made up of Members. Our job is to guide MHAs, and we do so with the guidance of House of Assembly staff, many of whom you see everyday on the TV, sitting at the Table here. We have a number of great staff that guide not only the Speaker but help us in the decision-making processes that we are involved in.

One of the big things that we have dealt with, obviously, is the conduct and, I guess, behaviour of Members. We've gone through a time where that Management Commission did not exist, and going back as far as 2007, and there was a body before that – I think was more of an internal, but this group, the meetings are televised and they're recorded that we sit here in the House. I think there's a transparency that people see and that leads to an increased accountability and we know the duty that we hold to the people in which we serve, and people can actually watch what we're doing and see the decision-making process that's involved.

So, when I look at lot of these – and this act is sometimes amended basically on a routine basis in that many sessions of the House there are amendments brought to this bill that we stand up and debate in this House. Some are quite lengthy, some are not. This one, in terms of its size, is actually quite small. It's one section. It says: Section 22 of the act is amended by adding immediately after subsection (2) the following: “(2.1) A member shall complete the orientation and training programs referred to in subsections (1) and (2).”

I'm going to come back to one particular word in that sentence which is so important, which is probably the crux of why we're here. Before we do that, I'm going to go through the actual section so people understand what it is we are trying to amend and we are debating here today.

Section 22 of the act currently reads as follows, under Orientation and training, 22(1): “The speaker, assisted by the clerk, shall develop and offer appropriate orientation and training programs for (a) members; (b) members of the commission; and (c) officers and staff of the House of Assembly service and statutory offices, to assist them in understanding their respective duties and responsibilities and, in particular, in

applying and complying with rules and directives of the commission relating to claims for allowances and expenses and policies and procedures respecting financial management.

“(2) Within 30 days of a member's election for the first time to the House of Assembly, the speaker shall ensure that an appropriate orientation program is given to the member respecting (a) the types of services offered to members by the House of Assembly service and how those services may be accessed; (b) the proper procedures to be followed in making claims for reimbursement or payment for proper expenses incurred by the member in carrying out his or her duties; (c) recommendations for proper systems to be employed in operating a constituency office and employing a constituency assistant; and (d) other matters that the speaker considers appropriate to assist the member in carrying out his or her duties.

“(3) Within 30 days of a member's election for the first time to the House of Assembly, the speaker shall ensure the delivery of the following to the member: (a) this Act; (b) the rules; (c) directives of the commission pertaining to members; (d) written policies of the House of Assembly service that may affect the member; (e) the code of conduct for members and for officers and staff of the House of Assembly service; and (f) the manual.”

Following the 2015 general election, training sessions on the following topics were offered to all MHAs: intro to the House of Assembly and role of the MHA; respect and civility for order and decorum; constituency office operations and resources; travel, living and constituency allowance; records access and privacy ethics and accountability; expense claims and purchasing; parliamentary procedures and practice; parliamentary services and resources; and roles of each of the statutory offices of the Legislature. The sessions were delivered, but – I think this is important to note – not all MHAs attended.

So one of the big things you'll note recently, and again, unfortunately it's something we deal with quite a bit, is we've dealt with the allegations and dealings of harassment and bullying in this House of Assembly. I don't think – one thing I want to point out, this is not isolated – the

Member for the NDP, for Signal Hill - Quidi Vidi?

AN HON. MEMBER: St. John's East.

MR. A. PARSONS: St. John's East - Quidi Vidi brought it up. I did a Ministerial Statement earlier today where I talked about municipal councils and we brought up the fact that there are very real concerns amongst many municipalities and councils out there about the behaviour that goes on. I think this happens in just about every workplace. Unfortunately it's something that we see, and everybody is trying to combat it. We here in the House of Assembly are trying to combat that as well. I think all Members are united in that we want to make this a better workplace for all people.

So one of the, if you want to use the phrase, silver lining, one of the silver linings that we see is that the House of Assembly since that time, the Human Resource Secretariat offered information sessions to all MHAs on fostering a harassment-free workplace environment. And unfortunately, attendance was at the direction of each MHA. Now, it's not my job to stand up and say if somebody went or not went; that's not identified. And to be honest with you, that's not my care. We want everybody to take that; that's the reason we have this piece of legislation here, this amendment here today, because it contains a very important word. That word is "shall," and I'm going to get back to that now shortly.

The Minister of Finance subsequently requested to the Speaker that the Management Commission – and the Minister of Finance given the fact that the HRS, Human Resource Secretariat, answers to the Department of Finance subsequently requested to the Speaker that the Management Commission consider additional mandatory training for all MHAs on harassment.

Now, in order to do this, in order to make it mandatory we have to bring an amendment to this House, which has been directed by the Management Commission. So the Management Commission – and I wouldn't be able to give you the date, but this went to the Management Commission and there was a meeting and it was approved that this is an amendment that everybody agreed upon, would come to the

House – and I think it was actually done some time ago: September. So we're talking in the last two months now that was decided by the Management Commission and this is the path through which it must follow to get here into the House of Assembly to be debated and then voted on.

So approved by Management Commission, and again Management Commission has representation from all parties. The amendments are not limited to harassment training but would apply to all training and orientation offered by the House of Assembly to Members under the authority of section 22.

Now, you'll notice we didn't get into no specific penalty was included for non-compliance. The Code of Conduct for Members does require all Members to comply with HOAIA, with the piece of legislation.

Principle 1 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Assembly states: "1. Members shall inform themselves of and shall conduct themselves in accordance with the provisions and spirit of the Standing Orders of the House of Assembly, the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, the *Members' Resources and Allowances Rules*, the *Elections Act, 1991*, the *House of Assembly Act* and this Code of Conduct and shall ensure that their conduct does not bring the integrity of their office or the House of Assembly into disrepute."

Therefore, should a Member fail to attend mandatory training, as required by this section, that Member could be in violation of the Code of Conduct. So that's why we are bringing these amendments forward today for debate and approval. I'm quite confident that there will be universal support of this.

I don't think it just should apply to the newest training that many of us and perhaps all of us – I'm not sure who did or didn't do the training. That most recent training is essential and I think we all should do it. More importantly, I think going forward, as we go into by-elections and as we go into general elections, any new Member – I think every set of training here that I outlined was important.

I can talk as a Member when I first came here and there were many Members on both sides that went to what we called MHA school. You sit here in the House and we went through all the training. It's so important because these duties are important not just to how we conduct ourselves in the House, it's how we deal with the expenditure of the people's money when we talk about setting up constituency offices, when we talk about how we must expend funds to get back and forth to our constituencies and spending money in doing our duties but, again, it's the people's money.

I think every one of these should be mandatory. I think most people, if not all, have taken it just as a matter of course, but the fact that we're making it mandatory now I think it's very important. I don't think anybody will have an issue. I think that harassment-free workplace training should fit right into that as essential training, as mandatory training that not only we all should do, but we all want to do. Everybody wants to do this training in my opinion.

Again, it's not just training I think for this House of Assembly, I think it's in private workplaces. I think it's in other public workplaces. I think it applies across the board that we all need to have this training because ignorance is not the defence. We need to do this training. As someone who has gone through this, I found that the people that taught the course and that put off the training are excellent at their job. They are very well trained and they did a wonderful job, and so, again, glad that I've gone through it. I think it's essential learning. Sometimes I think this is essential learning for everybody, not just whether you sit in this House or not. I think it's a good thing; I don't think education is bad for anybody, no matter what role you serve in our province.

I want to go back to the piece of legislation. So I've given the explanation for this: the act governs the Members; the House of Assembly Management Commission helps makes these decision; it comes into the House via the Government House Leader in the form of a bill; and everybody will have a chance to debate that. So, again, this is not something that's a government initiative; this is something that's a House of Assembly Management Commission initiative.

Now, I can point out again that the Minister of Finance pointed out it should be mandatory. I think that was a good point, but I think it was something we all felt. I think everybody feels that way.

So I go back to the piece of legislation, and I always, whenever I see – it's funny, having been in this House for just over seven years now. So the section is quite simple: "A member shall complete the orientation and training programs" I always go back to perhaps my first experience with real debate, and real significant debate, was back in 2012 with Bill 29. And not to bring that up, but it was amazing because we actually debated for hours and hours and hours. And I look at the Clerk of the House of Assembly, who is a veteran of that process. We spent hours debating "shall" versus "may," and it was amazing how long we went on. And that's a part.

You know, I'm sure there were Members of the government at the time – I can remember one in particular that wasn't very happy with how that debate went in the "shall" versus "may," but that's part of democracy, is the debate and what we are allowed to do in that debate.

So I come back to the importance of words. When we change it to "shall," that means it's mandatory, it's a must; it shall happen, it has to happen. It's not it should happen, it's not it may happen, it's not it's probably going to happen. It shall happen. It will happen, and if not, Members could find themselves in a breach of the Code of Conduct.

So, again, I think, whether it's a by-election – and we know there are by-elections coming soon, and for every general election after, every person that serves in this House should be trained. This is a new, essential piece of training that I think all Members will undertake, and I'm glad to see that it's going to be mandatory for all Members going forward to debate this piece of legislation.

But I also point out that it's not just Members, Members of the Commission, but Officers and staff of the House of Assembly and statutory offices. I just want to point that out because there's been some debate in people when we talk about the statutory offices, and we have a

number of statutory offices in our province that are governed by the House of Assembly. They're independent of government. That would include the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, the Child and Youth Advocate, the Seniors' Advocate and the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. They're all statutory offices.

So these individuals, they're actually put in through an amendment, or through a resolution in the House. They're voted on by all Members, and those people are independent of government. I think that's important to point out, because I can tell you, anybody that says the Office of the Privacy Commissioner answers to government doesn't obviously understand the Privacy Commissioner, because they spend a fair amount of their time letting government know if they're not up to snuff when it comes to following ATIPPA.

We look at the Child and Youth Advocate. The Child and Youth Advocate, unfortunately, one of the big jobs that this person does is put out a report from time to time showing failures in our child care system. Those reports – again, I'm not getting partisan here because, you know what, it's reflective of a system. But those reports are not often – when they come out, they're not glowing in terms of how they refer to government, and that's important.

The reason that is important is because they're independent of government. They have the ability, the statutory ability to hold governments, all government to task, because their duty is to the people. I want to point that out because I've heard talk in the past about how some of these offices are not independent, but anybody that says that does not understand the fundamental role of these offices and how this process works. So I want to put that out there.

It's important, I think, that these individuals also have an opportunity to do this training. These roles are critical to how our province runs, and to how our – it's a check and a balance to how governments run. So I want to just point that out there; I think that's quite important.

So, on that note, Mr. Speaker, I think I've spoken at length now about this particular amendment to this very important piece of legislation. I know there are a number of

Members that are going to take the opportunity to speak to this, that are interested in this debate, and can possibly talk about what this training's all about, or even the other parts of the training.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to stand and speak. I appreciate the opportunity to be the individual to stand up and move this amendment to the legislation and to debate this. I look forward to debate from my colleagues on all sides of the House, and I'll have an opportunity throughout this debate to make further comment.

Thank you so much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to stand and speak on this for just a few minutes, and I agree –

MR. SPEAKER: I'm sorry, Sir, I thought you were rising on a point of order. Convention would have it that the Member from the Opposition speaks first.

MR. JOYCE: Holy –

MR. SPEAKER: I apologize. I thought you were speaking on a point of order.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to rise today to speak to Bill 31, the Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act, and an amendment to that act as the minister just went through and defined some of the changes and what the amendment is all about.

As he indicated, in terms of the content, or the actual wording of the amendment and what we're doing here with the bill, it's small in nature but large in scope. It gets to the issue of orientation and training programs for Members of the Legislature, and not just initially for orientation but ongoing. Making sure that

orientation and training is carried out initially, but as well, on an ongoing basis it's carried out as well and there are upgrades done and familiarity, understanding and continued understanding of what your obligations are as a Member of this Legislature.

This change, what it does now is – as the minister said – makes it mandatory and not voluntary, and I think that's important. I think most Members, as we go through debate, will certainly speak to that in regard to the importance of that particular element.

We know this issue came to the Management Commission. It was discussed. There were recommendations made in regard to the amendment. Some of the issues we've seen over the past number of months in regard to alleged harassment, alleged intimidation. Just generally looking at the workplace, and this workplace being no different than any other workplace, and what an understanding that people who have the privilege to be elected to sit here, and certainly the support of staff as well. The Officers of the House and the statute offices, there's much connection between us as elected officials, between the staff here at the House of Assembly, the various offices and that interconnection.

So it's all about awareness and an understanding of what our roles are and the Code of Conduct that was brought about from the Green report. It wasn't established by the Green report but there was direction to have it established. It would be part of the process here in this Legislature, and it was created.

Part of that, as we know, looking back at our history, the impetus for the Green report and what transpired to necessitate that certainly grew out of issues with regard to administration and operations of finances in the House of Assembly. From that grew clear guidelines, a much needed oversight and a requirement for a Code of Conduct in how Members operate; thus, the name Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act.

So what we have here in Bill 31 was to qualify, as some would say, housekeeping, but it's very important in terms of the overall oversight of the act, and making that training – as I mentioned – mandatory, not optional. And that the Members

of the House of Assembly would take the orientation and training programs that are developed through the Speaker and through the Speaker's office.

This went through the Management Commission, which I sit and have a privilege of sitting on, with hon. colleagues here from the Legislature, and was approved unanimously in May 16 of this year. That's what gets us here in regard to the amendment to the particular act and Bill 31.

The minister mentioned – I think it's important to go through and look at section 22 of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* assigns responsibility to the Speaker, assisted by the Clerk, for the development and delivery of an appropriate training and orientation program for MHAs, Members of the Management Commission officers and staff in the House of Assembly service.

The act also makes it mandatory for the Speaker to ensure that the appropriate training and orientation is delivered. This is basically, with the amendment, making it mandatory. Therefore, the training sessions are not at the discretion of an individual MHA, but section 22 of the acts is included to make it mandatory.

I think it's important for those listening to understand that what transpires now, in regard to a general election and training topics that are part of the orientation/introduction to the work we do – the introduction to the House of Assembly and role of an MHA; respect and civility; order and decorum; constituency office operations and resources; travel, living and constituency allowance; things like record access and privacy ethics and accountability; expense claims and purchasing; parliamentary procedures and practices; parliamentary services and resources; and roles of each of the statutory offices of the Legislature.

So, it's intertwined in all the activities from administrative point of view, from an operational point of view, from interaction with those statutory bodies that there's an understanding and a level of conduct that's expected and required, not just by us in our Legislature but by the general public.

I know based on some changes that were made in regard to an interim policy related to harassment, there was some training offered. As I said, it was voluntary. In the past number of months, I remember doing it and was offered by the public service and certainly looked at various aspects of how you conduct yourself and interactions. I found it certainly good to have that done and to have a discussion of what the protocols are, what the expectations are, which is very important.

It's done in an environment with your colleagues from all sides of the House, which again I think is important. It's not partisan; it's about the operations in this Chamber and the chambers that support the House of Assembly, and the staff that support it as well, which is extremely important.

That was the interim policy that I mentioned, to look at fostering a harassment-free workplace environment. So as we proceed with this – and the Management Commission had bought in to that interim application of the Executive Branch harassment-free policy effective January 1 of this particular year and looking at an equivalent process applicable to MHAs. As we've moved forward, I know with the Privileges and Elections Committee, we're looking at bringing forth a new policy related to workplace harassment-free policy which the Committee was struck with taking on that task through a private Member's resolution, and it's scheduled to report back to the House of Assembly in this particular session. So that's all intertwined in what we're doing here, and this amendment as we move forward is as well.

I think it's important to think about the origin and where we've come from in regard to this particular bill. One of the important parts was way back in the Green report on page 5.34 talked about the need for training and orientation and a Members' manual. That was brought about through some of the interactions that Judge Green had at the time with MHAs and others and people in the bureaucracy and arriving in a position not knowing, in some cases, what the actual role was with little or no instruction on the importance of having that availability, that focus and structure on the very aspects of the job, what's engaged in the job, what the financial responsibilities are and what

the level of conduct is. As I said, that went into developing a code of conduct.

So oftentimes, without that, you're left with just picking up things as you go through other Members who may have served here before and just learning and get an understanding on the fly, so to speak. So this is important that we have a substantiated process for training, and Bill 31 certainly speaks to that and allows and ensures that would take place.

This, as well, would ensure the high standards of professional conduct are maintained, and you seek out and undergo the training necessary to fill the administrative aspects of the job – and really all aspects of the job, which is extremely important.

So as you move forward to debate today, I think it's important that we reflect on progressing in terms of the education and training as it's required in our role and the fundamental issue that the very best training, the very best resources be available. This certainly maintains and secures that everybody does the applicable training; it's not optional. We have now an interim policy dealing with possible harassment and intimidation allegations. But, as we move forward with the Privileges and Elections Committee, we'll certainly redefine what a new policy would look like; with that, would become the training components of it, an enhancement to that, and this would support as we move forward.

And it's important to reflect on – initial training is good, but then as we move forward there are updates and re-familiarization, I guess, if you can with what the requirements are, and that's always important.

So, certainly our caucus supports this amendment. We look forward to discussion as we move through debate this afternoon, but from our perspective I'm sure Members on this side will want to speak to it again. We certainly endorse this and the whole concept of a high standard, a high threshold that we need to maintain and we need to work towards because the job is never done, the job is continuous in regard to education and awareness and it's continual learning, it's lifelong learning if you

will, and this helps in terms of mandatory training to allow that to occur.

I look forward to the future debate this afternoon as we move forward with this bill and have further discussion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Any Members from the government side?

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this very, very important matter. Today we're debating and discussing An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act, and really what we're doing is we're amending it to require, make it mandatory, for Members of the House of Assembly to complete the orientation and training programs offered by the Speaker of the House of Assembly, and in particular around harassment.

As my colleagues have already spoken to this afternoon, so I won't get into too much detail, there is a requirement today, and it came from the Green act, to do training as new Members of the House of Assembly come on board, and always good to have new people come join us here in the House of Assembly, and I encourage anybody who's considering running as a Member of the House of Assembly to do so, particularly women.

I think that we need more women in the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to encourage anybody listening today or any female that is considering it, it certainly is an honourable profession. I will say that, Mr. Speaker, because it does really reflect on the rules and responsibilities of our communities, and it really does rest to develop our province.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is incumbent upon all of us in this House to set the example of ensuring that harassment and bullying and intimidation of any kind, any abuse of any kind is not tolerated in our society.

I often reflect on some of the work that the UN has done, and I know on one of the particular reports that I read recently it talked about the top five issues for working women in the G20. One of the top five issues, and it is harassment, Mr. Speaker, harassment in the workforce.

I know our government has done an awful lot to address this issue, and I'll talk a little bit about some of the things our government has done to address this issue; but, more importantly, Mr. Speaker, it's what are we going to do in the House of Assembly to address this very important issue? I think one small step, but a very important step, is to ensure that everyone in this House of Assembly undertakes training and undertakes to understand, gains the knowledge about harassment and how the impacts of harassment, how to identify harassment, and then as we move forward with the privileges committee, Mr. Speaker, how do we address those that have, unfortunately, experienced this.

I want to comment a little later on that, but, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to use a little quote that I often use. John F. Kennedy once said: "The greater our knowledge increases the more our ignorance unfolds." And isn't that the truth, Mr. Speaker. We want to unfold the ignorance around harassment. We want to ensure that men and women in workplaces have the respectful workplace that they deserve.

It is so important, I believe, that this change go through, and I'm glad to hear the support of making this change to make it mandatory. I can say that everyone on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, everyone on this side of the House has undertaken harassment training, has gone through the harassment training. It was at the direction of the Premier that that happened, but I do know, as I am a Member of the House management committee, and we did think it was very important.

My colleague, the previous speaker, did talk about how important it was that the Management Commission actually spoke about this and said that really we do need mandatory training, because once we can get people to understand what harassment is, once we can help to unfold the ignorance around harassment, then I'm hopeful that we'll have diminishing harassment, Mr. Speaker.

We do have a Code of Conduct in this House of Assembly, a very important Code of Conduct. Again, brought in under, I think, the Green report. Very important to understand, the Code of Conduct is something that everybody in this House swears they would uphold. It is the thing that really represents your responsibilities and requirements as a Member of the House of Assembly, and how important it is that we ensure a respectful workplace is available to all of us – very, very important.

We all know there's a huge burden and a significant cost to when there is harassment. When individuals are victimized, when colleagues or supervisors or subordinates or others who witness the incidents, the impact to them. They all play a very heavy toll on our self, on our soul, and we have to eliminate that type of violence, and I consider it violence, Mr. Speaker. Harassment, abuse, any of those intolerances really do weigh on individuals.

It is incumbent on all of us as leaders – and I consider everybody in this House a leader – all of us as leaders to influence and make the necessary changes to ensure a safe and respectful workplace. It is incumbent on all of us.

I often reflect back to my grandmother. My grandmother won the right to vote – won the right to vote. Can you imagine me using that term, won? She was given, provided the right to vote in her lifetime. And that's 100 years ago.

Now, imagine today and imagine 100 years hence, that someone is going to reflect back and say: 100 years ago they were addressing harassment in the workplace. Think about that, Mr. Speaker. This is a pivotal moment in society. It's not just for this House of Assembly, it's a pivotal moment in our society. I think it's pivotal, just as it was pivotal for my grandmother to be given the right to vote, as she rightfully deserved as a part of the human race, but it's part of our dignity as human beings to have respectful workplaces, respectful environments.

We often teach our children – we really go out of our way to teach our children not to bully. We go out of our way to ensure they know how to share. We go out of our way to teach them

manners, to teach them to be respectful. Mr. Speaker, today as we reflect on that, won't it be a better society when we've addressed this horrible issue.

I think the MeToo movement, the Time's Up movement, things that have been happening over the last number of years has really shone a bright light on this very, very important issue. Therefore, as the Premier has said, in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador we have zero tolerance – zero tolerance. We have to have zero tolerance in our Legislature, but it is incredibly important to make sure that everyone is knowledgeable, informed and has the ability to understand the impacts, has the information required to ensure they can address this issue, and that is what the training will do.

Making it mandatory on everybody in this House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker, I think is important, as it is important that we have other types of training. That it's a requirement that we have other types of training in this House of Assembly so that all of us can be learned and knowledgeable and have that degree of sophistication when it comes to these very, very important issues.

In our society, as I said earlier, we have tried to model about how important it is to address this issue. I'm going to reflect back on the Lieutenant-Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador who spoke on the need to address violence in the 2018 Speech from the Throne. And I'm going to quote from the Speech from the Throne because I think it really does reflect on this governments – importance that it has placed on this very issue, not just on harassment but on violence, on abuse of any kind. It has to be stopped in our society.

In the Speech from the Throne it said: "Raising standards and expectations for how our society treats women is an important focus for our Government."

Raising standards and expectations for how our society treats women is an important focus of our government. And I would say, Mr. Speaker, it's not just on how we treat women, which is – we've had, historically, a problem with that in our society, but I'm going to say how we treat each other. It's not a male issue, it's not a female

issue. It's a person-to-person issue. So how we treat each other.

Some of the changes government is making to address some of the concerns we've been hearing in our society, some of the leadership we are taking – and a lot of discussion is going around, Mr. Speaker, about what can government do to support the changes in our society? How do we address the concerns that we're seeing in our society? We are addressing, in one part today, how we make the changes in our Legislature, but how do we address some of the other bigger issues?

I think earlier in Question Period it was raised about municipalities. There are consultations underway for changes to the municipal legislation. They are looking at harassment under that legislation. There's an advisory council on occupational health and safety tasked with reviewing and making recommendations on harassment and violence provisions in the occupational health and safety regulation.

There's new legislation to be introduced to help victims of revenge pornography and the non-consensual distribution of intimate images. There is *Labour Standards Act* consultations, including consideration of domestic violence leave. And, Mr. Speaker, we're about to begin a new phase of violence prevention, a new plan on violence prevention.

It is very important to set the tone, and I believe the Premier has set that tone: zero tolerance. As we work through ensuring this societal change, this overwhelming societal change occurs, this need for us all, all of us – not in this Legislature, but in our communities, in our homes across our great country to address harassment. As this occurs, Mr. Speaker, I think you will see how important it will be for that education piece.

Again, that is what we were debating this afternoon. For those that may be just joining us, we are debating the mandatory requirement for all Members of the House of Assembly to have harassment training, and I'm very pleased to see that. I've just given a good list of some of the other initiatives that government is doing.

Let me reflect on a couple of other things that government has done in trying to make a better

workplace, a workplace and environment for employees where they're safe and free from harassment. So as an employer – I talked about the greater societal changes that are required, I talked about the legislative changes, but allow me to speak for a moment about the changes for employees to government.

They can have a workplace safe and free from harassment. It cannot and will not be tolerated to have harassment, and the new Harassment-Free Workplace Policy for those who work in the public service brings greater awareness of workplace harassment, and training required around this very issue. It increases accountability for those in authority, it establishes timelines for formal investigations, and includes a comprehensive complaint-resolution process. How important is that for the civil servants, as they go through their daily workplace?

I think it's very important for the people of the province to know that as an employer in the Human Resource Secretariat there is a full-time Harassment-Free Workplace manager, someone who's solely dedicated to the administration of the harassment and discrimination-free workplace policy, including the coordination of harassment investigations. So, Mr. Speaker, very, very important advancements government has made as an employer, and that government is making towards the betterment of society.

As I said earlier, all staff in the public service is required to complete the harassment-free workplace training. Crucial that MHAs take mandatory harassment training as well, as part of their orientation, that's what we're debating today. Imperative that all Members, all of us adhere to these principles, and that this training ensure a respectful, collaborative, productive workplace for all, and that's what we all want. Every single person in this House wants a respectful, collaborative, productive workplace. It's time for all of us to stand together against harassment, against bullying, to really make that paramount. We cannot be silent; we cannot tolerate this any further, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to say, as well, as I conclude my remarks, that I'm very pleased that we're debating this today, but I don't think it's much of a debate – honestly. I honestly don't think it's

a debate. I think it's something that everybody in this respectful Legislature will understand that adherence to the Code of Conduct, adherence to ensuring that harassment is not part of our workplace, ensuring that we have the proper training and education, so that we're not bystanders, either, on observing harassment and not knowing what to do with that kind of information.

As I said at the very beginning, the greater our knowledge increases, the greater our ignorance unfolds. John F. Kennedy said that and I truly believe that it's a new day. It's a new day for us all when society advances towards ensuring that respect, mutual respect, mutual understanding, tolerance and ensuring that harassment and abuse are no longer acceptable.

It's a new day, and I think in a hundred years hence, just as I reflected on my grandmother who a hundred years ago received the first opportunity to vote, a hundred years hence people will say my goodness, imagine a day when we didn't have respectful workplaces, when we didn't understand that is not to be tolerated.

So I'm thankful to the Premier and to the government for having the leadership to bring this forward. I certainly will be voting in favour of this, and I encourage all Members to not only vote in favour of this, but to check and ensure that every day they are working for a resolution to some of the challenges that we see in our society today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just stand and I'll have a few minutes to speak on this, Mr. Speaker. I'll be certainly supporting this bill also because I honestly feel that there should be a safe workplace environment for all people.

Mr. Speaker, as a person who just went through six months of torture in his life for allegations

that 16 have been thrown out, I have some personal insight on workplace bullying and harassment. What I noticed in a lot of the workplace, what if allegations are made with no foundation – what if? What if a person goes through six months of his life, or her life, without any foundation to it – what if? What are the consequences of it?

I just heard the Member speak about bullying and harassment in the workplace. How about if you get a text that says you're going to get a smack up the side the head; is that bullying? Is that dealt with? How about if you get a text and say well, when we get the millions, he's going to get some smack upside the head; is that bullying? Well if it is bullying, Mr. Speaker, there are other steps that needs to be taken here because it's all out public. That's the kind of thing, Mr. Speaker, when you take the workplace harassment policy – and I agree, everybody should be taking it – everybody.

I'll just give you one thing that I've been going through the last six months. I don't know if any Members opposite – and I'm going to have a lot more to say – a lot more to say. I'll just give you a couple of things that I've been going through the last six months. I think it's code 4. Code 4 is political corruption. Do you know the last people that were politically corrupt in this House of Assembly? They stole \$4 million. That was the constituency scandal.

Do you know what number 6 states, that I had to deal with? Is that your personal finances aren't in order and in the old-saying days, that was where you had to be bankrupt. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker?

So, this workplace and bullying and harassment should be brought in, but there has to be something, a reprisal, that once the harassment if there are complaints that are malicious, that are false, there has to be something put in place. There has to be something in place.

I'll just give you an example. The Commission – who is the Commissioner answerable to? Who is the Commissioner answerable to? I tell you an example. I spoke to the speaker just right there to your left, Mr. Speaker. I spoke to the speaker last week and I showed him a letter that he said: Oh my God, that's not what he just said in the

management committee. Do you know something, Mr. Speaker? I know what was said in the management committee, because the speaker told me. Do you know I can't get that confirmed in writing by the Speaker or the Commissioner, which is detrimental –?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I just want to remind the Member to remain relevant to the debate that we're having here today. So I just want to remind the Member to do that.

MR. JOYCE: It is relevant. To my mind, Mr. Speaker, it is relevant because – is the training. So the training is – what if you have a concern after? What's the next step? Is that what we're saying here, everybody should do mandatory training? If you actually do the training, Mr. Speaker, and then you find, okay, your rights have been violated. What's the next step? What is the next step?

So there's a lot more to it than saying, okay, we're all going to take the training, which I agree with. I agree with it 100 per cent, Mr. Speaker, because I can tell you, all the towns, municipalities and all the mayors I've dealt with, they all spoke at PMA, everybody agrees that the workplace should be free of harassment. But, Mr. Speaker, we have to ensure that people who make false allegations should be held accountable. Mr. Speaker, I make absolutely no bones about it.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just go on through. It's almost like once someone is accused of harassment, then all of a sudden they got to prove themselves innocent instead of saying, okay, why are some – I'll just give an example. You know one of the allegations against me, that was against me that was thrown out, do you know what it was? Do you know what it was, if anybody took the time? Do you know exactly what it was that was made against me by a certain Member? I didn't explain the capital works enough.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm asking the Member again to remain relevant to the debate. We're looking at the provisions for training in relation to making it mandatory in the House. So I ask the Member to stick closely

– I'm giving him a fair amount of leeway in terms of making his point and making the connection to this bill, but I ask him to remain relevant to the debate we're having here today.

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible) me leeway, so I will stay to the bill.

I agree that – and I look forward to the debate, Mr. Speaker, when these motions are – I look forward to it. I look forward to the information I have that I haven't put out in the public yet. I look forward to it.

So I'll say to all, workplace harassment should be eradicated, Mr. Speaker. There should be mandatory training for everyone. I'll be the first to agree to that. I'll be the first one to say not only in this Legislature, but I know at the PMA, at the Department of Municipal Affairs and Environment at the time, gave them funds to do training across the province about harassment by the town managers and town clerks, and they're very appreciative of that. And I know in MNL also, Mr. Speaker, they're holding clinics on what's acceptable or not.

So it's not only this Legislature, but I think all across the province and through all the municipalities, Mr. Speaker, that I think everybody feels there should be a workplace where it's free of harassment and bullying. But we also have to ensure that workplace harassment, bullying complaints aren't just thrown at someone for the sake of not getting what they want.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly a pleasure to rise today to speak to this bill, Bill 31, An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act. It goes without saying, Mr. Speaker, these are serious issues we're debating and very important that we put the necessary steps in place to ensure all Members of the Legislature have the proper education and training as it relates to these matters.

Mr. Speaker, I not only stand here as a Member of the Legislature representing the fine people of Placentia West - Bellevue, but also as a Member of the Management Commission and some of these issues we have been seized with now over the last number of months.

As the Government House Leader has alluded to, the House of Assembly Management Commission, for those who are watching at home, is comprised of all parties: Members of the government party, Members of the Official Opposition and of the Third Party caucus. So we are essentially akin to a board of directors for the House of Assembly in terms of the financial administration and other administrative matters of the Legislature.

As the Government House Leader also rightly pointed out, in the wake of the spending scandal, in the wake of the Green report, the Management Commission functions have been much more transparent since 2007, replacing the predecessor, Board of Internal Economy. So things are open. We often sit at this table for our Committee meetings and all are televised, with the exception of in camera meetings. So that's certainly important.

On May 16, Mr. Speaker, the Management Commission met to discuss making training sessions mandatory for all Members, including veteran Members. There was certainly commentary at the time as to whether or not it would be necessary for someone who, for example, has been here for several terms, or even has been here already one term, whether that person or individual ought to be mandated to sit here in this room for mandatory training again.

For those also listening at home, for their benefit, Mr. Speaker, we typically – I think it's done in this room, MHA training, and it has been the practice to invite Members to attend, but it has not been compulsory. Most new MHAs probably would attend because it is a lot to learn about not only the rules of the House and procedure and the Standing Orders, Mr. Speaker, but everything from the budgets that we would have in our offices for certain functions, whether it's for mail-outs, newsletters and whatnot, for office supplies, the hiring of

constituency assistants and what goes along with all that.

So it's quite encompassing, Mr. Speaker. It's quite broad and it's quite informative. From what I recall of it, it was led by the Clerk. There were a number of us who attended as new MHAs. And I do recall also that there were some MHAs who had been in office either a term or perhaps even more, who also attended.

This is the conversation we got into at Management Commission as to – first of all, we were going to mandate that issues around harassment and a safe and respectful workplace be mandated into that training. That was question number one, which everyone said yes to, of course. It's absolutely critical that that be included.

In the second part of the question was, well now that we've mandated that be included in training, do we make it mandatory for all Members to attend? There was one comment made by a Member saying that, you know, if you're here 10 years why should you have to go again. I understand that point, but, Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's too much to ask once every four years. If you're lucky and privileged enough to take your seat here again after a first or second or third or fourth term, I don't think it's too much to ask that you sit down for one hour or two hours or however long it takes and go through some of these issues.

While we were discussing this, we also got into a conversation with respect to the benefit of having people in the session that have already, not only undergone the training session once before when they were newly elected, but who have sat here for four years and who have learned how the House operates, how the administration of the House operates, and how people can work and interact together.

So if there's a new MHA who probably hasn't even been sworn in yet at this point when the training sessions occur, and they have a question, they can ask the Clerk certainly, but perhaps wondering if they can turn to a colleague as well, and the colleague can perhaps speak to their experience in that situation and impart the knowledge that they have. I even spoke to this in the Management Commission on

May 16, and I'm quoting myself now: "... I know as a new MHA, I sat through the training and having people around me who were veteran and senior to me to impart their knowledge on us, I think it was beneficial."

That's what I said, Mr. Speaker. I know the Deputy Government House Leader is quoting John F. Kennedy, so I'm not at that level but all I can do is read back what I said at the time. I'll just read back what I said. While we're quoting people, I may as well attribute to my hon. Members opposite, the Member for Topsail - Paradise said: "For the amount of time it takes to go through training, as painful as it might be for some of us to sit and then probably have 99 or 98 per cent of it repeated from what we already know, I don't think is a bad thing." I completely concur with the Member opposite.

Now, the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi raised another point. I do understand the point that having been here for 10 years, why would you have to sit through it again? That's the conversation and the debate that we got into at Management Commission. Of course, one of the remarkable things about Management Commission it's all on television so you can go back and watch it, it's very transparent and it's very open, Mr. Speaker. So, that's the debate that we had at Management Commission surrounding this issue.

As has been noted, we landed here where we are today. The Management Commission directed that we would issue that direction that Members be compelled to attend. On September 27, then – so I remind Members that I had been quoting from May 16 Management Commission meeting. We made the decision then that we would proceed with this. Then the House staff came back to us on September 27 with a drafted bill. As the Government House Leader so eloquently alluded to earlier, bills of this nature derive from the Management Commission and then the Government House Leader presents them. As he indicated, these are not government bills, these are bills that emanate from the House of Assembly Management Commission but, as Government House Leader, it's the custom for him to introduce them.

On September 27, Mr. Speaker, the Law Clerk presented the draft motion, the draft bill, we

accepted it and it proceeded from there. The motion I'm very pleased to say passed unanimously, Mr. Speaker, by all Members of the Management Commission. At that point in time, Members of the Management Commission included the Government House Leader; the Deputy Government House Leader; the Opposition House Leader; the then leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Topsail – Paradise; the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi; and yours truly; and the Speaker, of course, is a non-voting member as Chair.

The amendment that we're debating today, Mr. Speaker, is Bill 31. It takes away the option, I would say, of whether you will or will not attend training and makes it mandatory. It makes it compulsory. It compels Members to attend, and I think that's a very positive thing. I'm sure the Member for Burin - Grand Bank would agree; the Member for Labrador West and indeed all Members – the Member for Harbour Main is another example. We're all in agreement on this, Mr. Speaker.

I feel almost like the Clerk now doing the roll call. But in all seriousness, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased with all of this. This is work that we've been undertaking now for a number of months. In addition to that, the Management Commission – after the introduction of the June 1 Executive Branch harassment policy – adopted that on an interim basis for the Legislature while the Privileges and Elections Committee undertakes its work for a permanent policy.

I understand from the number of emails that we've all been receiving through the summer from the Committee, Mr. Speaker, that Committee has been quite busy and consulting on a wide and varied basis, including all Members of the House. That's also very positive to see. I'm very confident that once the Privileges and Elections Committee comes back to the Legislature with its suggestions and proposals, that it will be comprehensive. Mr. Speaker, that's very important because the last thing you want is something that's not comprehensive and have to go back to the drawing board for that.

I think it's very key that we have a safe and respective workforce, Mr. Speaker, whether that's a school or a dentist office, or a work site

like Bull Arm, a very fine work site in Newfoundland and Labrador, or another fine work site like CFI in St. Lawrence, or the shipyard in Marystown – very important. It wasn't always a safe workplace, but it's certainly cleaned up in the last number of decades to a very safe workplace there.

Or the Greig site – you see work sites not only on land, not only in government buildings but on the sea and on the ocean. So wherever you work, you have to have comfort, peace of mind that you're going to a safe place, Mr. Speaker. That's not only from an occupational health and safety perspective that you're physically safe, but that you're free of harassment, you're free of bullying and intimidation, that you can go to work with your head held high and operate in a manner that is comfortable to you.

That's why the Management Commission adopted the interim policy of the Executive Branch to the House of Assembly and why the Privileges and Elections Committee has been engaged in the very important work of bringing forward a permanent policy, Mr. Speaker, to address any issues that arise moving into the future.

As I mentioned, Bill 31, An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act, it's not a lot of changes here. It's not a big bill. It's not changing many sections. But sometimes a small change can be a very powerful change. If you read it, it says: "Section 22 of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* is amended by adding immediately after subsection (2) the following." And this is section (2.1): "A member shall complete the orientation and training programs referred to in subsections (1) and (2)."

So for the reference of those Members following along so closely to my remarks, or those at home, Mr. Speaker, that section, actually, (1) and (2), it says: "The speaker, assisted by the clerk, shall develop and offer appropriate orientation and training programs for (a) members; (b) members of the commission; and (c) officers and staff of the House of Assembly service and statutory offices, to assist them in understanding their respective duties and responsibilities and, in particular, in applying

and complying with rules and directives of the commission relating to claims for allowances and expenses and policies and procedures respecting financial management.

"(2) Within 30 days of a member's election for the first time to the House of Assembly" – this is section (2), now, Mr. Speaker – "the speaker shall ensure that an appropriate orientation program is given to the member respecting (a) the types of services offered to members by the House of Assembly service and how those services may be accessed; (b) the proper procedures to be followed in making claims for reimbursement or payment for proper expenses incurred by the member in carrying out his or her duties; (c) recommendations for proper systems to be employed in operating a constituency office and employing a constituency assistant; and (d) other matters that the speaker considers appropriate to assist the member in carrying out his or her duties.

"(3) Within 30 days a member's election for the first time to the House of Assembly, the speaker shall ensure the delivery of the following to the member: (a) this Act; (b) the rules; (c) directives of the commission pertaining to members; (d) written policies of the House of Assembly service that may affect the member; (e) the code of conduct for members and for officers and staff of the House of Assembly service; and (f) the manual."

So, Mr. Speaker, those three sections that I just enumerated, in great detail, there's now going to be an addition to say not that a member may, but it will read, as I just quoted: "A member shall complete the orientation and training programs referred to in subsections (1) and (2)."

Mr. Speaker, that will now be mandatory for all Members. That is extremely important because as the Deputy Government House Leader so eloquently said, as she always does, there is no place in the workplace for harassment, intimidation, bullying, violence of any kind. Training equates to education. It's no different than what we see through our school systems that often when there is an issue, we employ a public awareness campaign or we send people in to schools to do presentations for things such as impaired driving.

I go back to the legislation that we brought in with respect to impaired driving for drivers 22 years of age and under not being able to have any blood-alcohol tolerance level. I'm sure Members may ask themselves Mr. Speaker, what is the relevance to what we're saying and I invoke that only to say that I believe if you start early with a habit, you'll keep the habit.

If we get Members in the habit of attending sessions like this and learning on a continual basis, taking the necessary training, as we've all done over the last number of months, then I am confident that we will yield a more respectful workplace, a more productive workplace and certainly a workplace where all Members of the Legislature and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador can be confident in the work that is undertaken here on their behalf as we debate the very important issues facing the people who have elected us, the issues of our districts whether they're on a community basis, whether they're on a regional basis, whether they're on a provincial basis and sometimes, yes, even on a national basis.

The people who elect us have to have confidence that we're undertaking that work in the manner that they feel is appropriate. As the Deputy Government House Leader also alluded to, when we take an Oath of Office and we put our hand on a Bible or you affirm it, one or the other, you take an Oath of Office to Her Majesty the Queen, but you also take an oath to the Code of Conduct. To the best of my knowledge, that's unlike anywhere else in Canada.

So we have a particular responsibility here in this province to uphold a certain level of conduct and this will be an important step, Mr. Speaker, in realizing those expectations to ensure that the people who elect us, our constituents, have the confidence in us and in our actions. And that we as well can have confidence in each other that we are operating in a respectful way, promoting an environment where any forms of intimidation, harassment, violence of any kind has no place in a workplace and it certainly has no place in the House of Assembly as we are the leaders of the province elected to do the good work of the people.

This is why I'm certainly very pleased to stand and support this bill, support the work of the

Management Commission. Certainly some of these issues are not always easy to deal with, Mr. Speaker, but they are issues that must be addressed. It's not easy on everyone involved sometimes in these types of issues. That's why we have to have the best policies in place, that's why we have to have the best training and education and awareness so that if someone is doing something or saying something that makes someone uncomfortable, that that can be addressed. I'm confident that with continued training that we offer our Members and our staff and officials here, that's going to lead to a more respectful workplace, Mr. Speaker.

It's going to lead to a safe and respectable workplace and the Management Commission, of which I'm a part, we've already taken steps to bring in the interim policy. We're looking forward to the Privileges and Elections Committee reporting back to the Legislature. As I mentioned, this is a piece of work today on Bill 31 that began in May of this year of the decision taken by the Commission.

It came another step closer to bringing it to fruition in September with the bill that was drafted by the Law Clerk. So here we are today now the end of October, All Hallows' Eve, Mr. Speaker. I may go out and get a pumpkin tonight. I don't know if anyone knows where I can buy a pumpkin. Any supermarket I'm sure, or I may drop by and see my friend in Mount Pearl tonight and get a pumpkin. Well, Mr. Speaker, you have to be able to have that collegiality amongst colleagues and I look forward to supporting the bill.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm quite pleased to stand today and speak to Bill 31, An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act. An extremely important act, as has been pointed out both by the minister and

others who have spoken because it is the act that was –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: – put together by Justice Green way back when in 2006, 2007. He began the work of the Commission in 2006 and the bill came into place in 2007, I think. It was just as I was entering the House of Assembly, actually, when all of this happened, that the unfortunate financial scandals that occurred demanded that a Commission be held and Commissioner Green was the person who did that tremendous piece of work that was done which is reflected in the accountability act, to use the short term because it is a long name.

One of the things that he made sure would be in the act was the section on orientation and training. And the orientation and training that the Commissioner was speaking about when this bill was put together, included first orientation for new Members into the House of Assembly and various aspects of what that orientation would be about, but then also training. Not just training with regard to a harassment-free workplace but all sorts of training. One of those, of course, is what some of the speakers have spent a lot of time on here this afternoon talking about harassment-free workplace.

The Commissioner and our act that came from that work talks about training in a much broader sense than just that. And training that becomes identified by the Speaker, working with the Clerk, and it is their responsibility to make sure that training is devised and that training takes place. As has been pointed out by other Members, what is coming forward today in this amendment is the result of a discussion on the level of the House Management Commission. I, along with five others of my colleagues, am privileged to be on that Commission and it is a sign of what good can happen when we work together.

I have to admit that when we first talked about whether or not training should be mandatory, which is what this amendment does, it makes training mandatory by adding a subsection to the two sections that talk about orientation and

training – and the subsection says: “A member shall complete the orientation and training programs referred to in subsections (1) and (2).” And that “shall” is what makes the training mandatory.

When we first discussed it in the House Management Commission, I wondered, do we really need to make it mandatory? And I’ll be very personal here and, you know, I thought about it in terms of the orientation training, for example. I’ve been in the House since the fall of 2006. I’m the second longest-standing Member of the House, after the Minister of Finance.

I have to say, the last time we had our election, the general election in 2015, I didn’t see a necessity for myself to do the orientation training, but I’ve been challenged on that thinking by some new Members. The point that was made to me was: But it would be really important for you to be at our orientation training, and anybody else for whom it’s not the first time they’re elected, because you can help us in the discussion around what it means to be in the House of Assembly.

The orientation should be deep enough that when the new Members walk into this House, they shouldn’t be terrified by it, they should see it as a welcoming place, and I realize they’re right. I have a responsibility as a Member of this gathering to be at that orientation training. It really changed my thinking when that challenge was put to me. It made me think about the fact that when it comes to how this House of Assembly works, how we work together on the floor of the Legislature and how we work together in committees and statutory committees and other committees where we work together, that all would be affected by all of us right from day one after a general election, being together in these orientation sessions.

So I acknowledge that I, myself, had a bit of an arrogance, if I can put it that way, with regard to saying, well, I don’t need that. I’ve been around for a while, I don’t need orientation. Then I saw notes – there’s more to it than the orientation, and I have a responsibility for the newest Members coming in, as somebody who has a lot of experience here in the House.

We need to be together so that they may raise a question, and I have no doubt that the Clerk and the Clerk's staff would have answers to those, but then as a sitting Member and somebody who has had to deal with being in the House, I'm going to have a different kind of answer maybe than the Clerk and the staff of the House. So I've changed my opinion; and, yes, I think that training needs to be mandatory.

I want to use another example where I also questioned whether or not I would do the training, and that has to do with training that has occurred with regard to a harassment-free workplace. That's been referred to by some of my colleagues already this afternoon as well.

Once again, I thought about the training and I said, well, really do I need that training. I have – over the last 20, 25 years – had a lot of experience with regard to harassment-free workplace. I've gone to training sessions myself, and maybe there's some training I'd actually be able to give myself, so why do I need to do it? But when I thought about it I realized, with my colleague and our caucus, no, we have a responsibility to go for this training. We need to know what the training is that is happening and we should be there, and I should be there.

Again, I rethought my first position. And, again, it could have been a bit of arrogance: Oh, I know a lot about this, I don't need to go. But then I thought, no, I need to be part of the process. I need to be part of what's happening for all of us in the House of Assembly. I think that is probably one of the strongest bases for me for saying that we need the training to be mandatory, so that we all work together.

I firmly believe – I'm a very positive thinker, actually – that if we work together that way, if we do training together, if we are working on committees together, then that will change – and has changed, actually. I've seen it. The tone of our debate here in the House of Assembly, I see that as being a spinoff from this thing of saying let's work together.

When it comes to the orientation and training, let's find all the ways in which we can work together so that we can make what happens here in the House more effective and a better place to be – not for ourselves but for the people of the

province. They deserve it. They deserve us to do anything we can in order to make the debate that happens here in this House and the work that we do something that's going to benefit them, because that's why I'm here – and I know we all believe that's why we're here. We're here to be accountable to the people who elected us and we're here for the good of the people of the province.

So if I look at training and orientation as more than just its effect on me as an individual, if I look at it as something that I am part of as part of the whole in this House of Assembly, and if I look at it as something that's going to make me a better MHA, and others better MHAs for the good of the people of the province, then I think in that picture, in that broad way of looking at it, then, yes, I think we all should do the orientation and training that falls under our *Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*.

As was pointed out by the minister, I think, it's also something which is in the act, that would be covered by the Code of Conduct in terms of the spirit of the Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct, of course, is part of the act as well.

So having said all that, I obviously am voting for this, and I would encourage all of my colleagues in the House to vote for it. As I said with both things, both with regard to the orientation and with regard to the harassment-free workplace training, I turned around in saying whether or not I needed to do that training. The decision for me now is that I should be doing all training that is offered by the House of Assembly, that is offered by the Clerk and the Speaker, because I am part of the House of Assembly and we all need to work together. So doing training together is an essential part of who we are.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just rise for a few minutes to offer my support to this very important bill, and just to give you some of my experiences in what

training means and how important it is that – you’ll never have too much training. Never. And certainly to get up to speak today on this Act to Amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act is very important to everybody. I think it’s something we all need to partake in, and I’m pleased that we have come forward with this resolution to make it mandatory.

I spent 20 years in municipal politics. I spent 30 years in an industrial environment, and I must say that training and instruction was a big part of that 30 years. When you look at training and whether it should be done every second year, every fourth year, or after you get elected, or when you get hired, just think about some of the training modules that are out there. Like first aid, for instance, CPR, they have a time limit. They have an expiration date. And there’s no reason why we can’t do the same thing here.

Now, I’m not suggesting that we do it every year but it’s something, at least, that should be done every four years. And whether you’re newly elected or re-elected, it shouldn’t even come into consideration. It shouldn’t even be considered, because things change.

For instance, when you look at what the resolution says and what the House of Assembly offers as training, the types of services offered to Members of the House of Assembly and how those services may be accessed, well, guess what? In four years that may change. The procedures may be different, and the next one with the proper procedures to be followed, they’re making claims for reimbursement, for instance. That’s just an example.

Well, procedures change over the years. And I’m pleased that the Member for St. John’s East - Quidi Vidi has seen the light of day and decided against her original thought that she’s too experienced for training. It’s good to see because we need people, senior people and experienced people, in this House to be part of the whole Assembly.

There’s a saying about training. It says, and on that date – I’m not dating myself, but it says: 60 years ago I knew everything, now I know nothing. Education and training is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance. Mr. Speaker,

that I think explains everything, that we never have too much training. When you look at the bill that has been put forward today and the resolution, I think it’s very important.

Now, as I said, I spent 20 years in the municipal world. Many of us here have gone through the municipal field, municipal part of our lives, and it’s a very important part of our lives. It’s very important of our political lives. I’ve always believed, right from day one – I’ve always believed that mayors and councillors, whether just newly elected or they’ve been elected for some time, should receive mandatory training. I’ve said that publicly to them. I tell you, the backlash you get for saying something like that is just unbelievable.

A lot of people believe they don’t need training, and it’s unfortunate really. You see mayors, councillors, no matter what level of political body you’re in, whether it’s municipal, whether it’s provincial, whether it’s federal, training is a very important part of it. I think that’s all come to light certainly in the past little while. What has raised really the level of importance and the – I guess the whole talk around whether the training or not, is the harassment and bullying policy that needs to be upgraded and certainly put into place and given as mandatory training. So we all need to be part of that.

Again, getting back to the municipal world, and it was never a part of it that the training would be mandatory. And I tell you, organizations like Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, Municipal Affairs, Environment, all those entities have put a lot of time and effort into training.

It was amazing, really, and disappointing to see the low number of people who would access that training, and it always leads to problems. When people aren’t properly trained in their responsibilities, in their accountabilities, that leads to issues that arise, whether it’s in council, whether it’s within the House of Assembly, but it’s something, of course, that we need to really brush up on and to make sure that we have the right amount of training available to them.

Of course, there’s no point of having it available unless the people who are supposed to receive the training are mandated to do so, and I think

that's where this resolution is great. I know it's something we've been wanting to do for some time. But when you look at the issues that are part of this orientation program – and we can call it orientation, we can call it training, we can call it re-training – again, it's something that every Member of this House, regardless of the amount of time he or she has been in here, it's something we should all take advantage of and certainly be willing to take part in.

Some of the training that's through this orientation program that's being offered and the types of services offered to Members by the House of Assembly, and all those services may be accessed – again, as I said, that contains over and over again: “the proper procedures to be followed in making claims for reimbursement or payment for proper expenses incurred by the member in carrying out his or her duties.” There's never a bad time to get re-trained in that.

“Recommendations for proper systems to be employed in operating a constituency office and employing a constituency assistant.” That's one thing that probably of all the people in our organization who are harassed and bullied, or call it what you like, are our constituency assistants. They're the people on the front line. They're the people who see the upset citizen or whoever, and I tell you, because I've experienced it, and my constituency assistant has experienced it, they do expose themselves to a lot; a lot of bullying, a lot of harassment, and to the point where we have to install security systems and cameras.

So, Mr. Speaker, this type of training has become more and more important every single day. I tell you, when you talk about our constituency assistants, sometimes they're left behind, and it's unfortunate. I know, because my constituent assistant experienced something this year that really opened my eyes, I tell you. Where they're located – and she is located in the courthouse where you got sheriffs and whatnot walking around, but the abuse and the harassment that she was subjected to, I tell you, it's unbelievable, Mr. Speaker. It's unbelievable. It's horrendous.

So when you talk about that – and I know this training will not train the people who come in to see them, but hopefully the training can be given

to them to learn how to handle it and that they are not exposed to such dangerous situations, because I tell you, the experience we had this year was very scary; was scary for me, was scary for my CA, was scary for her family, was scary for everybody involved. And no person, no person under our employ should be subjected to that type of exposure.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: That's why it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we all take advantage of this training. It may be something that we can go back and provide assistance to our CAs, because not all our CAs – we're not with them all the time. When we're here in the House, they're holding the fort back home. And they do a great job of it too, by the way. They do a great job of it too. So we always have to keep them in mind.

So training – and I'm sure, and I hope that our CAs will be given the opportunity to avail of all this training that's going on. I know they are now. I'm not sure if it's clear here whether it becomes mandatory for them, but I hope it does, and I hope conditions are presented so that they can avail of it and that they are trained and in the proper manner.

“Within 30 days of a member's election for the first time to the House of Assembly, the speaker shall ensure the delivery of the following to the member: this Act; the rules” of the House; “directives of the commission pertaining to members;” – and there are lots of them – “written policies of the House of Assembly service that may affect the member; the code of conduct for members and for officers and staff of the House of Assembly; and (f) the manual.”

Mr. Speaker, it's quite intense. It's a lot of information there, but I hope that we are given the time and hope people are prepared to avail of the time that it takes to absorb the information, to be accountable to the information and the rules and regulations that exist.

By making it mandatory, I think it's a very positive move for all of us. It's a move that's probably long overdue and I know, as the new policies are implemented from the Privileges and Elections Committee, I look forward to those, they're going to be very important as we

go forward. We hope that every Member of this House and the staff will be given the opportunity and people make sure that they avail of that information and that training.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat but I just want to have those few words and one of the things that I wanted to say was to keep in mind, with all this, our constituency assistants and make sure that they're not forgotten in this, that we see this training carried out in a timely manner, and that it's done soon rather than later, and that we'll be –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LETTO: Oh, keep going. Well, I'm sure there are some of them –

Okay, so there's another speaker. I will take my seat, Mr. Speaker, and I want to say that I definitely will be supporting this and I look forward to taking part in that training.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly an honour and a privilege to stand here in this House once again today in very strong support of this change to the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, Mr. Speaker. I don't intend to speak for a long time to the bill, but I do believe it's very, very important that we all support this bill, and I'm quite confident that we will.

It's was very unfortunate listening to the Member for Labrador West to hear about what happened to his contingency assistant over the summer. I certainly can relate. We've had a few situations in my office as well. The public at large may not be aware, Mr. Speaker, but it has been incidents like this that have led to the requirement of installation of cameras in our constituency offices for self-protection, because it can be a very challenging workplace.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, I think we can all appreciate, as parliamentarians, the frustration that people endure, especially when they're incurring hardships in their life, which is all the more reason for us, as parliamentarians, to lead by example and to clearly state that violence is not the solution to anything. In fact, violence always leads to making things worse. I will speak to that – well, actually I guess I can speak to it now.

The Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, in her commentary when she was speaking to this, talked about how if we don't curb violence at the early stages, it escalates and becomes more and more and more violent. To that end, I truly believe that curbing needs to stop at the bullying and intimidation stage. When we don't stop it at that stage, it does proliferate and it does lead to situations like we've seen last week.

I'm going to quote, just from Twitter, something that I saw that really struck me in some of the discussion on Twitter about the very tragic situation last week in Philadelphia. This person tweeted: The horror of all mass atrocity crimes begins with poisoned politics of hate and demagoguery – sorry, I can't pronounce that word very well. Then he tweeted a second tweet that said: The point is, if you're waiting for the worst to happen before you speak out, you're leaving it far too late.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is important that we all speak up against all forms of violence and we all support people who we believe to be victims of violence. It's not good enough for us just to talk about it. I've always been a believer that actions speak louder than words, and we must lead by example. We still have a ways to go, Mr. Speaker, admittedly, a long ways to go, but it has to start somewhere. Again, I believe, if nothing else, the process that we have been through over the course of the last few months is making a difference and it's starting to make all of us realize, Mr. Speaker, that we need to do better than what we have been to date.

We've talked about it in this House. For three years since I've been here, I am pretty certain over the last three years every session, whether it was on a money bill where we were able to speak about any topic or whether it was in one

of the two PMRs that we brought forward against bullying in this hon. House that I've stood up and I've spoken to the issue and I've spoken about the importance of not sweeping it under the rug. If we, as parliamentarians, refuse to acknowledge that problems exist then we, as parliamentarians, are not going to fix those problems and we will not lead by example. Our children and our grandchildren and future generations will not benefit from a better world if we don't create that better world.

So I'm going to talk a little bit as well about my career and my lifetime. I certainly knew the Member for Labrador West in my previous career because we both worked in community economic development, Mr. Speaker. He was mayor of his municipality. I have to say, I've worked in the private sector, I've worked in the not-for-profit sector, and here for the last 11 years I've worked in the public sector. But never before, and I can honestly say this, Mr. Speaker, never, never before have I seen an environment that allows bullying to proliferate like I have seen in politics.

Everyone will say: Ah, that's politics. You got to be tough; you just got to put up with some of that. The question I ask to that, Mr. Speaker, is why – why do we just have to put up with some of that? There's no other workplace – and we as lawmakers, makers of the law, would not tolerate any private sector employer or any board employer or any not-for-profit employer to tolerate some of the things that we ourselves tolerate here in the House of Assembly.

So I think the buck stops here with us strongly, strongly in support of mandatory training after every election. Because, as many Members have already stated, things do change, policies do change, and we always evolve, and hopefully we always become better.

I think it's important too, there was a point made in these discussions here this afternoon about supporting the rights of all persons. And it is very, very important that we get this right. Both accusers and respondents deserve equal rights, and they deserve equal opportunity to have their views heard. It is important, and I strongly believe that all people on all sides of an issue or a problem need to work together to resolve that problem.

I certainly am quite pleased that we're bringing in mandatory training. It's unfortunate that it was required, because personally I do believe that, as professionals, we should know that. By the time we reach a place in our career that we're ready to serve the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in a position as responsible as that of a Member of the House of Assembly, we should already know these types of behaviours are unacceptable, but training, certainly, to reinforce it is always, always beneficial, and training to continue to learn and adapt to new policies as they emerge is always, always beneficial, Mr. Speaker.

So I'm not going to belabour the point too long. I understand there are other Members here in the House who would like to speak to this bill as well and stand in support of it. Certainly, as we move forward over the course of the remainder of this session, Mr. Speaker, and the remainder of this year, I would like to think we're going to see continued improvements like this made.

I'd like to think, Mr. Speaker, we're not just going to hear them spoken in words but we're actually going to see them in action. I'd like to see each and every one of us, as professionals, be able to shake each others hand at the end of any day because we are here to serve, first and foremost, the people of our province, and it is our duty to do that with professionalism and in respect of the law.

So we have the responsibility to lead by example. We have to hold that standard very, very high. We can't expect anyone else to do it for us. We have to exude that from within ourselves. Each and every one of us has that responsibility, and each and every one of us, I would think, should know the definitions of respect and integrity, and each and every one of us should know the definitions of harassment and what is and is not acceptable behaviour in the 21st century.

I understand, Mr. Speaker, the way things used to work in politics. I understand the old boys' club. I understand the unwritten rules, but I stand here today to say this is the 21st century and there is no room for any of it in today's Legislature.

I'm very pleased that parliamentarians here today are committed to changing the way we do business, to raising the bar and to ensuring that future parliamentarians, men and women, can come to work knowing that they will be able to just do their work and not have to worry about issues like bullying, intimidation and harassment to the degree that they have been allowed to exist in the past.

So we are making steps forward. My apologies to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that we haven't moved faster with it. I, for one, commit to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that by my actions I will certainly endeavour to give the people the truest of integrity and honour that they deserve as the people of Newfoundland and Labrador from their Members in the House of Assembly.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity, and I'm sure this bill will receive unanimous support here in the House when we call the vote.

Thank you.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to stand this afternoon and speak to Bill 31, An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act.

This particular bill, we're just simply making a subtle change, but an important change. It's a subtle change in terms of the actual content of the bill, but the implication I think is significant in that we're going to require training for all Members of the House of Assembly, training and orientation, and to ensure that it is mandatory that all Members must attend.

Now, we've heard a lot of discussion about workplace harassment training. I think, obviously, we all know the impetus for this, but at the end of the day it could apply to other training and orientation as well. Certainly when new Members are elected the Clerk carries out a fairly extensive day of training on House of Assembly policies and procedures and so on, in

terms of the operation of the House, in terms of the operation of your constituency office and all the rules that govern that. So that's something we generally all do. Obviously, it wasn't mandatory in the past; now it will be.

There's nothing to say that additional training in other areas cannot be added to the training syllabus at any time if it is deemed necessary. Basically, we're saying that any training, regardless of what it is – if it's just a new MHA orientation, or if it's any specific training that's deemed necessary, then there would be an absolute requirement for all Members to attend said training. Mr. Speaker, I think that's – it makes perfect sense to me.

In any workplaces that I have worked in in the private sector training was mandatory. You didn't have an option. It was certain training that your employer required mandatory to do your job; training that was required to educate you on different aspects of the business, different aspects of, perhaps, any products and so on that would be associated to your business; training around occupational health and safety and training around workplace harassment. Then there would be an expectation, certainly anywhere I've worked, that all employees must attend that training.

This is really no different. At the end of the day, we do work for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, but this is still a workplace and there are certain rules and policies that govern how we do our work, how we interact with each other, and it's important that everybody understands, everybody is told what those rules are, how they work, what the expectations are.

Now as I indicated, and as has most people have sort of talked about, really this was spurred on by the unfortunate incidents that have been reported and are being dealt with here in the House of Assembly around harassment, and without getting into any details on any of that – because, quite frankly, I really don't want to get into those details – I feel that process in itself is flawed and we shouldn't even be talking about those detailed things in this type of a forum.

I will say from a general point of view, when it comes to the harassment training in particular, and the general decorum here in the House of

Assembly and how Members interact with each other, whether it be in the House; how they interact with each other outside of the House; how they interact with each other in their caucuses; how they interact with each other in Cabinet; how they interact with each other in terms of with employees, or whether it be your EAs, your CAs; how Members interact with all members of the public service, because we all have dealings with different members of the public service all the time in trying to do your job and trying to help your constituents.

I'm always on the phone in my office dealing with different departments, different people in departments and so on, trying to hopefully solve issues on behalf of the people I represent, and it's important that those interactions be respectful. By the same token, it's very important that the interactions we have with each other, as colleagues in the House and outside the House, that that be respectful.

It's important that the interactions that Members, regular Members would have with Cabinet, Members of Cabinet, the Premier and so on, that that be respectful, and respectful both ways. Particularly when it comes to the fact that depending on your position, so to speak, in the food chain there are different levels of power, different levels of influence. And it's very important that that power, that influence is used appropriately, not used inappropriately to try to somehow beat down, intimidate and so on, your colleagues; or for an MHA to try to use their power and influence, or perceived power and influence, to sort of beat down or demean their staff, or to try to intimidate members of the public service into getting what they want. Because we all know lots of times that when you're advocating for constituents on certain issues, a lot of times you don't get the answer you want and it can be very frustrating.

I've been frustrated many, many a times with the processes and government red tape, as I'm sure we all have. We must bear in mind, however, that the people who we are dealing with, they have a job to do, they have policies to follow, procedures to follow, that there is an appropriate chain of command, and there are mechanisms for appeal and ways of getting things done. Yelling at the person at the other end of the

phone is not the way to get that done, regardless who it is.

These are all important things. You would think that would be common sense. You would think that would be the type of thing that your mother would have taught you, or your father would have taught you. But sometimes those lessons don't necessarily sink in, unfortunately, and we see those types of negative behaviours manifesting themselves in the workplace. It's incumbent upon us all in this workplace – no different than an employee in any workplace at any level – to ensure that respect and dignity rules the day in what we do and how we interact.

This training, in particular when we talk about this harassment training, that's supposed to help get us where we need to be, because we're not all there. From the perspective of an overt point of view, I think we all understand some of the big issues in terms of harassment, but from the more subtle issues I think we all have to be reminded. Sometimes we don't even realize what we're saying ourselves, because of our upbringing.

There's a lot of terminology for example – I look back at a lot of terminology that would have been used over the years that was never meant – never meant – in a derogatory way whatsoever, but has been used. I have to catch myself. There has been a number of times that I have caught myself from saying one of those words, that was meant in the nicest kind of way, because you were taught that way. When you hear someone say the expression, my love, my darling, that type of thing, not meant in any other way but a friendly gesture, that your mother probably would have taught you or your mother would have said and your father would have said and whatever, mean nothing by it, of no harm –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: There you go, like the minister says. But you have to recognize that while those things, while you may not mean anything by it, only to say it in a nice way as just an expression, it's not what you mean, it's how it's received. It's how the other person perceives that.

While it's fine – I think while we all understand if someone is like a hard-core bully, we all know what that's all about, and we shouldn't need to be trained to know that's wrong, but certainly when it comes to, like I said, the more minor things or things that we would consider minor in nature and mean nothing by, that could be perceived in a certain way, it's important that we receive that training and that understanding of what's acceptable and what's not acceptable and how people could interpret what you're saying or doing and so on.

That applies to every workplace and this workplace that we work in would be no different. So I think it is very important that we do this type of training. I think it's very important that this type of training be mandatory. I certainly hope that the training that we would receive – because we did do, I'm going to say, an interim training. I'm assuming we're going to be doing more. The training that I went to was more sort of generic in nature but did not address specific issues around the House of Assembly, per se, because I think we also recognize that sometimes you can have heated debate here in this House of Assembly, we all recognize that. You know, it can get heated.

Sometimes you can argue on policy. Sometimes you can raise your voice a little bit because you're passionate about your position. Sometimes you might crack a little innocent-enough joke, or make some flippant remark that's really not offensive. As a matter of fact, sometimes I've been here in the House of Assembly where an Opposition Member or a government Member would make a remark that was at the other side, and the other side laughed just as hard as the side who made it, because we all recognized it as just simply humour to try to break up the monotony of the day, if you will.

I think we've also experienced in this House of Assembly, and there's no Member who can look me in the eye and tell me I'm wrong in saying this, that we have all witnessed times in this House of Assembly where people have made remarks that absolutely would classify as bullying – absolutely would qualify as bullying. And that's not saying what side of the House, or who said it, there's been guilt all around. He who is without sin cast the first stone, I'd say, Mr. Speaker.

But it has happened. There has been very cutting things said in this House over the years that I've been here, there have been very personal things said in this House that I've been here, and there have been situations where people have been targeted, not just in an off-handed remark, but targeted every time they stand up and speak, and beaten down and bullied, or at least attempted to be beaten down and bullied. We have all seen it. There's nobody can tell me they haven't seen it because they have. That is a fact.

We all know – we talk about there's a line, where in politics there's a line. Everybody here knows where the line is. I'd say, Mr. Speaker, everybody in this House of Assembly, if you were to ask them, could tell you that they've pretty much got a good idea where that fine line is, and they know when that line gets crossed. They do. We all know when that line gets crossed, and it happens, and it shouldn't happen.

So, if nothing else comes out of all this, I hope that we can now take this as an opportunity to raise the bar, to raise the bar in terms of how we interact with each other, inside and outside the House, to not get personal, and to be respectful. That's not to say we don't have debates; that's not to say we don't disagree; that's not to say that you don't make the scattered little joke every now and then to break up the monotony. I am not saying that at all, but that we will commit, all of us, to a House of Assembly where we can all come in here each day to do the people's business and to do so unhindered; to do so unhindered without any stress or worry about what any particular individual is going to try to say to beat you down, if I can say that.

That's what we should all achieve, that's what we should all strive for. And if we could do that, I think, despite all of what's going on with all these things, which I wish to God they didn't happen and I wish to God that we could turn back the clock, but it is what it is. On a go-forward basis, I think we have an opportunity now to try to do things better, and I'm sure that every Member in this House, on all sides, is committed to doing that.

So if putting training in place and making training mandatory is going to help get us to that point, then I support it 100 per cent. But I would say, Mr. Speaker, it will take a lot more than

simply going to a harassment course. Simply sitting down to a course where someone tells you what's acceptable and what's not and ticking the box that I went to the training, that in itself – it's a help, it's important, we should do it – but that in itself won't cut it.

We're the only ones who can make it happen. We're the only ones that can make it happen. Train as much as you want, if the people doing the training aren't committed to taking what they've learned and applying it inside and outside the House of Assembly when we're dealing with each other, then the training is not worth the paper it's written on. It takes that commitment.

I'm saying in this House of Assembly, I am committed. I've heard other Members say they're committed. I'm sure everybody is committed to that, let's make it happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I appreciate the commentary from my colleagues on both sides of the House as it relates to this amendment, and I understand when I sit down we'll be moving forward with this procedure. So at this time I'll be taking my seat and we'll be moving this piece of legislation into Committee and we'll look forward to the question and answer process.

Thank you.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that Bill 31, An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act, be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act. (Bill 31)

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

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 31)

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 31.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 31, An Act To Amend The House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act.

A bill, "An Act to Amend The House Of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act." (Bill 31)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: I move, Mr. Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bill 31.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 31.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, the hon. the Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 31 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 31 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow. Thank you.

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

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 5, second reading of Bill 28.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Yes, Mr. Speaker, it's certainly a pleasure to speak to Bill 28, An Act To Amend The Arts Council Act, which is moved by myself as minister, and seconded by the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue, parliamentary secretary for Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, to speak to Bill 28, An Act To Amend The Arts Council Act.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill –

AN HON. MEMBER: 28.

MR. SPEAKER: 28 – thank you – be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act To Amend The Arts Council Act.” (Bill 28)

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a real pleasure to rise in the House today, as Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, and speak to this piece of legislation, which is an amendment to the Newfoundland and Labrador *Arts Council Act*. The Arts Council is a Crown corporation. The Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council, known as ArtsNL, is responsible for developing and administering grant programs for professional artists, arts organizations, schools and community groups.

ArtsNL is an independent Crown entity that is governed by the *Arts Council Act*. While government provides the entity with an annual grant to support various programs – and we all know about the various programs that are supported, from the touring programs to good work that is being done to help with the creation and dissemination of art to help support artists, the creation of art, and the work that they do to support for sustaining organizations as well.

This particular amendment that I'm talking about today is really a routine matter, and it's to align the legislation with other Crown corporations and agencies of the provincial government. So, what we are doing here today – and this is the only thing that is being done – is that we're removing section 14(1) of the *Arts Council Act*, which is in reference to the *Financial Administration Act*, the FAA.

The *Financial Administration Act* is the primary legislation that governs the province's financial management, and it applies to all the departments within government. However, ArtsNL is not a core department of government, and the entity has not operated under the rules of the FAA. And while the reference to the FAA is removed, this amendment still ensures that there is financial accountability of ArtsNL, and that's certainly something that is very important to ensure that all of our Crown entities have financial accountability.

So just to put this in context, Mr. Speaker, when the Arts Council was established in 1980, the intention was to provide operational flexibility required to manage its programs. It has operated that way for the last 28 years, ever since it was established. This allows it to provide flexibility in administering its grants to third parties and to

provide multi-year funding. Removing and replacing this section from the *Arts Council Act* will align the legislation with other Crown corporations and agencies within the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

This is about something that is in an act that has not been adhered to and it is not applicable to the Arts Council of Newfoundland and Labrador, based on their operations, and this was something – the amendment will also ensure that the Arts Council is in compliance with its legislation, as was identified by the Office of the Comptroller General. When the Comptroller General did the review, this was something that was recommended and advised, that in order for ArtsNL to continue to do the work that it does and comply with the legislation of the *Financial Administration Act*, reference to that would be removed through amendment.

Our government remains very committed to the arts community in our province. We value the important role of ArtsNL and what they play in providing arts funding, and they do incredible work with the funding that they receive. When I was appointed minister responsible for arts and culture in 2015, part of my mandate was to recognize that artists are essential to the preservation and progression of our cultural identity in the province, and that mandate includes collaborating with the arts community to help improve the social and economic status of professional artists in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I have met with and talked to many, many artists, those that would've received funding from ArtsNL, to get to see the productions that would've been created, the art exhibitions that have been on display, the organizations and entities, the publications that would've been produced. Just on Sunday I had the opportunity to sit and see an interesting piece of work that was done by Bernie Morgan, *Seasons Before the War*. To have the illustrations and be able to use technology at a book launch, to have the illustrator, who is very famous there, to be connected by technology with the author and to be able to highlight that, is one of the engagements that's undertaken.

It's so important to be proud of what we're doing in terms of being committed to enhancing

and recognizing and supporting artists throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. It was just only a couple of weeks ago to be able to hear the diversity of talent that we have when it comes to our music, Mr. Speaker. And I had the great privilege of being able to present Ralph O'Brien with the Lifetime Achievement Award by MusicNL, and to get to hear the talents of the Swinging Belles, the Kubasonics and so many others that had been presented at this award ceremony.

To understand that we have everything from rap, with ChessClub, to electric, to all different genres – we have so many artists here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Some are starting – some are professional artists and some are certainly being able to make it in Newfoundland and Labrador, but also to elevate on the national scene and the international scene. Many people get their start through the Arts Council and Arts Council grants and that would leverage other funding, whether it be Canada Council for the Arts or other support so that our creative community here in Newfoundland and Labrador can be more successful in everything that they do.

So, I am very proud and committed to enhancing the recognition and support for artists throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. That's why our government introduced *Status of the Artist Act*. To further build upon the *Status of the Artist Act*, we're also very committed to strengthening the support of culture by renewing our cultural plan. That is why we had undertaken numerous consultations with stakeholders throughout the province. This will offer us all further opportunities to explore government programming and funding mechanisms, and to offer ways to improve opportunities for artists in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I talked a little bit about funding, but the legislation and what actually is taking place here in terms of the amendments – and just to be very clear, the changes that are being proposed in this legislation are very minute to the *Arts Council Act* that will put into practice how the Crown entity has operated since its inception in 1980. So, to be in compliance with all legislation, removing the reference to the FAA is necessary to enable the Arts Council, ArtsNL, to continue to deliver its programs and

multi-year funding to third parties, to our artists, to support our artists and our professionals that are doing great work in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It certainly is real incredible to see the professionalism, to see the types of works, to see the types of events and investments that are being made. I would like to see that continue to be made where investments are made to support our arts, to support the community, to allow for multi-year funding and to allow for flexibility to ensure that third parties can continue. The alternative would limit the type of work and operations that the ArtsNL was set up and established to do.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to others contributing to debate, making dialogue here. When we get into Committee I'll certainly be available to answer any questions that anybody may have on this particular matter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly an honour and a privilege to rise once again in this hon. House to speak to this bill. Mr. Speaker, I will be standing in support of this bill when the vote is called. It's certainly, I think, a good – anything we can do to improve financial accountability is an improvement and this bill will do that.

The *Arts Council Act* currently requires the arts council to be compliant with the *Financial Administration Act*, and this is problematic, Mr. Speaker, because the *Financial Administration Act* is meant to regulate government departments and not Crown agencies. For example, the *Financial Administration Act* governs the actions of Treasury Board, public debt and those types of entities, but most ABC legislation requires that the Auditor General review the financials of the corporation.

So during the briefing, Mr. Speaker, officials noted that the *Legal Aid Act*, the *Public Trustee*

Act, and the *Innovation and Business Investment Corporation Act* all contained the requirement to be audited by the Auditor General and not the requirement to follow the *Financial Administration Act*. So this bill is just moving another ABC inline, really, with the type of accounting that the other ABCs are following.

This bill removes the requirement for the Arts Council to follow the *Financial Administration Act*, which is currently in section 14 of the *Arts Council Act*, and instead requires the council, as I just said, to have its financials reviewed each year by the Auditor General, and having an audit completed by the Auditor General is the practice that the council has been following to date.

In the briefing, officials noted that when they found out that the FAA requirement was in the legislation, it came as a bit of a surprise to them, Mr. Speaker. They have been following this practice all along but the act didn't speak to it. So this bill will clean that up.

By having the Auditor General audit the financials instead of following the *Financial Administration Act*, it's going to give flexibility to the Arts Council to award multiple-year funding, carry over unused funding and those types of things, Mr. Speaker.

Having worked for an economic development board for 12 years of my life, these types of abilities are very, very important. A lot of time is spent by staff chasing annual core funding and there are a lot of issues. So I'll speak to the core funding issue first. Like, it's a lot of wasted time and unnecessary effort by staff, so multiple-year funding will certainly be a benefit to them.

Carrying over unused funding is also important, Mr. Speaker. Because when you don't have the ability to carry over unused funding that's when – what we used to call – the end of budget year rush happens. In March you would see a lot of government entities and government-funded entities rush out to spend what was left in their various budgets because if they didn't use it, they would lose it. This will, I think, also lend to more prudent and fiscal responsible spending by the entities. So it's certainly a good bill, Mr. Speaker, and one I will be supporting.

The legislative change was recommended by the Office of the Comptroller. In the briefing, officials noted that the legislation was created in 1980, and the *Financial Administration Act* requirement was added at that time. A review of *Hansard* doesn't give any comment on the requirement.

A background on the Arts Council from the briefing, is that the *Arts Council Act* was proclaimed in 1980 to enable the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council to foster and promote the creation and production of artistic works, the study and enjoyment of these works, and to encourage public awareness of the arts. Tourism, Culture and Innovation provides an annual grant to the Arts Council. In 2018-2019 it was \$1.94 million, and \$1.6 million of that allocation was for arts programming.

So this move is just one I think that brings the organization in line with the practices it's currently following and what has been recommended by the Auditor General, and we certainly will be standing in support of it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to adjourn debate on the act To Amend The Arts Council Act, Bill 28.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Noting the hour of the day, I move, seconded by the Minister of TCII, that this House do now adjourn.

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

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 House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 o'clock.

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