



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

---

Volume XLVIII

THIRD SESSION

Number 39

---

HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA*

Thursday

November 8, 2018

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

I have several guests today that I'd like to advise the House of. In the Speaker's gallery, first of all, I'd like to welcome members of the Miss Newfoundland and Labrador Pageant Committee. These volunteers are Kathy Tetford, Wendy Penny, Debbie Vokey and Elizabeth Baker. I understand Kristianne Janes and Ashley Janes were unable to join you, but I'm glad you are here today. You will be mentioned in a Member's statement very soon.

Thank you, and welcome to the House.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Also – and this seems to be an amazing coincidence, and it is indeed a coincidence. I'm also very pleased to welcome, on behalf of another Member of this House, she was escorting the winner of the Miss Newfoundland and Labrador Pageant, Ms. Tammy Oliver-Snook. She will be recognized by that Member's statement.

Welcome to you, Madam.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Also, over in that same gallery – as some of you have been around here a little longer than myself, will recognize, and certainly I do recall him from his time here – I'm very pleased to welcome MHA Harry Harding, former Cabinet Minister and MHA for Bonavista North. He served in this House of Assembly from 2002 to 2011.

A great welcome to you, Sir.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** In my other Speaker's gallery – I did need two today – I would like to welcome Ms. Sherry Ryan. She will be the subject of a Member's statement today. Ms. Ryan is joined by her mother, Frances Ryan, and her sister, Bernadette Feehan.

Welcome to you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** And I'm very pleased to recognize up in the public gallery today, I do recognize Mary Shortall, President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour. I also recognize Mr. Jerry Earle, President of NAPE. They are here, I would assume, for the second debate of second reading of Bill 32, An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act.

Thank you for coming.

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

### Statements by Members

**MR. SPEAKER:** For Members' statements today we will hear from the Members for the Districts of Conception Bay South, Stephenville - Port au Port, Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, and St. John's Centre.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say I knew the late Master Corporal Darrell Cronin very well. He was a Search and Rescue technician with the 413 Search and Rescue Squadron out of Greenwood, Nova Scotia. The CH-113 helicopter was en route from CFB Greenwood when it went down on Quebec's Gaspé Peninsula while returning from a SAR mission.

Mr. Speaker, six members of the Tusker 27 crew passed away on October 2, 1998. This was a very sad day for our community, losing a native son who only one year earlier received the Bravery Award for his daring rescue of crew members on a sunken cargo ship in the North Atlantic.

Yesterday I had the privilege of attending the Admiral's Academy Remembrance Day Ceremony. This was a special ceremony which was followed by the renaming of the Admiral's Academy Resource Room. This event was an

emotional one for his family and friends with the unveiling of a plaque and a mural officially naming it the Master Corporal Cronin Learning Commons. This is a very fitting tribute to a great resident of Kelligrews, Conception Bay South, but also to a great Newfoundlander and Labradorian.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking those involved in making this a reality, and to honour Darrell's memory.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. FINN:** Mr. Speaker, I stand here today to congratulate Ms. Rita Janes of Boswarlos on reaching a magnificent milestone in her life. Ms. Janes celebrated her 100th birthday on November 4.

I had the pleasure of attending a birthday celebration in her honour at Silverwood Manor in Kippens just this past Sunday. She lived in Boswarlos on the Port au Port Peninsula, on her own, until the age of 92 before moving to the Silverwood Manor.

Mr. Speaker, something can be said for living off the land and it's relation to reaching 100 years. Ms. Janes credits her longevity to doing exactly that. She and her husband, George, must have cleaned hundreds of rabbits as he would bring a few home from everyday in the woods. They were together for more than 61 years before he passed at the age of 88. Together they had five children.

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Janes loves to have a game of cards, still enjoys knitting, especially for family members and friends who still like to get her homemade socks and mitts.

Mr. Speaker, birthday greetings come from her two surviving children, Linda Hoskins and Betty Spencer, nine grandchildren, 15 great-grandchildren, 11 great-great-grandchildren, one

great-great-great-grandchild, two step great-grandchildren, as well as hundreds of friends and family.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me on wishing her good health and a heartfelt congratulations on reaching 100 years.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Well done.

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

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

I would like to recognize the Miss Newfoundland and Labrador Pageant Committee of Volunteers: Kathy Tetford, Wendy Penny, Kristianne Janes, Debbie Vokey, Elizabeth Baker, Ashley Janes and Dianne Parsons.

On November 4, the committee put off the 61st annual pageant at the Danny Cleary Community Centre in Harbour Grace, featuring five strong female contestants who competed for the title, demonstrating skills in the categories of education, accomplishments, volunteer work, fitness, friendship and camaraderie.

Mr. Speaker, it's a time when strong women are making their voices heard and their talents known. And this committee of leaders strives to highlight the fact that the Miss Newfoundland and Labrador pageant has evolved from being strictly a beauty pageant to an event that celebrates and promotes the accomplishments of the province's finest young women. Women who are smart, successful, determined and committed to our province and our youth. They look upon this pageant as a platform from which they can inspire and encourage today's young people.

Along with so many sponsors, the Town of Harbour Grace is a significant supporter, allocating funding in its yearly municipal budget, as Harbour Grace is where the Miss

Newfoundland and Labrador pageant – it's where it originated, in historic Harbour Grace.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all hon. colleagues join me in congratulating the committee and, of course, our new Miss Newfoundland and Labrador, Miss Tammy Oliver-Snook of Harbour Breton.

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

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

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

I rise in this hon. House to extend congratulations to Tammy Oliver-Snook of Harbour Breton for her prestigious accomplishment of being crowned Miss Newfoundland and Labrador 2018-2019. We are extremely proud that Tammy was recognized for the amazingly gifted individual she is, and we are so very proud of her success.

Tammy rose to the challenge of meeting Miss Newfoundland and Labrador's rigorous search for a community-minded, well-rounded young woman with integrity, strong academic and leadership skills. Tammy's genuine warm-hearted nature was also recognized by her fellow contestants who chose her to become the cherished Miss Friendship 2018-19. With her remarkable skills, talents and giving nature, Tammy is an excellent ambassador for my district and our province, and we look forward to watching her achieve her dreams and being an inspiration to youth in our province. I also thank the organizing committee for providing this wonderful opportunity.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Tammy Oliver-Snook, our proud Lion of Harbour Breton and tremendous role model who exhibits the genuine beauty of the human spirit and what can be achieved when you set your mind to achieving your goals.

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

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

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

Wreckhouse winds reach up to 200 kilometres an hour, and Sherry Ryan is taking the provincial music scene by a wicked storm with her latest album *Wreckhouse*.

Winner of this year's MusicNL Female Artist of the Year Award, Sherry is hailed as Newfoundland and Labrador's Lucinda Williams by *UP* magazine. There is so much that we can be proud about in Sherry's new work as she sings about her life, our lives, and our Newfoundland and Labrador.

In "Stop The Train" co-written with her dad, Jim Ryan, Sherry sings about legendary wind gauge Lauchie MacDougall who worked for the Newfoundland railroad from 1939 to 1965, and who could smell the wind and how the Wreckhouse winds could blow a train off the tracks. It's such a great tune.

One review said: Drifting between country, blues and folk, Sherry's songs can lead you down a path of heartbreak, hope, and even humour in the space of a single chorus.

For sure, one of our finest singer/songwriters, her train will not be stopping anytime soon. Bravo Sherry Ryan, MusicNL's Female Artist of the Year.

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

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

#### Statements by Ministers

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to stand in this hon. House today to highlight the exciting news that record bids for exploration licenses –

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

**MS. COADY:** – offshore have been received as a result of the most recent call for bids in the Eastern Newfoundland Region and Jeanne d'Arc Regions, both located in the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Area.

In total, there was a record cumulative total of \$1.38 billion in bids –

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

**MS. COADY:** – and a record single bid of \$621 million from BHP Billiton Petroleum in the Eastern Newfoundland region. And I'd like to welcome BHP to our province.

The bid process is managed by the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board.

The resource potential in offshore Newfoundland and Labrador is incredible. In less than 7 per cent of the province's offshore, there's a combined resource potential of 49.2 billion barrels of oil and 193.8 trillion cubic feet of gas.

There have been eight new entrants in the past two years, and \$3.9 billion in recent exploration work commitments.

Mr. Speaker, we are seeing success in our plan to drive exploration and grow the province's offshore through *Advance 2030 – The Way Forward on Oil and Gas*. This success confirms Newfoundland and Labrador as a global centre of interest for the world's oil and gas exploration companies.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. Mr. Speaker, I congratulate as well the C-NLOPB and the industry on setting the record for the highest cumulative bid total of \$1.38 billion and the largest bid of \$621 million from BHP Billiton Petroleum. With this bid, they become a new entrant in the offshore activity which is certainly welcome.

The high bid round is a direct result of investments made in geoscience, including seismic. Knowing the impact of seismic

research, it is important that the government continues to ensure that the 2D and 3D seismic programs continue in the future.

Mr. Speaker, the successful bidders have six years to make their investments in this province. I certainly hope the ongoing erosion of the Atlantic Accord, through the implementation of doing an environmental assessment and the addition of exploration wells through the project list, will not deter these companies from fulfilling their exploration licenses.

I call on our provincial government and our several Liberal MPs to speak up to ensure any erosion of the Atlantic Accord and the authority of the C-NLOPB does not occur.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

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

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

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

I thank the minister. This new round of bids is indeed exciting news for the province's future. Companies committing money for exploration is a tangible expression of the interest in our resources; however, there is still plenty of work to do to ensure we get this right. We need to ensure we protect our workers who will be working in even more dangerous conditions, and we must ensure we move forward in the most environmentally, responsible way possible. So let's get busy. Let's get down to work, but let's do this right.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**MR. HAGGIE:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to highlight a two-day provincial Recovery Forum held in St. John's this week.

Hosted by my department in close collaboration with the Recovery Council, more than 100 people came together to share their personal stories and experiences with mental health and addictions. This included people and families with lived experience throughout the province, regional health authority staff and community partners.

The Recovery Forum was an opportunity for those with lived experience to share their stories and to provide varied perspectives and insight into mental health and addictions care in this province. Thank you for your courage in coming forward, and for sharing your narratives.

Your voices are crucial to our work on *Towards Recovery: The Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador*. We are grounding our decisions in reality as we continue to move forward. One year in, we have seen a 68 per cent reduction province-wide in the number of people waiting for counselling services.

One of the reasons we are making such process is in large part because of the tremendous work being done by the Towards Recovery Team led by Colleen Simms. The team were recently recognized as part of the Public Service Award of Excellence Ceremony. A well-deserved award for Ms. Simms and the rest of the team who are making a real difference in the lives of people and families in this province.

Let's keep working together, because one year in shows what we can achieve with a plan, a vision, determination and partnerships between people and families with lived experience, all stripes and levels of government, grassroots community partners and health care providers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** 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.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I rise today to also thank those who participated in the provincial Recovery Forum held in St. John's this week. Each and every one of us in this House have likely witnessed the effects of mental health or addictions issues with our friends, families and communities for far too long. People have been ashamed to speak openly about these deeply personal issues. Providing avenues for open and frank discussions about mental health and addictions in a safe and welcoming environment is critical to tackling issues that have affected Newfoundland and Labrador communities for far too long.

Mr. Speaker, I also commend the work of the Towards Recovery team and their recent acknowledgement as part of the Public Service Award of Excellence Ceremony. Effecting positive change on mental health and addictions issues in our province is something that transcends party politics, and I look forward to seeing more work from their team.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

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

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

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

I thank the minister. The All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions started at a kitchen table in my District of St. John's Centre. I asked a group of people what was keeping them awake at night, and they said the lack of services for mental health and addictions. From there, we held a town hall and then formed the Community Coalition for Mental Health.

It was the coming together of people who told their stories and shared their expertise that started this whole process. It shows what can happen when a group of passionate and compassionate people come together, determined to make a difference.

Bravo to Colleen Simms and her amazing team for taking this work further. It's complex, but we're on the right track.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

**Oral Questions**

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

I have a question for the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation. I have to write that one down, and I'm still getting that committed to memory.

First, to the minister: Respectfully, I give notice that I'll ask questions next week based on the Rooms conflict of interest guideline that I tabled these previous few days.

Sir, the question is: Across Canada, those who are involved in the cannabis industry have had to outline who has invested in the operations of the industry.

Why is it acceptable that a numbered company, with unknown shareholders, can be involved in the industry in this province?

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to getting a licence to be involved in the cannabis industry in Newfoundland and Labrador, you would have to go through Health Canada. Health Canada has rigorous checks and balances to ensure that those who are involved in holding a licence would have the appropriate mechanisms to do so. There are heavy security checks; there are financial checks. There are all kinds of regulations that are put in place.

So for anybody to operate in Newfoundland and Labrador, Health Canada would have to approve a production licence to operate a facility. They would have to go through those appropriate checks and balances.

Canopy Growth Corporation has production licences elsewhere in Canada, as do Biome Grow, and we encourage others who want to set up here, but they have to adhere to Health Canada policies.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Mr. Speaker, is the hon. minister telling this House that we can put utter faith in the federal level of government, and that no further due diligence on the identities of people involved in the industry is necessary to be done by the government of this province.

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, there are appropriate processes put into place for anybody who is operating a business here in Newfoundland and Labrador. What's very interesting is how the Member opposite is casting such aspersions on companies, and the business community, that's operating here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have an incredible business community that's doing great work here in our province. When it comes to cannabis production and a production facility, in order to get a licence and operate, they have to get that from Health Canada. In order to do that, they have to follow the rigorous checks and balances and the regulations.

That is solely the responsibility of Health Canada to do that, not the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have a contract in place and we have appropriate checks and balances on our perspective.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Mr. Speaker, I take it the answer is that no, we don't need to do our own due diligence on the identity of investors.

Last week, the Minister of Finance said in this House that he was going to try and find out who are the silent shareholders of the numbered company. On November, 1 he said – quote – “But certainly we'll endeavour to find that out, if that's what the Member wishes” – unquote.

We've asked several times this week, but the minister plays silent partner to his seatmate.

Once again I ask the Minister of Finance: Have you been able to determine who actually owns this company?

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, we have done our due diligence. Our department officials that have worked on this file work extremely hard. They do the appropriate work to ensure that we get good business deals for the people of this province.

When it comes to the regulations of any particular matter to acquire a cannabis production facility, that is with Health Canada. Health Canada will do the appropriate security checks to make sure that there is no connection to organized crime or any particular matter.

What we have is we have a very clear contract with a company that is licensed with the TSX and also with the New York Stock Exchange. They have to follow regulations. This is a publicly traded company that is doing appropriate business here in Newfoundland and Labrador and to cast aspersions and to put innuendo out the way that the Member opposite is doing is completely –

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

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Question for the Minister of Justice. On May 28, the minister appointed

Marlene Jesso to conduct an independent, external review of the circumstances surrounding the deaths of three inmates at correctional facilities between August 31, 2017 and May 26, 2018.

May I ask the minister as to the status of this review?

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

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

I appreciate the question from the Member opposite. It is certainly a very important topic. What I can say is that Ms. Jesso has been working away diligently. It is an independent investigation and it's one that we're making sure she has all the time and resources necessary in order to do a full and thorough investigation.

My understanding is that she should have a report finished sometime late fall is what I'm being told. I'm certainly not applying any pressure to Ms. Jesso. I'd rather have it done right, rather than have it done quickly.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Might I ask the minister to clarify if he's received any recommendations so far?

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, no, we haven't received any recommendations thus far. I anticipate receiving them in the finalized report.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Is it the minister's plan to make the reports public?

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Certainly, Mr. Speaker, with the one caveat that obviously if there's any sensitive information that would compromise people's personal information, my goal is to make everything as public as possible. I think the families demand that, I think the public demands that, and that's certainly our intention.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Subsequent to May 26, as the minister will no doubt be well aware, another inmate passed away at HMP, June 30.

This death, is it also being investigated as part of this review, or will there be some other review?

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

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

I believe this review right now is on three deaths that have occurred in our facilities. Certainly I can endeavour to find out if that one has also been included. It's not my understanding that it has. There certainly hasn't been any negative implications that have been brought to my attention. Unfortunately, these things do happen sometimes, and again, authorities would have reviewed this at that time.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Thank you, Minister.

Many people think a review is not sufficient, and what we really need is a public inquiry into systemic issues that may constitute human rights abuse in our prisons, which according to some,

resemble 21st-century asylums for people facing mental health and addiction challenges.

Will the minister commission a public inquiry that will lay the facts on the table in an open forum and allow solid recommendations to be brought forward in a way that compels change?

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

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

I can tell you that this situation is something that all of us in the department have taken quite seriously. It's something that is serious; it's involving the loss of life. What I can say is that we've committed to a full, independent investigation by a very qualified individual, which I'm expecting to receive hopefully very soon. I want to see what that report says. I want to see what the recommendations are.

What I can guarantee you is that I take very seriously the care of everybody within our penitentiaries and our institutions across the province, both inmates and the staff that work there.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the statement by the hon. John Haggie, Minister of Health.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I remind the Member not to address one of your colleagues by name. You should use their title.

Thank you.

**MR. CROSBIE:** I apologize. I was going from —

**MR. SPEAKER:** There's an interesting statement. I'll just remind the Member you cannot do indirectly what one cannot do directly.

Thank you.

**MR. CROSBIE:** The Minister of Health who referred to what can be achieved with the plan, vision, determination and partnerships between people and families with lived experience and so forth – the emphasis being on planning and vision.

Again, back to the Minister of Justice, we've asked Ottawa to step up with funding for a new penitentiary and considered going it alone. Will the minister ensure an inquiry is conducted and recommendations tabled before the province locks itself into a new correction structure that may leave major systemic issues unaddressed?

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

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

There are a couple of big parts to that question. The first part, obviously, we're talking about a review and an investigation. What we've commissioned, what we're waiting for and what we've promised is a full, thorough publicized investigation that's independent into these situations. That review is, obviously, very much underway. I'm expecting a report very soon from Ms. Jesso and team.

When it comes to the need for a new facility – I made quite clear when I sat over there, and since I've been over here that we do need a new facility. I can remember when one was promised by a former federal minister back in the '80s. There was actually a sign, I think, put outside Harbour Grace.

The fact is that we do need a new facility. We're continuing to work towards that and what comes out of this report may also contribute to that.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** On August 22, 2017 the Minister of Finance announced a review of the province's tax system would be completed in September of this year; the final report expected

in November for consideration of all recommendations prior to the budget of 2019-20.

Would the minister inform the House on what date in November will the final report be released to the public?

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

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

The committee that we put in place, Mr. Speaker, were completely independent. I did not interfere with the committee and their work, or their deliberations. When they provide the work to me, I will receive it. I anticipate it will be by the end of November. I don't have a specified date from them at this particular point.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

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

Mr. Speaker, we've been advised that 122 employees of Astaldi on site at Muskrat Falls, some not involved with the trade unions, have yet to be paid back pay and other benefits. They made representation to Nalcor and the government. I wonder if the Premier can give us an update on that request.

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

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

Yes, I've been talking to a number of the employees that have not received pay cheques or full pay cheques since they were taken off the site just a few weeks ago.

Mr. Speaker, we've been talking to the CEO, Stan Marshall at Nalcor, and we recognize that these are the non-unionized workers that would've been working there with Astaldi. That's the company, of course, that's been on that site since the beginning.

But we're working on a solution for those employees that deserve to get paid for the work that they've done.

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

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

I understand there was some intervention and address done by the province in regard to the trades union. So is the decision made to intervene here and assist these workers, or is that decision still being contemplated?

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

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

As you know, when situations like Astaldi, the company, finds themselves in, and Nalcor would find themselves in, there are a number of bonds and a number of sureties that are in place to address situations like this.

Just like we did with the unionized workers that were affiliated with TradesNL, we worked out a solution with Nalcor to actually facilitate the payment of those workers. If you remember, there were about 500 workers that were taken off that site, back around the third weekend of October.

These are the non-unionized workers, and now we're working with a solution with Nalcor to actually make sure those workers, they would get the payment that they deserve as well.

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

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

Yesterday, your government voted down a private Member's resolution to eliminate the 1.6 busing policy.

I ask the minister: When is the Liberal government going to take the safety of our students seriously?

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** I remind the Members that I will not tolerate outbursts.

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

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

I thank the Member opposite for the question, and I'd like just to remind the Member opposite that he was actually the one that voted it down. Because there was an amendment put to that urging us to have the 1.6 kilometre, to remove it, and the Members opposite stood and voted against that motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I need to remind the minister that the amendment was to do a review. The time has gone long past to do reviews.

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** We got people who have safety issues in Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure that their children are getting to and from school in a safe manner.

Parents, administrators, school councils and now municipal leaders are all expressing their support to eliminate this outdated policy for the betterment of education and safety of our students.

I ask the minister: Will you commit to changing the policy where safety is a concern?

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

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

I want to assure the Members opposite and I want to assure the people in this province that safety is number one for all of us in this government.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** And I just want to just remind the Members opposite again, when they get up and they grandstand on this issue, they realize that there has been three years – they had 14 years in office they could have made these changes, and all of a sudden now it becomes a huge issue for them and a safety issue, when they had all the opportunity in the world. They had \$25 billion in royalties coming in, and they never saw fit to change it. So now all of a sudden it becomes an interesting problem.

I would suggest to the Members opposite to start looking at their own side and with the decisions they made in the time they were in government.

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

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

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

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

Again, with all due respect, I really don't care when this policy came into being; I don't care who didn't do stuff in the past. I care about what the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are facing right now with students going to and from school in a non-safe environment. That's your responsibility as Minister of Education.

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Has this government even done a cost analysis to determine if indeed this will be an additional financial cost, when we know in rural areas of the province the number of contracted buses are down dramatically?

Don't you think the safety of our children at least deserve that?

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

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

Obviously, the Member is quite clear when he makes a statement. He obviously didn't care to 2015; that's obvious.

The other question I'd like to ask the hon. Member: Did you do a cost analysis? Did you check? Did you see what removing 1.6 kilometre is going to do? Did you have that analysis? Was safety an issue then up to 2016? Obviously, it's a new issue for us.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, we are very serious about what we're doing. That's why when I became Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development back in April one of the first things we did was looking at making some changes and putting in a courtesy stop, which they never even had the thought of doing with regard to picking up kids. So we've implemented that as part of the policy. We now have a stop within the 1.6, which is the best in Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

With all due respect, again I've got to clarify. We are the administration that brought in the courtesy seating to ensure that safety was available.

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Things have changed in the last number of years with the number of cars on the roads, with the changes in the bus allocation and the number of buses that are travelling. So we've gone a long way to ensure that safety. You haven't taken it any further.

I ask the minister: Do you think it's safe to have a child walking on a narrow shoulder on the road in CBS on Route 60, which is the fifth-busiest road in this province?

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

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

So obviously the Member opposite is indicating how good we are doing within this government;

there are increases in cars and the traffic in the last three years. That's significant.

Mr. Speaker, I always want to say, safety for me as the minister responsible is certainly always paramount. We want to make sure that we're providing measures. Now, they might have brought in a courtesy stop, but they never really fully implemented it the way it should have been. That was what we did, Mr. Speaker. We made sure this year – and that's part of the policy yesterday – to ensure to look at how effective putting in one stop within the 1.6, how it's going to provide a service to those who need it. Mr. Speaker, that's part of the analysis we are doing, and we're continuing to do that.

Mr. Speaker, it's important for all of us, all the time, to look at policies that are in place to ensure that we have the best policy ...

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

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.

Four years into your mandate now, can we stop picking and choosing, doing courtesies, and get a program and service that addresses the particular need here about safety?

This year a child from Maddox Cove had to walk an additional 200 metres in the opposite direction to get the school bus. They are walking up hills with no shoulders on the roads in very heavy traffic areas.

Minister, do you think this is appropriate?

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, again, I just want to address the Member opposite.

As a minister, I take all of this very, very seriously, because obviously safety is a top priority for us; a top priority for this

government. And that was one of the issues, Mr. Speaker, I made – I've had considerable discussions with the English School District. Unlike with regard to the original courtesy stop, we have made sure that we do have – there are kids, there are children that are actually within the 1.6, if there are available seats within the buses that's providing that service, within that 1.6, Mr. Speaker, we will pick up students that are within that 1.6. That's why we put an additional stop where it's a safety measure within that 1.6.

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

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

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

Again, with all due respect, that's why we're getting hundreds, if not thousands, of emails and contacts that this is not working, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, you walked Beachy Cove Road with parents when you were the Minister of Transportation and Works: Do you think the road you walked is safe for children walking to school?

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

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

Well, at least I walked the Beachy Cove Road to get a first-hand view of what's happening.

Mr. Speaker, throughout this province we all understand – again, one of the things we want to talk about, this is not political. This is making sure we're providing – one of the stipulations and one of the policies – the Member is well aware of this, Mr. Speaker, he is well aware of it, that within the 1.6 – and it is standard throughout Canada. It's a jurisdictional scan that parents are responsible within the 1.6 to ensure that their children get to school in a safe manner.

Now, that 1.6, is that hard and fast what it should be? Well, you know, if you looked across Canada – in British Columbia, for example, it is four kilometres. In Ontario it's 3.2 kilometres. So, Mr. Speaker, we are one of the better

provinces when it comes to a policy for providing for our children and the safety ...

**MR. SPEAKER:** 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.

I went to school on Spadina Avenue in Toronto, and Beachy Cove Road is no Spadina Avenue, I tell you that much.

The minister will not commit financial support for the English School District to implement an adequate financial monitoring control system.

Will he at least instruct the board to find the necessary money from the \$250 million operating budget they have?

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

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

I don't know where the Member opposite is getting his information that we're not going to instruct the funding. I told him, I think it was yesterday, or one of the days this week, that actually a budgetary process is in place.

One of the things I did say, Mr. Speaker, I did say, it's totally unacceptable when you have an Auditor General that goes in and does a report, a report from 2011 to 2016 – get the dates, 2011, 2016 – very unacceptable, and there were issues there.

When I became minister, and one of the things we did as a government, is made sure that the Auditor General got in there to look at these issues, because there were issues. We addressed those issues. We'll continue to address these issues, and we will make sure that we have programming and we have a safe environment for our students in our schools.

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

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

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

Minister, what role will your department play in ensuring that the proper financial monitoring process is implemented as soon as possible?

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

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

I just want to make the Member opposite aware that we have made significant changes. We have, in fact, asked the Auditor General to go in and take a look to that, and we've asked the Auditor General to take a further look at some of the other areas; but, as you know, Mr. Speaker, under their watch the school boards were consolidated into one school – boards throughout the province for the English School District, and, of course, we have the French school district as well.

Mr. Speaker, it's very important for us to have the checks and balances in place. However we're going to do that, we're going to ensure and instruct – we are going to instruct, there's no doubt about it, Mr. Speaker. We're not going to sit back and let this happen. We are going to instruct and we are going to have the checks and balances in place to ensure that the things that happened between 2011 and 2016 will not happen in 2018.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Your time has expired.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, thank you.

With all due respect, again, they're all great sounding things, but when are you going to make a decision whether or not you're going to fund this process to move forward?

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

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

Again, I'll just continue to give the answer that we are putting checks and balances in place. We are putting the measures in place and we're having these discussions to ensure that we do have, and we will continue to have, the proper checks and balances in place so that the types of things that happened between 2011 and 2016 will not happen in the future.

There are some situations there, Mr. Speaker, that could be fraudulent, and we will make sure that these things don't happen. So we will make sure that the resources are in place to ensure that these checks and balances are there, and we'll continue to monitor to that and we'll continue to work with the school districts to ensure that, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, it's great that you're going to put in checks and balances. Can you share what they are?

We're months into this and we're dealing with hundreds of millions of dollars that could be better used for resources for school busing, for supportive services.

Tell us what your checks and balances are that you've implemented.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development for a quick response, please.

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

Our first response to that, or my first response to that, is having a very serious discussion with the chair of the English School Board, which I've done on many occasions, and having a discussion with the CEO to ensure that the checks and balances are in place, because this –

the practices that were happening were unacceptable, and we needed to have the proper accounting and the proper programming in place, which we will have, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to ensure that these things will not happen again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

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

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

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

\$1.38 billion in new exploration bids for the province's offshore oil and gas industry is pretty significant.

In his 2010 offshore helicopter safety report, Justice Wells said recommendation 29, calling for an independent offshore safety authority, was his most important recommendation. Government's brag that our offshore industry is world-class and that safety is paramount, but the Norwegian Petroleum Safety Authority is a global gold standard for protection of workers.

With a new chapter in deep-water offshore oil exploration starting, I ask the Premier: Will he work with his federal counterparts to create an independent offshore safety authority for the protection of our offshore workers?

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

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

The Member is correct in that we are pleased with the growth and development of our offshore oil and gas industry. We take, on this side of the House, and I'm sure everybody in this Chamber takes safety and environmental concerns very seriously.

As the Member opposite does know, all the recommendations have been implemented. That was a suggestion of the outcome of the report.

We have a separate conservation officer; we have a chief safety officer in the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board. We have to continue to ensure the measures are there to protect workers and to protect our environment.

Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

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

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, but I was speaking about an independent offshore safety authority that was highly recommended by Justice Wells.

Mr. Speaker, oil and gas exploration is reaching farther offshore, requiring workers to fly longer to get back and forth to work. Flying at night is particularly dangerous, with little chance of surviving a crash. Government has introduced new OHS regulations for the offshore industry, but they stopped short of an outright ban on night flights.

I ask the Premier: Will he make a commitment to ensure the current policy banning night flights will be made permanent for the protection of our workers?

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

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

As I said earlier, safety and environmental protection is paramount for our offshore, and we'll continue to make sure that it remains thus.

And with regard to night-time flying, there has been no move, no move at all, to extend night-time flying. As we continue to move through our offshore development, the Member is correct, we will be going farther offshore. It is always something that is paramount and in the minds especially of C-NLOPB, and especially for every Member in this House of Assembly.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Scientists say the number of seabirds has declined drastically with offshore oil production, and that many of these birds are being killed by lights on the decks of oil rigs. The C-NLOPB efforts to make operators reduce bird mortalities are not working.

I ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment: Will his government tell the C-NLOPB to require installation of light deflectors on all rigs to protect against any more seabird fatalities?

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be quite honest, that's not an issue that's been brought to my attention before, so I certainly wouldn't be able to speak to it now or make a commitment like that. That's a commitment that will require consultation with a number of groups and people.

What I can say is that when we talk about wildlife, that's something we all take serious. So what I can endeavour to do, and promise to do, is make sure that this is a topic that does have discussion around our department, with the offshore and with the C-NLOPB.

Thank you.

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

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

I suggest to the minister that he as minister may not have met people like Mr. Bill Montevecchi but they've certainly been around government, so I ask him to introduce himself to him.

For decades, scientists like him have asked for permanent, independent monitors on board oil rigs to check for infractions such as small oil

spills and bird fatalities from lights. Environment Canada has now indicated the need for monitoring on rigs to understand what is happening to species such as Leach's storm petrel.

Will the minister work with the C-NLOPB to establish environmental monitors permanently on board oil rigs, similar to what is done in the fishery?

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

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

The first thing I would say is that obviously if somebody calls me I'll take that meeting, but I haven't been called. I haven't been emailed. I haven't had a letter written to me.

The second thing I would say it that I would caution the Member that we may need to speak to our MPs because this may be something that's actually federal jurisdiction and not provincial jurisdiction. So certainly, we'll do what we can here to protect wildlife and the environment here, but that's not just a provincial endeavour. So I suggest we'll reach out to our federal colleagues as well.

Thank you.

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

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

**MS. MICHAEL:** Will government recognize the need for an independent agency in conjunction with the federal government to protect the environment offshore?

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

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

As I said earlier this government, all the people in this House, and all the people in Newfoundland and Labrador take environmental protection very seriously, and especially in our offshore where we have increased activity. I'm

very pleased to see increased activity and increased concern for the environmental protection.

There is new legislation within the federal government who are changing the environmental protection requirements offshore Newfoundland and Labrador. That bill, C-69, has made its way through the House of Commons. It is quite restricting on the environment and exploration and environment concerns for our offshore Newfoundland and Labrador.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The time for Oral Question has ended.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

#### Notices of Motion

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

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

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting The Protection And Promotion Of Public Health, Bill 37.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

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

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

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting The Reporting Requirements Of Public Bodies, Bill 38.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

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

At a time when the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are dealing with high levels of taxation, increased unemployment rates, increased food bank usage, increased bankruptcies and many are being forced to choose between food, heat and medications, Newfoundland Power and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro are continuing to seek numerous power rate increases through the Public Utilities Board.

Once the Muskrat Falls Project comes online, these rates are predicted to further increase significantly to unmanageable levels for the average citizens of our province. While government has indicated they are working with Nalcor to mitigate rates, they've provided no detailed plan as to how they intend to do so.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to publicly provide all of the potential options for rate mitigation and develop a comprehensive, detailed plan to deal with current and impending power rate increases. This plan is to be provided to the public as soon as possible to allow for scrutiny, feedback and potential suggestions for improvement.

Mr. Speaker, I have about 200 signatures again today. These are coming primarily from the St. John's metro area; CBS, St. Philip's, Mount Pearl and so on. I think the petition is pretty self-explanatory, I've now read it several times, and I'm sure there will be more to come.

I just want to put a little new twist on it today for the information of all Members, and to urge all Members, that currently there is a rate

application process before the Public Utilities Board on behalf of Newfoundland Power. Part of that application is to allow Newfoundland Power to increase their maximum profits from 8.5 per cent to 9.5 per cent return on investment annually.

I think at this point in time where we're in this situation where people are in desperate situations, that's something we definitely can't afford as ratepayers. I'm certainly encouraging everybody out there in the general public, and I encourage all Members of this House, to contact the Public Utilities Board. Anybody can email them, put in a submission and let the people at Newfoundland Power know that we will not tolerate a rate increase at this time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation for a response, please.

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

I know the Minister of Natural Resources has said multiple times in this House that we are taking action, we are working on plans and, as soon as possible, we're doing everything that we can to ensure that we continue to have affordable electricity here in our province.

One important thing that we are certainly doing is attracting new business and investment here, and looking at ways of which we can ensure that we have places of commerce, like new mines that are taking high energy-intensive industries that we've seen with Canada Fluorspar that recently opened, that's creating jobs. When you create new jobs, you have more housing developments.

In the budget, the Finance Minister had highlighted a housing program that was put in place, and we've actually seen improvements in this fiscal year in new housing starts that are taking place. So when we have new homeowners, more energy is being consumed, and these types of things help when it comes to demand and when it comes to the cost of what electricity will be in our province.

Being able to attract that high level of investment, whether it be in the cannabis industry or whether it be in oil and gas or whether it be in manufacturing or technology and other services, this is very important, and that's why our government has taken the approach in *The Way Forward* through all of the sectors, whether it's aquaculture, forestry, agriculture, technology, to ensure that we're placing attention on job creation. Job creation grows the economy and creates jobs and will buffer this process that is put forward.

So I thank the Member for his petition put forward today.

Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Further petitions?

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS proposals to index 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 toward 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 by 2021, with annual adjustment thereafter to reflect provincial inflation.

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

Mr. Speaker, I've stood and presented this petition a number of times. And it's clear, the research has been clear about how an increased minimum wage to \$15 an hour is good for the economy. It's not only just good for workers, it's actually good for the economy.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, our minimum wage at \$11.15 is the third-lowest in the country. Minimum wages in Canada range from \$11 an hour to \$15 an hour, but most of them are higher than \$11.15. Now, Alberta's minimum wage is \$15 an hour. BC's is \$12.65, with a plan to reach \$15 by 2021 – they're going in the right direction. Ontario's is \$14 an hour, but its new Conservative government cancelled the goal of \$15 an hour by 2019. I'm sure many minimum wage workers are very discouraged by that.

A full-time, minimum wage worker makes \$23,192 in Newfoundland and Labrador, which is not much more than the low-income cut-off of \$20,952 for St. John's. So, Mr. Speaker, there is no justice when someone works full-time, often at very hard jobs, and still lives below a poverty line, or just at that poverty line. I don't think this is what we want for our workers. I think we want more for our workers.

Again, we know workers who are on the lower income, they spend all their money locally. They spend all their money in their communities. This would be a just and fair thing to do and makes good economic sense.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development for a response, please.

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

I'll just take a moment to respond to the Member's petition.

We, as a government, certainly recognize that there are people out there that make lower income and they have challenges with day-to-day living. I want to talk about some of the things that we, as a government, have done, Mr. Speaker, for those people; \$65 million we've been putting in place every year since the first budget – \$65 million; an income supplement for low-income people that's reaching 155,000 families in this province; \$56.3 million for a seniors' benefit that's reaching 47,000 families in this province.

Our first budget, 2016, \$250 million for poverty reduction initiatives. We increased that to \$270 million in 2017. Our last budget in 2018, \$280 million and more than 100 poverty reduction initiatives. The most, to my knowledge, ever in the history of any government in this province; \$8.3 million for supportive living; over \$4 million to help low-income people with a Home Energy Savings Program.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that when it comes to assisting low-income people it takes a whole-of-government approach across departments, and that's what we're doing. And also working with our federal government on a number of initiatives. We will continue to do what we can for the people in this province that are on low-income, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

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

WHEREAS many students within our province depend on school busing for transportation to and from school each day; and

WHEREAS there are many parents of school aged children throughout our province who live

inside the Eastern School District's 1.6 kilometre zone, therefore do not qualify for busing; and

WHEREAS a policy cannot override the safety of our children;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to eliminate the 1.6 kilometre policy for all elementary schools in the province and in junior and senior high schools where safety is a primary concern.

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

Mr. Speaker, this issue has taken a lot of debate in the last number of days, and we continue to bring it up here on a daily basis. It's a very important issue, as has been stated and – it could never be overstated.

Outside of the cost factors, outside of the political games, the minister, during Question Period today, alluded to the policy and the politics: Why didn't you do it? Did you do this? That's not where we are. Here and now today, things have changed. Society has changed. It's more than just the safety of children walking roads. It is other safety factors, too, that we don't talk about a lot.

The world has changed a lot. To have small children walking these roads unattended, there are a lot of other safety things out there besides moving vehicles, Mr. Speaker. Without getting into the details, I think most people can connect the dots. There are a lot of dangers out there to our most vulnerable children in society. Do you want them left unattended? Do you want them walking to school on these busy roads with no sidewalks? No. It's more than vehicles. Vehicles is a very safety-oriented issue. There's a lot more involved in today's world than that.

The family supports are not in place. They don't have the uncles and aunts and grandmothers and friends to pick up your child or bring them to school. It's not there. I got a lot of families in my district of single parent families, they're struggling just to keep everything going. They're

trying to work everyday to pay the bills, and they're struggling.

I'm going to give you one example. This is a real example. I had a single mom who lived in Kelligrews, who worked as a nurse. She had to be to work for 7 o'clock in the morning. She was inside the zone by a very slim margin. Do you know what she ended up doing? She sold her home and moved. She had no choice. She was leaving work, going to get her child and coming back to work in a nursing environment. They were allowing it. After a while she realized she couldn't do it anymore. She sold her home.

Those are not small issues, Mr. Speaker. You can play politics with this; these are important issues. It's affecting families. We talk about safety – and safety is, no doubt, a primary concern, but it's the overall family model.

We can make accusations back and forth; at the end of the day, this policy is outdated. It has crossed party lines, we get that. Here and now today, as my colleague for Conception Bay East - Bell Island pointed out, we're concerned about hear and now. It's time for the policy to be changed, and we call upon government to do so now.

Thank you very much.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development for a response, please.

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

I wasn't going to respond today, because I've been responding over the last while. I just sit over here, Mr. Speaker, and I just cannot believe that a Member can get up and say how significant things have changed in three years – Mr. Speaker, three years. I'd like for him to ask his colleagues, who were in Cabinet, that were in Cabinet up until 2016, where they were. Why didn't they make a change? You would not know that the sky has dropped in three years.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, what an ideal opportunity for them to have changed the 1.6 when they were getting \$25 billion in royalties over a 10-year period.

To get up and make these statements, and now, all of a sudden, the sky is falling. We have made changes, unlike what was done on the other side and we have put in courtesy. That was part of the amendment yesterday, to review the courtesy stops to see if they were working. We didn't say we weren't going to be making any changes to 1.6. We said we will review.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's ongoing. It would be not prudent for me not to look at new ways of doing things. It's an ongoing process.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I call Orders of the Day.

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

#### Orders of the Day

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 5, second reading of Bill 32.

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

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

It's my pleasure to stand this afternoon and I move, seconded by Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, that we would make amendments to the *Labour Standards Act*.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 32 entitled, An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act." (Bill 32)

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, I didn't notice that the Member was not present so I'll move, seconded by the Minister of Justice, that we would make amendments to that.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Okay. My apologies. Thank you for that clarification.

The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour to start the debate on second reading, Bill 32.

Thank you.

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

I certainly want to thank the House today for the opportunity to inform you of the amendments to the *Labour Standards Act* that will introduce a new form of leave from work to help employees and their families better deal with the consequences of family violence.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, this is a huge issue that's facing more and more people. As I mentioned earlier this morning, I would like to be in a position to be able to say that we've eradicated all of family violence but, unfortunately, that's not true.

Mr. Speaker, I know that all of my hon. colleagues in this House would agree that this is a very serious issue. This is a very serious issue. And it's important for us, as legislators, to ensure that we address these concerns. As I worked on this particular amendment to this bill, the more and more I looked into it, the more and more I realized that there are people that are facing some very, very unfortunate situations.

Family violence is defined in the *Family Violence Protection Act*. It may include one of the following: assault, an intentional reckless or threatened act or omission that causes bodily harm, or damage to property or causes a reasonable fear of bodily harm or damage to property.

It could include physical confinement; it could include sexual assault, sexual exploitation or sexual molestation or the threat of either;

conduct that causes someone to fear for his or her safety; conduct that causes psychological or emotional harm or a reasonable fear of that harm to the individual or to their child; conduct that controls and exploits and limits an individual's access to financial resources; and depriving people of food or clothing or medical attention, shelter, transportation or other necessities of life.

Statistics Canada family violence profile for 2016, the most recently available data, indicates the total number of victims of police-reported family violence crime in Canada was 336,487; approximately 86,000 were family members of the accused. In our province, Mr. Speaker, the total number of victims of police-reported family violence was approximately 1,200 – I might add, 1,200 too many.

However, as we all know, most incidents go unreported. Research suggests that only about 10 per cent of such incidents are reported to police. According to a federal Department of Justice study, the cost of family violence to Canadian society is approximately \$7.4 billion annually, and this includes an annual economic cost to employers of \$77.8 million annually.

A lot of this is due to absenteeism, lengthy periods of leave, reduced productivity and issues related to workplace safety. Think for a moment, Mr. Speaker, that if you're in the unfortunate situation of having to deal with family violence and there are not proper measures or tools in place to help you through this situation, and you have to face these situations not only within your house, within your home, but now you also have to worry about your employment, up to this point in time. All of this stress and strain on these victims is not necessary. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, family violence is all too common an occurrence and the effects of that violence can be devastating for the survivors and their loved ones.

As noted, studies have shown that there is a cost to family violence and that people who experience family violence report that it negatively affected their work performance. The new family violence leave we are introducing today will help, to a small degree, these individuals and their families, while acknowledging and balancing the ability of employers to meet this obligation.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned this morning in the media centre, this is, I think, a good first step. One of the challenges that I have as minister is that I have to strike a balance. I have to strike a balance between employees and employers. It's not always easy, Mr. Speaker. A lot of times, you put your human hat on, or human experience, there's a tendency you want to sort of go one side, or one way or the other.

So many times, Mr. Speaker, while I'm in this portfolio that I've had to do a check within myself. Part of the check that I've had to do within myself is to check in realizing that I do have to do a balance. I have to create that balance, what I think would be fair to not only employees but employers as well. Do I always get that right? Probably not, Mr. Speaker.

But one of the things I think we all have to realize is that we just cannot sit back and do nothing. I think it's important for us to realize that, as a government, we have to ensure that we are providing – within sometimes the limitations that we have – for those that are impacted by society, by the workplace and by living within your homes, we have to ensure that we are cognizant of the difficulties, and we have to be cognizant of the pain, and the anguish and the agony that these people face.

Mr. Speaker, many of us have probably never experienced that. So when we say that, it becomes very, very difficult, at times, to get into other people's lives. Speaking with many people that are advocates over the years, Mr. Speaker, and speaking to many different women's organizations and many groups, and realize that there are significant challenges in our society. That every single day, men and women are facing these challenges head-on and, in many cases, finding it difficult to do so.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's incumbent upon us, who have the ability to make these changes, to understand that we tried the best we can, as quickly as we can, to minimize and to mitigate some of these concerns. Family violence leave will provide up to 10 days of leave: 3 days of paid leave, 7 days of unpaid leave for individuals, both men and women, experiencing family violence.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, is that the best we can do? Well, as I said, we have to work and strike that balance. In making this decision, I want to really recognize – and, of course, I'm glad to see Members in the gallery today and, particularly, the employers and some of our public employees. Also, of course, the Federation of Labour, and the tremendous amount of work that you have done. I really applaud you because I know we have met on several occasions –

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** – in trying to work through this to get what we would consider to be a first start. I made that very clear this morning, this is a first start, in order for us to be able to examine and to look at what exactly this will do, how will this play itself out. Will the measures that we have there now provide benefits to those that are impacted? Will it create some concerns? Will there be a big uptake? Will there be a minimal uptake? So it gives us some time to be able to get out and to analyze and to really look into how this is going to fit within the measures that we want.

I think, Mr. Speaker, a lot of times we would like to have this or we would like to have that, but sometimes it takes courage. It takes courage for organizations that may want to look at levels up here, and there are other organizations that may want to look at levels down here. It takes courage on behalf of both sides to be able to come somewhere that we can live with this, and this is a good first start. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to applaud all of those that were involved in us having those discussions.

One of the other things, Mr. Speaker, that we put in there as well because we think it's important, is that the leave would be available to an individual that has been employed for a continuous 30-day period. Now, we set that because we understand that there may be people that are changing employment, and they may be changing employment for various reasons. They may be looking at if I change employment, if I change work, things may be different.

We really did not want people that were impacted by family violence to have to work for a full year with an employer to be included in this. Mr. Speaker, we looked at what would

probably be the minimal amount of time with an employer. So we set that as a 30-day period.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of times the impact can be the employee, but we realize that there are others that can be impacted, and not necessarily the employee himself or herself. So in this amendment we have included an employee, we've included their children, or a person for whom the employee is a caregiver who has been subjected to family violence.

The new leave will come into effect on January 1, 2019 and can be used for the following purposes; seek and receive medical attention, counselling and other services from a health professional; seek and receive services provided by a transition house. I must say, Mr. Speaker, our transition houses in this province are doing some fantastic work.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** We want to work closely with our police agencies. We want to work with government and any other organization that provides services to people that are subjected to family violence. We want to give people an opportunity to move their place of residence, to seek and receive legal services or assistance. All of this, Mr. Speaker, can be done without having to worry about whether they'll have a job to go back to.

Imagine facing a family violence or domestic situation and having to deal with that itself and the added stress of wondering whether I'm going to have a job to go back to. We've all heard stories about that.

The new family violence leave builds on and is in addition to some of the other leave we have in place now: the parental and adoption leave, the bereavement leave, the sick and family responsibility leave, compassionate leave, care leave, the unpaid leave for reservists, crime-related child death or disappearance leave, and leave related to critical illness. The amendments that we are discussing today also ensure job protection for employees who avail of this leave.

Mr. Speaker, this government is ensuring that our Labour Standards legislation remains relevant and responsive to the ever-evolving

challenges that are faced in workplaces every single day. When family violence occurs, this amendment ensures that the employee will have leave available to do what needs to be done for themselves and their families. These amendments will help ensure that they will have time that they need.

As I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, my officials have met with a number of businesses, labour, and women's advocacy groups in advance of these amendments being brought forward today. Any time that we amend the Labour Standards legislation, which establishes the minimum terms, Mr. Speaker, get this, the minimum terms, because in many of the situations within the Labour Standards, employers have the ability to grant whatever they want. These are the minimum standards.

Mr. Speaker, these are the minimum terms and conditions of employment in this province, and we must look at it from the perspective of both employers and the employees. We have to balance the needs of workers and the ability of employers to pay, which is particularly important under the current economic conditions.

Our responsibility is twofold. It's to make sure that workers have access and protections that are responsive to their needs while ensuring that the businesses can continue to operate and remain competitive for the benefit of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Providing three paid leave days and seven unpaid leave days strikes this balance.

Our government is sensitive to the needs of victims of family violence. We remain committed to improving the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and of our communities through the introduction of relevant and responsive legislation.

Mr. Speaker, today, for me as minister, is a great day. I am so pleased and so proud to stand in this House and to introduce this bill, to make sure that we are listening. To make sure that we are providing whatever we possibly can for those that are impacted by family violence, that are impacted within their daily lives have the necessary tools, the necessary resources that will help them through the situations they are facing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for those comments, and his staff for the briefing they provided last week on this bill.

It's an important bill, actually, too. When it was introduced and I read it – me and the minister, actually, had a conversation about it last week. It was interesting, because when I read it first, I was – it's a good bill. Obviously, it's a good piece of legislation, but it just came to me, like, why hasn't this been done before.

It's interesting, and it draws you back to the reality of the world we live in with family violence and the way society is. I guess it's always been around. It's that more people talk about it now. It's like the mental health issues, people talk about it.

Family violence is a shame. There was a lot of shame and embarrassment at times and people tended not to want to speak about it. It went undetected, unreported. And as we read in these notes, there's only 10 per cent of it still reported. If you look at the numbers, we're saying there are 1,250 cases reported yearly in Newfoundland – and that's 1,251 and it's only 10 per cent of that. So we're up to 12,000 cases in our province of a half million people. That's quite staggering, actually.

So to bring in this piece of legislation to protect people and individuals – and sometimes we quickly jump that it's just females, but the numbers show that a lot of males also are subject to family violence. It's surprising percentage-wise, the numbers are very close, which is interesting. Again, we sometimes make assumptions that are not always right, because society has changed and we see it in those numbers. And if you really size it up, it shouldn't be that surprising.

When you look at three days paid leave, 10 days in total, it's good. Ideally, you'd like to see no

time be unpaid, but that's understanding of the financial – across the country the pattern is pretty consistent with several provinces, but it's a sad reality of the world we're living in.

As I was reading this bill and the legislation that came with it, I guess I went back in time to a previous life. I know the president of NAPE is upstairs and the Federation of Labour president, and it brings me back in time when I used to be president of a NAPE local for a lot of years and I know a lot of people at NAPE. It brought me back to my time when I was involved as chief shop steward and I was head of the committees. I dealt with a lot of these situations back then. I'm going back probably 15, 20 years back now – now I look at it as time went on, that's what they were, they were family violence issues.

So you're going in to the employer, you were arguing to give this person some leeway because they used X number of sick days too many, or they never got proper approval for their leave or what have you. They were in trouble with the employer. That was my role, and they'd come to me and they were getting called in. They were being reprimanded or what have you, and when I read this it really struck me – and I can name off numerous examples of it.

Now I realize what the problem was. I did not know then and I don't know now, but I'm pretty well sure I know what the reason was. They were suffering from family violence, but they couldn't tell me that. I couldn't tell the employer that because I didn't know that either. Oftentimes, I went in and I tried to navigate through that as best I could, because I knew deep in my soul there was something not right but I just couldn't connect the dots. I didn't know if it was alcohol, I didn't know if it was depression. I didn't know what it was.

This really, to me, when I read a lot of this it really opened my eyes. And probably even before that, I've had flashes of it but this really gives you those times, your pause-and-reflect moments. In retrospect, that's exactly what it was. I think now, you look and turn the clock ahead, in a lot of the labour movement and with employers in general, we're looking at things from a different scope now. Before – I go back in time, back in the years earlier – I mean things

were pretty black and white. There were no grey areas; there was no acceptance.

I remember when the EAP program became a thing. People were directed to go to EAP. Then I'd be looking at people and some of these same people are referenced, and they: I don't have a problem, why would you recommend EAP? Truthfully, I was trying to do something to save their job. I knew if they signed up and they did EAP, maybe we'd get to the root problem, what their issue was. Because I didn't know, even though I had suspicions.

So it just reminds us of how far we've come in those years and where we're to today, to be bringing in a piece of legislation like this to address those concerns, because I guess sometimes we take a lot of things for granted. If we're all fortunate enough to live in a stable, family home and have a family or whatever you've got, have your own stable home, you don't really realize – you can't walk a mile in their shoes. But when you deal with them, and I'm sure there are people in this House that's dealt with them in a previous life, probably as MHAs now, when you sit and you come face to face with those people, and you listen to their concerns, and you look at their faces, it strikes home. It's challenging.

As recently as two, three weeks ago, I had this lady in my office. She cried for the two hours she was there, and it was heart-wrenching. She was suffering from all these same issues. I was doing what we could, as we all tend to do. We'll try to – whatever programs are there to assist, to do what we could to help them and try to make a difference. Again, that's what we all do anyway, but it was really emotional to watch it.

Again, even now, we're doing these things. This bill is great, it's great to see and I'm very pleased with it, but we still got a long ways to go. All these are steps in the right direction, there's no doubt about it, but I still feel that we can do more – all of us – collectively as a society, because we're still missing the boat on a lot of this stuff. That's not pointing fingers, that's the reality we live, and we learn as we go on. As this change comes, there will hopefully be another change next year that we'll say it never occurred to us this year. That's the way

we progress and that's how we make ourselves better.

There's one instance – and it was about a couple of months back. This is another individual that I knew and went through a lot of issues: family violence, drugs. There were a lot of issues. But this employer actually took her under her wing; took her in with all the baggage. And as people say, a lot of people would not want to deal with that.

All of her imperfections, all of issues, and she had lots, but she was looking for help. Everyone was reaching out to her, and took her – and right now today, basically, she's employed by this person, they're helping her, everything they can assist. They contact me and (inaudible). It's a wonderful story, and that's without this legislation. So there are a lot of employers out there that are taking people like that, without any requirements. They're taking them as they are because they believe in them, or they want to help.

We have a lot of good employers in our province. A lot of them don't need this legislation to be supportive of people that are victims of family violence. So this legislation just protects everyone. This gives them rights, the worker, who are suffering from family violence rights, but I'd like to point out – because this should be noted – there are a lot of good people in this province that do a lot of good things for people that are in need, and I know that's one example. I'm sure we can hear lots of different examples.

That one, in particular, really impressed me because this person, as an employer, requires a lot of help. To this day, still requires a lot of help; a lot of time away from work dealing with their issues. Hats off to this person for doing it. I spoke to them personally, and I said: Good on you, because not everyone would do that. It's quite admirable to that for that person.

Again, I can say we can multiply that by who knows how many, so there are a lot of good employers in our province that help the people that are in need. It's not only young; there are a lot of older people suffering through this. Children are included in this; they're vulnerable. If you're a victim of family violence, it's

probably one of the more vulnerable times you'll ever be in your life.

Now, close to home, I dealt with it – not personally, in my immediate family, but pretty close. Luckily enough, this person were employed by a big, private corporation. And even that became challenging. At times, there were HR issues because of so much time missed from work. There were quite serious family violence issues. At the end of the day, it did work out, but there were a lot of tight times there that it was questionable, how things were going to work out. As it turned out, things did work out, but I think back then it was only because it was the corporation that she was working for that saved it.

Now this person happened to be really close to me, so I know quite personally. But it's an understanding, as a society, where we've come and I think that's the point I'm trying to make when I speak like this. This legislation, I could get up in five minutes, as the minister just outlined, it's a great piece of legislation. We have no issues with this legislation, but I think the bigger issue is there are still a lot of problems in our society.

We're bringing in this legislation because we still have a lot of problems. As elected officials in this House, I think it's noteworthy that maybe we all should reflect on that and talk about it, because I don't know what we can do individually to correct this. I don't have the answers.

I do know that we all try to provide supports whether it's our workplace, our private lives, what have you, anyone that you know that's a victim, you do what you can. I think that's humanity, that's civility and that's what we do. There are a lot of good people in this province, outside of employers, a lot of good people to help people through these very difficult times. To know that you've got an employer who's going to support you when you're going through this, it's a good thing. It is a really good thing.

We have a lot of the EAP, Employee Assistance Programs, out there that provide that service to a lot of people. But I think the thing is we've got to get past – when I say mental health, because I've got a passion on that as well, it's the stigma.

It's the stigma. It's the shame of saying you have problems. It's the shame to say you're a sufferer of family violence. There's no difference then when I look at mental health or any other addiction out there – and we all know them. I got people I can name off, they had every issue – I'm listing off every one of them. And the biggest issue they face is shame, coming forward and telling they have a problem.

Telling your employer you're a victim of family violence – think about that. That's not an easy thing to do. You go to work – and everyone has dignity. They want to keep their dignity. They want to keep their confidence. They want to feel good about themselves. They feel, as a person, they're losing that by coming forward. That's a really sad statement but, unfortunately, that's the way a lot of those people feel, that are in that situation. That's sad, but maybe it's something incumbent upon us as society to support those people; to make it not so hard to do; to open the door to make them feel more comfortable in doing that.

It's sad to say that we accept that that's a part of our society but unfortunately it is. We got to do better to correct it in the future; we got to do better every day to correct it. I don't have those answers, as I said, Mr. Speaker, but I think that that is probably where – we're bringing in this legislation, and again, like I said, in an ideal world we wouldn't have to but where're here, and that's where we're to right now.

I believe that here and now you deal with the issues head-on, and this is an issue, a very serious issue, among the other issues I just listed. What's the answer to it? I don't know. This is a good start, there's no doubt, but I think we need to even look deeper. I know there are great programs. This one here, we go the mental health and addictions, the All-Party Committee came out with great recommendations but maybe we need to branch off and deal with societal problems.

Is it to do with our finances? Is it to do with people's livelihoods? Is the minimum wage too low? I know my colleagues in the Third Party would love for me to say that. Is that the problem? Is it social problems? Is it economic? What is the issue? What is the root problem? What's causing this? Is there too much drugs on

the street? Is there easy access? What is the answer? I don't know, but I think the more we talk about, discuss it and (inaudible), because I'm sure everyone, when I say that, you'll think to yourself what is the answer.

You'll go home and you'll read about it. You'll hear about it. Everyone can name a dozen stories in their own towns and their own communities; tragic stories of family violence, of murder-suicide. Unfortunately, we've all witnessed that. I watched it on the news last evening, I believe. It was on the Northern Peninsula – I might be wrong on that but it happened in a clinic, the shooting-suicide in a little, local clinic on the Northern Peninsula.

I was watching that this morning and I was thinking to myself – I thought this bill was coming up today and I'd have to speak to it, and when I was watching I said it was kind of ironic. That is a prime case of family violence. This lady went to work. Her partner came in, murdered her and shot himself in front of a co-worker. That's in our world. I re-listened to her interview and ironically it was a week or two later, in my own district, down in Manuels, it happened at a medical clinic there.

That brings it home as well because I know that was a very terrifying time for people, residents and me included. This person was on the loose. There was a lot of pandemonium and it was shock and awe that your own town – even though CBS is a large community it still feels – I've lived there all my life. I still think that I know everyone who lives on my street, which I don't. I like to think that, but I don't. I used to be able to name everyone on the street. I can't do it no more. But, in saying that, that don't leave you. You feel you're part of that. That's part of who you are.

I hit the crest to Manuels hill and I go down to Manuels lights, I'm there. I know my friend from Baie Verte - Green Bay, he travels up there quite a bit because he has family there, so he knows what I'm talking about. When you hit there, I'm home. I feel safe. I do, I really feel safe. I feel like you could sleep on the side of the road, but you can't. That's the sad reality.

When those things happen – I know the incident that happened down in Manuels at the medical

clinic that time, that shook our community. We had another couple of incidents after, they weren't related but they were pretty public events. It's a real eye opener, but that's – again, I come back, that's the society we're living in.

We can think in our communities – and we have a lot of rural Members in this House. Across the way I look at a lot of them, and everyone thinks the same way that I think. It's the coming of age of every community, but it's the coming of age of us as a society. These are problems we have to deal with head on and, again, I'd love to have the answers.

This legislation, no doubt, hats off to government for bringing it in, and it's addressing one part of the bigger problem. There's a lot more work to be done by all Members in this House, by people in society, by all leaders, whether they be union leaders, any leaders, community leaders, society in general, all of us got a job to do. We have to protect our most vulnerable people, whether they're children, whether they're victims of family violence, addictions, you name it. They're vulnerable. They need help; they need intervention. That's what we have to do.

We come in here and we debate a lot of legislation. We take our place and we stand and we tell stories, and we try to perfect change. But at the end of the day, we're trying to talk about issues that – I'll get up and I'll tell you personal stories, and some of the personal stories are very, very close to me. I think everyone in this House could get up and tell the same story. It's the matter that I'm real, and I know every other Member in this House is real, and all these stories are real.

This is a great step, a step in the right direction, but I think we can still do more and I encourage this House to do what we can. I applaud government for bringing in this legislation. It's a step in the right direction, and I look forward to more good things to come down the road.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I certainly want to applaud the Member for Conception Bay South. He spoke passionately and well to this very issue, and I agree with him. This is not one of us, not government, it's not community, it's all of us that have to address this concern in society.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to stand today to speak to this *Labour Standards Act* and the changes and the amendments "... to establish a category of leave for employees where an employee or a person to whom an employee is a parent or caregiver has been subjected to family violence."

I think, Mr. Speaker, this is a very important change that we are making here today and I applaud the minister responsible, and I applaud all of us in this House for recognizing and working together to make these changes possible.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to give the definition of family violence, because I was asked this question earlier today and I want to make sure that people understand what we're talking about when we talk about family violence.

So it's defined in the *Family Violence Protection Act* and it includes one of the following issues: assault; an intentional, reckless or threatened act or omission that causes bodily harm or damage to property; or causes reasonable fear of bodily harm or damage to property; physical confinement; sexual assault, sexual exploitation or sexual molestation; conduct that causes someone to fear for his or her safety; conduct that causes psychological or emotional harm or reasonable fear of that harm to an individual or their child; conduct that controls, exploits or limits an individual's access to financial resources; and the deprivation of food, clothing, medical attention, shelter, transportation or other necessities of life.

Mr. Speaker, I defined that so that people understand the depth and breadth of what we are talking about today. I will say this, and I've said this repeatedly because I think we as a society need to almost make it our mantra: violence of any kind, at any time, in any place, is unacceptable – unacceptable. And as a society

we have to insist on zero tolerance of this terrible behaviour.

Violence is a serious concern; and, as such, government is responding with measures that target this issue from all fronts. Through the Women's Policy Office, we provide support to community organizations and at the same time work within government to make progress on our own policies and programs.

In the last year, our government has made significant changes to legislation, regulations and policy that will positively work towards ending violence against women and girls. We have changed the definition of family violence in the *Family Violence Protection Act* to include psychological, emotional or financial harm.

We made changes to the Residential Tenancies Act to better serve victims of domestic violence, and we introduced a new Harassment-Free Workplace Policy for those working in the public service. And, as well, the changes to the Schools Act passed in the House in the spring sitting that will ensure that the act better meets the needs of victims of violence throughout the province, including victims of sexual violence, by addressing the provision of alternate delivery of instruction where a student's presence will be detrimental to the well-being of others. Soon, we will be debating new legislation to help victims of revenge pornography and the non-consensual distribution of intimate images.

As well, we've established a Minister's Committee on Violence Against Women and Girls, co-chaired by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and President of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women. I think that committee is made up of a number of community partners involved in the very serious issue of violence and violence prevention, and I thank them for their deliberations and work. They're really helping to shape and define what we can do as a government, what we should be doing as a government, and what we should be doing as a community.

I also am pleased to chair a committee of my ministerial colleagues to advance issues relating to ending violence and advancing women and girls. We meet regularly, Mr. Speaker, when the House is in session, to ensure the advancement

of legislation, to ensure the advancement of policy change, and I thank – there are, I think, seven members of that ministerial committee, and there are only 12 of us. So the majority of Cabinet sit at that table, and we look each other in the eye and say: What can we do? What can we do in our ministries? What can we do in our communities to make it safer, better and violence free?

Further, we are in the process now, as a government, of implementing a mental health and addictions plan, and I honour my colleague who gave us an update today. It's incredible, with focused effort, what we've been able to achieve in the improvement of mental health and addictions.

We also have *The Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes*, and both of these initiatives work towards addressing the root causes of violence.

The Violence Prevention Initiative Action Plan: *Working Together for Violence-Free Communities*, is a plan that we, as government, have been implementing. It's 96 per cent underway – under implementation.

Over the past three years, government has undertaken a number of initiatives through that plan. Including support for culturally-responsible approaches to violence prevention in Indigenous communities, such as those funded through the Indigenous Violence Prevention Grants Program. And working together for violence-free communities is a multi-departmental, community-government partnership – multi-departmental.

Mr. Speaker, I just talked to you about the ministerial committee that we all get together. There are seven ministries that are working diligently on this very issue and talking to one another of how we're going to improve things. In order to implement the shared actions outlined in the plan, the Women's Policy Office works with its partners, including departments, agencies and community organizations. Many of the actions outlined in the plan are ongoing programs and initiatives which continue as a means to reduce, eliminate and prevent violence in Newfoundland and Labrador, and we continue

to work with our partners to implement ongoing and remaining action items.

In the coming months, we'll be working with stakeholders and partners to hear their perspectives on violence prevention and the needs of their community. We are updating the plan, Mr. Speaker. We will have consultations in our community. We will ensure that the people of the province are involved, communities in the province, the police departments, the community support agencies are involved in what our plan will be to continue to address this very serious issue.

But the changes announced today, up to three days of paid leave and seven days of unpaid leave for individuals experiencing family violence, is an important step as we work toward ending domestic violence in our communities. This leave is available to all employees, both women and men, who have been employed for more than 30 days. It will allow them time for medical attention, counselling or other services from a health professional, time to find and receive services from organizations that assist those affected by family violence, and time for legal services. This leave applies for an employee, their child or a person for whom the employee is a caregiver who has been subjected to family violence.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to say that there are employer responsibilities outlined in the legislation. An employer must ensure the confidentiality of all information related to any leaves under the *Labour Standards Act*. I think that's important because, often – and my colleague opposite made this comment earlier – it's very hard for people to come forward, oftentimes, to talk about family violence, to say that they are experiencing it, that there's trouble, that they are either being sometimes physically abused, sometimes mentally abused. It's very, very difficult for people to come forward.

I want to tell people who are listening, tell the people of the province, I know the minister responsible for this legislation has done so as well, that there is a confidentiality requirement here. So you could come forward to speak to your employer, to ask for this leave for whatever requirements that you have. Some people may have to leave their home, some people need to

seek medical attention and some people need to see their lawyer, but that is confidential. If you need to seek this leave, if you need to have that leave, that it is available to you now through this legislation.

I'd certainly like to thank my colleague, the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, for the work he's done on these amendments. I know that he has worked very hard. He's very passionate about this issue. He's very dedicated and committed. I know that when we have meetings he talks about all the things that his department is working on, and I thank him for what he's done. I certainly want to, again, recognize other ministers who are doing other pieces of work to ensure violence-free communities.

I'd like to recognize – and I'm very, very pleased that Mary Shortall, president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, is here today. They are steadfast in their work on this issue. They support this legislation, I understand; but, most importantly, we work very well as community partners. I call us community partners, but we work very well together.

Ms. Shortall came to a number of ministers earlier this year. We talked about a number of changes that were required. I'm pleased to report to this House that this is 75 per cent complete and we are anticipating that in the very near future we'll have addressed those issues. By working together and improving things together, all of us in the community are better for it. I thank them for their efforts, I thank for their advice, I thank them for their encouragement, and I ask them to continue their efforts. I ask them to continue to be great advocates in our community and I ask them to continue to work jointly with all of us in our community, not just government, all of us in our community to make this a better place.

Wouldn't it be nice, Mr. Speaker, if at one point in the very near future that we have addressed the systemic issues of violence, that we've addressed that issue and we don't have to put in safeguards and supports for people who are experiencing it? But being a realist, maybe we won't get there just yet. So supporting and helping is very, very important. Putting the

safeguards like we are doing through this legislation, putting in the supports for people that are experiencing it are very, very important.

I also want to say that there are, in our communities, great supports. The shelters that are available, the Transition Houses, the supports through the Status of Women's organizations, the Violence Prevention Initiatives in communities and the police, the RNC and the RCMP, are all working towards ending violence.

But until we can actually end it, Mr. Speaker, let us all embrace and ensure that we have the supports there for those that are experiencing it, and let us be there to help them escape the violence that they may be experiencing so they can go on to experience better lives themselves. That, in itself, would help the systemic issues as move forward.

Our government will continue to work with partners in communities to address violence and abuse. I think today is a big step forward. I look forward to deliberations over the next very short period of time and I look forward to continuing to work with the Federation of Labour on this very important matter and look forward to working with others in the community because all of us together can address this.

I often reflect on how much – and I said this to others recently. Safety in our workplaces was something that needed to be addressed and now we have safety moments and there's a great recognition for it. Well, I think there's a great recognition to end violence in our communities and to readily support those that experience violence and to try and work our way to a better place.

I hope that all of us as we think and reflect upon this today – and I think most will agree this is a great step forward – a great step forward. It's not the last step; it's one of the many, many steps that we have to make. But if we can make the changes that we need, we will all be the better off for it.

Again, thank you to the minister for bringing this forward. Thank you to the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour for their help. Thank you to the community supports that

are out there and let us all continue to focus on this very important matter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I'm happy to stand and speak to Bill 32, an amendment to the *Labour Standards Act*. This is good news, what's being brought in to the House is good news and it's certainly a step in the right direction. Mr. Speaker, as we know, many of us know here in this House that change does not come often from – it's not started often within this House.

As a matter of fact, it often starts outside of this House by activists, by people who are experts in a certain area. That's often where significant change starts. It's the work that's being done by activists, by people who are passionate about an issue that then pushes government to do the right thing, and today is a clear example of that.

I would like to congratulate Mary Shortall, president of the Federation of Labour, and all her affiliates – her union affiliates, labour affiliates – who worked so hard on presenting to government why this is important. Because, oftentimes, it takes those who are working on the outside, it often takes them convincing government why something is important, why a change is important, and they did it in such a comprehensive and clear manner.

And then PANSOW, which is the Provincial Action Network on the Status of Women, and in particular as well, Jenny Wright and the St. John's Status of Women Council, and a number of anti-violence activist groups who have been involved in a committee, in a multi-member committee, who have worked so diligently with expertise, with commitment, with passion, and also with compassion to get us to this date today.

Mr. Speaker, I've been a feminist activist for a very, very long time. Thirty-eight years ago, I worked with the St. John's Status of Women

Council. At the time, it was called the Newfoundland and Labrador Status of Women Council. I worked helping to establish our first transition house. I actually worked with Iris Kirby, who was a social worker with secretary of state, with the federal department of secretary of state at the time. I had the privilege of working in the Women's Centre, and it was at a time when – now, we can't turn on a TV or turn on a radio or open a newspaper without seeing issues around violence against women and girls. But, at that time, it wasn't out there on the public agenda.

I can remember giving training workshops to police, to nurses, to other medical professions, to service groups, talking about the issue of domestic violence, and it was at a time when there was so much denial that this was going on. And we raised dialogue, but not only did we raise dialogue because we had to change minds, we had to change hearts and we had to change legislation. And sometimes – sometimes – the reason that legislation is so important is particularly when hearts and minds are not changed, at least then we have protection through legislation.

I remember the first transition house that we started, and it was on Garrison Hill and it was simply called Transition House. I can remember, I was working doing a project at the Health Sciences Centre in emergency for the identification and treatment of battered women – because that's the term we used then – who would come into the emergency department. Oftentimes what would happen is that a woman would come in either after ODing on medication or whatever she could get her hands on, or come in and say that she had fallen down the stairs or that she had bumped into a door. So she would be treated and then let go. Nobody would say: Are you okay? Is anything happening at home? Is anybody hurting you?

So I designed this protocol and what would happen is that if any woman came into the emergency with unexplained injuries or as an overdose, or if she'd said she'd fallen down the stairs or bumped into a door, I would be called in. I would go and I would visit the woman once she was out of danger in terms of her own physical health, once after she got that medical treatment. I would just introduce myself and I

would just chat with the woman and then I would just very gently and in a respectful manner ask if everything was okay at home. Was anybody hurting her?

I remember the first time I was called into the emergency room, Mr. Speaker, and it was a woman who was in her sixties, and she'd come a few times after having overdosed. When I asked her, she started to cry. And she'd never ever told anybody. I think she had told her parish priest at one point and he said you have to make sure you don't do anything that makes your husband beat you, be good to him, keep the house clean, make sure his meals are made and on the table. She'd been putting up with this for years, but had nowhere to go.

So our Transition House at the time was not quite a week before it was going to be officially opened. We had it all ready, it was furnished, but we were going to have the grand opening. I contacted the committee and I said, this woman – I'll say her name was Theresa – I said: Theresa, finally, is ready to leave and she has nowhere to go. Can we take her, even though we're not officially opened? And the committee said yes. I explained to Theresa that in about a week we would have the grand opening and there'd be media there and a lot of people. I said: On the day of the grand opening, we'll bring you to someone else's house so you can be safe and you can have your privacy.

When it came to the grand opening, she decided she wanted to stay, and that she wanted to speak to the media because this was the first time she'd ever got help. She got up and she spoke. She was this frail, tiny woman. She said to the media: I want to thank the women here of the transmission house. I thought, how fabulous is that? It was a misspeak but, really, for the first time in her life, she was able to change gears. And for the first time in this province, we were able to offer women a vehicle that would help them out of violent situations. They were able to change gears.

I often think about that, Mr. Speaker, the transmission house. This is what we're talking about here this afternoon, about changing gears on some of our legislation and making things better. We've come so far. That was 38 years ago. We've come so far that there isn't a denial

on a societal level that women and children experience violence, that a lot of women and children, and predominantly –predominantly – women and children experience violence in the home.

We're talking about gender-based violence. It's different between two adults who have equal power who might get into an argument; that's different. This gender-based violence is a different dynamic. It's about a power dynamic. It's about control. It's about humiliation. It's about intimidation. It's about cutting someone off from their family and their friends. It is very deliberate and there's a pattern. We know that because the research is being done for 40 years, Mr. Speaker, on this particular phenomenon.

So, we have women where the courage is about leaving a violent situation. It's very complex to leave, particularly if children are involved. A woman may have paid employment outside the house, but she may not have a whole lot of pay. She may be working in a minimum wage job. We know that a combined salary of two parents, or two partners, is much better than a single salary.

Oftentimes women stay, and they stay longer because they're concerned about if they leave, they know they will be putting their children into poverty. If they leave, they know they may have to leave the home and take their children with them; thereby, taking their children away from where they go to school, or taking their children away from their friends. She knows it might mean not being able to take the family pet that the children love, so she stays and she puts up with the violence. She puts up with the daily humiliations; she puts up with the intimidations because of her children. Also, because she may have been so intimidated and so beaten down over the years. Again, this is a cyclical thing, Mr. Speaker, that is unrelenting.

It's so important that if we, as a society, have a commitment to intervene in this vicious cycle and to acknowledge it as gender-based violence, that we have to do whatever we can with our policies, with our services, with our legislation to – if we're talking about breaking the cycle of violence, if we're talking about a commitment to victims of domestic violence, we have to do whatever we can to help break that cycle. To

help women have a sense, once again, of empowerment, of control over their lives, of the ability to make a decision, because it's not easy. It's not simply a matter of picking up and leaving. It's not simply that at all, Mr. Speaker.

So I'm totally supportive of this legislation. I think it is very important, and I say bravo to those who have taken leadership on it. I say bravo, as well, to the government, to the minister who is responsible for labour standards, and for the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. I say bravo to them for being willing to hear and to learn from the activists that are up in the gallery today; women's activists and the anti-violence activists all over the province. Bravo to government for listening and to learning from them and to then work in partnership with them.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation is good. It's almost there. It's not quite there, Mr. Speaker, because we know it could have been better, and that's what I hope we'll be able to talk about more. I'm not going to talk about the statistics because a number of Members have done that and we know they're dire.

Forty years ago when we were talking about this, we thought if we raised dialogue and worked together that this wouldn't happen anymore. It's not the case. It continues to happen, but we have to give whatever resources we have, whatever policy, whatever legislation to help. And employers are part of the solutions as well, to help victims of domestic violence.

Again, it's not about taking care of women. It's about facilitating a woman to have what she needs in order to make the decision to leave; to have what she needs in order to be able to make the decision to protect her children and to protect herself. It's about empowering women and empowering them to be able to make the choices they want to make and to help facilitate that, and that's what this legislation is about. We all are responsible for that, all of us, because as a society we say we cannot tolerate this.

We've seen some changes over the past while. Again, those changes really have been led by activists in the women's community, in the anti-violence community and, particularly, in labour. Also, I believe many Members in this House, we

understand the dynamics, we understand what happens in domestic violence and we understand what our role is in order to be part of the solutions.

I'm concerned about the number of days that are paid days. One of the things – often people will talk about: well, what if women abuse this? What if they really – so what government is proposing is there are three days of paid leave and there are seven days of unpaid leave. So that means if a woman – and this leave is so that a woman, if she needs to go to a lawyer or if she needs to go see her children's school, that she's able to do that. That she's not going to be docked pay, because she has a lot of challenges ahead of her.

She has an enormous number of challenges ahead of her. She may have to find a new place to live. She may have to find a place for the family pet. She may have to speak to teachers. She may have to speak to doctors. She may have to go to a counsellor that will help her be able to really, truly assess her options. She may have to take her children to counsellors. So there's a lot that has to happen, and none of it is easy.

Often it becomes even more complicated, because if she's had to leave her home and take her children and perhaps go to the Iris Kirby House, she may be far away from her place of work. She may be far away from her children's school. So her children may not be on their bus route anymore. And to get anywhere – we heard from the executive director of the Iris Kirby House today speaking to the media, and she said if people have to take a bus from the Iris Kirby House, they have to take a bus up to the Village Mall and then catch a bus to anywhere else where they're going. So it takes more time. Everything's just a little bit more difficult, and these people are in crisis.

This is about ensuring that a woman and her children will be able to get back on their feet again, that they will be safe and that they will be able to continue their lives. Now for some women who have perhaps higher-paying jobs, or their families are not economically challenged, three days of paid work for leave to do the things they need to do may not be a hardship, but for marginalized women, for women who are earning minimum wage, women who are in

precarious jobs, women who are part-time workers, particularly women in Indigenous communities who are even that much more disadvantaged economically, it's a hardship.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think what we need to look at is, let's look at what's happening in other jurisdictions across the country, and we'll be able to look at that in Committee. We'll be able to look at, really, what is the scale of different offerings in different parts of the country? And we in Newfoundland and Labrador, we don't have to do the lowest one. We don't have to be satisfied with that.

A number of provinces give five days of paid leave and five days of unpaid leave. Again, it's complex. And there are some folks who are saying, well, that might be unreasonable, what if a woman takes more than she needs. But research has shown, particularly in the UK where they have had this kind of leave, that women are not going to take advantage. Women will use what they need in order, again, to get themselves up on their feet, to get their children established, and get them established.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue that I think is really important is the issue of it being intermittent. For instance, if a woman is going to see her lawyer and she only needs two hours of the day, that that not be a full day taken off. That hopefully the employers will see that as two hours out of the work day and that she can return to work that day.

So those are issues that really need to be looked at. The other issues are just the culmination of all the different services and social programs that we have to ensure that they are working together, to make it as much possible for women again to be empowered to get their lives back on track and the lives of their children. And I believe, Mr. Speaker –

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

**MS. ROGERS:** – that we can do this a little bit better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

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

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

Often when we stand, we say we're pleased to speak to a certain bill and I wondered if I should say I'm pleased to speak a certain bill, but yes, I am pleased to be part of a government that have recognized this as a tremendous need and we're bringing it in.

I listened closely to the Member opposite and she did make some very good points. She made reference to the fact are we there yet, where we need to be. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, if you wait until you get everything in order that you'll be waiting for, you have to start somewhere. So I think that's important for us to notice today.

Bill 32, An Act to Amend the Labour Standards Act, establishes a category of leave for employees where an employee or a person to whom an employee is a parent or caregiver has been subjected to family violence. So as my colleague, the minister, said earlier, the legislation will allow for 10 days of leave annually: three days paid, seven days unpaid.

Mr. Speaker, often – three years at least, now – when I've spoken over at the Health Sciences Centre for their grieving with loss through the holidays event, I often say when I walk in to a packed lecture theatre, I'm very sorry that you've obviously had a loss that has brought you here, but I am happy that you have a place to come for support. And that's a little bit like this. I'm very sorry for any male or female that will need to avail of this. But I am happy that the minister has moved forward and that we will put provisions in place so that no matter what an individual is going through, the stress of, will I have a job to go to tomorrow, is not something that they will have to deal with. Do I have to get up in the morning – and those are very difficult things to talk about – and cover bruises in makeup and push on because I have to have a pay cheque, I have to have an income? That won't be something now that will be added to them.

Mr. Speaker, it's so funny; I went back to my office last night and I turned on the supper news, like I often do, and what should be on the news was this Lori Chaffey talking about her colleague who had lost her life in the workplace, extremely sobering, and my notes for Bill 32 today was sitting on my desk and I just stopped what I was doing and I watched.

I hope one day and every time I go to a vigil and the names are read aloud of those women who lost their lives, every time I go, every year I hope that one day we will live in a society where we won't be talking about violence. Just since Halloween on two occasions – actually on Halloween, I sat down with 25 single moms; lots of things going on in their lives. Some of the stories they told me, on one hand your heart bleeds for them but, on the other hand, you go home yourself and you think we have problems. We have no problems, Mr. Speaker. We have a lot to be thankful for. What some of these women power through and what they do to protect their children and to maintain that job, Mr. Speaker. There is a tremendous need to bring in this legislation and I'm pleased that we're moving forward with it, Mr. Speaker.

What we each have going on at home, there's a spectrum, Mr. Speaker, of experiences, of lives being lived and struggles people are trying to cope with. It can be hard to leave it all at home and sometimes you take it to work, Mr. Speaker. We all get tired sometimes at work. Can you imagine those people who are carrying that extra burden, some that are living in violent homes coping with whatever stage in the cycle of violence they happen to be with at that moment, walking on eggshells, or the aftermath of a violent episode or maybe in the so-called honeymoon period?

We do know, Mr. Speaker, there are lot of stories, there are lots of research that family violence has devastating impacts on women and children, as they tend to be the victims in those situations. We could talk about aside from the physical harm done to the women and children, the emotional impacts that are extensive.

The children, Mr. Speaker, those single women that I met with talked about the impacts on their children. How sometimes their children are taking medication because of things they've

been exposed to. And when you throw into that these women are trying to work and maintain a job, and going to work sometimes maybe after a very difficult evening or a difficult episode. I can only hope this piece of legislation will make that a little bit easier for them, so that – whether they take a day now and a day next month, or whether they need to take three or four days together. Those flexibilities will be there, Mr. Speaker, for those women who are victims of domestic violence.

Mr. Speaker, many of these women that we're talking about, they leave their homes each day and they head to work, just like the rest of us. They head into work, but they carry with them that trauma and that anxiety of what they will face at the end of their work day when they go home.

I am beyond blessed, raised in a large family by my grandparents – 12 of us, and sometimes a dozen more. But stories I've heard last week, sitting down with ladies who run a transition house here in St. John's and some of the things they work with. Women that leave these circumstances and tend to go back. I think the average, the executive director told me, was five times they leave and go back before they have the confidence. Maybe before finances are in order, before they actually find the courage to leave permanently, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to say that I met with one transition house, but today we have 11 of those transition houses in our province. We provide over \$8 million to support that very critical work, Mr. Speaker.

During my meeting this week, with this particular – the house that I met with, the lady talked about, sometimes a woman will leave five times before actually leaving for good. It's not uncommon for us to hear: Why won't she just leave? Well, there are lots of reasons. There's poverty. There's lack of confidence and self-esteem that they can make it on their own. All the things I just referenced.

Seeing the Orders of the Day, Mr. Speaker, I did have a number of other things that I wanted to talk about. Most women that we know of are killed, are killed by someone they know; usually their partner. We noted separation is the most

dangerous time for a woman in an abusive relationship. So lots of sad stories out there that we all, sadly, are aware of.

I want to acknowledge the minister for bringing forward this very important piece of legislation. I want to acknowledge people that are here today and for the very important role they played in advocating for this in recognizing that we all don't get up and go to work and return to safe homes in the evening. For those of us who don't, we need to ensure that worrying about your job is not one of the things on that long list.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, I will adjourn debate on Bill 32.

Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I will move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that the House do now adjourn.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is 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, Tuesday, at 1:30 o'clock.

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