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Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): Admit strangers.

Order, please!

I would like to rule now on several points of order which arose on Thursday, March 5, 2020.

The point of order raised by the Member for St. John's West: The Leader of the Third Party stood in this House yesterday to acknowledge that she had quoted from an erroneous information in a news story and, by consent, tabled that information. I find the Leader of the Third Party has corrected the record and there is no point of order on this matter.

Two points of order raised by the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation: The first point of order related to what the minister termed inaccurate information raised in Question Period by the Member for Terra Nova. Inaccurate information is not a question of order. I note that Members have an opportunity to correct information they deem inaccurate during debate. Therefore, I'm finding no point of order.

The second point of order raised by the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation alleged that the Member for Terra Nova had accused him of lying. I have reviewed the *Hansard* on this matter, and note that the reference in question related to private entities and not the Member. I find there is no point of order on this.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will hear Members' statements from the hon. Members for the District of Exploits, the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, Mount Pearl - Southlands, Conception Bay South and Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I stand in the House of Assembly to recognize a business in my district, Morgan Printing of Bishop's Falls, who recently celebrated 90 years in business.

In 1929, Walter and Ruth Morgan established a printing company in Bishop's Falls and with determination made a living for their family – little did they know that their family business would endure for four generations in the same community.

Mr. Speaker, the business is owned by Leo and Carolyn Morgan of Bishop's Falls and provides employment to a staff of seven to 10 people. Morgan Printing presently provides printing products to organizations, companies and individuals throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members in the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Leo and Carolyn Morgan of Morgan Printing on 90 years of business.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize two Special Olympians from my district who I know very well and are very fine young men – Brandon Park from McIver's and Philip Beales of Curling, members of Team Newfoundland and Labrador who competed in the 2020 Special Olympics Canada Winter Games in Thunder Bay.

Both Brandon and Philip have been involved with Special Olympics for over seven years.

Brandon started speed skating two years before the 2016 Special Olympics Canada Games. That year he brought home one gold and three silver medals in the four events he skated. This year, as the only speed skater on Team Newfoundland, Brandon brought home another three medals, one gold and two silver.

This was Philip's second time competing in the Special Olympics Canada Games and won gold in the 200 metre snowshoe race. As Philip recently said in an interview: It doesn't matter who wins, I'm not worried about winning or losing. His goal is to do his best and have fun.

Brandon and Philip's sportsmanship, hard work and dedication to their sport is an inspiration to us all and I ask all Members to join me in congratulating them on their accomplishments and wish them continued success in the future.

Great job guys!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my privilege to stand in this hon. House to recognize an amazing display of talent by some of the finest young performers our province has to offer. O'Donel High School's production of *The Wedding Singer* was a treat for all ages and combined the arts of acting, singing, dancing, comedy as well as a tremendous display of musical accompaniment by these amazing young people and their support cast.

That is not to mention the artistic abilities and other associated talents displayed by those behind the scenes, whether that be in costume design, set and construction, or other related tasks required to make this production the great success that it was. Of course a production of this magnitude and quality doesn't just happen. It requires the hard work and dedication of many individuals both on the stage and behind the scenes.

I therefore ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in acknowledging and congratulating producer, Brad Jones; stage director, Scott Simms – not that Scott Simms; musical director, Sean Carroll; choreographer, Chloe Durnford; stage manager, Jackie Rockett; assistant stage manager, Jessica Rossiter; art consultants, Nicole Russell and Rebecca Walsh; lighting designer, Patty Rose; as well as the staff, parents and other volunteers that made this a success. Of course, a huge shout out to the students themselves who dazzled us all and brought great pride to their school, their families and their community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on February 20, I had the pleasure of attending the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Ceremony at Glendenning Golf Club in Mount Pearl.

One of the most prestigious awards Canada offers to our young people is the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award. Established in Canada in 1963, the tri-level non-competitive program encourages youth to set and achieve goals in the areas of community services, skills, fitness and adventure.

Today, I stand to recognize three young people from my district who received the silver certificates from the hon. Judy Foote, Lieutenant-Governor. Congratulations to Brianna Dawe, Ashley Russell and Jakob Dawe.

These students are part of the COSTA – Challenge Our Students To Achieve program – an initiative to support students with special needs. The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award recognized that challenges vary from person to person and that all youth should be rewarded for their remarkable achievements.

Mr. Speaker, these individuals attend Queen Elizabeth Regional High School and worked extremely hard in attaining their awards and I ask all hon. Members of this House to join me in congratulating them on their achievements.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LOVELESS: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to congratulate a youth in my district, Cole McDonald. Cole is a Grade 12 student attending St. Anne's high school in Conne River. He's a very intelligent young man, with a bright future ahead of him.

Mr. Speaker, every year schools in my district participate in the Interview Olympics, part of a program offered to level II students who are registered in career development classes. As part of this program, students complete a professional interview process in competition for a job. Students have the opportunity to win awards for best interview, attire, eye contact and body language, self-confidence, résumé and cover letter writing – all the prerequisites that entail the completion of a successful interview process.

Students are given points based on the merits of the various categories they are scored on. The person receiving the most points wins the competition and goes on to the final interview, which is competing against other winners from the Coast of Bays area. Mr. Speaker, Cole was up against intense competition, but won the scholarship with over close to 40 competitors.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Cole McDonald and wishing best of luck to those who will be competing this year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

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

Mr. Speaker, each March, Pharmacist Awareness Month celebrates the contributions that pharmacists make to the health care system.

With over 700 licensed pharmacists working in Newfoundland and Labrador, this month recognizes the profession and highlights the services they offer.

From renewing prescriptions, delivering vaccinations, providing medication management services, and assessing and prescribing for minor ailments, there are many reasons to visit your local pharmacist.

Convenient, accessible and close to home, pharmacists are there for you when you need them.

This month marks the official launch of the Pharmacists' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador's annual Pharmacist of the Year campaign.

The association is seeking nominations from the public and fellow pharmacists to recognize two individuals who have demonstrated exemplary service as Community Pharmacist of the Year and Hospital Pharmacist of the Year. The winners will be announced at the association's conference gala in the fall.

I encourage everyone to visit www.panl.net and nominate someone who they feel is deserving of such recognition.

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, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

On the occasion of Pharmacist Awareness Month, I would like to thank all pharmacists in our province and their association for their compassion, diligence and service they provide to us as patients.

Mr. Speaker, pharmacists are readily available to take care of us when we are ill, answer our questions and encourage us all to live healthier lifestyles. They form a key part of our health care team. We're very fortunate in this province to have pharmacists who truly care about their patients and often go the extra mile to assist, where possible.

I would like to take this moment to encourage the government to work with the pharmacists to ensure that they can work within their scope of work and practice. Pharmacists are often able to respond quickly to individuals' needs; barriers to do this should be and can be reduced.

Mr. Speaker, we encourage all pharmacists and all individuals to nominate your local pharmacist for this award.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Pharmacists are essential to our health care system because of their unique expertise, accessible services and dedication. Their accessibility and expertise is especially important in rural communities and for all of those without a family physician.

I would like to see MCP coverage expand to include some of the new services pharmacists are providing so that more people can avail of them. And, please, go nominate one.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, occurrences of fraudulent activity are becoming more common. In fact, recent statistics from the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre show that, in 2019, Canadians lost over \$98 million to fraud.

During the month of March, the national fraud prevention campaign aims to help Canadians stand up to scammers who are costing them millions of dollars every year. It also helps educate and inform consumers on how to recognize, reject and report fraud.

From school-aged children to the elderly, from consumers to corporations – everyone is vulnerable to fraud. As the digital world becomes increasingly important in the lives of

residents, fraudsters are creating more elaborate schemes.

Knowledge is key, Mr. Speaker, and we must all be vigilant when it comes to fraud. Beware of any activity that does not appear to be legitimate. Report scams to the authorities so they can warn other people and help minimize the chances of them spreading further. Tell your friends and family of any scams you are aware of to avoid them becoming a victim of this type of crime.

During Fraud Prevention Month, and throughout the year, our government encourages consumers to learn about ways to protect themselves from fraud. We remain committed to raising awareness about fraud and providing consumers with the tools and information they need to protect themselves and others.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

Mr. Speaker, we, in the Official Opposition, are also pleased to recognize March as Fraud Prevention Month. Fraudulent activities are certainly becoming more common, and the statistics quoted by the minister are very disheartening. To think that Canadians lost over \$98 million to fraudsters last year is very sad and deeply concerning.

It is important to realize that no one is immune to fraud and any one of us can become the victim of a scam. We must continue to educate and increase awareness regarding these activities so that people are better equipped to protect themselves and their families from fraud.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

The \$98 million the minister referenced in her statement shows us fraudsters are becoming bolder, more sophisticated and more unscrupulous. We must step up and work not only to protect people, but, whenever possible, bring the scammers to justice.

In an online world, it is important to improve fraud prevention literacy to empower people to know that they are being scammed. Knowledge is key; we must ensure that the trusting and vulnerable people in our society are protected from these people.

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, thank you, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, we have learned of an investigation conducted by the provincial government concerning the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources building lease in Corner Brook. Since the investigation was conducted, an unsuccessful applicant has released a government employee's handwritten notes from the tender. These notes have no mention of Marine Contractors Inc. – the successful bidder during this bid opening – and confirmed the unsuccessful applicant's own notes taken at that time.

Did the investigation review these notes, and why do they align perfectly with the unsuccessful applicant's notes?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

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

The matter that the Leader of the Opposition refers to was referred to the Chief Procurement Officer. I can certainly table her findings after her review to inform him.

Mr. Speaker, this has been referred to the Department of Justice and we will leave it with the department to make any further decisions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I thank the minister for that information.

In that context, he's saying a referral to the Department of Justice. His department, Transportation and Works, uses a system internal to the department to track tenders. Over the course of the investigation, it illustrated a defect in the system such that the wrong date could be entered into the system.

Could this defect have allowed the date of bid receipt to be recorded after the bid deadline, and is that in consideration in the course of the investigation?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question.

When this matter came to light back last spring, we actually referred it to the Chief Procurement Officer. The Chief Procurement Officer did a review. I'll certainly table the letter from the Chief Procurement Officer.

Mr. Speaker, what we're talking about, government employees who work in the tendering office who do this literally hundreds of times a year, so the activities of that particular tender were reviewed and reviewed by the Chief Procurement Officer. I'm more than willing to table her findings, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Could I ask the Acting Minister of Justice if he can inform the House as to when the investigation by his department might reach some kind of conclusion?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, again, I thank the hon. Member for the question.

The investigation or the review was done by the Chief Procurement Officer. Any further legal proceedings regarding this are a matter between the proponent and the Department of Justice.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I thank the minister.

The lease is virtually the longest lease held by the government and is unusual at 20 years and nearly \$20 million in value.

During the last election, the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources campaign headquarters was located in a building owned by the successful bidder.

What personal or professional relationship does the minister have with this company, its board and its owner?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again I thank the hon. Member for the question.

What the hon. Member opposite is doing right here today is he's questioning the integrity of the

men and women that serve in the public tendering office in this building. That's what he's doing. He's questioning the abilities of those people to do their job. They literally do this job hundreds, maybe thousands of times a year. They open tenders on a daily basis, typically 12 noon.

Mr. Speaker, they did their job. It was reviewed by the Chief Procurement Officer. Again, he's questioning the integrity of people who work day in and day out, clerks and others who oversee our public tendering process, and I'm more than willing to table the findings of the Chief Procurement Officer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I have just been informed the matter is being referred to the Department of Justice. So, yes, integrity would seem to be an issue.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I didn't find a question there but I will take the opportunity again to say that this matter was referred to the Chief Procurement Officer. There was a finding. I'm more than willing to table that finding; furthermore, what I did say to the hon. Member opposite is that this matter is now a matter between the proponent and the Department of Justice.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans have repeatedly delayed the harp seal population count.

Minister, are you aware if the count has occurred, and can you inform us of the results?

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

MR. BYRNE: No, Mr. Speaker, I have not been informed by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans as to what their census numbers or their scientific analysis is of to date, but I would join with the hon. Member opposite if there's something that we both agree on – there are many things we both agree on, but this is definitely one of them.

Seals – in particular harp seals, but in addition to grey seals – have a significant impact, a negative impact on the stock recovery of cod and other species, including capelin. It has impacts on many, many species and this should be better investigated by the federal government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We've seen images and heard stories of harvesters finding enough shrimp and crab in the stomachs of seals to fill buckets.

Minister, why are you doing nothing and saying nothing to the federal government and asking them to act on what's happening with our seal population?

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

MR. BYRNE: First off, I'd like to say thank to my hon. critic for his questions. I don't get very many in the House on fisheries matters. This is very welcomed because it does allow a dialogue to occur which the entire province can hear.

It is true that seals do have a serious impact on a number of species, a number of ecosystems. Better information is required. I am disappointed, I am genuinely disappointed that the federal government hasn't acted quickly and more strongly on this, but I am encouraged by the fact that the federal government has

established a seal science advisory team. We asked, as a government, to be a member of that team. We have science capacity within the provincial government. They have looked for resources elsewhere, but we will continue to be involved in this process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Last August, leading into the federal election, your federal cousins announced Atlantic seals task force team. Last week, after seven months, we finally heard who's on that team.

Minister, how long will it take before we see action on the control of the serious overpopulation of seals? It's not good enough to be disappointed.

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

MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I seem to be leading the hon. Member in his questions.

It is not acceptable that there has – the level of action today has not been acceptable. I do not know exactly when the findings will be produced, but what I do know is it cannot happen soon enough.

If there is something that the hon. Member and I have in common – it's a value and a principle that we share – it's our oceans. If the federal government is to stand up with integrity and say that the ecosystem is important, that our oceans are important, then they have to take some difficult, but important first steps in protecting our oceans. That includes an active, engaged seal management plan and one that hopefully is based on expanding markets for seal products as a first priority.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: In a news release announcing the task force team, DFO stated seals feed on all kinds of fish, cod, capelin, herring, halibut, redfish and even shrimp. It also stated that the number of seals has dramatically increased in recent years.

Minister, we need to get this count and we need action. Every day we're hearing things in our fishery about decline in stocks. Someone needs to take some action. You're the Fisheries Minister in this province. When are you going to do it?

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

MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That action is already underway.

It has been said by several DFO scientists – and I won't challenge their integrity or their findings, but I will question whether or not the Department of Fisheries and Oceans itself has put the necessary resources into investigating this question. There has been some suggestion that the impact on cod and cod recovery is negligible. I find that very, very difficult to believe.

I also find that the level of effort that has been put forward on this question, unsatisfactory from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. What I'll also agree with the hon. Member about is that capelin as a resource species, as a part of the food chain, is impacted by seals. That also has a consequential element to the recovery of cod.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The coronavirus is having a huge impact on the global economy and the economy of our province. People in the fishing industry are very concerned.

Minister, what's the plan to ensure that the industry will be prepared for market changes and the availability to get seafood to market?

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

MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is very much an evolving situation and an evolving question, but one we're on top of. I am meeting with leaders in the seafood industry on a daily basis, getting their feedback, getting their intelligence on impacts on logistics, impacts on markets.

The primary concern here is that consumers and demand for fish is facing a temporary – hopefully, it's a very temporary reduction. In particular, markets in Asia and, in particular, markets in China where it is a very social environment there, people are not eating out, it's having an impact. Moving fish within China is difficult and moving fish over into Asia and China is difficult.

We're working together as an industry, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to report to the House that I'm engaged in constant communication with our industry leaders to help find bridges to better markets and better success.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much for your answer. It's very important that we stay on top of it.

Minister, the Fisheries Department has no ADM; this is a critical point in our fishery.

Why is there no ADM in Fisheries?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, it is not entirely unusual for a transition to occur in Executive. We're in a transition moment. We are actively looking and engaged in finding the proper skill set to have that position staffed. I'll be happy to

inform this House when such decisions are taken.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, in March 2019, the Justice Minister announced pilot programs to test three initiatives: adult diversion, electronic monitoring and bail supervision.

Is the minister now able to report whether these pilot programs proved to be successful, as we had hoped?

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

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, I don't have that information here with me, but I'll certainly get the answer for the hon. Member and table it in this House.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, pilot programs are usually tested in select areas and applied more broadly if they prove successful. Adult diversion was piloted in Stephenville and Corner Brook; electronic monitoring and bail supervision were tested in St. John's.

Does the government plan to expand these programs to other areas?

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

MR. WARR: Again, Mr. Speaker, I will certainly take the question from the hon. Member under advisement and I will ensure to get a report tabled in this House of Assembly at my earliest convenience.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, justice must be applied evenly and fairly.

Does the minister agree that if the government plans regarding restorative justice measures are not expanded, that that would deny fair access to these programs to people from rural areas?

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

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, bail supervision policies are being drafted in preparation to begin accepting clients in the coming months. Bail supervision provides an alternative to pre-trial detention that reduces custodial cost by supervising the accused in a community and providing referrals, monitoring and support.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I will allude to the Member's prior questions, I will certainly get those answers for her and table them here in the House of Assembly.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, one more question regarding the Drug Treatment Court in St. John's.

It's an important pilot project and we are wondering, if it proves to be successful, are there plans to expand it to other areas so more people can get the kind of treatment that can divert them from crime by helping them escape their addictions – something that's truly in the best interest of all of us.

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

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the question.

Drug Treatment Court is an alternative approach for offenders with serious drug addictions who commit non-violent, drug-motivated offences. The Drug Treatment Court in St. John's brings together treatment services for substance abuse and the criminal justice system to deal more effectively with drug-addicted offenders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Could the Minister of Natural Resources please give us an update on the payments owed to the former workers of Astaldi? Why are these individuals still waiting for monies they are owed?

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

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

I appreciate the question. This is a very difficult time for some workers at Astaldi who have not had all of their claims settled at this point. As the Member opposite knows, this is before the courts. We have been advocating on behalf of some Astaldi workers.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, when Astaldi was terminated from the site, all workers were paid up until the final day. There were some workers that had additional days after that, that have yet to be paid, plus some back pay that was owing and some bonus money that was owing and some other payments that were made. These are caught up in this court case, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to advocate on their behalf.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government had the ability to pay these workers. Mr. Speaker, government could have made the situation right at the time.

I ask the minister to make the right decision now, immediately, and ensure that these individuals are paid the monies that they're owed.

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, you know, I have a great deal of empathy and it's very difficult on a number of people that were employed. I will remind the Member opposite they were employed by Astaldi. They weren't employed by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; they were employed by a contractor to a Crown corporation.

There is recourse, of course, through the courts. I understand some of them are going through that, Mr. Speaker, at this point in time. We certainly hope that they would be able to reclaim, but there are a growing number of companies and individuals who are working through that process as well. We will continue to advocate on their behalf.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister and the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District for ending all student international travel to Europe for the remainder of the year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, our office is getting numerous reports of parents and school councils inquiring about hand sanitizers in schools. Schools have been told that there is none available and none is coming.

How can the minister expect districts and schools to get ready for the arrival of the coronavirus if they are lacking one these necessary tools to combat?

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

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for his question.

Mr. Speaker, the school district is working with provincial health officials on information to send to all schools and parents across the province as well. This information should be distributed very soon.

I would suggest – the Member makes a comment with regard to hand sanitizers. We still have soap and water that we can use. I realize that there's a shortage of hand sanitizers throughout the province, but we must ensure that education from families at home to their children is paramount. We'll make sure that we can get a supply of the sanitizer at our earliest possible convenience.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is more than a matter of information and, yes, soap and water is essential but, Mr. Speaker, schools across the country are taking proactive measures to protect students, teachers and staff from the virus. This includes enhanced cleaning protocols, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices.

Schools in Newfoundland apparently have no excess, through their commodity listing, for ordering hygiene supplies such as hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes and Clorox bleach. We can't expect to maintain a safe environment for learning without.

Can the minister check to see why these products are not on the schools' commodity listing? There is no time like the present to assure we maximize our readiness.

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

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, again, I thank the hon. Member for his question.

Certainly, he brings up a very good point. Mr. Speaker, it's all about the health and safety of our students and of our teachers and staff as well.

We will continue to work closely with public health officials seeking guidance to help us get the message out about ways to protect ourselves.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

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

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment doubled down on his new rule that municipalities will get no money from government for any work until they fix their drinking water problems.

Minister, does this mean there will be no money for improvements to roads, to buildings or for fire services in the affected municipalities?

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

MR. BRAGG: That is a misguided question, Mr. Speaker.

No pun intended. That was definitely a misguided question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAGG: There's no way, Mr. Speaker. We met with representatives of MNL yesterday. We explained to those people we're addressing the boil-water advisory situation for this province. We have money in our MCW funds. All we are asking these municipalities, who are currently on a boil order, is to apply to get yourself off a boil order for your next round of capital works funding.

Any money these guys might have in the bank right now is there for them to use for whatever they have decided, but we're just asking in the future, those 144 towns on long-term boil-water advisories, to please address this situation first.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the minister for his answer.

We're not debating whether they need clean drinking water or that's not a priority.

The minister himself is a former municipal administrator in a small rural town.

Can the minister explain why he feels he is better equipped to determine the priorities for municipalities than the residents and the elected officials of these towns themselves?

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

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, I spent 30 years in a small town. The town I'm from has a population of 300 people on a good day. You can't find many other small towns with a small-town budget, with a small-town tax collection. I'm willing to give you a great example if you'll give me the allowance of a little extra time, Mr. Speaker, to nail this home.

My neighbouring community of 155 people were on a boil order for 20 years. They changed their council – and this is by no means in respect of who goes there – it was a lot of young moms who got on the council, who felt very adamant about removing a boil order for their town. They invested in their neighbouring town of (inaudible). It's not hard to figure out. You can throw a stone to them from me. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, but this needs to be said.

These people with a budget of \$160,000 a year invested in their pumphouse, put in a new water tank and have been off a boil-water advisory for three years consecutively, Mr. Speaker. There it is.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: That's great to hear, Mr. Speaker, and we feel as though we want everybody off the boil orders as well.

The fact of the matter is these municipalities can't be held at ransom because of this decision. They need to be able to make their own decisions. So maybe the minister can work with them instead of going against them and letting your own department make the decision.

The minister did not even bother to consult with MNL, the organization that works very hard, which represents local governments across the province, before imposing this new rule. So much for collaboration and transparency from this government.

Minister, why didn't you consult the important stakeholder as MNL? Why didn't you just consult them?

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

MR. BRAGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like for the Member opposite to do a little more research.

In 2014 and 2015, I was on a panel with MNL and we presented a report with 18 recommendations to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I was a part of that. So I was consulting in that time. I've been there. We met with them yesterday, Mr. Speaker.

Are the Members opposite saying that we should not address the boil-water advisory? Because we are not holding these towns on ransom. We're helping these towns. We have operators. We have educators who can go in there with these people.

I hear the Member opposite chirping over there about boil-water advisories. He doesn't live in a small town that's forced to drink unfit drinking water. We're all worried about the coronavirus right now; let's talk about the boil-water advisories.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, for a quick question.

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Acting Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour was unable to provide any definitive details about the request for emergency assistance for businesses and individuals impacted by the January state of emergency. Rather than offer these details, the minister talked about, quote: offering them opportunities to expand and get into the marketplace.

Mr. Speaker, these businesses are still reeling and may not be around long enough to take the minister up on his offer.

I ask, what exactly is he going to offer businesses and when?

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, for a quick answer.

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the hon. Member for the question as well.

One of the things that I did say – and I feel for the individuals who were impacted during the state of emergency; it was a difficult time for everyone. I lived through it in my own community and many other people did as well. From that standpoint, everything we can do as a government with respect to economic development in regions, we've done. We're working as hard as we can in partnership, because partnership is going to be key.

There has never been as much collaboration between businesses, communities and government as there is right now. One of the

things we're working on is the opportunities for businesses to grow; opportunities for businesses to provide marketing opportunities for them as well – market readiness.

Some of those opportunities can be reached through our department. If they have a business idea for a region, we'd like to see that come into our office. Our staff are fantastic. They work very hard to try to –

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last year, the Premier made an election promise of \$200 million from the federal government to mitigate Muskrat Falls power rates; however, in the latest rate mitigation announcement, the federal minister of Natural Resources said negotiations on financial restructuring are just beginning.

I ask the Premier: What happened to his \$200 million promise?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The rate mitigation program that we released last year through the Department of Natural Resources was one of fill in the gap of \$200 million. This would have been in conjunction with negotiations with the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, we have a very strong group of individuals. Just a few minutes ago when we released the report on the inquiry of Muskrat Falls, I was asked this very question.

There are meetings ongoing right now. It is very complex, very complicated. The financial structure that's there, cost of service, electrification, decarbonization of this province, Mr. Speaker, monetization of certain assets. All within the scope of the Muskrat Falls Project, Mr. Speaker.

Our rate mitigation plan that was put in place prior to the election last year was the only credible plan. The Leader of the Third Party didn't even have one, Mr. Speaker, and the Leader of the Opposition had one that was \$150 million double (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: The Premier's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the oil industry is in a state of upheaval and we are perilously close to economic and environmental catastrophe, yet government proudly promotes its \$110 million equity investment in Equinor.

I ask the Premier: Wouldn't it be better to spend that \$110 million on economic diversification or schools or roads, or health care or dental, or anything else?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, when you look at the question, or when you consider the question that was just asked, none of them, except for economic diversification, which is a big part of our Way Forward – we're putting thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to work in our province. But the rest of the question around health care, around education and so on, dental and so on, all of these require revenue.

So the decision was made, as we make strategic investments in the things like in the offshore of Newfoundland and Labrador – when governments invest in equity positions – not suggesting that this will be policy forever – but when they do it adds confidence and it helps attract companies like our offshore companies to invest in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the Member opposite too, when you look globally, as we reduce our carbon footprint, we have some of

the best oil on the face of this earth when it comes to carbon intensity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Labrador Affairs office was established in Labrador West in 2012 to deal with the boom in the region, acting as a conduit between government, companies and municipalities. It housed a regional task force to guide development. The work of this office was not done as long the industry continues to evolve.

I ask the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs: Why was the Labrador Affairs office in Labrador West closed with such secrecy over the Christmas holidays?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I think the Member opposite would know, because I invited him and told him that I would be attending a meeting in Labrador West this week. I did meet with the Labrador City council and with the council of Wabush Friday. This very issue came up, Mr. Speaker. I explained to the people that (inaudible) this is the only community that we have in our province that would have an economic director in the community.

So, Mr. Speaker, right now when you look at the economy in Labrador West, including Labrador City and Wabush, it's booming right now. People will tell you that. What we wanted to do is restructure the office of Labrador Affairs. This administration, for the first time in the history of Labrador Affairs, will put a deputy minister within the Labrador Affairs office. They will then facilitate the organizational change. We have great people that work out of Labrador West (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, teachers have expressed concern about a shortage of cleaning staff in our schools and a failure of the English School District to fill vacant positions until well into the school year. Sadly, this situation hasn't changed much since I was a teacher and served as NLTA president.

I ask the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development: In light of the outbreak of COVID-19 and the need to take cautionary measures, what assurances, if any, can he provide that schools will be staffed with a full complement of janitorial staff at all times?

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

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the question.

We had an opportunity to speak earlier and he advised me of this situation. Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. Member that I have taken his concern to the department and asked for a full update.

Mr. Speaker, we certainly take what the Member is saying very seriously and we will ensure that we deal with the district and the schools on the situation. With regard to the schools, we'll continue to work with the public health officers to ensure that our schools and properties are as clean as they possibly can be.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

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

During Question Period, the Leader of the Opposition raised some questions around a tendering process. I referenced a ruling or a decision or some information that we received back in June of 2019 from the Chief Procurement Officer.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to table this at this time for this House and assure the Members opposite that we have great faith in the staff at the tendering and procurement offices throughout government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. DWYER: I rise in my place today to (technical difficulties) closure of Pearce Junior High.

On December 7, 2019, the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District gave notice of school closures stating that the final decision will be made in March 28, 2020.

Residents have expressed concerns about the potential closure of Pearce Junior High in Burin, as the region is projected to grow and a premature decision to close the school would leave the region without the capacity to serve the education needs of the people.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of

Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure that Pearce Junior High School does remain open.

What's intriguing about this one here, actually – just looking at the signatures that are on this particular petition, Your Honour, of the nine names that are on this, only one is actually from my district. All the rest are from Burin, Lewin's Cove, so these people are affected as well. Like I said, the school is physically not in my district, but all the people are. I'm here to work side by side with the neighbouring district to ensure that this school doesn't close.

When you have new industry like Grieg NL Seafarms that has a big footprint going in down in the Marystown area and you're trying to attract workers, then obviously when these young families are looking to start a new career in a new location, the first two economic indicators that show them that they're moving to a desperate area is closing hospital beds and closing schools. So this is not sending the right message of what we're doing on the Burin Peninsula.

We have a very burgeoning economy on the Burin Peninsula and on the isthmus side, I must say, of my district as well of Placentia West - Bellevue, but the way this was rolled out was kind of cart before the horse type of stuff. There were options laid out. Now one of the options is off the table. We don't know where the options came from. We don't know what they were based on. We asked questions. This autonomous board doesn't really want to answer any questions.

I think there needs to be some changes made to the system that's in place so that the autonomy – I have no problem with them making decisions, but they have to be accountable to the department. Right now, I don't think they're exactly accountable to the department. I know that this goes on from time to time, but in the meantime, they really selected the absolute wrong area of the whole province to put up this school closure, because it's sending the absolute opposite message of what everybody else is trying to send in the district in order to attract workers and to improve the economy.

I think it is incumbent on the Cabinet on the other side – not just the Minister of Education,

but the whole Cabinet – to realize that what they've done here is sent the wrong message to anybody that we're trying to attract and anybody that we're trying to retain. In order to get doctors and nurses retained as well, this is another really poor indicator.

I think if this is to continue, we're going down the wrong path of understanding what educational outcomes should be. Right now in the Marystown Central school area, they just had a 100 per cent graduation rate of Grade 12 last year. So I think it's a benchmark for the province, not one that needs to close.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, again, I heard the Member's statement yesterday. I spoke to him yesterday; I'll speak to him again today. I have a lot of respect for the Member bringing this petition on behalf of the people to House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, let me clearly state that this is not about closing schools. It's about ensuring resources are being used to maximize program opportunities for all students in a region. We're not just out here closing schools. There's a process here.

Again, as I mentioned to the Member yesterday, I was so happy to see the support that came out for Pearce Junior High in the community of Marystown. The room was full. I had an opportunity to speak with NLESD with regard to their visit to Marystown. They were certainly impressed, Mr. Speaker, with the information that came back to them from these residents.

We will ensure that the process takes place and it takes place properly.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Mr. Speaker, I'm pretty sure I feel confident in saying that just about every one of us do not choose to have a compromised health situation, but the reality is there is a segment of our population that does. The reality is in most situations people are not subject to the burden of attacks when they go to seek out the medications they use to treat their specific ailments.

Mr. Speaker, all other medicines, except medically prescribed cannabis, are tax exempt. It's been about a year since I presented this petition and asked the House of Assembly to consider removing the tax on medically prescribed cannabis.

Applying tax to medical cannabis is making it too expensive for many patients who are already struggling with financial issues and physical issues and mental issues. This financial barrier to their health and well-being is, therefore, subjecting these patients and these individuals to unnecessary pain and suffering.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follow: We, the undersigned, call on this House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to remove the portion of provincial tax for medical cannabis users.

Mr. Speaker, we did have the privilege of the Minister of Finance replying to this petition on several occasions and that was, as I said, about a year ago. At this time, I look forward to his response once again to see if he did actually look into means and ways of removing this unnecessary tax from individuals who do rely on medically prescribed cannabis to treat their medical conditions.

It's unfair for us to, basically, profit excessively off medically prescribed cannabis, off individuals who have found this as a source and a mediation to their particular physical and mental challenges.

Mr. Speaker, this is something that is insulting to those individuals. It's insulting to me. Even though I don't rely on any medicine, I've been fortunate to have good health, but that doesn't say – that may change down the road.

It's most important for us to stand up for those who are having difficulty standing up for themselves, and we don't need to tax their lot in life.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the minister's response.

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

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Whereas in 2008 the provincial government instituted a provincial teacher allocation model to address the educational needs of students by providing class size caps for K to 9 and additional administrative time for school leaders. This new allocation model was to be reviewed in 2011.

Following the implementation of the 2008 class size caps, government instituted a "soft cap" policy which allowed some classrooms to exceed the established 2008 caps.

In 2009, government began the forced integration of students with special needs into regular classrooms without adequate supports under the inclusive education initiative. In doing so, dramatically changing classroom composition and complexity.

In the absence of the Cabinet directive to review the 2008 teacher allocation model, successive governments have increased class sizes in Grades 4 to 9 and reduced administrative time for school leaders.

As a result, students, including students with special needs, have been placed into larger classrooms with greater complexities of need. The result has been an increase in student absenteeism and violence coupled by a decrease in available teacher time for individual students.

Therefore we, the elected leaders and representatives of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to conduct an independent review of

the Teacher Allocation Model with a report to be prepared by June 30, 2021.

This has been signed by 68 members of the NLTA, including the executive and branch presidents from across the province.

Mr. Speaker, in many ways, when we look at allocation, it should be almost somewhat aligned to determining the number of life rafts that you include on an ocean-going ship. You just don't pick a number out of the air but you look at the number of people who are travelling on that ship, and in a school, look at the needs of the students in that school.

Soft caps are troubling; caps that are arbitrarily assigned are troubling because at times teachers, administrators and the association wonder what the rationale is in choosing a particular number, or why such initiatives as combined grades, increased class sizes without the necessary supports are brought into place. We have an inclusion model. We have a *Safe & Caring Schools Policy* – although, at times, I've been known to slip into the safe and scary schools policy, because what's missing to make that policy work are the resources that are needed there.

It's interesting in some cases, Mr. Speaker, the class size violate fire codes. So what we do call upon is the minister to institute an independent review and to have a report by June 2021.

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

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for his petition.

It's certainly an important one and a timely one, Mr. Speaker. Since we launched the *Education Action Plan* in 2018, we've been adding teacher resources, new reading specialists, a new position called teaching and learning assistant and we've increased learning resource teachers. These resources, all 350 of them, will be fully implemented by September of 2020 and, certainly, we'll make sure that we take a look at the class caps after the full implementation.

I'd like to point out, Mr. Speaker, while the class cap size for Grade 4 is 28, only 19 of 226

classrooms have 28 students. For Grade 7, only eight classes out of 228 are at the cap, and in Grade 9, only eight of 218 classes are at the cap.

I just want to add that piece of information for the hon. Member, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

Orders of the Day

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, for leave to introduce a bill, An Act To Amend The Personal Property Security Act, Bill 27, and that this bill shall now be read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. minister shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Personal Property Security Act, Bill 27, and that the said bill now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Personal Property Security Act," carried. (Bill 27)

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Personal Property Security Act. (Bill 27)

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

When shall the bill be read a second time?

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 27 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Forestry Act, Bill 28, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. minister shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Forestry Act, Bill 28, and that this bill now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Forestry Act," carried. (Bill 28)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Forestry Act. (Bill 28)

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

When shall the bill be read a second time?

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 28 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Orders of the Day, Order 2, Committee of Supply.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to stand again and speak to Supply today. I know yesterday there were a couple of amendments put forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. OSBORNE: Oh, sorry, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: We have to move to Committee before we do that.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Sorry. We didn't do that effectively, did we?

I move, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that we now move to Committee on Bill 26, respecting the granting of Interim Supply to Her Majesty.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Bennett): Order, please!

We're now going to debate Interim Supply, Bill 26.

MR. OSBORNE: My colleague asked if he could speak before I did, so I (inaudible) very gracious.

CHAIR: The Speaker recognizes the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And I thank the Minister of Finance for giving me the opportunity to stand and speak on Interim Supply.

It's about an issue that I was involved with back –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: It's about an issue –

CHAIR: Order, please!

We have to read the resolution first.

MR. JOYCE: Sorry.

Resolution

Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:

“That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2021 the sum of \$4,602,859,900.”

CHAIR: We are now debating the amendment.

Now we recognize the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the Minister of Finance for allowing me to speak for a few minutes before he stands up.

It's concerning an issue that I was involved with back in 2015, the Placentia wellness centre. It was brought to my attention once again, this wellness centre is on review by the Department of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

I just want to go back to 2015, Mr. Chair, when this first came to light. I was dealing with the town at the time and I had a few words with the committee, the Lions Club. It was an issue in 2015 that the money was announced by the former premier of \$30 million for Vale. Part of that money, \$4.5 million I think it was, was going to the Placentia wellness centre. There was a bit of an issue there at the time because there was no money received. I know the Minister of Natural Resources confirmed that in writing to the Minister of Service NL, the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's, but it was never received.

Again, I'm just bringing this up personally because I was accused of taking \$30 million, leveraging federal funds and spending it all on the West Coast, but we never received the funds.

After working with the town council, there was no headway with it because the town at the time didn't want to borrow any additional funds. I know the Lions Club, under Mr. Jamie Neville, went out and spent a lot of money to do a lot of research. I think up to \$600,000, if my memory is correct.

What happened then, they couldn't use it. Because we were using federal funds, they couldn't use the funding. I spoke to Mr. Neville personally several times about it and with the new council that came in place, new mayor, Mr. Bernie Power, the project start moving ahead.

I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs is listening intently to this because it's a big issue. The people of Placentia - St. Mary's, the whole region of Placentia, this is a major issue that has been ongoing for a number of years.

Mr. Chair, I just want to make it quite clear that the Minister of Service NL, the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's, was well aware of this

here from the beginning. Right from the beginning. I'll say to the minister: Now my understanding is it's being held up because it's in a possible flood zone. I just have to get this straight, that this wellness centre is being held up because of a possible flood zone.

I don't know what the issue is and I raised it with the minister, but this mayor, Bernie Power, and the council and all the residents and the Lions Club in Placentia has been working so hard for this and they can't get answers on why this is being held up.

I know the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's, the Minister of Service NL, is saying that she's not aware of it. Well, she was aware of it. I just want to say to the minister, the Placentia wellness centre is attached to the stadium. The stadium is in a flood zone. The hospital is in the same flood zone. The new school that was just built is in the same flood zone.

I have to say to the minister, you have to come to some conclusion on this. When this was approved back in 2017, Mr. Chair, the Department of Municipal Affairs and Environment then did their assessment. They approved the funding and sent it to Ottawa. Ottawa then did their own assessment, came back and said yeah, we approve the funding. I think it was December 2018 that the funding was announced. Now they're ready to go out to tender and they can't get an answer why it's held up. They can't get an answer.

I say to the minister, who's over there listening intently to this here, you must give the council some indication of what the hold up is in this. This just can't continue for the people in Placentia - St. Mary's. It just can't continue.

For the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's to say she's not aware of it, and now she's going to come in on some shining horse like she did before when apparently I was holding all this up and the Municipal Affairs and Environment staff wouldn't deal with her, wouldn't deal with the town council and couldn't get any answers. Now all of a sudden, she's not aware of it. It's time for the minister to come clean with the people of Placentia - St. Mary's.

This has been booting around – this information has been on the go for at least since 2015 when it all started about where it's going to be built. I have to say, Mr. Chair, that I'm starting to get a bit frustrated with the department saying why don't you just call the town council and say here is the hold up. Two weeks ago, they were waiting to get it signed off. It's just put on the desk waiting for it to be signed off. It is still not signed off and no one can find out why. No one can tell them why.

But apparently, the Minister of Service NL said I'll check it out now; I'll find out what's on the go. She's well aware of it. She spoke to the town council on it. For God sake I say to the minister, these people worked so hard for this. This is something that they worked for. This is something they fought against the minister who never did agree with the project.

I'm going to bring this up, personally. In the complaint, I took the \$30 million, spent it out and couldn't get any information out of it. I didn't deal with the town council on this here, Bernie Power and this former town council. I didn't work with the Lions Club on all this, yet the project was approved. It's a bit ironic.

Mr. Chair, I'm standing up here again on behalf of the people of Placentia - St. Mary's because, obviously, the minister won't or can't, or for whatever reason refuses to get answers for the town council. I'm asking the minister to step in and give the credit to the elected town council down at Placentia at least a phone call to say here's the problem. Whatever the problem is let them know because they don't know. They were told two weeks ago, three weeks ago it's going to be signed off. It's still not signed off.

Mr. Chair, I go back to 2017 – and I know the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune is over there now who's an elected Member. In March 2017 – and I have to put this in because the town council is well aware of it – he gave the Minister of Service NL, the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's, a note saying it's in the budget in 2018; I think it's March 27.

June that year I was accused by the minister then of not dealing with the town council or anybody after getting the Placentia wellness centre going. I was delaying it, I was stopping it all the time,

yet I know the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune – even gave her a personal note. The staff at the Premier’s office gave a personal note and here we are now fighting through all that, going through all that rigmarole of – the rumour was I spent all the money.

The other rumour was that it wasn’t in the pool. The other rumour was that they couldn’t work with the department or any officials. Here it is now all approved, approved by the department, approved by the town, money borrowed, approved by the federal government and here it is again, stalled again and we can’t get answers.

The people of Placentia, the mayor who works so hard, the Lions Club who works so hard and, Mr. Chair, all the town council, all the residents who raised hundreds of thousands of dollars – hundreds of thousands of dollars this Lions Club raised. Mr. Jamie Neville who spearheaded it, raised hundreds of thousands of dollars and we can’t get answers. We have the minister, the Member for the area of Placentia - St. Mary’s saying she’s not aware of it. This is being held up, this project.

I say to the minister, you have to show respect to the town council. I’m not saying you’re not but I’m just saying they’re frustrated. You need to call them and say – or find out what the issue is with the flood zone, if there’s an issue. If there’s an issue with the flood zone, the swimming pool is in the flood zone which is now going to be attached – the stadium I’m sorry. The stadium is in the flood zone. They’re going to attach the swimming pool to the stadium. Here’s the stadium. They’re going to put the wellness centre right here, but the wellness centre is a problem because it’s in the flood zone and so is the swimming pool.

The hospital is in the same area. The school is in the same flood-zone area. It’s been approved by the Department of Transportation and Works who put it in there.

I say to the department, the people of Placentia - St. Mary’s deserve answers. This has been kicked around, politically, too much. There are so many allegations – false allegations I might add, Mr. Chair, about this pool, where they told them they have no money, it’s all spent. The department won’t deal with them.

They even took \$750,000 from Dunville to put it towards it, that we make the guarantee to put the money back. That’s how Bernie Power and this town council were pushing for it, and they did it. But what we need to do now, Mr. Chair, is give some credence to the town council, respect to the town council and inform them what the delay is because they’re waiting to go to tender. The residents are waiting to go to tender.

They were told it was going to be done two to three weeks ago and it’s still sitting on someone’s desk. They can’t even get an answer, which is not good enough with all the hassle this town council – I respect the town council. I thank the town council for the work they did.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Member’s time has expired.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was going to start a little earlier by saying I know there were a couple of amendments yesterday. Members in the Legislature spoke about the fact that they had no intention of disrupting the Legislature. I think the two independent Members did and Members from the Third Party.

Mr. Chair, the reason we brought in the six-month Interim Supply was to ensure that because it’s a minority government and there was talk of a coalition to try and bring government down, that services would continue, that hospitals would be able to continue to provide services, schools would be able to continue to provide services, that would go on without disruption. That was truly the motivation behind this.

Understanding that Members are not interested in disrupting the Legislature, I have no problem with a three-month Interim Supply. The amendment put forward by the Leader of the Third party, I’m okay with that amendment. My concern, Mr. Chair, was simply to ensure that we didn’t disrupt the services to the people of the province.

Mr. Chair, if the reality is we're not going to disrupt the services to the people of the province, I have no issue with a three-month Interim Supply.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Chair, there is one concern with the proposed amendment. That's that the amount put forward is not sufficient to cover three months' expenditure. What the amendment covered was simply cutting the six-month Interim Supply expenditure amount in half.

Quite simply, what government spends in the last three months of the fiscal year is considerably less than what government spends in the first three months of the fiscal year, because we put out tenders, municipal tenders. We put out Transportation and Works tenders and so on. In order to get those tenders out on time, in order to ensure that those tenders are put out in a timely fashion and work can get started as early as possible, we need a little bit more in the first three months than we do in the second three months. So simply cutting the number in half is not quite sufficient, not as easy as that.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to make a subamendment with the amount that's actually required to put this forward. We need to ensure that regional health authorities, the university, for example, College of the North Atlantic, school boards have sufficient funding to operate as well. Oftentimes, they do purchasing in the first three months and require a little more in the first three months than they do in the second or third quarters of the year. As well, in order to get infrastructure started, or gas-tax money flowing through to municipalities, we need to ensure that we have sufficient in the first three months as well.

The subamendment that I'm going to be bringing in, Mr. Chair, will look at a three-month Interim Supply with \$2,631,157,300. This is an additional \$329.7 million over what the current amendment proposes. So it's a friendly subamendment, but its intention is to ensure that we have sufficient funding in the first quarter.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to move that amendment now. I know that the schedule we've supplied to the Table Clerks as well to be included as part of the Interim Supply bill. I will ask that all Members of the Legislature get a copy of that schedule so that we know exactly what we're debating in terms of Interim Supply.

One thing that I will point out, whether it's a three-month or a four-month or a six-month Interim Supply, Mr. Chair, we've got to go by the schedule. This is not money that government can just use at will. It's funding that departments use, it's prescribed, there's a specific purpose for that funding – the same as the budget. When we put forward a budget the funding is prescribed. So whether it's a three month or a six month is not consequential, really. The only thing that we wanted to ensure with the six month is that services continued. If there's no risk that there will be a disruption of services, I have no issue with a three-month supply.

Mr. Chair, I move the amendment moved by the Leader of the Third Party be amended by striking out the amount "\$2,301,429,950" and substituting instead the amount of "\$2,631,157,300."

CHAIR: A seconder?

MR. OSBORNE: This is seconded by the Government House Leader.

CHAIR: We're going to take a temporary recess to review the amendment.

Recess

CHAIR: Order, please!

We have reviewed the subamendment and found that it is in order.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm not sure when Members want to vote on the subamendment. I'm ready to vote on it now, if Members want. I'm pleased with the fact that this has been in order, Mr. Chair, and open to debate on the subamendment if Members so

wish. I know we've asked for copies of the new Schedule, based on the subamendment, to be distributed to all Members.

Should the subamendment be voted on and, subsequently, the amendment be voted on, this new clause will have to become part of the Interim Supply, essentially replacing the old Schedule and allowing –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Thank you.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, I say to my hon. critic.

Mr. Chair, if the amendment is voted on – or the subamendment and passed, the amendment is voted on and passed, the new Schedule which is being distributed to all Members of the Legislature will then become the Schedule that becomes voted on and replaced in Interim Supply.

All Members will get a copy of the new Schedule this afternoon, outlining the amounts for the first quarter, or three months, in Interim Supply for each of the departments to operate under, Mr. Chair. This will, as I've said, allow for tenders to be called, whether it's for roadwork or municipal tenders or gas tax funding to be provided to municipalities and so on, so the important work can continue for three months.

Hopefully, as I've said, there's no disruption in the Legislature; no disruption, then, to government services. We fully intend to see a budget brought in here. It's my hope that Members will vote for the budget, pass the budget and the work of our public service can continue on uninterrupted.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Bonavista.

MR. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to stand and speak on behalf of the residents of the District of Bonavista. I know I've stated before that there are quite a number of people who watch the House of Assembly proceedings. Mita Butler, a senior from Bonavista; Josh Clarke; Mr. Keith Rickman, just to name several. The audience is wide. Sometimes we don't realize that when we speak, but we certainly have a lot of people that are tuned in to the House of Assembly. I hope I get a chance now to represent them well in the 10 minutes that I have to speak.

I want to raise this particular name: Erik Weihenmayer. I bet nobody knows who Erik Weihenmayer is, and he does not reside in the District of Bonavista. He scaled Mount Everest in 2001; 29,000 feet he scaled, and you would say: Well, what's notable about that? Because many others did. In 2002, he did the Seven Summits, including Everest, the other six notable summits, the highest elevations in the – and he did those in 2002.

One would say, why do I bring up Erik Weihenmayer? Because Erik Weihenmayer was blind. Now all of a sudden those achievements, while they would have been notable with full vision, they are certainly notable without vision.

He is now the world's most sought-after public speaker, and he started a non-profit organization called No Barriers. Here is what the theme of his organization is: What's within you is stronger than what's in your way. Just to repeat that, when we look at the complexities that we face in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador over our history and currently what we're talking about in the House of Assembly: What's within you is stronger than what's in your way.

Just one little anecdote before I touchdown on what I want to speak about relative to the District of Bonavista, was in August of last year I attended St. John's Rotary where I listened to Ed Hollett, who is the blogger for *The Sir Robert Bond Papers*. He was presenting. Before he presented on Muskrat Falls, he had threw the question out: What is relevant about 1969? I knew what was relevant about 1969, but I'm certainly glad I didn't speak up at that time – nobody did. I sat there, what I immediately thought about was Woodstock. But that was not what he was looking for.

What he was looking for was the signing of the Upper Churchill and when they signed the Upper Churchill. We know it returns to us, the percentage we own in '41. The gist of those two little anecdotes is hope. We've heard a lot about hope but we haven't heard a whole lot in the electorate and with the residents in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I'd just like to emphasize on the word hope.

Before I touch down on several of the areas – I know I only have 10 minutes – I know yesterday the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands had some words after the Member for Cape St. Francis spoke. He had a few words about back in time. It led me to go back to the Budget Speech of 2016 of which the Finance Minister read. I just want to share 10 short excerpts from that speech – and keep in mind, no commentary on any of the 10 excerpts, but I think they'll probably speak for themselves knowing what we are talking and discussing today versus what you did in 2016, which was the first full year of the current government.

Ten short excerpts. Mr. Chair, it was stated: "... today, in our government's first budget, we are laying out a fiscal plan that allows our province to regain control of government finances."

"This year, we are forecasting the price of oil at \$40 U.S."

"By planning six deficits in the past 12 years, while unpredictable oil royalties grew, the former administration created a culture of spending in the absence of good fiscal planning."

I said I wasn't going to interject any commentary. I was in the education system as the administrator in a particular school when the previous government who was accused at spending loosely brought our per pupil allocation from \$37 to \$120. We couldn't have computers in the special-needs classrooms. SMART Boards came to our classrooms. We had the module components that were introduced to our school system, all at that time when we referenced loose spending, but the only thing being we were great beneficiaries in the education system at that time because we had such a big deficit. I think we'll all agree that the money was spent to address the deficit.

Continuing on with the anecdotes or the references, the minister states: "It is impossible for us to be satisfied that we will spend more on debt expenses than we do on educating our children." The premier said that in 2019, which is correct. It was also stated in 2016.

"Work at the Muskrat Falls powerhouse is significantly behind schedule. Faced with these schedule delays and expected cost increases on the project – a concern to all of us – government is doing and will continue to do everything possible to help get this project back on track."

Next reference –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. PARDY: Just a reference from *Hansard* – and I'm halfway through them – "With this in mind we are planning, and holding ourselves accountable to return to a surplus position in seven years."

It was stated to leave politics out of the decision-making process – noble and good. Unfortunately it said, increasing class sizes for Grades 4 to 12 will save \$8.8 million annually, which was a saving but I know that we hear a lot of references to the class size and the issue that we have in the school system.

Eight: "Our government promised the people of Newfoundland and Labrador better management and real leadership."

"Our government will establish a Diversified Wealth Fund once we have moved back into surplus. We will put the necessary framework in place by bringing forward legislation during our mandate. The legislation will be designed to prevent any future governments from leaving our province in the fiscal situation we find ourselves in today."

Finally, the last one: "We will do what Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are expecting us to do: We will eliminate government waste; we will stop excess spending; we will be more efficient; and, we will expect that public money is treated responsibly. And we will act when we suspect it is not."

Anyway, my full intention was to be able to look at these components and look at what I would think in the management and efficiencies and bring some forth. I'd like to start with health. One thing which I think should be foundational for us as a government would be that we make sure we look after those that are the most vulnerable in our care. I think our efforts are noble.

The only thing I would reference would be the Golden Heights Manor in Bonavista was staffed at 3.8 hours per resident. Because they had some residents who were no longer in the facility, they cut it back to 3.4. The medical needs in covering at the long-term health care facility are not in question. The thing that is in question would be the PCAs, the personal hygiene care and looking after the attendants to be able to feed residents who may be unable to feed themselves.

The medical needs in the RNs are covered, are good and there are no complaints with that. The LPNs, there appear to be no problem. It seems to be with the PCAs – and I know that the hon. Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, in his petition several times mentioned in these long-term care homes.

I know my time is up, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Transportation and Works.

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

It's great to have the opportunity for the first time in Supply to have an opportunity to have a few words. I'm sure I'll have quite a few words in the days to come as we continue to debate the subamendment, the amendment and Interim Supply itself.

But, Mr. Chair, I couldn't help myself from getting up right now after hearing the remarks of the Member opposite on this day that we've been presented with a report that shows a misguided project. He references back to 2016.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to read some quotes into the record, and these are quotes that

unfortunately we'll be having to remind people of the situation that 2015-2016 brought us to. I've often heard Members opposite say, oh, well, you've been there five years now – you've been there five years now. But the report has some very interesting comments in it, and very interesting quotes, and we've just started to read through it.

“Rather, it is the Province's current financial position and the loss of opportunities, both of which have been caused by the need to pay for Muskrat Falls That is what has caused residents of this province to become concerned about the future.”

The concern for the future, Mr. Chair, is the misguided project that, today, we had to release an 1,100-page document explaining what went wrong here – what went wrong in the years leading up to the sanctioning of this project. It says quite clearly in the report, number 10 in Volume 1, page 47: “Considering the extent of construction completed and the contractual and other obligations in place at the time, the Project had clearly reached the point of no return when the Ball government was elected (late 2015). The real point of no return was at Financial Close of the FLG in November 2013.”

Mr. Chair, that says a lot. That says a lot about what this government found in 2015-2016. I take no pleasure today in reading a report that will saddle my children and my grandchildren for decades and decades to come. But to hear a Member stand up over there today and lay at our government's feet, talk about a budget in 2016. We just paid tens of millions of dollars for an inquiry to tell us why we got to where we were in 2015-2016.

To hear that, to hear someone stand up and talk about a culture of spending, loose spending. Loose spending and a culture of spending don't even start to explain where we are today because of this misguided project. This project is so misguided. Twelve billion dollars – 30 per cent of this province's debt today is because of this project and is because there wasn't proper oversight by the government of the day to make sure this never happened – just make sure it never happened.

Before project sanctioning it would've been very easy – I'm going to read some quotes. "Before Project sanction, it would have been very easy for Nalcor" – the previous administration – "and GHJ to have educated themselves on the history of cost overruns and schedule delays for megaprojects and their" – and I'll repeat this – "and their failure to do so is indefensible." It's indefensible.

Surprisingly, the previous government "failed to conduct a thorough assessment or review of the potential impact of undertaking a megaproject such as the Muskrat Falls Project, and of its potential cost overruns, on the future financial position of the Province." – on the future financial position of the province.

The reason we find ourselves in the financial position we find ourselves in today is because we're saddled with a project that every single Newfoundlander and Labradorian, taxpayer and ratepayer will have to pay for generations and generations to come.

It's astounding when we hear somebody referencing back to a budget that we brought in, in 2016. Is anybody on this side of the House proud of having to bring in a budget in 2016 that we had to bring in? There were choices. There were mistakes in that budget, and there's nobody in this province, me included, would ever try and say there weren't. But you have to remember, we were coming in and finding a situation that there was no way to deal with what we had been left with without drastic measures.

"There is also no doubt that GNL politicians and officials must be faulted for failing to provide a reasonable level of oversight of Nalcor, for placing an unjustified amount of trust and blind faith in that corporation and for the naivety that they demonstrated in accepting, without a comprehensive independent review, Nalcor's DG3 cost estimate and schedule" and risks.

It was the previous administration that took that Public Utilities Board and removed it; an independent oversight body that is there to protect Newfoundlanders and Labradorians from these types of mistakes. They took that body out of that decision.

They also brought in a bill, Bill 29, to hide behind. They brought in a bill, a bill that today and days later – give credit where credit is due. In late 2015, they repealed Bill 29, but, unfortunately, the damage of Bill 29 was done.

Bill 29 accomplished what it was set out to do. Bill 29, I feel, was set out to hoodwink the people of this province so the questions wouldn't be asked. The Public Utilities Board was removed from the process so the questions wouldn't be asked, and it was our government that brought the Public Utilities Board back in to get us to where we are now.

This report also goes on to say – this inquiry also goes on to say that it was this government, under our Premier's leadership, that actually brought stability to the project in 2016-2017. We put the project back on a solid footing for the project that it was.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to take my place, but I think in the days to come every single one of us in this House need to reflect – we all seriously need to reflect that a lot the reason of why we are where we are today is that 30 per cent of our provincial debt is this.

We talk about the things we'd all like to see. I can speak for all 40 Members of this House, I do believe, when I talk about what we all want to see. We all want to see a future for our children. We all want to see safe and comfortable communities. We want to make sure our seniors, those that have given so much, are comfortable. Mr. Chair, when a province is put in a situation where \$1 billion a year goes into interest payments – a lot of it courtesy of Muskrat Falls – there are things we can't provide because of the amount of debt that this project has given us.

I would encourage the people of Newfoundland and Labrador over the coming days to take some time and read the Muskrat Falls report. I'll give a little hint, read Volume 1 and Volume 4. If your time is limited, read Volume 1 and read Volume 4. They are two of the smaller volumes and they will give you an opportunity to see where this misguided project has left the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Main.

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There are many issues that I want to focus on today, but I think the first question that was raised by the Member for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde was, why are we here today? Of course the Member will engage in the blame game, which is typical. We need to be, I would submit, more objective in answering that question.

I first will draw attention to the *Report to the House of Assembly: On the Audit of the Financial Statements of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador* by the Auditor General. I would say that it is interesting to note that the Auditor General does acknowledge and point out that there is also a structural deficit we have to deal with. Structural deficit is a systemic – it's a structural issue that has occurred.

Mr. Chair, I would submit to you that when the opposite Member tries to get into the blame game with respect to the previous administration, he needs to be fair and objective in his analysis.

When we look at, for example, one of the greatest minds that ever lived, Albert Einstein, who said we have to: "Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow." We don't deny that we learned from our mistakes, but it's important to note that Albert Einstein said: "The important thing is not to stop questioning." As an Official Opposition, we intend to do that of our government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: One of the biggest questions, Mr. Chair, is: what has happened in the past five years? We need to look at that. We need to acknowledge some of the scholars that have weighed in on this issue.

I was proud to attend a fiscal symposium in February, at which time there were many political and economic thinkers who weighed in

on the situation of our fiscal crisis. They focused on things like, what are the reasonable solutions? We need to have respectful conversations about the solutions, not the negative blame game that we've been seeing.

These experts and these political thinkers and these academics from our university, economists and political scientists say that we need to get away from the negative blaming. Doctor Locke himself referenced that negative blaming and the tone of most discussions, the finger pointing. He said we're not going to solve the problems of the province's considerable debt load by engaging in this negative blaming.

Mr. Chair, as was recognized in this symposium, we need to focus on collective progress, and that's what the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador expect from us. We have to take important steps towards developing a positive vision for our beloved Newfoundland and Labrador and figuring out the actions needed to make that vision a reality. We need to have more engaged scholarships like this. We need to have discussions and investigations and – as has been acknowledged by many of our academics at the university – we need to make decisions on evidence. Evidence based decision-making is key.

One of the professors, Prof. Dr. Russell Williams from the political science department, said we need to clean sheet it. I thought that was profound. He said: We need to look at policies in other jurisdictions. We need to have more innovation. We need to look at things like that in order to move forward.

There's no more doom and gloom. Let's get past that. Negativity has to stop. Our youth and all of us have heard enough of this rhetoric and these politics. We have to look at the problems. Dr. Russell Williams had said: "The shattering chaos of his own government is the reason we don't have a provincial budget" that's working. "Things are falling apart while these guys play games."

We heard from Prof. Williams who said: "I know so many excellent public servants in this province. If there is one thing that drives them to depression it is the extent to which 'evidence' is not part of how we do things."

Prof. Tomblin said: Newfoundland and Labrador “really requires evidence-informed decision making and less politics.” We have to do better. “That has not been happening,” Dr. Tomblin said, “whether energy-environmental restructuring, health care, municipal affairs, even intergovernmental relations.” We need to have more evidence-based, informed decision-making in our policies and less politics.

Mr. Chair, I would submit to you that we first of all have to look at that important approach. When we go forward, we have to recognize we’re a province; we’re so rich in opportunities to build on. We should be seizing these opportunities, like in ocean technology. We should be seizing opportunities in aviation. We’re just capable of so much more. We should be one of the leaders in population growth and job growth, yet when we look, we see that the out-migration is a very serious issue for us.

For example, the outlook really appears bleak. Under a medium-growth scenario, the province’s population will ebb to 460,000 people by 2043, a decline of 65,000 people –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: – 12.4 per cent from 2018, according to StatsCan projection published in the fall. There is no scenario in which the province doesn’t lose tens of thousands of residents.

Again, these are issues that are serious, but we need to embrace these problems that we have in a spirit of positive, not negative, not blaming. Let’s try to focus on moving forward.

When I look at, for example, Mr. Chair, my district, there are many issues that we see there that have people very concerned. Whether we look at the family doctor shortage, one of the biggest issues facing people of my District of Harbour Main, I hear constantly from concerned constituents about the fact they don’t have a family doctor. I hear that they’re fearful of what they’re going to do. We need to urge the government to implement the recommendations set out by the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association’s forecast and plan.

People are fearful at this time in my district about family doctor shortages, but they’re also fearful about the roads. I’m inundated with calls, emails, texts, office visits, people dropping in – pleas from people, individual residents and local municipal leaders and groups. They’re expressing grave concerns and legitimate fears about the deplorable condition of the roads in the District of Harbour Main.

There are concerns about these conditions. They say they’re badly in need of repair and repaving. It’s not only in my district, other districts as well. The potholes, the ruts, the limited shoulders, these are making the roads also dangerous to drive on. It’s serious for vehicles that travel every day. People are experiencing damage to their vehicles. I’ve heard so many individuals calling, frustrated and angry. They’re encouraging damage to their tires, to the rims because the patched up work that’s done on the roads is just not adequate. These are legitimate concerns about the roads and people are concerned.

I had a councillor from South River contact me recently. They’re swerving to avoid potholes. They’re concerned that there are going to be dangerous collisions. Our office, almost daily, are contacting highway depots in our district to address these problems. We have like a direct line to the highway depots to try to get them out to address these, or at least give notice to the people of the district. Those are some of the issues.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. DINN: Mr. Chair, I’m going to start by just referencing the Parliamentary Guide, in particular the part of the Parliamentary Guide that refers to Interim Supply which, according to this guide, says: “The Interim Supply Bill authorizes an advance of approximately one-quarter of the amount of funding contained in the main estimates. This funding permits Government to cover the needs of the public service from the end of the fiscal year until the

end of June, or until the Main Supply Bill is passed.”

I can't help but wonder that whether we would even have to have a debate over amendments and subamendments if that's what we were presented with to begin with, because that's what started this.

I think in many ways – I want to draw your attention as well to the interruption we faced here in the House yesterday. I want to link these two. We got a pretty good telling off by a member of the public who was very frustrated, very angry, hurt, you name it – afraid, yes. We probably deserved it in many ways, but I think that person represents an awful lot of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are looking to guidance and to some answers here.

It probably gives us the seriousness of what we're about, whether it's an Interim Supply bill or coming up with a budget. Because really I don't know if it matters much – I don't know if we should be in the position where there should be some sort of a quid pro quo around Interim Supply. Well, we'll bring it in a shorter one, as has been suggested. We'd come up with a regular Interim Supply if one side of the House promises not to bring down government or call an election, or cause an election to be called.

I think it's really very much about a matter of confidence and about working together and to finding some solutions. Working together doesn't mean we're not going to argue and debate and disagree, but there's got to be that sense of confidence there in each other that we're working together to find some solutions from the best of our abilities as well. That should be the only quid pro quo.

We need to commit to basically coming up with a budget that is reasonable and that meets the needs of the people of this province. If anything else, I've sat in this House now since I was elected and listened to the number of petitions on one hand that come forward that basically ask for an increase in spending and then commentary that we need to control spending. That's the balance.

We have the Muskrat Falls report out, and many ways we've sat here and listened to this, and it's

a bit reminiscent of the arsonist and the firefighter blaming each other for why the house burned down. The house is burnt down, where do we go from here?

In many ways maybe there's enough blame to go around for all – and not just within this House, but to the public as well. Whatever it was, misguided or not, regardless of what side of the House we're on, we're going to share in this. But the bigger question is, where do we move from here?

So we have that on our plates, we have an Interim Supply. We'll have a budget to deal with, but I can tell you there are other needs out there. I look at education, where I came from, and my colleague in the Official Opposition tweaked a memory of SMART Boards. I think, roughly, a SMART Board is about \$5,000 to replace. Roughly, maybe a bit more.

There's a real push to have schools brought into the 21st century learning. So you can imagine a school that might have 20 or 30 classrooms with 20 or 30 SMART Boards, what that means to replace that technology every, what, five to 10 years at the most? Five, if you're lucky.

In addition, in an attempt to restrict cost, I remember the English School District went to purchasing of TeamBoards, which was a cheaper alternative to SMART Boards. You could get two TeamBoards for the price of one SMART Board. The trouble was they didn't work that well and became glorified TV screens.

Now, my late brother used to have a saying that poor people like us can't afford to buy cheap. So you buy the best possible equipment and best possible gear, because it will last you longer. You can buy gear that will last 10 years, or you can buy five pieces of cheap gear over the 10 years – whatever.

I think in many ways what we've been looking at is how do we buy smart? How do we invest in people? Maybe we have to stop looking in terms of expenditure as investing. We talk about investing in oil. We talk about investing in aquaculture – and, by the way, if we want to talk about misguided, in many ways we're about to enter into the open-sea aquaculture, that's

another misguided project if it ends up destroying our environment.

With education, we talk about children who – you can bring all the education action plans in place that you want, but if you're not addressing poverty in the school systems, if you're not talking about dealing with children who are suffering emotional trauma, anxiety, suicidal thoughts – talk to any school counsellor and you'll find out that the anxiety that we would think is reserved for teenage years, the teenage angst, is actually creeping into the primary and elementary grades. So it starts there. Having sufficient counsellors then is something that is going to be essential, hopefully, to not only turning these children into productive adults, but also a saving to our system.

Health care; if I wanted to have a budget, I think I'd have something with universal dental care for all people, whether they can afford it or not. Why? Poor dental care is probably going to affect your self-esteem, your ability to go out and get a job, or the decision of an employer whether they are going to hire you or not, or even your own physical health. I'm thinking those are just some of the issues when we look at priorities in spending.

Now last year, I referenced that going through the budget process, getting elected was a bit like riding a bicycle except the bicycle is on fire, I'm on fire, everything is on fire. It was a learning experience, but I do remember the whole notion of zero-based budgeting and about finding savings and efficiencies. There are many ways we can find savings and efficiencies without cutting the core investments to the people of this province.

If anything else, snowmageddon – call it what you will – identified certain gaps in the needs of the people facing us, the vulnerable and we have to address them. There's no two ways about it.

I will say this, with regard to – I'll give you an example of one gentleman in my district. He lives frugally, he's on Income Support and he's on a budget plan for electricity. Somehow the electricity rates have gone up, and if you think that doesn't bother people, it does. It scares the hell out of them.

This gentleman is doing his best to survive on a modest income. He has the rooms walled off with curtains to keep the heat confined, very clean, but he's down at one point to \$9 a week for food. That's the gentleman, and many like him, who we're trying to help. He has a choice of starving or starving to death slowly. Before he had to pay back the electricity bill because it got out of hand. He thought he was on a budget plan; he had \$40 a week for food.

I count myself incredibly blessed. When I look at the family growing up, loving parents, parents who were supportive, a father who had steady work and the values that they instilled in us, but for a lot of people out there right now it's not a matter of choice. It's not even the matter that they've chosen this. They have mental health issues; they're dealing with other issues.

When we're talking about this budget, this Interim Supply bill, I think we need to start considering people like the gentleman who lambasted us for a better part of 10 minutes or more and the other people in our districts.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Always when I get up I say it's a pleasure to be on my feet today and to speak as the Member that represents the beautiful District of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair. Mr. Chair, I'm going to say today it turns my stomach to get up for the next 10 minutes and talk about what I'm going to talk about. It turns my stomach what I'm going to spend constituency week reading.

When we look around this Legislature, there are many people weighing in on this today, Mr. Chair, that were not here – they were not here. I was here in 2013; I was on the other side. *Hansard* will show, I, along with my teammates, were on our feet many, many times saying this isn't right. You did not do due diligence – that's what we said repeatedly.

The UARB in Nova Scotia was given the luxury to review the project; yet, Mr. Chair, we see that the PUB – our own PUB – was not given the benefit of looking. I have lived this project, I have eaten and breathed this project for the last six or seven years. I've seen the impact. I've seen the impact in Goose Bay and my colleague's district up in Lake Melville where they said there would be minimal impacts. I've seen the impacts.

My colleague on the other side just talked about poverty reduction and how important it is that we have money to go in schools, how important it is that we have money to address the social issues. We get questions around shelters; we get questions around seniors, around their dental care.

I was asked just the other day, why don't we have a poverty reduction strategy. Mr. Chair, the previous administration in the 2007 budget, the first budget after their Poverty Reduction Strategy, there was \$91 million invested. I want to say today as a government, our investment in Poverty Reduction Initiatives is \$286 million.

I also want to say to the people of the province, the largest anti-poverty reduction initiative to hit this province is Muskrat Falls. Based on the current levels of spending, we see 40 years of poverty reduction initiatives flushed down the Churchill River. I think most people, Mr. Chair, in this House look at me and they say I'm pretty fair, I'm pretty reasonable, I don't care what party you come from; but when you talk about Muskrat Falls, it puts my blood pressure right through the roof. My colleagues will tell you, too, because I've seen the impacts of nobody listening.

They brought in Bill 29. It got national media attention: Don't go down the road. It's a very draconian piece of legislation. You're covering things up. Mr. Chair, we led the longest filibuster in the history of this province, 84 hours. What did the PC government of the day do? They invoked closure, shut down democracy, brought in Bill 29 and covered everything up. What happened after that? There was another Committee put in place that cost the taxpayers over a million dollars and then they changed it, Mr. Chair.

I do get really upset because every day – I'm in a large social department – I see the needs of this province. When we had a project that was sold to the people of this province, a bill of goods for \$6.6 billion and now we're up to \$12.7 billion, we're going to saddle the people of this province for 50 years to come.

I hear Members opposite saying: Stop the blame game. You're there; you've had five years to govern. What have you done? You've increased fees. What do you do when you're passed the keys and you think you have a billion-dollar deficit and it's \$2.4 billion? We were in very, very shaky territory, Mr. Chair.

My first interview after I went into Cabinet, staff were briefing me: You're going down to NTV; you're going to sit in studio; he's going to ask you this and this and this about the department. Do you know what happened, Mr. Chair? They didn't want to know anything about the department I was in. They said: You spoke out so much against Muskrat Falls, why didn't your government stop it when you formed government?

So I took the time, Mr. Chair, to tell the people of this province, there was nothing that I wanted more. My colleague, Randy Edmunds, who was here; Lake Melville, those of us who the project was in our backyard, we wanted nothing more than to stop it.

The Minister of Natural Resources will know, the very first briefings we had as a government was on this project. What did we find out? If there's one thing they did right, they locked us in. The legalities, we couldn't get out. We had a federal loan guarantee and if we defaulted on that loan, any benefits that eventually came from the project were going to accrue to the Government of Canada.

We had a line built – Emera – over to Nova Scotia in exchange for power. We were locked into that. We had a subsea cable over \$1 billion going across the Strait of Belle Isle, we were locked into that. We had five major pieces around the world being built, Mr. Chair, customized for the lower generating station. We were locked into that.

Today, I feel somewhat vindicated that this report says we passed the point of no return in November 2013. So that point of no return was passed before we formed government.

So it's not about the blame game. It's about a government of the day that had \$20 billion in oil royalties and spent like drunken sailors, because my –

AN HON. MEMBER: Twenty-four.

MS. DEMPSTER: Twenty-four billion dollars in oil royalties, Mr. Chair.

The only reason I stepped up, the only reason that I got involved is I represent a portion of Labrador where we were weighed in the balance and found wanting again and again and again. We had gravel roads. We had no form of communication. All our communities, we didn't have water and sewer. We were not benefitting in this province and I got involved.

Then to see this fifth largest megaproject in the world being built in our backyard. We're only 526,000 people. We could not afford it. Every weekend I went back to my district in those early years in '13 and '14, and I would see these large towers going across the land. I would see the land destroyed. No consultation with Indigenous people, complete upheaval in Labrador, but they ploughed through. Corporate arrogance, Mr. Chair, and the project went on.

Here we are today, I really take exception when Members say it's the blame game. Mr. Chair, it's about informing people of why we are where we are today. It's about educating the people on why we don't have the money today to do the things we want to do.

Do you think any of us in this government, Mr. Chair –

MR. BYRNE: A point of order, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Point of order.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Chair, I cannot hear the hon. Member speaking. There is a considerable amount of noise coming from the aisles opposite.

CHAIR: There is no point of order, but we ask Members to keep –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. DEMPSTER: It's really appalling, Mr. Chair, that we have a report today and the Opposition are laughing and joking about it. It is really, really appalling.

What I'm doing is saying none of us on this side took pleasure in bringing in budget '16, going home to our districts and being hammered. This is the reality. This is the project. This is the boondoggle, Mr. Chair. This is the problem.

The Leader of the Opposition, quoting from him in a VOXM article on February 19, he said: Changing the premier is merely changing the lipstick on the pig. It's still the same pig. So I say based on this, Mr. Chair, to the people of the province, what does that mean about this administration that sanctioned Muskrat Falls? Does that mean we're merely changing lipstick on the pig? Some of those Members who were not here, based on what their current leader would have said today.

He also said: The new leader will have to accept the baggage of previous leaders. So I would ask the hon. Opposition today, are you accepting the baggage of Muskrat Falls and the damage that it has done?

We talk about food security; food security is complicated when you go to explain it, but what are the measurements? The marginal measurement of food security is the worry, people worrying about food.

I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that in this province, and I hear from them every week –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. DEMPSTER: I ask the Member for Conception Bay, would you just respect me enough to let me speak? Would you respect me enough to let me speak on this project? This is a serious issue we are dealing with in our province

and you've already taken a couple of minutes of my time.

So, Mr. Chair –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. DEMPSTER: The Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island thinks it's theatrics. I'll tell you, it's not theatrics for the seniors out there that are losing sleep, can't sleep for fear of the doubling of electricity rates. We didn't cause it, but we are getting this province back on track and we're going to continue to do that.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to speak on the Interim Supply. I stand here to represent the people of Exploits. That's who put me here, and they put me here, Mr. Chair, because of things that went on in the district.

I just listened to the minister; there were a lot of people that weren't here, Minister. There were a lot of people that weren't here. I was one of them. But I did get elected in 2019 because of things that you fellows took away from us. That's why I was elected.

AN HON. MEMBER: Why did you take it?

MR. FORSEY: Why did you take it? When you took away the 24-hour emergency service in Botwood, you forgot to take one thing. You forgot to take away the need for it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FORSEY: So that needed to go back.

MS. DEMPSTER: Point of order.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair on a point of order.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Chair, I say to the people of the province, you can't get blood from a turnip. They left us broke and that's why things were taken away.

CHAIR: There's no point of order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. FORSEY: I'm losing time, too, Mr. Chair.

Anyway, Mr. Chair, yes, we do need –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair is finding it very hard to hear the speakers.

The Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: Mr. Chair, a three-month Supply – yes, we need Interim Supply to pay our essential workers that's there; we really do. They are very important to us. We need to have money put aside to use in case something happens, like if the government keeps going with their star candidate there, we might have to go pretty fast.

Mr. Chair, also in my district, of course, the biggest one was health. The health care in Botwood, that really hurt and then the taxes, levies and fees came in. Roads in my area are disgraceful. The parts of the province – it goes down to Fortune Harbour, Leading Tickles and Peterview; all those outlying areas really need attention and the people are tired of driving over it.

Another big thing in my area, Mr. Chair, is the economy. There's been nothing done to touch the economy. We have an abundance of forestry in there and not a thing being done in regard to looking at any industry in the forestry to be taken into consideration so that we could have some use for that forestry.

We have some mining situations that are happening in that area now, Mr. Chair, which is good. There's nothing wrong with it. We need

more emphasis on that, in creating employment for our area because that is one thing the people need.

Mr. Chair, having said all that, yes, we do need the Interim Supply put in and I'm sure they'll get their Interim Supply. But like I say, the roads and health care in the district, that is a big one. I'm hearing stories of the health care, of people needing 24-hour emergency services not there; it's been taken away in the nighttime. They're trying to get to Grand Falls-Windsor, the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre in the nighttime, in storms. I know I've heard the minister say that it only takes 20 minutes. It doesn't take 20 minutes on a stormy night. The Premier here yesterday told me I was playing politics with it. Well, I wasn't the one who made the promise, he did, but I would say that he should hold up to his promise and get that back opened again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FORSEY: If anybody played politics, it was the Premier in 2019 when he said he would reopen it. We'd like to see that done.

But anyway, Mr. Chair, other than that, I'm sure that's enough – I'll leave that alone on Interim Supply right now. I'll let another Member take time with it. But when I hear the Opposition over there saying that we've made mistakes, well, I only just got here – I only just got here. Not even a year ago yet. So I won't take any blame for what happened.

Anyway, Mr. Chair, thank you for your time.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I certainly appreciate the opportunity to stand up and speak. No surprise, I guess, I want to speak about the Muskrat Falls report. I haven't had the chance to really read it. I skimmed through a few little things there in the summary. I, like the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, my stomach has turned as well. My stomach has probably turned more than her stomach has turned, because at least at the end of the day she

is able to stand up and honestly say that she spoke out against it and she voted against it.

I don't have that luxury, as I've said in this House many times. I voted for the project, but I didn't do so to put us in the mess that we're in today. I did not do so out of malice. I had absolutely nothing to gain from voting for it. I have to live here, my family has to live here, my friends, my neighbours – they all have to live here. They all have to suffer because of the outcome of this project. I have no business interest whatsoever. I had no reason whatsoever to do anything other than what I felt was the right thing to do at the time, based on the information provided.

Now, the Minister of Transportation and Works did read a section there and it talked about an overreliance on government to simply take the advice of Nalcor. That's what's in this report, and I absolutely agree that that is exactly what's happened. I would say, though, for Members of caucus of the day, which is no different than caucus today, caucus on that side, caucus on the government side would say that not only in our system of democracy is there a reliance on the so-called experts and people who we believe have the expertise in our agencies, boards and commissions, our deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers and so on, to give good advice and give proper advice and give honest advice. As an aside it's interesting the Minister of Service NL talked about this is Fraud Prevention Month – perfect timing, I'll say that.

But we do rely on those people. If you are a Member of caucus, not only are you relying on that advice but you're also relying on Cabinet, because Cabinet are really the people that call the shots. They're the people that call the shots at the end of the day. They're getting a lot more briefings than Members of caucus are getting.

Caucus is only getting fed a little bit of information basically and a few briefings, in this case, just to say this is what we're doing, we need the power and this is the low-cost option. We were presented with reports that looked at liquefied natural gas, looked at piping in natural gas from our offshore, looked at wind, looked at the small hydro and, in all those reports and in the information that was provided to caucus, who are not experts, just ordinary lay people

who were just elected in their districts because they care about their communities and thought they had something to offer, they were provided with that information and told, (a), we need the power and, (b), Muskrat Falls is the low-cost option.

That's what we were told. I was a Member who would have sat in a caucus room – never got a lot of briefings but we had a few – and people named in this report sitting across or standing across the room and spouting the absolute lies – and that's what it is. It's referenced in here and that's what it was: lies to myself, to my colleagues. That's exactly what happened.

Yes, there were questions asked. Were they deep questions? I'm sure there are people who are critics of the projects who were warning at the time, who really researched it and have that knowledge who would question you should have asked more, you should have said this, you should have asked that, you should have listened to us – and I understand why they would feel that way. I absolutely understand why they would feel that way, but you have to appreciate that, at the time, you come into government, you come into a caucus and you're relying on the people there who you believe know what they're doing and you believe is telling you the truth.

You rely on your colleagues in the Cabinet who would be privy to all the information and would have asked all the technical questions and would have gotten a lot more technical briefings than a Member of caucus would get. You have to put some faith and trust in them that they know what they're doing and that they're not lying to you.

Then it comes down to, do you believe them or do you believe some guy on Twitter?

Ultimately, that's what it came down to. You have a few people on Twitter saying this is wrong, so who are you going to believe? You don't know these people. That's kind of what happened.

I honestly believe that as one Member what I was being told. Now, what we found out through the inquiry and what we're finding out here is it was nothing but a pack of lies. This was something I brought up in this House of Assembly months ago, probably over a year ago, calling on our government – and I wrote the

Premier, I wrote the Minister of Justice, I raised it in this House numerous times – to refer these matters to the police, refer them to Justice for civil litigation.

It took some time. I was kind of impatient but I think now in retrospect it's the right move, even though there were a lot of people wanting it done immediately. Now that we have it, now that we have this here, I want to commend the minister, commend the Premier, commend the government for referring this matter to the RNC, RCMP, whoever it's going to be, for investigation. I want to commend them for referring it to Justice, hopefully, for some civil litigation. That's what I've heard in the media that being done.

I also want to say that we need to take it a step further. Even if there was no criminal activity, even if there was nobody that is going to be sued as a result of this, I can guarantee you from what I've just read so far, there are definitely people that need to be fired, pink slips handed out, 100 per cent.

I certainly call upon our government to have all the individuals that are noted in this report, and even people who are still working for government by the way, those that haven't already slipped out with a million-dollar settlement or multi-million-dollar settlements or hundreds of thousands of dollars in severance – which I was totally against and brought up in this House; never should have allowed it to happen. I do understand the rationale given – I absolutely do – but to my mind, so what; let them take it to court. Let them fight for their money. They wouldn't get a dime if it was me. Or at least they wouldn't get it very easily.

But I say to the minister now, now that we have this report, individuals identified, even people whose names may not exactly appear in this report, but I guess would have been involved with these individuals who would have been complicit in some of the things here, anyone that had any dealings with this, they need to be looked at from an HR perspective. Whether it be negligence or whether it be absolute total incompetence, whatever it might be, and pink slips need to be issued. It's not good enough, it's not acceptable and there has to be

accountability. Now we find ourselves where we do.

I will say, though, that the minister talked about Bill 29, and I absolutely understand his issues around Bill 29. But just to make the record clear, even with Bill 29 changed, Bill 29 didn't really impact Muskrat Falls; it didn't really impact Nalcor. Because the *Energy Corporation Act*, under even the current ATIPPA, exempts Nalcor. That's something I've raised in this House numerous times as well. The current ATIPP Act exempts Nalcor. So even today as we speak in the oil and gas corporation and in Nalcor, they're still able to hide information on everything that's going on all under this commercial sensitivity. BS – and that's what it is.

Again, I call on the minister and the government now, if we're serious about this as we move forward, we need to look at the access to information act, we need to have Nalcor and OilCo fall under it and let the Privacy Commissioner determine what's commercially sensitive and what's not and what could be released to the public so we don't get into this kind of mess again.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just sitting here, I attentively listened to all this stuff going on. Again, with some of my colleagues here who haven't been here before, my one statement is: Can we be different? I was hoping we'd be different. Every time we just start to get to a bit of a reality, we sort of go back the way we were all the time. We seem to want to go back to the old style ways. It's disappointing.

We're all here to do a job that people put us here to do, to represent your district, to take care of the people in your district and take care of the province. We all want to go back to the blame game and it's just so disappointing – on both sides. It's just there's no need for it. We should

get on with the job at hand. That report has done its job and it's going to continue to do its job, and you can speak on it. I know they are not going to go away from it, but I was hoping we were going to be different and that we can try to get to that, but it doesn't seem we're going to get that way.

I'm probably going to jump all over the place here, district-related stuff that's been going on here, just some of the positive things that has been going on in my district. During the winter carnival with the Bay Bulls to Bauline Athletic Association, I had a chance to attend probably seven or eight events, whether it be down to an old-age home with a 100-year-old lady on her birthday, which I'm hoping to have in for a Member's statement, if the weather is fine tomorrow, if not, we're prolong it until when she can get in; to a card game to a group that's hosting a card game; to a seniors' 50-plus dance in Bay Bulls with communities from Trepassey to Goulds and also the 50-plus area from Bay Bulls to Bauline, with over 200 people attending.

So those are positive things that are going on. They are able to host those events between the BBAA and the government providing them funding to do this stuff. The previous government did that and this current government is doing it as well. I'm not going to put the blame game – I probably will blame something here along the way when I start talking, but that blame game for me, I'm going to try and stay clear of it.

We've been asking questions. The MHA for St. John's Centre had brought up about teachers. We have teachers here that have been substituting for two years. They probably have to substitute for five year before they ever have a chance to get a job. They're going to end up leaving this province and there is not much we can do about it. The unions have their own contract in place. It's very disappointing. My daughter is one of those and, hopefully, she is not going to go anywhere, but it's sad to see people go.

They have five or six years that they'll put into their career and they'll end up going away. We're talking about trying to keep numbers here. Obviously, when people stay here we have

tax dollars, but they're going to leave. We have to try to curve that at some point in time to solve that issue.

Also, when he was talking about teaching, he was talking about custodians. We have people who are in these schools who are custodians that are taking care of schools. Ladies mostly, I'm going to say, up our way that are taking care of these schools and they don't have enough help. Listening to them and speaking to them, they'd like to have extra help. They have to clean the classrooms. Some of these classes don't even leave the classroom for the day. In elementary schools, they're full; they have no other rooms to go to. These custodians have a lot of work to clean up these areas.

They don't get an empty room. They're going in there with all this gear. They have their dinner there. They have everything that goes on during the day, so it's pretty disappointing that they would have to do that and not get the help that's needed.

During Snowmageddon we had seven or eight guys that were in our group. We had volunteered, or a lady had asked me to go up and see if we could help clear out the school doors before it opened. We weren't allowed to go do it, which is fair. It's union and I could understand that, but the custodian wasn't able to do it. She was there by herself; she wasn't able to do it.

It did get done. They sent people there, it took time to get done, but we were doing something that was going to help the community and we just couldn't go do it. That's fair. We stayed away and not to cause any trouble. But that's the kind of thing that us as Newfoundlanders will try to do to make everything move forward. So those kind of things are a bit disappointing.

We had a great session here this morning, a positive thing, I thought, on coronavirus. Just to throw that out there. I thought it was very informative, so hopefully we will be able to keep forward with that.

When we're in here – and that gentleman was up there the other day, as the MHA for St. John's Centre had said, he's right. We're in here talking and there's no one listening. I think I spoke on

the *Highway Traffic Act* a little while ago, and I'm not saying just because I brought it up it's going to be the right idea, but I think it's something we should entertain.

You're talking about speeding in school zones, slowing people down going through the zones, and not every school has that. In the district in Mobile, the main road, yeah, there's a 50-kilometre sign, it has a flashing light; but in an area like the Goulds, where you're going down towards the elementary school, it's no problem to go 50 to 60 kilometres there. It's a fair stretch of road. When I went on vacation, they had a traffic light that stopped you. I think I mentioned it before but, again, people are not listening and probably not hearing it, but somebody should go back and look at it.

If you put a camera on each side of that school and people are complaining, then you're hearing a lot of complaints from the parents calling you about speeding in the area and they're going to put police there to traffic the area. If you have a traffic light that's 100 feet away from the school and the light comes on because you're going over 30 or 40 kilometres an hour, then that stops the traffic. Then you have to stop for 10 seconds. There's nothing going on. You stop for 10 seconds. Everybody is a hurry, going everywhere, but just stop. The light turns green and you go again and you pick up your speed. Within 100 feet, you're not going to be going 60, 70 kilometres through that school zone.

It's something that I think should definitely be looked at. I don't know the cost. It's easy for me to say that, but it's safety and that's what we're trying to preach to as a province-wide thing. It's not my district. There are other districts that have the same issue. We should be looking at that kind of stuff. That will bring stuff forward for everybody to be happy and successful for the whole province, not just for your own district. It will be every province. Again, it will be something to look at.

When we sit here and we think on that gentleman yesterday, we do have to listen to each other. I'm trying to listen. I see a lot of people over there are trying to listen and hopefully get stuff out of it.

For me, personally, I'm trying to get something done for a district. I might have to speak to a minister over here, and I have no idea where to go. I'm in my first 10 months here. I have no idea who to ask, other than your CA. If I didn't have a CA who was here for five years previous, I'd be like some of my constituents here that they'd be lost, and she's helping those people out along the way. It's not an easy job to do.

Just for everybody to help each other out. We have to get there, we really do. We have to get away from this rhetoric that we get into and we have to get back to doing the job we're supposed to do.

I was in the car industry up until last year. In 2016, when the budget came out there were 300 taxes in total that were out there. Again, I'm not laying blame. I said I would get back to it a little bit and not to lay blame because you're trying to change your revenue source and trying to get the economy going, but that sort of stifled it a bit in the car industry. People were hanging on to a car for five years, now it's going to be six years or seven years.

In here, our job – when you start talking negative, and we're talking oil prices and everything else, people start to think and they start to slow down. That's where the economy goes. That's down roots, right where it's to. Cut all the garbage out of it, that's where it's to.

That's what people are listening to on the radio: oil prices, coronavirus, and we need to try to be positive and get it on the right track. It's something that we really need to work on, and how we do it. I'm not sure, but we have to be together. We can't be this way; we have to be like that.

We're getting briefings along the way, getting information on stuff. Every time we do something it's always, why are they doing that? It's always a negative thought. We have to get to some positive thoughts here to make this work better. I think that's very important for the whole group, and not just this side or that group down there, it has to be everybody.

When you're working here yourself, you're working for a family. I'm trying to keep my family here, and everybody is trying to keep

their family here. We don't want everybody to go away. Again, we have to figure this out, how we're going to keep people here. There's no more two ways than that. How are we going to keep people here, to stay to work and pay taxes and run this economy?

We have to get people happy and in the mood. We just get so much negativity out of this that we have to try to turn that around. Hopefully, in the next – I don't know how long it's going to be, but hopefully in the next term we'll be able to do that.

Thank you very much for your time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Minister of Transportation opened up his commentary by: Why are we here today? That's something we kind of need to reflect on every day. I often have thought on that, really when I come to it, the simple and painful reason is since 1949 we, as a province, have overspent and continue to do it. Political has always trumped economical and the practical.

Now, let's go off and lighten the moment. I'm going to share with you a little sentiment that I had yesterday.

I was sitting here in the House of Assembly as we were going through normal proceedings and bing, my phone went off, a text had come in and it was from my daughter. She said to me: Dad, your cows are doing whatever they want. They've eaten all the hay, now they're out digging up the snow and eating next year's crop. They're making a mess everywhere and I'm not cleaning it up. They're not generating any revenue, why are you continuing to put money into them?

Anyway, I guess I have a particular affection towards my animals and I just kind of dismissed it. But later that day, I went home yesterday evening and I was down in the barn looking after the cows, and I just said: Yeah, you must all

have spring fever now and you're out roaming around. Stay in the barn and be good.

Do you know what? I thought about what my daughter said. Basically, what the cows were doing was they had used all the resources they had contributed to pay for, now they were looking ahead. They were eating next year's crop of hay. And my daughter said to me: I'm not cleaning it up. So that's the next generation.

I looked at each one of those cows and I said: All right, step up to the table here, darling. Every one of them, I had to look at: Are they going to be profitable in the future? Am I going to be able to justify taking money out of my pocket and buying hay to keep those cows around? Now, some of them didn't quite make the grade so we'll have a big sale on hamburger next week. But, folks, I know while that's amusing, let's apply it to our situation.

The focus of many of the previous administrations, and this current administration, has been to increase the exploitation rate of our resources. Between the *Advance 2030* and *Mining the Future 2030*, we're looking at accelerating exhaustion of commodities that, really, we have no control over as it pertains to price nor demand.

As a matter of fact, when you look at *Advance 2030* when it comes to oil production, we're basing our future on a commodity that will be inevitably less in demand. So what we have to do – again, I'll go back to my farming experience – is while we're a big farm in Newfoundland, we're a very small in the realm of farming when it comes to North American farms. We had to look at – just as the province should look at – instead of increasing the size of our economy, we have to increase the value of our economy. We have to look at increasing the amount of return we get for our resources. Not only does it make economic sense, but it is also a responsible and sustainable way to develop our resources.

Every barrel of oil that we take out of the ground, every spoonful of mineral that we take from the soil is oil or mineral that will never be there again. We're taking it from future generations, so it's irresponsible of us to accelerate that to a point where it's gone

quicker. What we have to concentrate on doing is getting a higher value for those products.

I'm a big believer that money doesn't solve all problems, and that can definitely be applied to our economy. It's been said time and time again by experts who specialize in the financial markets, in the financial stability of companies, countries and provinces that revenue is not a problem. That's been said over and over again to the point of – I'll quote the Minister of Justice's favourite thing – ad nauseam, over and over again to the point of making us sick hearing it. Do you know what? Working people with money is what solves economies, working people who have good jobs, who can see a future here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We, as politicians, control, to a certain degree, people's perspectives on the future. If I got up here and started talking doom and gloom and dark clouds, people are going to believe it. What we saw in 2016, regardless of what challenges this administration faced, the inappropriate message was delivered. Yes, there were fiscal challenges ahead of us. Yes, there were fiscal challenges that were out of our control, but the reality is Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have never, ever been afraid to rise to a challenge. We have never been afraid to take on the challenge, nor should we have been then.

What happened were even people who had disposable income zipped up their purses, zipped up their wallets, kept their money in their pockets. What happened, everybody? We all know. The economy ground to a halt. We came out of almost a decade of what I would consider was buoyant enthusiasm in our province's history. We were going everywhere in the whole entire world with our heads up.

What has happened since then? We all get calls to our constituency offices, we all get calls from other offices; people who are desperate, people who are looking for a path to not just prosperity, a path to survival. When you look at the rates of bankruptcies, marriage breakups and mental health issues – and the most tragic statistic in our province's history, we now have what is rumoured to be the highest rate of self-harm and suicide in our province's history.

That's all about perception. Yes, people have very real issues. Yes, people have very real challenges; there's no doubt. There is no doubt that our economy is suffering but we, as politicians, we, as leaders of our people, have to step forward.

Winston Churchill said: When you're marching through hell, what do you do? Did anybody ever hear of that one?

AN HON. MEMBER: You keep going.

MR. LESTER: You keep on marching; that's right. That's a quote that I often refer to in my own life. Up until I was about 31 or 32 –

AN HON. MEMBER: Last year.

MR. LESTER: Yeah, that's right, last year. It seems like half a lifetime ago.

My wife and I, we raised three kids on minimum wage. We maintained a household. We took extra jobs, outside of working for my parents, to make a go of it. Then myself and my wife decided we were going to go out and step out on our own. The first two or three years that we went out in business on our own, we made less than minimum wage. We maxed out every credit card, we maxed out our lines of credit, but we were investing in our future.

That's why when you look at debt – I don't think that debt should be a scary thing. Debt is not a scary thing as long as it's the appropriate type of debt. But if you are looking at keeping the lights on in your house, the everyday expenses of a household, again this is something that's been spoken to many times over, you cannot continue to afford to borrow money to keep the lights on. You can do it for a very short period of time, but we've done it now for how many years in a row?

Oh, my tie is off. I'd like to point out my nice sealskin tie, everybody.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. LESTER: In closing, I want everybody to reflect on where we are in the province today. Can anybody actually say that we feel like we're in a better place than we were five, six years

ago? Can anybody say that you've not woken up in the middle of the night and really worried about where your children are going to be? Are you going to have the privilege of seeing your children stay here in Newfoundland and Labrador and grow and prosper and have children of their own?

For the reality of many people in my district, they don't have that privilege. While we say resettlement is not a policy, it's a very ongoing reality of our population. People are moving to where there are areas of more perceived opportunity.

Mr. Chair, Newfoundland and Labrador, as we'll all in this House agree, is a place abound with opportunity. We have more resources per capita than anywhere else in North America and, arguably, anywhere else in the world. We're faced with challenges right now, but I would like to say to my fellow MHAs, those watching and those who are not: People of this glorious province, within every challenge there is opportunity and it is an opportunity to prosper and triumph.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have spoken a couple of times today, so I won't take up a lot of time. I did have to stand with the two previous speakers, actually, and say it was refreshing. To hear the Member for Ferryland actually offer suggestions, not just complain, is refreshing. There are only 40 of us in the Legislature. We have an important task to do. To hear suggestions on things that we could be doing, we listen to that. I tuned in. I know other ministers tune in as well.

We've come through a very difficult time in the province over the last three or four years, and the Member for Mount Pearl North just pointed that out as well. We had three megaprojects shut down, with those people looking for work. We've had Alberta affect the province and people bringing home large incomes. We've

gone through a period of transition and it's been difficult. It's been difficult on a lot of people in this province; it's been difficult on 40 Members in the Legislature, who hear the concerns of their constituents. We are in this together and we have to find solutions together.

Like I said, I wasn't going to speak long. I just wanted to stand and say that it was refreshing to hear that. I actually wanted to just say that because it's important for all of us here to hear that; it's important for the people who tune in to hear that we can work together and it's an opportunity. When you have things to suggest and things to offer, we actually listen.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to stand just for a few minutes and speak about a few things. Muskrat Falls will be one part of it.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment. This afternoon I brought up about the Placentia pool and the frustrations that the town council have with it. I just want to thank the minister. He committed to speak to the mayor and that he would –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: – definitely look into it and see how we could get this moving. I just want to thank the minister for that. I say to the mayor and the town council, the minister will speak to the mayor. As I explained – and we went through the whole process – this was in a flood zone, so was the arena, so is the hospital and so is the school that the government built. It's all in the same area. Why it's delayed, I have no idea. The town council has no idea.

Minister, thank you for agreeing to look into that to speed that process up because it is great. They're anticipating it. I know the Lions Club down in Placentia also has agreed to –

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: I don't know if the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's has to say something. You can stand up. Are you all right? Don't go chirping then if you're not going to stand, because I'm helping out the people of Placentia in your own district which are calling me. I was involved with that back in 2015.

Minister, great job. I'm glad to see that you're open for discussions with the town council. I look forward to having this tender out, this RFP out so we get this moving.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to speak on something that's here in the House – we're talking about talking in the House. I agree at times the noise gets a bit high, but to be fair to the government Members, because I was over there also, many times – and Opposition Members also. This is no knocking Opposition Members and I'll explain why. They go over in the corner and meet with ministers to have discussions about issues in their districts. That's part of the process.

What we're forgetting to tell the people in the province is that when we're having discussions, we have what they call *Hansard*. We can go back any time that day and look at what was said in the House of Assembly. This is not because some Member goes across and speaks to a minister about something important in their district that they're not listening, it's that they have an issue and a concern. Sometimes it does get a bit loud and that is the Speaker, and in this case the Chair, that has to ...

So I say to the ministers, I know the work that you do. A lot of times you meet with Opposition Members, meet with your own Members, meet with myself too, and go over and have a chat about issues. That's common. That's how we get stuff done in this House. A lot of times when people go back in their own districts, it's hard to chat with the ministers and they're going to be the decision-makers that you need for the issues. That's just common.

What we have in this House of Assembly is *Hansard*. *Hansard* is something that is done up every day that everybody who stands up and speaks in *Hansard*, Mr. Chair, it's recorded so we can go back and look at what everybody said. It's not uncommon to be speaking in the

House of Assembly because people are working on behalf of their districts. Everybody gets the impression that everybody is just in here just bawling and shouting. We're not; they're valuable discussions that we have. I've done it, I've done it for other people and I still to it today. It's for your district. So it's not that it's not invaluable, just chirping back and forth. It's discussions on major issues.

I also have to bring up the Member for Ferryland when he brought up – and he's correct. A lot of times we need to work together. I can assure you and being here, I don't know if there's one minister across the way in the last two weeks of the Legislature I didn't see speak to someone on the Opposition. People do work together in this House.

Sometimes we get up and we banter; sometimes we get up and then we disagree. But people do work together in this House. This idea that because you're on the Liberal side or you're on the NDP side, on the PC side, you don't get along. We do. This is just the normal process that sometimes you get up and ask questions, you raise issues. You want to have a few concerns. But I know ministers in my two weeks here, I don't know if there's a minister here who never met with someone on the Opposition.

When I was in Opposition, same thing; you should be doing it. There's nothing wrong with that. That's how you get things done, working together and co-operation. So there is a fair amount. There could be more, absolutely, no doubt.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to speak on the Muskrat Falls bit, because I was one of the ones that were in Opposition when we were raising questions about this. I know my history with the Premier, and that's a side show, but I can tell you, Mr. Chair, and I have to speak as it is, when we were in Opposition, there was no person than the leader of the Opposition, who's the Premier of the province now, that delved in to Muskrat Falls more than any person in this House of Assembly. I've got to say that.

That information that the Premier brought on at the time to the caucus Members and all of us dug into it – we all had our own little responsibility and dug into it and bring it back to

the Premier. I've got to say that we tried on so many occasions from the government – and according to the report, some of the information wasn't even given to government. I know then some of the information wasn't even given down to the MHAs who stood and supported that.

But I have to say, when we were in the Opposition and we started the questions on Muskrat Falls and we did the filibuster on Muskrat Falls, the Premier and the whole Opposition, myself, and there were six of us, I think, at the time, we did more research, we got more information and we called more experts in ourselves to come in to sit down. We even sat down with some officials in Natural Resources. The information, we couldn't even get the correct answers ourselves.

I have to say the Premier of the province now, who was in Opposition, did more research on this. So when this report came out, it's sad for Newfoundland and Labrador actually. It's sad for Newfoundland and Labrador on how it went. The Opposition at the time, when people say we didn't ask the questions and we were part of it, I can assure you we stood here for five days, 24 hours a day, in this House of Assembly trying to bring it to the attention of the people of the province.

I know my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands said a lot of government Members didn't have this information; I agree with that. I'll be the first one – when I was in government talking about how you made the decisions, now we know why: We didn't have the proper information. I agree. I know the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island was a part of it too and he never had the information. Even here now, they're saying they never had the information.

To it all now, we are facing a very tough time in the Muskrat Falls situation because of the debt. Somewhere along the line we all have to start saying what suggestions can we have with this. With that is going to come some of our own biases because we hear today problems with roads in certain parts of Newfoundland, problem with potholes which is fine – we all get them – with the schools.

We have to find some way to come together and say, okay, what is it that we can live with. What is it that we can live with and how can we move on from here? I can assure you when we all walk outside of this House of Assembly, when we all go our own separate ways, when we're back in our districts, issues related to our district, people aren't worried about what we're discussing in here, it's the issues in their district.

We have to try to balance that, as MHAs, the needs in our districts for what we're going through, because the person who is going to be on the spot most is the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance is the one that when it comes into Treasury Board has to say aye or nay to this amount of money for schools, this amount of money for transportation and works. That's where it's going to lie.

I've been on both ends. I've been in the Opposition back in 1999 up to 2003, so I've been on both sides. I can relate to both Opposition and government – I can relate. If we could find some way that we can offer suggestions, yet stand up for your district and find some way to say okay we're into a problem here, how can we face it together.

I know sometimes we're going to stand up and banter we should do this. Government is going to say no, you had your chance. I did it. I make no bones about it; I did it. Sometimes you might say you might have went a bit too far, but I guarantee you one thing though, and I know the government Members the same thing, I don't know if there's a government Member over there in my time in government back in 2003 to now that never met with an Opposition Member to discuss things that could help their district and their province. So we do work together.

This is a major crisis for Newfoundland and Labrador with the drop in oil. If that stays down, this is a crisis, but we have to find ways. I know out our way in Corner Brook there are some bright spots, like the Lafarge plant that may be opening up for some wood; the port authority will be bringing in some container ships. So there are bright spots around.

I say to everybody, I understand the political game – I understand it. I say to the Minister of Finance, I don't envy your position right now,

but I look forward to working with people to help out in the solutions.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

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

Mr. Chair, it seems like a factual day, so let's bring on some facts here for a moment. One main fact that I look at today is that there are 40 Members in this House and everybody is trying to do the best job they can for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Nobody is ever going to dispute that.

The second fact is, we have to look at ourselves and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and we have to ask the citizens: Are you in a better place now than you were five years ago? I can guarantee you, most of them are going to say: No, we're not. Because they are not.

The sad thing is you can laugh about it on the other side, because you're in such a closed bubble it's not even funny. If you can't see outside that bubble – Val Healey of Grand Falls-Windsor can't eat; she has no teeth and wasting away to nothing.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) on Facebook.

MR. TIBBS: What's that about Facebook?

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. TIBBS: The second fact is, when we look at the citizens of the province and we know they're not in a better situation than they were five years ago, that's a failure – that is a failure. You have failed to do the job that the people have elected you to do. You have failed to do the job in the past five years that they've elected you to do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. TIBBS: You can hide behind that all day long.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. TIBBS: The next fact is that there are 15 Members here. These 15 Members, we look beyond this. We'll learn from it, but we'll look beyond it. We'll look to the future and try to make lives better, because they're not as good as they were five years ago.

We'll fight for jobs, like this Member will.
We'll fight for education, like this Member will.
We'll fight for health care, we'll fight for justice, we'll fight for agriculture and I'll fight for the people of Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans and the people of the province as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TIBBS: That's what we're looking ahead to. That's what we have to look ahead to, and you guys have to look ahead to the same thing as well. We can't live in the past.

I'm not blaming anybody for everything. There's enough blame to go around for years and years and years to come, but anything that was done before May 16, 2019, I cannot attest to. What happens after that, I will dig in and I will help this province as best as I can, just like this Member will, this Member will and this Member will. We always have. That's exactly what we're here to do, and we will fight to do it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. TIBBS: It's not about supporting anything.

CHAIR: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

That's enough chatter across the floor. The Member is speaking.

MR. TIBBS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Before May 16, 2019, most of us were not here. We cannot attest to it. What we can attest to do is what we're going to do from here on out. We are ready to do the job that you have failed to do; that I can promise you. I've worked with these Members now for the past year. We are

ready, we have a plan and we will move forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TIBBS: Some of the things, Mr. Chair, we've been talking about, we talk about inefficiencies in government and some efficiencies and what we can do to make things work. Some of these efficiencies are not paying off our friends for high-powered jobs. That's one thing we will look ahead to, and we have to learn from that as well. There are many lessons to be learned, and that's fine. We will learn from the past and we will take it forward, but we won't live in the past. I guarantee you, I won't live in the past.

I drilled for oil for 18 years, and in that 18 years I never once looked at my boss and said, no, I can't get that job done because the last guy before me had something to do with it. If I had to have done that and said, no, I couldn't do it, I would have been fired on the spot. That's how that works, and that's how every day works.

You're not bad people. There's nobody bad in this House. I'm just saying that the job you were entrusted to do has not been done. I think that's what we're getting at. Can it be done? Of course it can be done, with changes and working together is fine, but we need to make these changes and learn from the past as we move forward.

Some of the big things around the province, in my own district alone, Central Newfoundland, we have tons and tons of lumber moving out from big companies that are just tearing up the roads left, right and centre. What are the people from Central Newfoundland getting out of this? They're being told, no, you can't cut wood anymore. We've been cutting for 120 years now and we can't cut anymore. They're being denied different sections of the area because of huge cultural – people going after lumber themselves, like the larger companies, and that's just not good enough.

The people of our district want to cut lumber like their parents did, and their parents did before that and their parents did before that. That's a huge, huge problem in my district, in the Central district. The same thing as the

Member for Exploits, it's a huge problem in his district as well. That's something we have to get a handle on, getting it back to the people and putting it back in their hands.

Of course, doctor shortages, insulin pumps, you can go on and on about certain things that there are inefficiencies about. I just talked about a girl in my district, her name is Val Healey. She has no teeth. She needs dentures. She's wasting away to nothing. When she gets extremely ill and has to go to a hospital bed, which is \$1,500, \$2,000 a day, how much is that going to cost? That's one thing, and those deficiencies can go on and on and on. These are some of the things we have to look at as we move forward.

I want to make sure that we can work together for the bigger projects that come up as well. I have some big projects coming up in my district. The Marathon gold mine up in Millertown is huge. It's going to bring on up to 460 jobs. We have to make sure that we work together to get this mine up and running and not just put roadblock after roadblock after roadblock.

The barite mine up in Buchans, the same thing. We have to make sure that these projects get going. These are small towns that need jobs, jobs, jobs. The MHA for Terra Nova, he can't say it enough because he knows. He's a blue-collar worker as well. Jobs are what's going to make this economy rise again and we need jobs. The outmigration, what did we have, over 4,000 people leave this past year? That's absolutely horrendous. To laugh when I say that we are not in a better place than we were five years ago is not very good.

I went away, I worked and I came back home, like a lot of people do. It's sad to see people move away. Of course we don't want to see people move away, we want to keep them home here as long as we can. Unfortunately, the reality is when they don't see a life for themselves or for their families, they will move away and that's absolutely brutal.

Another one of the big things in the Central district all around Newfoundland and Labrador is Crown lands. If anything, we have an abundance of land in Newfoundland and Labrador – an abundance of it.

When somebody comes to my office and they say I've been waiting four and five years on an application, what does that stop? That doesn't stop a person from getting land. That stops a person from getting to build a cottage. That stops a person from working at the lumberyard because they're going to need lumber for that cottage; they're going to need pipes in that cottage. Any cabin is going to need shingles, a roof and all this stuff. If we can get this moving, we can get some stuff done. It can really stimulate the economy if those are the things that we can do.

That's one of the biggest things is the Crown lands. I just don't understand why there's a five-year wait. That is stalling the economy and it's making people wait when they shouldn't have to. Like I say, there's an abundance of land here in Newfoundland and Labrador and we really have to take advantage of that.

It's not all doom and gloom. I'm not going to stand here and tell you it's doom and gloom because it's not. Of course, there's hope.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. TIBBS: But in order for that hope to come to fruition, we need a plan. If your plan doesn't work after five years, we need another plan.

That's enough time I need, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It's always an honour to stand here, of course. I proudly represent the strong District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

It's a very interesting day to see the banter back and forth. I will say this, Mr. Chair, it's a hard job not to get high blood pressure in this place because you hear the drama back and forth. You have one Member saying who we commend up in Ferryland, enough with the blame game.

Then, unfortunately, the colleague to his right gets up and does the exact opposite of what he just said.

We are here to work on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador but the blame game and this and that, we know what happened in the past. We know where we are right now but, you know what, it's been made clear to us in the media. Have a look at the media, listen to Open Line, go to your coffee shops, people don't want to hear the fighting and the drama back and forth.

Do you know what? I will say, compared to – previous to 2015, I will say Harbour Grace - Port de Grave District is in a better place than it was prior to my coming to office.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: Do you know why? Because we have finally the long overdue replacement of Coley's Point Primary school.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: The people of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, in particular Bay Roberts, the community, of course they've been lobbying for decades for a school. A mould-infested school, that I will say, Mr. Chair, if I was still in a newsroom, I would be doing a story on the state of that building, but it was this government that replaced – \$16.2 million to replace Coley's Point Primary school –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: – in a time when we were flush with cash; when we became a have province, Mr. Chair.

Newfoundland and Labrador, for the first time in its history, became a have province but that school was overlooked. It was overlooked, but I'm happy to say, even given the times we're in financially, it was made a priority by this government. And thank God, because I'd still be talking about it and I'm talking about it now and I'm going to be talking about it until we cut that ribbon.

I was out, actually, in the fall and had a tour of the facility. It's coming along quite nicely. We're on track for 2021; \$16.2 million, finally, to replace that aging school in an expanding community with an expanding population, servicing communities of Port de Grave, Barneed, Coley's Point, Bay Roberts, Shearstown, Butlerville, you name it. Those children and that school community, that staff, you know what, they're very happy and this is welcoming news and very refreshing news.

Again, there's a lot of work to be done. It's no good in pointing back and forth and saying we were about five years where we were and here we are and we're ready to take – give it a rest. If people want drama, we have a great line up on NTV and CBC and all of our local broadcasting, including *Out of the Fog*. They can flick on the *Days of Our Lives*, Mr. Chair, if they want drama.

Let's do our work, let's talk about what needs to be done. We know a lot of work has to be done. Personally, I don't come from a partisan background, Mr. Chair, because I'm a journalist prior to this work as an MHA. It doesn't matter if you're on that side of the House or if we're on this side of the House, or we're up in the corner or wherever we are, we have to work together, and I'm committed to doing that.

There are 40 MHAs in this House of Assembly, and we're getting into budget time right now. So let's not get into the nitty-gritty and the drama back and forth, because it's not productive. The people want to see something different. Everybody has reflected upon that here in this House. I respect every Member. We've all put our names forward to represent the people who've elected us to come here and do this job. So that said, of course, Coley's Point Primary.

Also, another thing that's never happened in the community of Bay Roberts is a Newfoundland and Labrador Games. We've never been able to host a games in the community of Bay Roberts, but, finally, it's this government that's bringing a games to Bay Roberts.

It takes work. We collaborate with our community leaders, the Town of Bay Roberts, the volunteers out there who've come and said to me time and time again we've put

applications in. We've never been able to get a games here. We see our neighbouring communities all across the province get the games, but we're overlooked here. We have the infrastructure, we have the volunteer base, we have the athletes; we have it all. I'm happy to say we're finally getting our games in 2020.

Just last year, Mr. Chair, you and I did the announcement of \$200,000 to the Town of Bay Roberts, the hosting town, to be able to host this games. Myself and the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development just a couple of weeks ago were out in Bay Roberts again to announce another \$110,000 to support these games.

This is going to be an amazing games. It's going to bring people from all across the province into Bay Roberts and the Conception Bay North region. But do you know what? That infrastructure is going to stay there, that we need. It's going to contribute to community healthy living; for seniors, for young students, for everyone, for all residents to enjoy. I'm certainly looking forward to it. From what I hear, there's a lot of great work being done on the ground and it takes a lot of volunteer power. I'm very happy to say it's coming along quite nicely.

Good things are happening. I'll give another example with our volunteer firefighters, in particular in the Town of Upper Island Cove. Again, in a time they've been lobbying for a medical rescue unit fire truck, because in this geography they respond to a lot of medical calls, as well as fire emergency, of course. It's something they've been lobbying for for quite some time. The old truck they had, they were scared. And I quote, they said: Pam, we don't think we're going to make it up over the long hill anymore in that truck in Upper Island Cove.

Again, it took working together, it took speaking up, and it took advocating and lobbying. I'm happy to say it was this government that granted that truck – just recently, a couple years ago. The minister at the time came out, and also my neighbouring MHA for the District of Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde, and we announced that fire truck in the Town of Upper Island Cove.

So good things are getting done.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. P. PARSONS: I didn't hear what was said, Mr. Chair.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. P. PARSONS: Well, roads are another issue. Well, having said that, I'm happy to say – we're talking to my colleague over there from Grand Falls, from Central, talked about the roads, I'm happy to say that this government, with the collaboration of the federal government, we have announced money for the repair of Harvey Street in Harbour Grace, a main thoroughfare. So things are getting done.

There's no doubt, we are in the most challenging time in our history, financially, but I, for one, am committed to working together. I'm not interested in the drama back and forth of whose fault it was. I'm not interested in hearing that. We're here and now. Let's work together. I consider you all colleagues and most of you friends.

Everybody puts their names on the ballot to come into a good job. That said, I respect anybody who steps forward to put their name forward, so let's work together. There's a lot of work to be done.

I look forward to more debate, of course, throughout the budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. P. PARSONS: Throughout the budget, of course, there's going to be a lot more debate on our fiscal situation.

Also, aside from the fiscal and talking about Interim Supply, we brought in a great harassment-free policy in this House of Assembly for the first time in our history as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: I'm sure we're going to talk about that as well.

That said, Mr. Chair, I will take my seat. I know there are a lot of people eager to get up and talk about the priorities in their district.

There are good things happening in the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, and, again, I look forward to finally getting that new school, the new Coley's Point replacement.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: It's great to stand up again. I just had a couple of points that I missed and I just wanted to go back on it.

Do you know what? I'm glad you got your school; probably well-deserved, and I'm glad you got your pavement. We didn't get our school. We had a school in 2015 and, unfortunately, it got cut, but we're still looking for it. So we're not going to go down that road. We're not going to burn any bridges. We still need our school.

When you have classes from Grade 5 and Grade 6 that have to go to a high school, I don't know if high school goes from Grade 5 to Grade 12, but right now it is Grade 5 to Grade 12. When they were down in the elementary school, they didn't get schools, they didn't get pavement; they lost their libraries because they had to put students in the libraries in order to accommodate people.

It's the fastest growing region in this province, if I'm not mistaken.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. O'DRISCOLL: I don't have the numbers to back it up, but I'm pretty sure it is. The kids and the parents deserve to have the proper schooling and the proper building to do the schooling in. So I would think that we would look at that again, for sure, and jump back to it.

The other road that I've been talking about – and I don't mean to throw the minister under the bus, but I've spoken to him already – is Witless Bay Line. This is a serious road that a lot of people use going to Argentia, Long Harbour and all those areas. I will give him credit, when Snowmageddon was on, he called me to see if we needed anything up there or if anything needed to be done.

So, to me, I would not be able to comment and say that he didn't reach out, and I think he reached out to a good many people in every district to see if they needed help when Snowmageddon was on. So I congratulate him for that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'DRISCOLL: But we really do need to look at that road and really need to work on it, so I've asked him some questions and hopefully he will be able to get back to me. But I wanted to throw out about your school because I know we lost one and, congratulations, you have one, but you're throwing it all back in our face. It's hard to sit here and take it all when you have it all and we have nothing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

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

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

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

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

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

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

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

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

MR. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

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

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Ferryland, that given the hour of the day this House do now adjourn.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved that the House does now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

Pursuant to our Standing Orders, the House stands adjourned until 10 tomorrow morning.