



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLIX

FIRST SESSION

Number 50

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA

Tuesday

October 6, 2020

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER: Admit strangers.

Order, please!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today, we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Mount Pearl - Southlands, Terra Nova, St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows, Ferryland and Bonavista.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my absolute pleasure to sit in this hon. House today to recognize an amazing athlete from my district, Michael Mercer of Southlands.

This past November, Michael participated in the 26th Annual 2019 Canadian Boccia championships in Victoria, BC. This event brings together the best boccia athletes from across the country, all vying for a spot on the Canadian National Team and the opportunity to represent Canada at international competitions.

Michael did our province very proud as he captured the gold medal in the BC2 classification going undefeated for the tournament. Following the championship tournament, he was named to the national team for the fifth consecutive year. He is currently ranked number two in Canada and has represented our country in several international competitions since first joining the national squad in 2015. Mike's ultimate goal is to represent Canada at the 2024 Paralympics in Paris, France.

I ask all hon. Members to please join me in congratulating this amazing young man on his many accomplishments and wish him all the very best in his quest to represent our country at the 2024 Paralympic Games.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

MR. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak about a 16-member community group that planned and successfully delivered an important event in my District of Terra Nova.

When the COVID pandemic hit, the AppleFest! 16 committee members became very creative to plan the second annual community-involved event with an array of activities for all ages.

They felt it was extremely important at a time like this for this event to continue. The event in Port Blandford from September 25-27 provided four culinary events, an outdoor market with 25 vendors attending from St. John's to Fogo, as well as activities throughout the community like golfing, sea kayaking, a drive-in movie, a picture scavenger hunt, all following public health guidelines on self-distancing.

This was planned as an economic development project, helping increase tourism activity and to continue with the spirit in this viable community-oriented town.

It is estimated that over \$25,000 worth of sales took place at the outdoor market, and an overall \$50,000 worth of economic activity was generated for tourism and the craft industry in Port Blandford.

I'd like to thank everyone and congratulate the Town of Port Blandford for such a lucrative and successful event in such trying times.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, today I recognize a dynamic father and son who share a love for motorcycling and their community. Chris and Charlie Humby of St. Lunaire-Griquet started a motorcycle ride in 2018 called Just the Tip Great Northern Peninsula Motorcycle Rally, which gets its name from the route taken to circumnavigate the tip of the Peninsula.

Their focus was to bring together riders from the Great Northern Peninsula and raise funds to

support Kids Eat Smart breakfast programs at our local schools. In the first year they attracted 10 riders and raised \$1,851.

The ride grew in 2019 and continued to thrive in 2020, attracting support from Tim Hortons, St. Barbe Consumers Co-Op and Green Island Cove Lions Club. A total of \$6,210 was raised by 19 participants for White Hills Academy, Truman Eddison Memorial, Canon Richards Memorial Academy and French Shore Academy.

Chris and Charlie are proud of their ride that has a three-year total of \$12,021, matched by Kids Eat Smart Foundation, which means more than 24,000 meals for our school-age children.

I ask all hon. Members to congratulate Chris and Charlie Humby for organizing this motorcycle ride and the impact it's had on school breakfast programs on the Great Northern Peninsula.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Today I recognize the recent passing of a constituent from my district. Kevin Dalton passed away on March 29, 2020, at the age of 58, and was laid to rest on September 11.

Kevin was a resident of Cape Broyle, a very well-known successful businessman with a very infectious smile and a big heart. Kevin was a hard-working man who owned and operated a couple of very prosperous businesses in his hometown.

Kevin began his career with the Canadian Coast Guard. While employed with the Canadian Coast Guard he purchased his first business. Over the years, Kevin purchased and built other businesses that he owned and operated, such as a gas bar, convenience store, a grocery store and a Home Hardware Building Centre. Kevin also owned and operated Newfoundland and Labrador's only casket manufacturing company, which he started in 1991 and is still operating in Cape Broyle today.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues of this House to join me in honouring the life of Kevin Dalton and the contribution he made to our province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, Calvin Pond of Musgravetown is a paraplegic who serves as an inspiration to any person who has the privilege of knowing him.

Calvin was working in the gold mine in Yellowknife back in 1986, when he was involved in a biking accident leading to his injury. If I used the term disability here to explain this incident, Calvin may take exception. In 1999, Calvin and his wife moved home to Musgravetown.

Since his accident, Calvin has challenged himself to do everything he did previously. He participates in the recreational fishery and hunts his moose every year when he has his licence to do so. Calvin has been an active member of the local Lions Club since returning home and recently served as their president for four years, where he has captured much respect from his colleagues and the community alike. Until recently, he received his truckload of wood every year, which he promptly cuts into junks and stored for the winter. Calvin serves as an inspiration for us all.

I ask the Members of 49th House of Assembly to join me in congratulating and celebrating the tenacity, energy, perseverance and resiliency of Mr. Calvin Pond of Musgravetown.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to acknowledge in this hon. House the winners of the 2020 Newfoundland and Labrador Book Awards.

Sharon Bala was chosen in the fiction category for her novel *The Boat People*. Inspired by events surrounding the 2010 arrival of a cargo ship in Vancouver carrying Tamil refugees, the author has masterfully and compassionately crafted insight into the experiences of refugees, immigrants and the people who determine their fates. Sharon Bala's *The Boat People* has won numerous literary awards, and is available in multiple languages worldwide.

The winner of the Children's/Young Adult Literature award was Charis Cotter for her novel *The Ghost Road*. As cousins Ruby and Ruth work together to unravel the mysterious family secret, they are both helped and hindered by their irritable witch, a mischievous storyteller and a swath of ghostly characters. This unique tale, which combines our province's folklore and natural history, was inspired by Ms. Cotter's upbringing. *The Ghost Road* is her third novel, which she considers to be a love letter to her home province.

Mr. Speaker, our government proudly supports the province's artists. To further support the arts community, we invested an additional \$1 million for ArtsNL in *Budget 2020*, bringing the annual provincial investment to ArtsNL to nearly \$4 million.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Sharon Bala and Charis Cotter and the recipients of the 2020 Newfoundland and Labrador Book Awards, as well as the other nominees in both categories for their immense contributions to Newfoundland and Labrador literary arts.

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.

I'd like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. On behalf of the Official Opposition, I would like to congratulate Sharon Bala and Charis Cotter on their tremendous accomplishments. Winning a Newfoundland and Labrador Book Award is not an easy task. Sharon Bala and Charis Cotter are now following in the footsteps of the prestigious authors who have won this award before them. They join the ranks of talented authors such as Bernie Stapleton, Mary Pratt and Andy Jones.

I'd also like to thank the Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador for supporting these awards and for the encouragement they give to all our province's writers both experienced and novice.

Mr. Speaker, the people of our province are talented with rich imaginations, experiences and stories to tell. I encourage writers, especially Sharon Bala and Charis Cotter, to continue writing and sharing their talents with all of us.

I look forward to reading these novels and look forward to more published works from both of these authors in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I would also like to congratulate Sharon Bala and Charis Cotter on their achievements. It is important to have stories that broaden our perspective on society, our culture and our heritage. I am pleased that we can recognize these works through ArtsNL programs. Our winners and all the nominees should be proud of their efforts.

Let us all pick up a local book and learn more about our beautiful province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, October 4 to the 10 is Fire Prevention Week 2020. This year's theme is "Serve Up Fire Safety in the Kitchen" which encourages people to learn more about the simple but important actions they can take to keep themselves, and those around them, safe in the kitchen.

Cooking is the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries in Canada. The majority of reported home fires start in the kitchen, most of which are ignited from food or other cooking materials.

Mr. Speaker, we all have a role to play in fire safety. During Fire Prevention Week, I encourage all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador to take steps to protect themselves and their families. Never leave cooking food unattended, check your food regularly, always have a fire extinguisher nearby and create a kid-free zone around the cooking area. Don't be careless in the kitchen. Check your kitchen for fire hazards and use safe cooking practices.

Fires caused by cooking and heating can be devastating, but taking these measures I have mentioned, as well as ensuring smoke alarms are working and home fire escape plans are in place, could mean the difference between life and death.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank firefighters throughout our province for keeping us safe every day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

On behalf of the Official Opposition I join with the minister in recognizing Fire Prevention

Week and offer my gratitude to all the firefighters and fire prevention officers in this province.

The minister outlined the theme of this year's Fire Prevention Week and gave some tips for fire prevention in the kitchen. I would like to take a moment to speak about some ways we can prevent fires throughout the rest of the home as well.

We can make sure heat sources have the necessary clearances from fabrics and furniture; we can avoid overloading electrical plug-ins and circuits; we should replace electronics, which have aged or damaged wiring; and we should always follow the manufacturer's instructions on appliances, light fixtures and other electronics.

Mr. Speaker, we should always ensure that every member of the family knows what to do in the unfortunate event of a fire: how to escape and where to meet outside.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thanks to you, Mr. Speaker, and the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, we all enjoy a good steak Diane, crème brûlée or cherry jubilee, but we must remember that flambés are a fire hazard.

Be smart in the kitchen; make sure your fire extinguishers are at hand and up to date; turn your pot handles in; don't wear clothing with loose sleeves while cooking; and don't fry bacon naked.

Many thanks to the first responders that keep us safe, and happy Thanksgiving, everyone.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. DWYER: Will the government agree to hold an emergency debate on the prospect of a permanent closure at the Come By Chance oil refinery?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

Thank you for the question from the Member.

The answer would be yes.

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

MR. CROSBIE: On June 11, the previous minister said she had assurances that Irving was “very committed to full operations of the North Atlantic Refinery.”

I would ask the current minister: What’s changed, and when did he find out?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

Certainly, the previous minister did speak in this House in June in response to a question from the Member opposite about this pending sale between two private entities. The reality is now that we’ve been notified by these parties that this deal is not moving forward as it stood; we were given official notification yesterday. I know that the entity also reached out to the union. That is something that we are still processing and dealing with today.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I thank the minister for that.

Last evening, the Premier posted on Facebook: “The refinery is an asset to this province, and one our government will maximize.”

I’d ask the minister: How exactly will you maximize the asset, and is maximizing different from saving jobs?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

This is a very difficult and uncertain time for the families and for the workers at the refinery. I can say that they’ve worked very hard to make this refinery; improve it; to grow it; to make it efficient, reliable and safe. I can tell you that the global pandemic has had a major impact on the oil industry, as well as others. This government is committed to ensuring growth and jobs and reliability of business supports. You see that throughout our budget.

I will say as well, Mr. Speaker, I think I mentioned back in June that there has been another interested party and I’m sure that they will be in contact. We will be in contact with them to see how we can, again, continue to have this great asset and great jobs in the province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I’m still unclear on what’s involved in maximizing an asset, Mr. Speaker.

Last night in Estimates, the minister said he cannot provide details on how government will help Come By Chance refinery get up and running; yet, the Premier made a public pledge to do so.

Does the Premier have a plan, and does it involve financial assistance?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

Certainly, there's a difference between saying that you will do what you can to help and also disclosing what those details are. The one reality that we must keep top of mind here is that this is a commercial transaction between two private entities. The government itself is not an actual party to this, so it's very difficult to speak about details that may place this whole issue in further jeopardy. I don't want to do anything that will make what is already a tough situation even worse.

What I can say is that we will do what we can. We realize the impact that this will have, not just on the area but on the province as a whole. The situation is fluid. It is evolving. It's evolving very rapidly, there's no doubt about that. We'll continue to work with Silverpeak, to work with the partners moving forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I thank the minister for that. We can all assume that the government is keeping a very tight watching brief on the situation and has been.

As well, last night the minister said he had little information because the province is not privy as a partner; yet, the Premier said his government would maximize the asset.

How can government maximize the asset without being a partner, and does the Premier intend that his government should become a partner?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

I know that the Member opposite and I had a good conversation on this last night and, again, I don't believe I said I wasn't privy to the details. I think what I may have said or certainly what I implied or would hope to put across – and, again, obviously when you're in a three-hour

Estimates and this thing is breaking during that, one could forgive if you misspeak.

What I would say is that we have been in contact with the different parties. We realize the situation as we find it. It continues to evolve and unfold. We've been watching this closely. We'll continue to watch closely. We all have the same goal in mind, which is to see some way for these people to continue working and this refinery to stay open.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you.

As the Deputy Premier alluded to, Origin International has publicly expressed their interest in purchasing the Come By Chance refinery.

Has the minister spoken with Origin in the last 24 hours?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

Origin has in fact, they had done so previously, and they've expressed it again today that they do have an interest in the refinery. It's nice to see a glimmer of hope in a very difficult situation. While our department has reached out, at the time that I entered this House for Question Period I had not had contact with Origin; but, as you can imagine, it's been a busy time for them as well. They've released their statement.

Again, as I would say, we are not a party to this, but we're certainly going to do what we can to help facilitate some form of deal.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Much appreciated, Mr. Speaker.

I spoke to Origin representatives myself last night, so if the minister wants the phone number I can pass it over to him.

The previous minister of Natural Resources spoke with officials from Origin in June.

Did Origin give any indication of how long it would take them to complete the purchase of the refinery and get people back to work?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I did, indeed, have correspondence from Origin International in June. I think it was public at the time, and officials did have a conversation with Origin. They were very interested at the time. They did know that the process with Irving was ongoing, and they said should that not advance they would be very interested in considering the assets of the refinery. That is, I'm sure, what they are exactly doing, as the minister suggested.

This is ongoing and very much something that's in process. I will say again how concerned we all are for the families and for the workers of the refinery. That is critical at this point.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Does either minister have knowledge as to whether North Atlantic refinery has been approached by Origin in the last day or two?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

It's hard for me to say what North Atlantic itself has been – who they've been contacted by or who they've been in touch with. I know the Member opposite has been speaking to his nephew, Tim Powers, who is a representative for Origin.

What I would say is if you want to make sure – again, because we all have the same issue here is that we want to see this succeed. So we can play politics with it or we can all put our minds to fixing this issue. The Member is asking questions for which he's hoping to get a gotcha moment, but let's put that to the side and remember there are a lot of people out there right now facing a lot of uncertainty.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I'm good, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, yesterday hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians received more devastating news. The sale of the Come By Chance refinery to Irving Oil is expected to fall through and North Atlantic refinery has indicated the refinery could close permanently.

I ask the minister: What does he say to the 500 families who are now worried about how they will pay their bills?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

I certainly understand the frustration I'm sure the Member is feeling, but I would remind everybody in this House that this was not a government decision to do something here. So I don't feel that I have to explain anything that I have done or we have done. The reality is, as with the question that you asked previously along this same vein, we are dealing with a global pandemic combined with a price war here that has seen the hugest impact to the oil industry we have seen in the last century. That is the reality of what we are dealing with.

The other reality is that we have a lot of people in your district and my district that I'm worried

about, that you're worried about. What we're going to try to do here as a government, and I know as an Opposition, is try to figure out how do we get our way through this in hopes of getting the bright side on the other side.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, last night I heard from many workers in my district that are worried that they will be out of a job if this refinery closes. Come By Chance is more than a refinery; it is a source of livelihood for more than 500 workers.

Again, I ask the minister: What discussions have you had about why the sale may fall through, impacting so many workers and their families?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

Again, I certainly understand the uncertainty that people face now. It's something that we've been dealing with before today. We've had some serious upheaval when it comes to the industries that drive this province.

I can say that this morning I spoke to the mayor of Come By Chance; I spoke to the mayor of Clarendville. We've spoken to the union, and everybody has the same concern. We realize that people's lives are affected here.

The reality is that we have a private entity and another private entity that we're trying to reach an agreement and that agreement is no longer there. So what we can do as a government is work with the vendor to try to help facilitate the continued operation of this facility, and that is what we will continue to do.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, the people have a right to know. When the minister references that he's facilitating this deal, the people have a right to know exactly how this is being done. These workers deserve to know what their government is doing to protect their livelihoods.

Minister, you said again last night the province is not privy to discussions but, with so many jobs at stake, how can the minister take such a hands-off detached approach?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

Again, as I stated earlier, and maybe the Member can recalibrate the question to acknowledge the answers that I've given, I did not say that, but, again, will continue on here.

I know the Member opposite is a lawyer, and I know the Member opposite realizes how commercial deals work. As I explained to the member of the union today, the fact is that you'd love to be able to stand up and say everything you want, but the reality is that doing so may place us in a tougher situation.

What I would say to the Member opposite is don't confuse detached with understanding how this works and not trying to break certain laws and agreements.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

MR. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, Come By Chance is more than an oil refinery. It's an economic driver for surrounding communities and the province as a whole. When the refinery is at full employment, convenience stores, take outs and many businesses all do well.

I ask the minister not what does he say to the companies, but what does the minister say to the residents of my district who are about to lose their futures?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

Again, I've spoken to the Member opposite about this and we've had conversations about the impact of this. This is something that, again, sadly, with this refinery we have a history of going through tumultuous times, basically, since its inception. The fact is that this was created in a cloud of controversy decades and decades ago. It's gone through that.

What I would say is that we are not a party to this, but we have a duty – and this is the same exact thing that I said to the mayor of Clarendville today, with whom I've had a very strong and positive conversation, and we've agreed that the line is open and we will talk as much as they would like to talk or as much as we can give information.

What I would say is we want to ensure that we continue on in the best interests of all these citizens. We'll do what we can, as a government, but, right now, this is a private transaction between two companies. It's not a commercial transaction that we are actually a party to, but I know that doesn't fix the uncertainty and unrest that your constituents feel.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

MR. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, many of the people who work at the Come By Chance refinery are my constituents. The decision to close the refinery, it certainly impacts those who I work every day to support. I sit here today to voice their opinions and their questions and their concerns.

I ask the minister again: What is the minister going to do, specifically, for these workers if the refinery shuts its doors for good?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

MR. A. PARSONS: What I would say to the Member is that, again – and this sort of continues on from an answer that I gave to the Member for Labrador West yesterday when we talked about taking workers and putting them up in a different area and doing retraining. What I would come back to is we are not giving up on the refinery. That's the first thing I would say.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: That being said, Mr. Speaker, this is an evolving situation. The problem with situations like these is people want answers now and in some cases you're unable to give the answers that they want at this time. We know that people want that information right now.

We will continue to make contact, to give information as we can and to work towards facilitating or finalizing some kind of deal.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

MR. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, I remind the minister that there's \$320 million in the bank waiting for some decisions to be made and time is not on these people's side; mortgages are falling through and people are losing their vehicles. If the refinery does not start up again, many residents of my district will be left without work. Businesses will suffer.

What supports will be made for the businesses and the residents affected by the shutdown?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

MR. A. PARSONS: Two things that I would say to that question. We will work to deal with

the situation, but saying that we have the support package in place right now, we're just not there at this stage of time, that would be premature. I understand the concern the Member is expressing.

The second thing I would say when it comes to the \$320 million for the feds. It was only less than two weeks ago that your leader said put it into Husky. The fact is that we can only spend that once and we have a duty to spend that in the best way that we can. That work continues on. We realize that time is of the essence, though.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the minister knows, the cold season is approaching. It's much harder to start up the refinery in the cold and serious damage could occur.

Minister, will you commit to doing what's required to get these workers back to work before the winter?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

The Member is certainly right that the cold season is approaching and that presents complications to what is already a complicated situation. What I can say is that I cannot commit to doing something for which I legally have no power to do.

What I can say is that we have the same goal in mind, which is to see these people back to work, but we need to work with the vendor. Right now, we know that commercial transaction has been terminated. We know that there have been expressions of interest. We will do what we can in the ways that we can to help.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This issue is urgent, Minister, as we all know. This asset cannot sit idle through the winter.

Will you provide assistance to North Atlantic to get the refinery back up and running?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

I would love to be able to sit here and say we're going to do that, but the fact is that right now where we are in this moment, and again we're moving in real time here, it's too early to say whether that's the necessity. The fact is that there's just been a commercial transaction with this entity that has been terminated by the other party. We know that there's been an expression of interest. We'll do what we can to help facilitate that, but, again, we're monitoring this hour by hour since this came up and we'll continue to do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Not only does Come By Chance provide jobs for the region but also provides out-of-province and essential supply of fuel.

Minister, are you aware how much fuel Come By Chance produces for this province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

MR. A. PARSONS: I don't have the number here but I thought it was somewhere in the 40 per cent range, I think is the number that I have but if I'm wrong I can certainly provide that.

The reality is whether I have the number here or not, there's no understating or overstating, I should say, the importance of that refinery. It's the only refinery that we have in this province so we appreciate the importance.

We've gone through this, in fact, in this House of Assembly in my time here when I sat on the other side and we went through the last sale of this. I realize the implications. I'm very familiar with the importance and the details so that part will continue on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, 100 per cent of the jet fuel is produced at Come By Chance which is used in this province.

With the closure of Come By Chance, will the province experience a shortage in supply?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

That is not a concern that's been expressed to me at this point, that anybody should have any supply chain concerns as it relates to the supply of that fuel or any other fuel, but, again, we realize what the refinery contributes to the different lines of hydrocarbons and the different lines of fuel, so that's something that we're obviously cognizant of.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, I know hindsight is 20/20 but don't you think an asset such as Come By Chance the government should have played a larger role in the negotiation of this sale and even on a brokerage level, even though it's private industry, it's a big enough concern.

I question: Why didn't government play a bigger role instead of a hands-off approach?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

MR. A. PARSONS: Two things, Mr. Speaker, and again, I'm sure we'd all love to operate in hindsight. There are a lot of decisions in the history of this province that may be different, but what I would say is that this deal up to this point had been progressing. All indications that things were moving forward, so we can't sit here in the House today and say you should have done this and that when there was no reason to believe that that was the issue. I'm certainly not going to take any blame for that one.

The reality is that we have a situation that's been presented to us and it's incumbent on us now to do what we can and pull the levers we have, as a province and as a government, to find a solution to the problem.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to say that all of our thoughts today are with the workers and their families for this sudden announcement.

The Come By Chance oil refinery accounts for over 5 per cent of the province's GDP, and thus the economy, each year. We've already seen in this week's budget that our GDP is expected to drop by 7 per cent this year. Obviously, if this refinery closes, it could drop by as much as 12 per cent.

I ask the minister: This refinery cannot be allowed to close – it's that simple – so what would be the plans for the next days or the next week on how you plan on dealing with that?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

I like the sentiment that the Member puts forward: this cannot be allowed to close. That's

the same sentiment we saw in 2014 when the Wabush mines closed. I will say that when this crowd came into government, we took a plan and made that become active again.

What I will say to you is that it's easy to say that, but the hard part here is that as a government we are not a party to the transaction. We will continue to work, fully realizing the impact on GDP, fully realizing the impact on employment, fully realizing all the financial impacts. That is not something that is lost on us, but it's not as simple as flicking a switch and saying the deal is done. There are complexities that we have to work around and it's especially difficult given that we are not a party to the transaction.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Minister, I can't speak about 2014 because I certainly wasn't here at that time, but I can speak about today. Today we face a potential for another 1,000 jobs being lost in this province.

Again, I ask the minister: Is the province now anticipating that almost 15,000 jobs will be wiped out from our province this year?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Thank you very much.

Allow me to address this issue, Mr. Speaker. The Member opposite talks about: What about the budget forecast? I can tell you the Come By Chance refinery would have been closed for most of this year. So it will have minimal impacts on our current budget economic forecast, I will let him know that.

We are very concerned about the workers. There are 500 employees, and I know how hard and dedicated they've been. I've been to visit the refinery on a number of occasions. They've been able to make that refinery more efficient. They've been able to enhance its operations and

make it reliable, and I'm very proud of their efforts.

We are in the middle of a global pandemic, Mr. Speaker, so this has been unexpected. We had seen two companies coming forward and we thought the sale would go through.

I will say this: We'll do whatever we can to assist to ensure that this refinery is operational.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Can the minister give an update on what initiatives have been taken in the last 12 months to combat gender-based violence, intimate-partner violence and family violence?

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the challenges of sitting, I guess, it gets confusing sometimes.

Mr. Speaker, as the Member opposite would have seen, and many of the questions I did answer for her just last week in Estimates, these are important pieces of work that are done between the Department of Justice and, importantly, with the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. We'll continue with our committees that we have to make sure that we're reaching out to the appropriate groups.

One of the things I've done since becoming Justice Minister is start the process of actually sitting down with the people involved in these many groups, because the government's role in this, albeit important, but it's the people on the front lines that we have to keep open communications with.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Communities in the surrounding Come By Chance area are reeling today. Hundreds of livelihoods are set to vanish overnight.

While I recognize the oil and gas economy has years before it will be fully transitioned from oil, I ask the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology: What are the plans to transition our workforce and identify a more stable, long-term employment for the employees of this province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

I appreciate the question from the Member opposite. The reality is that oil and gas has been the backbone of this economy and will still be the backbone of this economy for some time to come, but there's no disputing the fact that we must diversify. One of those areas that we can is the latest addition or component to the Department of IET, and that being the T in Technology.

As I discussed last night in Estimates, the reality is that we have huge opportunities there. In fact, we have job creation that could happen, but we need to create the pipeline of that talent.

My belief is that there are different ways we can do that. One thing is we have to go back into the primary schools and we have to go into post-secondary as well. The talent is here, we have the educational institutions that can do it, but we have to churn more people into these and out and there will be job creation that comes from it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a report released this morning by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives underlies that there are veils of secrecy around the P3 process. P3s are an effort to get debt off

government's books. They result in higher interest changes and convoluted repayment schemes.

I ask the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to please explain to the House how a P3 is different than a buy now, pay later furniture scheme?

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

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member opposite for the question.

On the P3, we are replacing aging infrastructure in this province that is much needed to be replaced. We're bringing things in on budget, on time. We have mock-up centres. Recently, I toured the P3 in Corner Brook in which the contractor took me through and we went to – every room is mocked-up to resemble what the hospital facility will look like.

While the building is being built, those rooms get modified to meet the needs of the people that will use them, as either the health care professional or the patient. This has been proven for us. It worked good in Gander. We're just about done with the long-term care facility. It's about ready to go in, and the success there and the response from the people in Central Newfoundland has been overwhelming.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I see that, no, the minister could not explain the difference between the two.

Mr. Speaker, I became an MHA because I was frustrated by the poor planning and execution of the Muskrat Falls project. I was angered and I am sick and tired of listening to the blame game being played by the Liberals and the Conservatives. Now we hear that the development of Gull Island is being considered.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Was it the brightest and the best who put Gull Island in the

terms of reference for the task force on rate mitigation?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

I'll remind the Member that her predecessor sat in that chair and was here for all those Muskrat debates, too. There's no doubt about that.

The fact is that Gull Island is a Hydro asset. You only have to talk to people to realize that we have tremendous assets here, but I agree with the Member. There has been an issue with the planning and execution, but I think there's absolutely no problem considering how we develop all of our assets. The issue comes when you try to force the development of those assets and it's not in the best interest of the province or the Treasury or the people that live here.

We will consider everything we can to make sure that our assets are fully maximized but we will not do so at the expense of the people.

Thank you.

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, on Thursday the Minister of Education was amused when I outlined that a team of staff were unable to clean this Chamber but one custodian is expected to effectively sanitize an entire building. I find it amusing that the minister obviously has no conception of the excessive demands his fluid plan has placed on these essential workers.

I ask the minister: Will he immediately review staffing levels with NAPE, CUPE and the school districts with the intention of increasing the number of custodians, especially for schools with large student populations?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am in contact on a relatively regular basis with our union leaders. I will say, Mr. Speaker, in the event that the Member missed it, we did increase the number of our custodial workers. We also hired additional custodial workers. At this point, other than people calling in sick and having to get replacements, I haven't been advised of any problems by the English School District.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre, time for a quick question and a quick answer.

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

I ask the Minister of Education: What is the plan to help these custodians during the winter months when they will also be responsible for clearing snow from walkways and exits in addition to cleaning and sanitizing schools during the day?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's certainly a topic that I can take up with the English School District. Mr. Speaker, it hasn't been highlighted as an issue, but I will speak with the English School District to ensure that it's not.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) I hereby give notice that this House do not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 8.

Further, I give notice pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) that this House do not adjourn at 10:30 p.m. on Thursday, the 8th of October.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

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

The background to the petition is as follows: Route 10 on the southern Avalon forms a large section of the Irish Loop. It is a significant piece of infrastructure and is the main highway through the Irish Loop. This highway plays a major role in the commercial and residential growth of our region.

Therefore, we 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 that immediate brush cutting is required on Route 10 of the Southern Shore Highway for the safety of the commuters and prevention of moose-vehicle accidents. Reason is due to the volume of vehicles travelling the highway daily.

Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity in the spring of the year to go visit and drive along Route 10, and done it many times. I guess looking back on it, going in the spring of the year is not as good as going in the fall of the year. Right now, with the fall of the year, travelling in the area you can really see where the brush and all the trees on the side of the road has become a hazard, certainly with moose in the area.

I'm sure it's in every district as well, that you see alders and trees growing out over the guardrails. You can't see the signs when you're driving. I think it's something we should have a look at and the government take it in their hands. It's not only that highway, there are many others, but I certainly bring it on the government to look at Route 10 and get that job done.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. BRAGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member opposite for the petition. Brush cutting is a very active part of the department which I represent. The Member will be happy to know that tenders are being called as we speak for brush cutting throughout the province. If he wants a breakdown of brush cutting in his area, I welcome him to – we have a sidebar after the meeting today or after the House sits. I guess we'll adjourn today, and we'll talk about brush cutting in your area because it is vital. Moose is the main reason for brush cutting and we want to avoid that at all costs, all moose accidents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity under special leave, under Standing Order 36, to adjourn the discussion matter. I wish to make the following motion:

That because of the impact of the closure of the Come By Chance oil refinery and the devastating economic impact it will have on our province's economy, the issues of supply on the Island portion of the province and the expected closure of many spinoff businesses, I move that the business of the House be adjourned to hold an emergency debate on the closure of the oil refinery, seconded by the hon. Member for Windsor Lake.

Mr. Speaker, as we've had a discussion here in Question Period, everybody agrees in this House that this is devastating news to the people of not only that region but Newfoundland and Labrador, and to the country. That was, and still is, the cornerstone of our oil industry which is an economic driver for this whole country. To have that not being active and employing people and providing services that are necessary – but, particularly, ensuring we have a supply of fuels that are necessary to drive our economy.

This particular refinery provides 100 per cent of the jet fuel, which puts us at a disadvantage of how do we manage to supply the industries that are responsible for bringing people and goods to Newfoundland and Labrador? What impact would this have in the immediate future? We're talking the immediate future, in the next day or so, what impact that would have.

We also look at the propane supplies that are provided by this – 100 per cent of that to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Let's just look at the impact that has, not only on home heating, but on all the other amenity industries we have. All the restaurants, all the other buildings that provide service who rely on propane for their heating source and their source of operations.

Mr. Speaker, also add into that the gas supply that comes from that and the potential that one sole supplier could control what goes on with other industries in communities that have one stand-alone gas station. I could see the other provider only wanting to supply their own if there's a particular shortage – a snowstorm where they can only get so much supply here. There's some other kind of issue that challenges that. We need to ensure that that refinery continues to do what it's been doing for the last number of decades, and that's provide fuel for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador while driving our economy.

Mr. Speaker, we're proposing this and we're asking that we would have a debate today to ensure that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador know that we are not sitting down or sitting back and letting this go without a fight and finding a proper way to maintain that asset to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and continue to ensure that our oil industry in

Newfoundland and Labrador has all the assets and amenities it needs to be competitive on our world and global markets.

So, Mr. Speaker, I present this to the House for review and tabling.

MR. SPEAKER: Before I take a brief recess to review the matter presented by the Member, I gave him a little bit of time to elaborate on the motion. I'm going to offer the same opportunity to people from the Government side, the Third Party and one of the independents as well.

The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

I support the emergency debate. We do know that there are a lot of families impacted here, about 500 employees of the North Atlantic refinery. I can say that they have been working very diligently. Since Silverpeak reopened the refinery in 2014, Mr. Speaker, they've been able to make it more reliable, grow – I think it's 135,000 barrels a day they now produce – made it more efficient, made it very safe. So it has been a good news story up until, of course, the global pandemic at the end of March.

In my former role as minister of Natural Resources, I had been working very closely with the refinery and I know some of their plans to actually grow the refinery, and it was quite buoyant and looking forward to that growth in the region.

Mr. Speaker, this is a refinery; the workers contribute greatly to our province. I know some say that the refinery contributes up to 5 per cent of our GDP, but as important is the amount of investment and involvement of the people who work at the refinery and, of course, their personal income taxes and their investments in the province as well.

I will say the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is supportive of having a debate on this very important issue. We're very concerned about the refinery. We had hopes that the sale would have progressed, Mr. Speaker. This is a business-to-business transaction, so now that it hasn't progressed, we're hopeful that there will

be others that will enter into the marketplace and continue that refinery.

I look forward to a good, robust debate this afternoon, and setting out a clear statement to the people of the province, to the workers of how much support they have, not only in this Legislature, but in all of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

We, too, as the Third Party, will support this resolution for an emergency debate.

While we may have a different approach towards the future green economy, we realize that, really, this has a significant impact on workers who are basically devastated. I'm sure they are. For as long as I've been driving the highway, I can remember that refinery there. It's very much part of the infrastructure. It's changed hands. I understand from the news that they were looking to upgrade to improve the operations, so there was a real opportunity to see this oil refinery to continue to employ people, to continue to produce fuels that are required by many parts of the economy. Certainly, jet fuel and propane are a few that have been mentioned.

From our point of view, yes, this deserves very much our immediate attention and an immediate debate on it this afternoon, hopefully with the intention of finding out how do we move forward with it and find some constructive way to deal with it.

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm speaking on behalf of my colleague, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands. We support this motion also.

It's a devastating day any time when someone says you're going to lose your job and lose your livelihood, but it's more devastating when you have 500 people in the same boat, plus all the spinoffs. It's a very rough day for

Newfoundland and Labrador. I have confidence in the minister that the minister will work as hard as he can to help with the situation, but we need to come up with concrete solutions.

I will give a good example, Mr. Speaker. I was in Opposition at the time when the Corner Brook Pulp and Paper mill was going to go under. I remember the minister at the time, it was Mr. Jerome Kennedy, and he came over and he said we all got to work together to find a way to get this moving. We made a decision then, we shook hands that we all work together. Because everybody worked together, there was absolutely no politics brought into it, whatsoever, we found a solution. The government at the time, the PC Government, found a solution to keep the mill operating.

I'm going back at the history off that, Mr. Speaker, and I say it can be done, but what we need to all do, all Members of the House – I've been through it several times with situations that we're facing now – let's park our colours outside the door, let's all move in for the Members that are here. I know the Member for Terra Nova must know so many people there that are devastated who are after calling you already. I say let's park our colours, let's jump into this as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, let's offer solutions, let's listen to solutions, let's work with the towns, let's work with the unions, let's work with the companies. I can assure you, together, we can find a solution around this. If and when all parties are working together it's going to be much better.

Myself and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands will definitely support this resolution to have an emergency debate on this to help all people in Newfoundland and Labrador, and especially the workers and the spinoff jobs that are created by this devastating loss.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: I'm going to take a short recess now to examine the material that's been presented by the Opposition House Leader, and we'll be back in a few minutes.

Recess

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

While the motion did not fit the technical requirements of Standing Order 36, I'm going to be guided in this case by the ruling made by Speaker Ottenheimer in May 29, 1978, in the spruce budworm debate. I don't know how many people remember that debate, but it's the last time we ever had – the Minister of Education says he does. That was the last time we had a debate on a matter of urgent public importance in this House.

So in making that ruling, Speaker Ottenheimer also based his decision on what Members seemed to consider urgent. In his evaluation, Members did consider the matter urgent and so ruled that the urgent debate could proceed.

In this context, I also looked at Bosc and Gagnon and noted that the Speaker has considerable discretion in this matter. Bosc and Gagnon says: "Finally, the Speaker may take into account the general wish of the House to have an emergency debate and grant a request for an emergency debate."

In the context of this motion, given that in Question Period and in other comments that were made, there seemed to be general support for the debate.

I will rule that the matter is in order and I ask: Does the Member have leave to proceed?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

MR. SPEAKER: Leave.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the House for leave to talk about this important issue. Just a dialogue previous to this, as we were waiting in the recess to get a ruling, it seemed to indicate that everybody here supports exactly what the intent here is. The intent is that this House of Assembly, the Members who were elected, see the value of that refinery. See the impact that it has on families, the impact it has on business, the impact that it has on our oil industry, but, particularly, the impact that it has on our morale in Newfoundland and Labrador.

That's what this is about; this is also about our assets. The whole world is facing COVID, and we understand that. It's not an excuse, but it's a reality. What we have to prepare ourselves for is that when COVID is over, that we're still equipped to be the beacon of light that we wanted to be for our citizens and for the rest of this country. We were on a threshold with the potential we have here with our natural resources, with the intelligence that we have, the skilled workforce we have, the commitment and dedication to the people of this country by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, our culture itself, we were second to none.

We, unfortunately, got a black eye because we took a hit with COVID. We've been fortunate enough to be isolated that we could protect our citizens while at the same time that has an impact on our industries because our industries are still fairly fragile, particularly if you rely so much on the mineral industry and the oil and gas. But we need to position ourselves to ensure that when COVID is over, we become what we were setting our traits to be, the best positioned natural resource economy in North America, maybe in the world because of our resources and our ability to deliver on that.

We fell back a little bit, no fault of anybody in this room, but we do have an opportunity now to ensure that one of the key assets, the cornerstone, and I see it as a cornerstone because I remember as a young boy a number of Bell Islanders leaving to go there to work when they first started to build the wharf. That was the first part of what would be the oil refinery. I know the ridicule over the 20 years after whether or not it was a white elephant and all the things around that, but let's look at what happened.

In the '80s, Cumberland Farms moved in and bought it out. Then there was again a downturn in the economy and what happened there, but then recently we had new companies come in and now we had an interest, we knew there were some challenges there. We had an interest by Irving, one of the bigger players and Canadian players. Unfortunately, that hasn't played out at this point. We'd all like to know why and suspect we'll get to know why in the near future. But we, collectively in this House, have a responsibility to work together to come up with solutions and whatever it means. If it means an

influx of support, if it means lobbying, if it means using our counterpart contacts we have in Ottawa, if it means, as it was noted, that we're fortunate enough that some people here have contacts with other companies that may be interested. Let's leave no stone unturned to ensure that asset and the people who rely on that for their income and the Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who benefit from the taxes that are paid by those people and by that company, but, particularly, for what it supplies to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador: it gives us independence.

When you're talking about having your own fuel being refined here, that gives you independence. Other jurisdictions would kill to have that asset, so we need to ensure it goes nowhere. We've come too far not to collectively get together and do it and keep the petty politics aside. Let's work together to make sure that we make this the asset that it should be.

I'm not going to take all of my time, Mr. Speaker, because I think there are a number of people here who would like to speak. I've asked the people on my side if they would take 10 or 12 minutes so that more people could get to speak, because this has an impact on all of us, particularly.

I do welcome the support from the House, the independents, the Third Party and the government itself that we move forward and try to come up with some constructive solutions and approaches going forward to ensure that asset still stays as an asset that's valuable to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

Normally, when I begin talking about any issue in this House I say I'm happy to speak, but sadly this is not one of those times when you're happy to speak. To echo some of what my colleague has said, this is a time when we must talk about the issue at hand. I would hold him to what he said, because I agree 100 per cent, when we talk about the petty politics of these situations.

It's very easy to sit here and talk about we should've done this, we should've done that; historically, what this crowd has done and what that crowd has done. The only historical fact that I'd like to talk about is the historical value of the refinery. We could sit here all day and talk about the importance. I have some of the statistics here that I would put out.

Again, I'll try my best to keep my commentary in some kind of organized pattern. It's funny, after numerous questions in the House today and a scrum outside, one of the comments that I said is that the situation is evolving. In fact, just reading CBC on this, it's almost like they took the words out of my mouth. They said the situation is evolving on what seems to be an hourly basis. That's what's going on here; that's what we must keep in mind.

The other factor that I would say here that's extremely difficult, and it's something that I said when I spoke to the union rep just before lunch, we talked about the fact that he's doing his job. He's looking out for his members, looking out for the jobs, looking out for the industry and they want information. And who wouldn't? I told him that. I told Mr. Nolan: You are looking out for your people and I appreciate that, but the situation we are in, two things we must keep in mind for those that are not, well say, up to speed with the situation. The refinery itself is owned – we call it NARL, North Atlantic Refining Limited – by Silverpeak and another group. There are partners. They purchased it back in 2014, I believe. It's owned by a private group and they were involved in a proposed sale to another private group which is Irving.

Like any commercial deal of that nature, there are agreements signed that forbid the disclosing of information. As government you're privy to certain information, but to put that out there, to satisfy the need for people wanting to know – and I will say, not being a partner – again, a question I had earlier: What has North Atlantic done in a certain regard? I wouldn't be able to say because I'm not North Atlantic. We are in constant communication with them. We have spoken to Irving. We have spoken to everybody we can, but the situation is extremely fluid and continues to move.

When we talk about the motion that was made under Standing Order 36, is we're talking about the impact of the closure of the Come By Chance oil refinery and the devastating economic impact it will have on our province's economy, so on. What I would say, though, I still live in hope that it's not closure. I still live in hope that the word will not be, will, it's could. I think we're all talking about the same thing. It's this House coming together to recognize the fact that there are, I think, in – I want to talk about some of that economic impact, 400 jobs.

There are 400 person-years of employment. That's the latest figures we have. Now, that is direct employment. I would point out that they are good, solid, well-paying jobs in a rural area of this province, which I think carries a significant amount of weight. The latest numbers we also have said that it's 1,471 indirect or induced jobs. That in and of itself is a huge number in this province.

Sadly, this is very reminiscent and similar to the debate we've been having in this House and have had in this House up to yesterday, in fact, and it will continue on, which is the issues faced by our offshore industry. We talk about not just the jobs that are involved in the industry; it's the indirect and induced employment that comes with it. It's the spinoff that comes with it, and you only have to look at this city to see what the impact is when we have a downturn in the market. We've gone through it before and we're certainly going through that right now.

Labour income is about \$65 million direct, about \$105 million indirect or induced. NARL itself owns 60 retail locations; three cardlock stations. They have home heating and propane delivery. If there's a positive, I would point out that this is owned by a separate entity. So this will not be affected, and they have indicated this will continue on. This has been a tough issue since March when it went into basically a shutdown mode caused by COVID.

I just spoke to the media here, and one thing I tried to get through here because – and, again, this is me just speaking about it. It's one thing when as a government you make a decision or a policy change or a legislative change, you have your reasons for doing it, and then if it is not received well or taken well or positive, you

defend it, you deal with it, but you bear some responsibility.

The difficult part here is that the situation we face is the same one that's being faced, especially, in Alberta; it's being faced all around the States. In fact, I was reading an article just a minute ago about how Phillips down in the States is shutting down a refinery as we speak. There are going to be significant refinery closures on this continent and worldwide. We are all facing the same common affliction here, which is COVID. That's one of the big, huge factors that have driven this, combined with an oil market that has collapsed. Those two things together make for a significant impact.

Another article I read this morning, when we talk about the impact, right now I think oil went up to \$41.91 this morning in Brent, which is up about a dollar. It's almost like you live and die every morning on those emails you get about where it's going.

The latest I saw is that the Saudis in their budget documents have estimated \$50 oil for the next three years, but \$50 oil won't even cover what their budget needs are. They need about \$66 to break even. So when we have a country over there that has been historically wealthy and they're talking about what they're facing when they're going through this, it just tells you that we all face this common issue.

I'll go back to the main point I was making, is it's difficult because this is not something that was caused by a government decision. This was caused by something that's bigger than all of us in here about a decision that's been made for various reasons, whether it was budgetary or otherwise. That makes it even more frustrating than a problem that may have been of your making; that you have an ability to sit down and just do something that will actually cause that change; wherein, this case we have a problem. We know that we have to and want to be able to fix it, but the issues that are causing it are outside the control of everybody. There's nobody that can control this. Well, the second issue, I guess, you could say some of the larger oil-producing nations could have a say in that, but that's far beyond our control here right now.

Back to the case at hand. This is something that has evolved very quickly. I know the union was notified yesterday, that Irving put out their notice today. Some of the questions today are about the impacts. I can tell you, I certainly understand the impacts, I think perhaps as well as anybody in the room. You only have to speak to these communities and these people and read your emails, just receiving them. I'm sure when I pick up my phone after this I will have had an email by somebody that's affected. You read each one of them, you respond to them and you listen to them. You carry it with you.

Two things that I live in hope of, one is there is a glimmer of hope that's been expressed by – a possibility that there may be another purchaser. That interest has been expressed. It's been expressed before by the company, Origin. It's something that we know, that now they too have been made aware of this, they will be doing their due diligence.

Our job as the provincial government is to see what there is that we have the ability to do. It's not always simple, but there certainly has been no issue with the chain of communication that has been there. The more that we are allowed to say, the more detail that we are allowed to give, we'll certainly give it.

In fact, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I would love – the same as with the offshore industries, the same as with many decisions and the issues you face, you would love to be able to fully disclose them so that people could realize the environment in which they're working. I would love to do that, but my desire to do that is outweighed by my need to ensure that we don't do anything to harm this – I can't say pending transaction, but this current issue.

The other hope I live in is that there are times when this House comes together in, I guess, a common goal, a common need and we all feel that need. Some of us feel it a little bit more, because when they go back to their district on the weekend they're going to be talking to these constituents that are directly affected. I empathize. I've been through that in other industries. It is not a good feeling. So I look to my colleagues and I say, I understand what you're dealing with there. That's a tough thing. Nobody wants to go through that.

What I can say is – the same as I've said to the mayor of Clarendville and the mayor of Come By Chance – if there's anything I can do, it's a matter of calling. Because we want the same thing. What is good for one of us is good for all of us here. This is one where nobody does not benefit from the resolution of this issue. Everybody benefits. The people involved directly working, benefit. Hopefully, the owner benefits, the community benefits, the province benefits and the Treasury benefits. This is good for everybody. That's why we're having this debate, because this is not an issue that, I think, is isolated to that particular area. The impacts are felt province-wide.

There are issues that will come out of this, but I'm not prepared to have that debate today. Whether it's the supports for workers, that's a question that, of course, has to be asked, has to be looked at. In answering that or coming up with specifics, one could say then that, well, you've assumed the issue is already done and there's nothing you can fix. That's not where my head is. The other thing I would say here is when it comes to supply issues, that's not an issue that's been expressed to me at this point, but supply issues, price issues, these are all things that we have to look at that are the repercussions of this deal not being done. These are all things we will face.

There are a few Members in this House that have sat through similar debates. We went through this in 2014, where there was the previous sale. Just some history, if you want to know the history: '71 to '76, it was Newfoundland Refining Company, Shaheen resources; then it was idle four years; '80 to '86, Petro Can; then it was '86 to '94 by Newfoundland Energy Limited; '94 to 2006 was Vitol SA; 2006 to '14 was Harvest; '14 to '20 is SilverRange, Silverpeak; and then, up until now, we had anticipated that there would be another proponent that would take this over.

We have gone through this. Some of the transactions have been smoother. I'm sure some of them faced far less environmental issues. When I say environmental, I mean the issues that we're dealing with. Commercial transactions are difficult even in the best of times and the best of markets. Right now, we are dealing with unprecedented times in markets and

the world, in and of itself; makes it even more complicated and more difficult.

I guess what I would close off saying – because I know there are other Members that want to speak – is that I have to respond to one of the questions here: Don't let anyone mistake a measured tone as being reflective of not being emotionally attached or mentally attached to this deal. I am a believer, and I've seen it and sat in this House. The fact is that rushing to do something or getting angry or frustrated or losing your cool does not often result in the best deal.

We've seen governments before – and I'll say governments on both sides. I'm not talking about anybody in particular, lest people think I'm going that route. We have seen governments make decisions thinking it was in the best interest, trying to get it done, realizing that the clock was running; the clock was ticking; we had these concerns. It's only later on that you realize what did you actually get, what did you sign up for and what did you cause? Again, it's not about best intentions, it's about doing this right.

I would say that, look, this is something that our entire department is consumed by. As if we're not already facing the similar issue with our offshore industry, this is something new. But I will say, to use this phrase, that a house divided will not stand, but a house united I think can get a lot of good done.

On that note, I look forward to the comments from my colleagues across the way. I look forward to continuing to figure this issue out for the betterment of the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When I had occasion to comment on the Budget Speech and the budget documents, so recently delivered, I said that the most important number in all those budget documents was 13,000. That

number was the number of jobs expected to be lost in coming months.

If we take 500 as the number of jobs in direct employment with the Come By Chance oil refinery, owned by NARL, if we take the usual multiplier of three, that suggests a number of a further 2,000 jobs imminently being lost, should this oil refinery close down on a permanent basis.

If we look at *The Economy* booklet, which I happen to have here, my souvenir copy, if we go to page 12, there's a table and it sets out Provincial Economic Indicators. These things can be rather abstract, but what we can get out of it is that the government expects folks in the Department of Finance, who do these calculations, expect 13,000 job losses in coming months. If we add the recent distressing news to that, then it looks like that may be 15,000 losses in coming months. That's on page 12, by the way, the table on page 12.

Also another distressing figure is Real GDP growth by Province Newfoundland and Labrador is projected by the government to suffer a minus 7.7 through 2020 loss or shrinkage, negative growth as the expression goes of 7.7.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if this is how an economist would do it. Perhaps some economist or the Minister of Finance eventually will explain it. But if NARL, if the Come By Chance oil refinery is thought to be 5 to 8 per cent of the economy, I suppose depending on the year or the test here. That's a major chunk of our economy, of our GDP as a province. If that's the case, then I guess it suggests that something in the neighbourhood of 13 to 15 per cent of our economy is going to go missing over the next few months into 2020 – negative growth of around 15 per cent if this sad event continues.

While looking through the wonderful tables in *The Economy* document, the only reference I could find to North Atlantic Refining is on page 69, there might be some other reference but this is all I could find. It's a table that sets out Capital Expenditures for – they're divided up in various sectors – inventory of major capital projects. What it has here is capital expenditures of \$50 million to \$60 million in 2020 and it's

described as being: “NARL Refining, LP - maintenance capital as well as capital for the crude flexibility project, tanks and other projects.”

So here the budget documents are already counting expenditures anticipated to be made by various entities, including NARL, in the coming months and now may very well be that those expenditures are not going to be made.

More to the point, the budget documents themselves give no hint or suggestion that there might be a failure to follow-through or a failure to execute the agreement to purchase, and a failure to close the deal by Irving Oil with respect to the NARL facility. There’s no suggestion in any of these budget documents delivered only days ago, so one might infer from that, that this comes as a surprise to the government.

I spoke to a worker in the Tim Horton’s in Clarendville only days ago on my way back from a road trip across the province. We had an interesting chat and this person told me that he’s on much reduced hours; he’s not full-time now. He’s on reduced hours as many other workers have been for recent months and he was very much looking forward to getting back to full-time work because his income, of course, had been reduced correspondingly. So that’s just a taste of the human dimension of these statistics.

I received an email; it just happens I received this today. I won’t identify who sent it. This person is a worker mainly related to the offshore industry. I’m picking this, it’s the only one I have in my inbox right now, Mr. Speaker, so that’s why I’m reading it.

He says: talking to a lot of my co-workers. We all feel the same, as we cannot wait to vote PC in the election, which we hope will be soon. I am from a small town, English Harbour East, in Fortune Bay. I’ve lived in Burin for the past 11 years and recently moved to St. John’s. I was hoping to get back to Argentia working soon and the point of moving to St. John’s was so I could be home with my family every night, rather than have an apartment out there like I did before. But without government investment, I’m doubtful of that. I’ve been in the trades for over 20 years; I’m an electrician. I did the fly-in, fly-

out in Alberta for eight years and was hoping not to do it again.

I’m sure we’ve all received emails of that nature and the insights we’re all familiar with and grateful to those who correspond with us and call us for the insights into their own lives and the impact of abstract figures like 15,000 job losses on their lives and the lives of their families.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: I might’ve expected the Government House Leader to lead by example in terms of decorum.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you.

So –

MR. CROCKER: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. CROCKER: (Inaudible) section 49, Mr. Speaker, of the Standing Orders, the Member opposite, we start off a debate this afternoon and the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island makes a really good point. I think our minister responsible for that department makes a good point as well. Then one day we’re hearing the Leader of the Opposition bringing motions that they don’t want an election, and then he starts off his conversation this afternoon talking about the urgency for an election.

So, Mr. Speaker, he can only have it one way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order, but I caution Members to use temperate language in the House.

Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I might have expected the hon. Government House Leader to have a firmer grip on what a point of order is.

The Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, to my mind, is overemphasizing the COVID effect in the present industrial crisis involving NARL, or at least I have to question whether that's the case.

This agreement of purchase and sale was entered by Irving in May, so we understand. One has to believe that Irving did this in full knowledge of COVID and its worldwide effects, and likely worldwide effects given that the world started to shut down back in March.

You have to assume that Irving went into this deal with their eyes wide open about the COVID effect. In fact, the reasons why Irving has decided that they don't want to complete this agreement of purchase and sale are not at all clear. In fact, they're very obscure. They have not seen fit to share those with the public, and perhaps for understandable reasons. Government ministers have not seen fit to do that either. They feel they're obliged by confidentiality perhaps not to disclose that, and I can understand; but, the fact remains that the reasons why Irving is pulling out are not clear.

Luckily for the workers and their families who are impacted and whose lives are dangling over a precipice as a result of this terrible news, luckily there is an alternate buyer or bidder, so far as we understand. Who is that alternate buyer or bidder? Well, that's a matter of public record. For example, I'm looking at the story from the CBC website, its dateline July 20, 2020, and it tells us something about this company, Origin, which was the disappointed bidder at the time Irving was awarded by NARL the bid and the deal which has now come a cropper.

I read from that story. It says: "If given the chance, a company called Origin International is pledging to resume the processing of various fuels at the Come By Chance refinery, hire the

same or more personnel than worked at the facility before the pandemic, and expand the operation into 'a more environmental sustainable model.'

"It's all spelled out in a June 8 letter, obtained by CBC News, to provincial Natural Resources Minister Siobhán Coady." As she then was.

"In the event the Irving transaction stakeholders deem appropriate an assessment of alternatives to acquire NARC, Origin stands --"

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

MR. CROCKER: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Member opposite named a Member of this House by name.

MR. SPEAKER: I did not hear that, but I'll caution Members not to use the names of Members in the House.

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you.

It says: "... Origin stands willing and able to re-engage in its bid for NARC" In other words, if the thing falls apart, which it now has. That's very encouraging. It quotes the CEO of this Origin company, a Mr. Myerson.

Myerson goes on to say: "We just wanted to make decision-makers aware of our interest in the province and a key asset in the event circumstances changed."

The story goes on: "Origin does not have operations in Canada, and Myerson says it would sail through the regulatory approval process much swifter."

I guess we can infer that the Irving deal has not sailed through because March, June, July, August, September, we're now into October and there's no decision from the competition authorities about this. The point that the Origin CEO is making here is that because it doesn't have operations in Canada, it wouldn't have the kind of regulatory approval issues that Irving might and apparently does.

Myerson is quoted: "This being the case, approximately 45 days of due diligence could be the main bottleneck to closing a transaction and bringing jobs back to the facility." Forty-five days. Here we are several months now and, of course, no word on the acceptance or rejection of the Irving takeover and perhaps it's all moot now anyway.

The point out of this being that at least the advice of the chief executive officer of this Origin group is he would expect that for the reasons explained, there would be a very comparatively short period of time before regulatory authorities, competition authorities would be able to give their seal of approval to the deal, so not a long turnaround time. That will be or would be good news to workers and their families.

It describes itself, this is Origin: "... as one of the largest privately owned collectors and recyclers of residual oil and waste water in the U.S. and Europe.

"The company operates three locations across the U.S. and Belgium, and is constructing a waste oil recycling plant in Baltimore, Maryland."

The CEO is quoted: "We believe that every barrel of oil we recycle means one less barrel going to landfill or being improperly combusted."

"Myerson said his company is focused on environmental, social and governance excellence."

Well, these are the news reports. Ultimately, who knows, but on the face of it this sounds like a desirable corporate citizen. A corporate citizen who believes it has the financial capacity and the characteristics to, if brought into play as a backstop to the deal that's currently falling apart in front of our eyes, could quickly pick up the pieces and keep this oil refinery to get it up and running and operating through the winter. That's what I derived from the news reports; very encouraging.

This is very encouraging, and one wonders why the government was not in a position after following and keeping close communication

with Origin, without breaching any confidentiality they might have had with Irving itself, why the government was not in a position to give rapid and immediate reassurance to workers and their families that there was another party waiting in the wings who is ready to come in and pick up the pieces and that their jobs were secure.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

I'm happy to have an opportunity to speak to this today; though, I'm feeling rather sad about the fact that we are here today, Mr. Speaker. I'm also equally sad that people would play politics about a very sensitive issue. I won't go back tort for tort on the last speaker's comments but I will say a couple of points today that I think will help add to the debate.

First of all, to the employees, to the workers of the Come By Chance Refinery, I've had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to visit there on a number of occasions. I can say that they have a great deal of pride and I, as a representative of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, share their pride in what they've been able to do since Silverpeak has taken over the refinery in 2014. They have made this refinery, as I said earlier in Question Period, more efficient, more reliable and safer. Mr. Speaker, they've made it one of the top quartile refineries and certainly the seventh largest in Canada.

So, first and foremost, to everyone who is involved with the refinery, the 400 families and then there are about 200 contractors that are impacted today, my heart is there with you. I know government is doing everything it can to ensure the continuance of its operations because of how important it is to the families that are involved in working there, but also to the economy of the province.

I will say this, I remember the phone call very well. I think it was at the end of March. We had just started the big lockdown and we were all concerned about the health and safety. I

remember receiving a call saying that the North Atlantic refinery has initiated a suspension of the crude oil and hydrocarbon processing at the refinery in response to COVID and the pandemic, and there were a lot of overall concerns about what was happening in the petroleum industry globally. At that point in time, I know they basically warm stacked it and tried to keep as many employees as they possible could.

I've been dealing with Silverpeak over the last number of years, Madam Speaker, and I can tell you they were putting big investments, I think it was about \$400 million into the refinery, to bring the refinery up as best they could. Making it more, as I said earlier, efficient, bringing the number of barrels it produced – I think towards the end it was 135,000 barrels a day which was substantively increased over the time.

I know people were very, very – proud, is a good word to use, and there were long-term, exciting plans happening. I remember talking about a coker, talking about a pipeline and talking about a number of exciting initiatives, Madam Speaker, and then the pandemic. We've seen this around the globe. We've seen this happen in the United States with the number of refineries closing.

Allow me first to tell you a little bit about what NARL Refining actually does. It operates about 135,000 barrels per day at Come By Chance. It includes process facilities, crude oil, refined products storage tanks, as well as a deepwater wharf and jetty facilities for tanker loading and offloading, and of course it has a marine division that manages vessel traffic, oil spill risk control prevention. The majority of the refining output is exported, with about 10 to 15 per cent, on average, annually sold in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It also has a large division called NARL Marketing, which is a retail and marketing operation. It has about 60-plus gas stations, Madam Speaker, around the province, and three cardlock storage and distribution locations, various bulk plant storage facilities, wholesale and commercial division.

I'm saying all this, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I think it's important for the people of

the province to understand the value of the refinery to Newfoundland and Labrador and the value of the pride of workmanship of the people that work there. Labour compensation is about \$170 million. That's direct and indirect and induced. It's quite something, if you've ever had the opportunity to tour there. It's a very valuable asset.

The North Atlantic refinery is a very valuable asset. It's strategically located, obviously, in North Atlantic crude oil shipping routes. It gives access to petroleum markets in Europe and the Eastern US seaboard, which is again very important. The value of the international petroleum exports from Newfoundland and Labrador totalled \$3.1 billion in 2019. It has a deepwater – as I said earlier – terminal that welcomes oil tankers from around the globe.

Madam Speaker, I will say that Origin International did write to me as a former minister of Natural Resources back on June 8, they expressed interest. As the former Speaker did say, there is an opportunity here for others who may be interested in this particular asset.

I say to Origin, you're welcome to Newfoundland and Labrador. The workforce is outstanding. I can say they have a lot of pride in what they are doing. I've already given a rundown of why this is such an important asset and why we welcome investment from around the world. I think it's incumbent on everyone in this House today to make sure that we make that message heard and make that message loud and clear that anyone who wants to step forward to take over the asset, to reinvigorate and reimagine what North Atlantic refinery can be, to not only the province but to Canada and globe, so we welcome them.

I will say, I can recall very vividly the day, I think I was the end of May, when I learned that Irving had expressed interest in taking on the asset themselves, it was May 28 actually, that Irving announced that they had reached an agreement with Silverpeak to acquire NARL. It was, despite some comments earlier, it was related to COVID. As I said, NARL refinery was moving forward, Silverpeak was moving forward with investments in the assets. At the end of May, we learned that Irving Oil was

subject to a regulatory review, of course, and conditions of sale being met.

So now we know, as of, I guess, yesterday, or the day before, I guess yesterday, that that has fallen through. I guess the conditions were not met. I think they were still in the regulatory process and Irving has removed itself from the discussions, but Silverpeak is still interested in exiting and making sure that this asset is valuable to someone other than themselves, at this point in time. Again, it is related to the pandemic and the impacts of the global oil crisis.

I will also say, Madam Speaker, earlier the previous speaker had talked about the impact to the province and the impact to the budgetary statements that were delivered last week and the impact to the economy. I said earlier, as we know the Come By Chance refinery was closed and would be closed for most of this year; therefore, there would be minimal impacts on the budget economic projections.

I will say that again so that people do not start to extrapolate out huge numbers and fear monger, Madam Speaker, because I think it's important that we understand the impacts of this, we understand the impacts to the family and to the economy and to the supply chain, to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, as I said, 10 to 15 per cent of the refining came to Newfoundland and Labrador. I wouldn't want anyone to misunderstand that extrapolating huge numbers and making it even worse than it already is.

I will say that NARL – North Atlantic Refining Limited – I just say that because I think that a lot of people get confused when we say NARL, North Atlantic Refining represents an estimated 1 per cent of the total provincial GDP, which includes direct, indirect and induced impact of operating and capital expenditures, net value added as a result of refining imported and locally produced crude. I want to make sure that people understand that. I know, and I think I even said earlier, it's about 5 per cent but when we look at the total provincial GDP impact, it's about 1 per cent.

There are men and women who work here that have done exceptional work and we want to support them and encourage them, that's why I

spoke directly earlier to the value and the benefits of this particular asset. That's why I made sure that people understand that this is very, very important to the province and that we're going to do, as a province, everything we possibly can do.

I will say again, and I know my colleague, the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology did indicate earlier and continues to indicate that this is a private ownership and a private sale. But I did have the opportunity when I was Minister of Natural Resources to speak with Irving and they appeared sincere. Again, I say that Irving has been in the province for about 50 years and they did indicate that they would go back to full operations, had they been able to successfully close on this. It is truly unfortunate to learn this news.

We still have strong belief in this industry. We know the value of the people who work there and the value of what they bring to Newfoundland and Labrador.

I know my colleague and I know this government will do absolutely everything possible to represent how positive an impact the North Atlantic refinery has to the province; how positive an impact it has on global markets; how well and strategically located it is; how well and strategically the deep-water terminal is, that it does now have 135,000 barrel per day capacity, thanks the hard work of the organization over the last six years, that the province stands behind it.

I think all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have pride in this and I think that we will do absolutely everything that we possibly can to ensure that it will continue to be a vibrant, active, refinery in the province, contributing not only to our GDP, not only to the families of the workers there, but also to our supply chain, also to the spin-off industries created around it, also to the technology, to the university.

I've met a lot of young people, Madam Speaker, who were there that were graduates of the Memorial University engineering school, and were so proud to be able to work in the industry and so proud of what they were contributing as well.

I say to everyone in this room today, I think we should all stand together in strong support of the North Atlantic refinery. I think we should all stand together in attracting investment to this province. We should all stand together in support of the men and women who work there and the pride with which they hold the refinery.

I think we all realize throughout this pandemic how important it is to support one another, how important it is to emphasize job creation, to support businesses and to support industry in this province. The budget did just that, Madam Speaker, and I will say that we will continue to do that for all those who work at North Atlantic refinery, and who work with the marketing arm as well as with the refinery.

On that note, I know a number of my colleagues wish to speak, I know Members opposite wish to speak, so I'll conclude my remarks.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER (P. Parsons): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's a sombre kind of day, actually. I might want to add that I changed critic roles a few weeks ago and went from Transportation and Works to Industry, Energy and Technology and it's been a blur for the last few weeks. It's just constant. With the oil and gas industry, there are rallies on the steps of the Confederation Building; now we have the refinery closing. I was in the middle of budget and Estimates.

But you learn on the fly, and it's something that's near and dear to all of the people of the province, our oil and gas industry alone, especially the Come By Chance refinery. You drive through Sunnyside; you're on the highway; no one ever misses Come By Chance, the stacks. It's a landmark more than anything for my lifetime and most people in this Legislature. It's been there for a long time and it's a huge economic driver. It's a great employer. It has a long history.

We hope, on this side anyway – and I'm sure all sides of this House – the history is not done. We hope there's a new life for this refinery. We can't afford to let the refinery come to a close, which was announced last night. I believe everyone in this House feels that way.

I do believe residents, workers and families – because that's all it's affecting. If we look at a refinery, a refinery is the building and it does a lot of things. You say, what is a refinery? It's more than just the bricks and mortar and the stacks and the oil tanks. It's families, it's jobs, it's people's mental health and it's communities. If you lose 500 jobs in St. John's and the Northeast Avalon, it's a huge blow, and the spinoffs from it, a huge blow.

If you go out in those areas, that is those communities, that is most of that area. For some of the smaller communities, that is the backbone of the community. People in this end of the province probably would never realize until you went out there. I've been out around there and I'm sure most have. A lot of residents in the province don't realize it because sometimes you can't put it into perspective, but it's a huge employer. Again, where do you go?

If you look at our oil and gas industry, I get oil – I've said this before and I'm happy to say it. Every evening I go home, every night I go home and I see the Terra Nova parked out in Conception Bay. It's beautiful in the nighttime if anyone ever had the opportunity. I say that with all sincerity. When lit up it's beautiful, but I'd much rather see that out pumping oil than sitting in Conception Bay.

That's what we're facing right across the board. As we talk about Come By Chance, we're talking about an industry in crisis. The minister and everyone on the government side are saying this is a business-to-business transaction. I get that. I don't think anyone in the province doesn't get that, but I think you have to ask yourself, we can sit here for the next hour or two, we can sit here all night, until you start offering solutions, talking solutions, we can talk all the nice words we want to talk, until we start talking solutions, take some ownership – there are things, I would think, could've been done differently.

Five or six years ago the PC Party were on that side. In 2014, they were part of the sale. Whoever's name is over the door, you have to take some responsibility. You can't absolve yourself of responsibility. You're the government; you have to take that responsibility.

Now, is that a direct slight that someone over there did something wrong? No. It's obvious; the government of the day have the keys to the Treasury. We don't. We ask the questions. We try to offer solutions; we try to debate solutions. That's what we're doing here now, but ultimately they have the aye or nay.

The people that are affected by this, right throughout the province, Eastern Newfoundland especially, and a lot of my colleagues here, it's in their districts. Actually, my district as well is affected. Some people work there. They want answers. It's fine to say it's business to business; it's not government; it's a private sale, we're concerned. We're all concerned.

I asked a question during Question Period today: Could you not have been at the table? Could you not have had some other influence?

I know several of us got an email – I think the minister was included on the email. Someone suggested power rates. When Muskrat Falls comes online, would there not be an opportunity to give a reduced deal on their electricity to offset some of the costs of the refinery as an incentive? Even though it's a private business deal, what's wrong with offering an incentive? We're not saying government should purchase it. Why not offer an incentive? Were there any incentives on the table like that during this most recent negotiation that broke off? We don't know – which is another part of the problem.

We were there last night in Estimates and Friday past. Actually, the president of the union that the minister referenced when he spoke, he lives in my district. He reached out to me Friday because he was frustrated that he had trouble trying to talk to someone in the department. This was Friday. I committed to him – ironically, I said: Well, I have Estimates Monday night with the minister and his officials, and I will assure you I'll get answers to your questions and I will ask the minister to contact you directly. Lo and behold, 6:15, 6:20 last night during Estimates

the breaking news was the refinery is shutting down. Then I went into questioning the minister on, where do we go from here?

For those people, that's the frustration. I get the fact you're not responsible, and that's not all wrong, but the question is – and we don't know. That's what we're here for today. Hopefully, these details will come out. What did you offer? Did you offer anything? Was there anything on the table? Was there any offer? Was there any olive branch to say, listen, we realize it's a private enterprise, but we're willing to sit down at the table. Do you want to talk to us?

So we do not know that, and we ask questions. That's what this is about. It's not about throwing rocks on one side or the other, because we've got someone already that – I'll leave that one. The stones, I won't go there. I'm going to be nice. I'm not going to turn any more stones today, I'll say that.

AN HON. MEMBER: They're all turned over.

MR. PETTEN: They're all turned over, that's right.

People want answers. There are people in this province now – there are families that are devastated, absolutely devastated. The workers are losing their jobs but they're going home to their wife and children or their husband and children – it depends who's working there – they have bad news. This is detrimental, and we're in this economy now with COVID.

We're struggling anyway, our oil and gas industry is, as we already know where that is. There are not a lot of jobs that are going to pay anywhere near that. We're on a downturn everywhere. All of our big projects are coming to an end, and now you have this. I understand government are struggling financially. We get that. They recently got the \$320 million, maybe there's something they could do with that. There are a lot of demands for that money, but you have to do something.

I know if I was home today and my job was gone or I'm thinking everything is gone and there's no hope – there's a company there that shows an interest, but that doesn't mean nothing

until it's finalized. I'd be looking, what are government going to do?

One of my questions, actually, to the minister last night during Estimates was: Is there something you'd consider for the workers? I understand it's not going to be a miracle with the financial situation. Is there something we can do? Because we're not going to solve the world's problems today but I think there needs to be some sort of assurance other than kind words: well, we're sorry, we weren't part of this deal. No one is saying that's false but you have the ability to do something.

If we have a fish plant that closes, we step in. We have ski hills that were failing; we purchased them. We have airports that struggle; we subsidize them. I can go on, but the picture I'm painting is we can't absolve ourselves of something of this magnitude of our refinery in this industry.

I do understand where the economy is going. I understand where people's minds are going with the green energy. That's not where we need to be to, not now. You'll always have to find a balance. Oil and gas is still important. Oil is still a very important commodity in our market, and we need it. It's fine to be green but green technology will not fully transform for 20, 30 years or longer out.

The Member for Lake Melville is much more up on the carbon and the climate change issue than I am, and I'm sure he can back me up on that. You're going to need a balance. You can't shut down all. You can't shut down your oil and gas. Unfortunately, we get that attitude coming from the federal government which makes me nervous because I understand fiscally where we are provincially.

Again, we saw it already in the oil and gas. We have money to do whatever you want with but we never address the problem. I think the same thing will happen here. We have a government that's struggling financially, so if you don't give incentives or try to be creative within our own bubble here, I don't think the federal government is going to step up any time soon because they're all about green technology. They're all about what's green. Down the road that may be fine, but right now I fear to think

what the future holds for this province if we don't get some substantive answers and solutions to the problems that are facing us.

Come up with solutions, incentives. Are there monies we can do to offset power rates? Is there any subsidy you can give them to get them over this hump? Is there something you can broker at the table for a sale? That's what the people want to hear. They don't want to hear we're sorry. They don't want to hear condolences. They want to hear solid answers or assurances that something is going to be done and we're with you. That's what the public want; that's what the workers want.

I guarantee you, the families that are out there today that are faced with this wondering, with the winter coming on, how they get through this – because they've been out of work for a while now, this sale has been ongoing. Some of them have been on the edge for a while, some people have.

This is not a good time and they want action. They want some answers now. It's fine to say you're not responsible. Okay, you can do that, but the workers know who's responsible; the people of the province know, ultimately, who is responsible and who can make a difference. It's the government of the day. I call upon them to do that.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

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

Yesterday, the media reported that the deal with Irving Oil had collapsed and that the workers at the North Atlantic oil refinery in Come By Chance could be without employment permanently.

Madam Speaker, last night, I was sitting in my office at home and my phone started going buzz, buzz, buzz and I said: What's going on now? I picked up my phone, I was learning in real time what was happening. The workers were telling

me that they had received notice from North Atlantic and, Madam Speaker, many residents of my district are gravely impacted by this important issue. The impact is felt on individuals, families, local businesses and Newfoundland and Labrador as a whole.

Madam Speaker, when I was the minister of Service NL, I worked very closely with the latest operators, the staff and union, executive members and we developed a really good relationship. We worked together for about a year. We worked to ensure everyone felt safe and worked collaboratively together and the morale had improved greatly at the site. Madam Speaker, this refinery is a major asset to the residents of the surrounding districts and to the people of the Trinity, Placentia, Marystown and Clarenville area, just to name a few.

This is an evolving situation. As I said, I learned about this in real time. I have spoken to a number of people directly impacted. These are individuals who are employed at the refinery and are waiting to go back to work. As the MHA for Placentia - St. Mary's, I can assure my constituents that we understand the impact of this news.

We are having a difficult time here in Newfoundland and Labrador with the collapse of the oil prices and COVID-19, but we're not alone worldwide. However, it's not lost on me that my constituents may be without work, permanently. It's frustrating because the work environment has improved greatly at the site. The refinery appeared to be on the upswing prior to the pandemic.

I am hearing that North Atlantic will try to cut costs before shutting the site down. In the past, the refinery had contributed to as much as 5 per cent of the province's economy. That's a large number, Madam Speaker.

This issue took up a significant portion of Question Period today, and we're now debating it here in the House. We can come together as elected representatives to do our best for the people of this province and the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Again, Madam Speaker, this refinery is an asset to Newfoundland and Labrador. We believe that

there are options here, but we must take our time. We must arrive at the best option for the people of our districts.

Madam Speaker, we have individuals of all ages impacted here. We have households where multiple individuals are impacted. You'll often hear people say what a difficult time of the year for this to happen. Any time is a difficult time when you face potential loss of your employment and your job.

Madam Speaker, both the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology and the Premier have spoken to the president of United Steelworkers local 9316. I have spoken to him, and to the people of the District of Placentia - St. Mary's and those impacted by this devastating turn of events.

I say there is hope. There may be another investor. Just a little over an hour ago CBC reported that a second company says it's interested in the North Atlantic refinery. Origin International did say that it is awaiting further clarity. North Atlantic Refining Limited says it's considering its options. So it's not all doom and gloom, it's a difficult day, it's a hard day, but we do have options.

To those personally impacted, I can assure you that you are the priority for this government, for the Members of this House of Assembly; you are the priority over politics. This is not over. It will take time. We are in very difficult times. Being hasty is not the option here. Hold fast, there are solutions.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I won't take up all the House's time, but I do want to speak to this because I lived this at one time. In February of 2014, working as a contractor, I delivered, I think it was, \$11,000 worth of products to Wabush Mines that

morning, and that evening they sent everybody home. I lived it. My community lived it. It was hard to watch your best friends who you grew up with walk out of there with their tool boxes in their hand. It's something I never in my life want to see again. It absolutely devastated lives. People had to uproot. Things were going great for a while, and then just like that the door closed behind them.

My biggest worry of all this is the workers. These people are the backbone of any business, any operation, any organization, any group: human beings. These people made their livelihood based on the opportunities of full-time employment at a unionized business with great benefits and great opportunities for them and their families. These people spend the majority of their money in our economy, our local economy, their region's economy. We must do what we can to protect these workers, but also protect some businesses and infrastructure around as well.

I know every now and then I get accused of: you're anti-oil. Nowhere have I ever said I was anti-oil. I would like to see a stronger economy built on embracing the environment and the importance of protecting our environment, but I know for a fact, and my colleagues here know for a fact – she's an economist who studied the oil industry – you just can't turn the taps off tomorrow. You can't shut it all down tomorrow. That's impractical, but we need to build an economy that is strong no matter what the industry is. If it's oil, if it's avionics, if it's technology, mining, the fishery, all these economies need to be built on a stable ground that also protects the people that actually operate them, because day-to-day people are the backbone of everything in this province.

We need to make sure that everything we do and everything we discuss and talk about, the number one person protected is the employee on the floor because those individuals are the ones who will spend the money in this province. They're the ones who will build our economy. They're the ones that go out and buy the luxuries of life and support local businesses. A majority of all the money spent by these large corporations' employees is spent right here in this province, and that's what actually drives our economy. It's the actual people that live here.

If there's nothing here that is a strong, stable economy or a strong, stable business, those people go elsewhere. That's the big crux of our problem in this province: out-migration, people leaving. That is actually the real root of a lot of these problems: people leaving.

I can't get doctors in my district. We've tried. We've offered them houses. We've offered them anything. They stay for a few weeks or months and then they're out the door. The problem they always say is they don't feel at home here. That's the thing, too. What do we do to draw people back?

I'm lucky enough; my new sessional assistant just came back from BC. He didn't like it out there and wanted to come home. How do we get more people like him to come back? We need people to come home. That's the thing; we need strong, stable industries in this province that encourages development and growth. Do you know what? All those people that left this province have skill sets. They've gone to MUN or other universities, they have great knowledge and insights, and we need to entice them to come back here.

That's the thing that we need to find, is to entice individuals to come back here. Maybe we can entice the right people to come back and maybe they can make Come By Chance a better refinery, a more economically thing. But we need to entice people to come home and that is a real strategic thing around here. That's where we need to build a plan that involves the technology industry, the fishery – it's all connected together. That's everything and the basis of it is good, stable economics and a good, stable base of our province.

So if you know someone who is living elsewhere and wants to come home, maybe they have a plan, maybe we should ask them: What would it take for you to take your business or your knowledge or your skill set and come back here? Because that's where we can find the key to what we're missing, it's the people that we need to bring home.

If the campus was open and we weren't in COVID times and you walk around the university and talk to people, some of them have a pre-plan to leave, which is so unfortunate.

What we have to do is: What will it take for you to take that great skill that you learned, that great insight that you have and translate it to one of our many industries in this province and try to make a better tomorrow for us? Because that is what it is, it's the people on the ground. They're the ones that know what it takes to keep things going. They're great people and they got some great insights but we need to encourage them to use them for our province's benefit; not Alberta's, not Ontario's, not BC's, for us, for Labrador West. That's where it is.

I don't want to take anymore time from anyone. I know a lot of other people in this House want to speak on some great issues here.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I need to highlight, first of all, the importance that this devastating news has upon many of the workers in the District of Harbour Main. We have a high percentage of workers that work in the refinery at Come By Chance and I've heard from workers about their concerns. I'd like to share with you and everyone some of the feelings and the anxieties that people are feeling.

There's a sense of discouragement. There's a sense of fear about their future possibilities. I spoke this morning, at length, with a long-time worker who had been in the oil and gas industry all his life and, in particular, had worked at the Come By Chance refinery for a very long time; very sad to hear the thoughts and the feelings of this person and he is only one of many.

We've heard that there are 400 workers directly impacted; another 100 contractors, indirect jobs. We also know that it will affect the building trades workers as well who also rely on this refinery to get a few weeks of work from time to time. The building trades will be impacted as well.

Boilermakers, labourers, carpenters, millwrights, not only them, but suppliers as well; businesses,

companies who supply materials who already have been hard hit as a result of the flattening, let's call it, of the oil industry and now they've received another smack, if you will, and probably are contemplating folding their businesses.

Madam Speaker, it is devastating news. I also would like to share what my constituent, who's a worker, said as far as the fact that there was no real knowing that this was coming. He expressed concerns about that. He said he felt like his bags were thrown out into the street, into the road after a lifetime of work.

How is it possible, Madam Speaker? This question has to be asked. I know we want to work together and we will work together, but these are legitimate questions that have to be asked. How is it that the government did not see this coming? We've heard that they were watching closely and they're going to continue to watch closely.

Now, were they watching closely? Were they watching the dealings that were going on? Yes, I understand as the minister had addressed me, as a lawyer, I am a lawyer and I clearly understand when there are business transactions that go on. However, that does not take the government off the hook, Madam Speaker.

Yes, we can blame it on COVID; we can blame it on the global markets, on the oil price prices. We can say it's a business-to-business transaction, but, surely, there is responsibility on our government. They have to take some responsibility here. Only then, when that is acknowledged, can we move forward together.

I question that and I think that is a legitimate question. I see that they're shaking heads over there, but government has to look at that issue. Government was involved; they talked about facilitating the deal, and I'm hopeful that will happen. We were told that government will do what they can to facilitate that deal, and they will see what we have the ability to do.

We hope that will happen. We need to understand if there were checks and balances in place, something went wrong. Hopefully, the new interested purchaser, the buyer who has expressed an interest, will be monitored closely

by our government. That is their responsibility. Yes, hopefully, this will pan out with Origin International and that they will be successful in acquiring the North Atlantic refinery.

So, again, these are legitimate questions that we, as the Official Opposition, have the right to ask of the government of the day. These are decisions which affect so many people.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I'd like to say, we are so rich in resources, in natural resources. We are one of the leading suppliers – Canada is – of crude oil in the world. So we have an abundance of natural resource, and, yes, we need to maximize our rich resources.

Recently, we were provided with information from experts in the field in the oil and gas industry. I'll just quote a few facts that are relevant for the people to know. Originally, it was thought that Hibernia contained 520 million barrels of oil. The field is now expected to produce 1,644 million barrels of oil, and 1,158 million barrels have been produced to date. So almost 500 million barrels –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: – still to produce. We are rich in natural resources, in oil.

Hebron, originally, was estimated to contain 556 million barrels of oil. It's now estimated at 707 million barrels. To date, it has produced 100 million barrels of oil. So, again, we are rich in this resource.

Terra Nova was originally estimated to contain 400 million barrels of recoverable oil. It's now estimated to contain 506 million barrels, and 425 million barrels of oil have been produced. We still have so much more potential here. We are rich.

White Rose; there are 404 million barrels of oil in the West White Rose oil field; 251 million have been produced. Again, we have so much potential here.

I'm continually asked the question by my constituents, those oil and gas workers who say,

why are we not maximizing these rich resources that we have? We are so blessed to have this available to us, so surely we can all work together to hopefully come to some solutions. We have to recognize that government has responsibility to work within the system and try to come to some plausible solutions here for the people of our province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I believe the objective of this discussion, this debate here today is to work together, to put the politics aside, to forget the history, to try to see what solutions we could put on the floor. For the next few minutes, Madam Speaker, that is what I'm going to attempt to do.

I'm going to look at it from a different perspective for a change and I'm going to put the environmental lens on this. That may surprise a few people, but you know what? As I heard my colleague for Labrador West say a few minutes ago, there's no question that there's a transition that's needed between the oil and gas economy that we've all come to rely on and where we know we need to go in terms of climate change. It's one of the other key pandemic world-threatening-type crises that we're facing.

A couple of thoughts I want to put on the floor. First of all, I'm sure everybody in this House can remember where we were two weeks tomorrow ago in terms of walking out in front of hundreds of very frustrated oil and gas workers, helicopters, equipment and a sector that was screaming at us to say: What can you do? We need your help; we need your attention. I have to say, that wasn't lost on myself, it wasn't lost on this crowd on this side and I'm sure it wasn't lost on anyone who stood in front of that group.

I also now want to go back to another thought on my mind. I want to go back to June of 2016, when I was minister responsible for the Office

of Climate Change. It brought in the first legislation dealing with greenhouses gas emissions. I can recall looking at my mandate letter from the premier of the day when he said: I want you to introduce legislation dealing with the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and I want you to start with a large industry of this province.

That, Madam Speaker, was an interesting challenge when we have environmental, climate change objectives and priorities that we all know are very important; yet, I still have a mandate letter to see what we can do to convince industry to go there. Those first few months of tackling that, bringing the bill in here on to the floor – it was Bill 34; I remember it very well. It was my first bill. A very fascinating exercise, and to bring that even on to the floor we needed the co-operation of all the large industry of the province.

Now, let me get to the topic of the day, which is the Come By Chance oil refinery. At the time, it was owned by Silverpeak. NARL – as we came to refer to it – was one of the key players and it has been one of our top emitters of greenhouse gas emissions. I looked to them to say and see whether or not we could get and seek their co-operation.

What I wanted to report here today to the House, and in terms of putting contribution on the floor, is as soon as I heard this motion here today I went to the Whip and I said I want to speak to this because I want to put on the floor, in *Hansard*, a testimonial as to the co-operation that this government, this province, has received from this refinery and the owners of that refinery to date. It's bar none. It is frankly an example, not just for our province but I believe the country and across the world. In fact, I spoke at the co-operation of Silverpeak and NARL and, frankly, other industry in our province in Mexico at a Pan-American conference on climate change a couple of years ago.

Just a couple of little points I wanted to put out there. I want to reference – he may be watching, perhaps he is, but I wanted to say hello to a friend of mine that I know the Deputy Premier knows well, Mr. Kaushik Amin. He's a partner at Silverpeak and a very surprising, interesting individual. I'd invite you all to google this

gentleman's name right now, Kaushik Amin. He surprised me. Here's a guy who's a world player in many investment companies. I thought I was going to have my typical environment versus industry, environment versus the economy type of confrontation.

He presented me with a book. The book is called *Climate of Hope: How Cities, Businesses, and Citizens can Save the Planet*, and for the next two hours I listened to him speak about his vision for how he as a world player on industrial development and economic development and sustainable development can all function together. A fascinating book; I'd invite you all to read it. There's a lot of guidance in there. In terms of how this debate can function and looking for solutions, I would suggest you can find solutions in a book like that. Kaushik, I thank you for it. It's been a good guide for me.

At the time, Mr. Amin came to me and he said, we will work with you. In fact, he said, we will set standards through which other industries can try to follow. He has put his money where his mouth is. In terms of looking at the quality and the value of this asset, I want this province to realize that we don't just have an industrial facility that employs some 400 people, represents 5 per cent of our GDP, we actually have a facility that has received significant overhaul and is one of the top facilities now in terms of its reductions on greenhouse gas emissions and working towards issues around climate change.

Here are a couple of numbers for you. I just went back in my own logbooks. At the time – and I heard the Deputy Premier reference that there's been some \$400 million invested in that facility. At the time I had \$200 million, of which \$41 million they were spending on energy efficiency and improved emissions intensity, and they had further plans in the works.

I stepped back from the Office of Climate Change in late 2017, but I've certainly been keeping a close eye on this facility because it's Canada's seventh largest refinery. By the way, it is our only export facility that we have in the country. It has several very peculiar, very interesting attractions to it that make it a very valuable asset. It's ranked number three in the country in terms of its emissions intensity. That

means in terms of the emissions that come from the refinery and in terms of the number of barrels of oil that it can actually process and go through, it is leading. It's essentially one of our top ones.

There's an entity called Solomon. I remember Kaushik telling me about, go look up Solomon and go look and see what they have to say about us. So I did. Here's a third party group that looks at this refinery in Come By Chance and it ranks some 130 North American refineries. That includes United States, Mexico, Caribbean and Canada. This facility that we are here debating today, that we are all very interested in, it is in the top 80 per cent. It is one of the best in the world. It is essentially ranked as one of the most highly competitive refineries in the world. That's what we're talking about here today. That's why we have this emergency debate. That's why we need to spend some attention to it.

I reached out to the Minister Responsible for the Office of Climate Change, and I thank him and his deputy and the other staff, because I wanted to – much like I did the other day when we talked about food self-sufficiency, Minister – get an update. Just how is the refinery doing in terms of the commitments and the progress and the plan they were on? I'm very pleased to report to this House that this facility has been responding very well to the challenge of the greenhouse gas emission reductions. They have submitted every single report they have required under the act. Go take a look. And guess what, last year – if you recall, the legislation was passed in 2016. It became enacted soon after.

There was a two-year monitoring period through which we were monitoring and then we put the targets on them. We asked each of these industrial players in our province, this is a target you have to meet. Their first target was in 2019. They had to meet a target of 6 per cent – check, they did it. This is a result of the \$41 million that they've invested, plus so much more that's going on.

I understand there are two projects that the refinery has right now under environmental assessment review that would provide an upgrade to the crude unit that would enhance processing for light sweet crudes. We talked so

much about the fuel and its low carbon content that we have on our offshore, these tremendous reserves. The second project is the construction and operations of a delayed coker complex to further reduce sulphur dioxide and other GHG emissions. So two important projects.

Again, as I think about people like Greta Thunberg, as I think about the demonstrations, the Fridays For Future and so on, this is exactly the kind of industrial player and facility that we all need, that the whole world needs, to demonstrate how we can make this transition in a very successful, aggressive and considerate fashion.

So, Madam Speaker, it was absolutely not a problem for me at all to bring this to the floor. I want everybody to realize that it's not a declining facility. It is one that has been continuously upgraded. It's been continuously upgraded in a manner that meets new aspirations in terms of the future for our children and targets on climate change.

Just on a personal note, I want to extend my own thoughts to all those workers and I want to go back to standing on the steps with so many people and what we all felt standing there. I've seen a few protests in the last five years, so that was not unusual to me to feel that emotion, but to see the province rally in such a way and to see the effects on our economy and on society, we really do need to pay attention and, Madam Speaker, we do need to come to this debate with solutions and suggestions as to how we can make the future for the workers and for our next generations very successful.

Thank you very much for your attention.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I just wanted to take a few minutes, I guess, to add my support. I know the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands supports this as well. He may have a few words himself before we're done.

We've heard a lot of talk here today about the importance of the oil refinery. We all understand the benefits it provides, whether it be benefits to our Treasury in general; whether it be the direct or the indirect jobs; the benefits to all the surrounding communities, for sure; and, quite frankly, the benefits to our province as a whole.

One of the things I think that we have to always recognize is that if one part of our province is benefiting, our entire province is benefiting. I'm always glad to see positive things happening, whether it be out on the West Coast, out in Stephenville area; whether it be out in Central Newfoundland and Labrador; whether it be on the Burin Peninsula. Every time that we can see a positive thing happening, jobs being created, money being invested, it benefits us all.

I think we have a collective responsibility in this House of Assembly, regardless of the particular district that we represent, to be supportive of any opportunities and any kind of development in any part of our province, because it benefits everybody in our province, including the people who we represent in our particular districts. They may not always see that, but that is reality nonetheless.

I do want to say that while it's great for us to take this time this afternoon to have a discussion and to all lend our support to this facility and, certainly, to the workers in particular, it is in itself a symbolic gesture. I think it is important to send that message to the employees and to the people, certainly to the communities that would be most directly involved, that we all support finding a solution to this very troubling problem that is upon us right now.

I think the symbolism of that is a good thing, but at the end of the day we can all talk about the benefits of the refinery. I've seen a little bit of politics creeping into it, which is unfortunate. I understand the politics as much as anybody, more than some perhaps on all sides of this, but the message we need to really be sending is that we're totally united and there's nothing political at all going on here other than 40 elected individuals who are concerned about their province and the people in our province, regardless where they live, regardless what districts they live in.

There's not one Member in this House of Assembly, I'm sure, that wants to see what's happening here right now, that wanted to see this situation; there's nobody. I'm also pretty sure, I feel 100 per cent confident in saying that I really believe the minister and the government – they never asked for this. They never created this.

COVID-19 is something that's happening all throughout the world. We know what's happened to the oil and gas industry because of the world oil prices and the issues around Russia and Saudi Arabia and so on, that have caused oil prices to come crashing down.

Nobody, and I don't care which government is in place, what stripe they are, there's nobody – you can't hang that on anybody. That's just a reality of the world in which we live at this particular time. With that said, is it total doom and gloom? I don't think so. I'm hopeful things are going to bounce back.

Does government have a role to play in this particular case? Well, as the minister has indicated, you have two private entities, basically, involved in this, but government can certainly have a role in trying to facilitate a deal. Government, I think, can have – getting the players to the table. Government can possibly, I'm sure, have a role perhaps if there's any red tape or whatever that's creating any problems here, looking at some of the regulations and government policies and things that could be preventing a deal from happening. I'm sure government would be looking at those things.

Perhaps there's going to be a role. We've seen it in this House of Assembly before where government has had to, whether it be provide loans or other forms of financing or tangible support. We've seen that in the past. We've seen it with the paper mills and we've seen it in other industries in the past where that has had to happen.

I hear people sometimes talk about the fact, government should not put any money into – if a business can't make it on its own, let it fold.

That's a very simplistic view for an individual to take. I understand why they take that view, to some degree, but you have to realize, we're in a province here, there are only 500,000 people

here. We're spread out over a large geography. We are isolated from the Mainland. It's not like we have millions of people and all kinds of businesses and opportunities that you would have in some of the larger centres where a business can operate or fold on its own.

A lot of times when you're talking about businesses like this in our economy, which is very much dependent on resources and things can happen totally out of the control of business, such as the price of oil, as an example. Sometimes government does have to take a role in some of these operations. Sometimes there has to be a direct capital investment. Sometimes there has to be loans. Sometimes there has to be other things, as I said, that the government can do in terms of regulation, or should I say, deregulation and so on to make it work.

I'm sure the government is looking at all these things. I would hope they are. I'm sure they are. Why wouldn't they? When you think about it, what possible reason would any government have to want to see this fail? It would make no sense. It would make no sense for the people of the province. It would make no sense for the workers. It would make no sense for the Treasury. It would make no sense, politically. It would make zero sense.

I'm sure that whatever can be done is being done. I'm sure that it's all being worked on. I have confidence in that. I would add, though, Mr. Speaker, that while we come here in the House of Assembly in the spirit of co-operation to make this symbolic gesture to say that we're all behind the workers – and that's an important message to send, as I said, and I certainly commend the Official Opposition for initiating this today, and I give them credit for doing that, and I thank them for doing that. But I think we need to take it a step further than beyond the House of Assembly.

It's fine for us to sit here and all have a few words about this and then come 5:30 we adjourn and that's the end of it. If we really want to show a true spirit of co-operation and working together, then I would certainly encourage – and I don't care if I'm part of this one, I really don't, as an independent Member. But I would really love to see the Premier, the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Leader of the NDP

actually get together and discuss with the minister what's being done, to have some input into what's being done and to possibly come up with some solutions, and for them to meet with the workers and the union and to meet with the mayors and the towns that are affected, and so on, that the minister has mentioned. Do it jointly.

It's one thing to just make one thing here in the House of Assembly, one symbolic gesture, but why not have some real, tangible co-operation beyond just making a political statement in the House of Assembly. Let's actually put partisan stripes aside and see if there's anything to be done.

My colleague mentioned – and I was here at the time, actually – the Corner Brook mill. I was here when my colleague was involved in negotiations with the mill and, I think, it was Premier Marshall at the time, I think, Tom Marshall, good man, and they did, they worked together. They met with the union and with the mill and they were able to help broker a deal. I would personally like to see that type of co-operation happen right now, beyond just everybody saying a few words in the House of Assembly. I would like to see that carry on and for all three parties to work together.

I'm certainly willing to be part of that as well, as I'm sure my colleague would, but, at the end of the day, if the three parties want to do their thing, this is bigger than anybody's egos or aspirations or feelings about being included. It really is. This is too important to the people of the province. If all three parties could work together, all the leaders, get together and try to come up with a solution, I think we would be doing a good thing for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Certainly, for the employees at that facility who are really counting on the leaders in this province to get together and to find a solution to this very disturbing problem, because their livelihoods are depending on this and being able to support their families.

As has been said, not just the 400 workers who work directly at that plant, but the 100 contractors and all the other businesses, the spinoffs. There are so many spinoff businesses.

I have family members that are going to be impacted by this who were supplying – one of the main things that keep that business afloat is that they're over in Arnold's Cove and they're close to that facility and they're always supplying stuff to that facility. If that shuts, that's going to put them at very, very substantial risk that they could be next. There are all kinds of businesses that are in that same boat.

This is bigger than anybody in this House of Assembly. It's bigger than politics. We should all be working together. Again, I encourage the three leaders now, after we're done, get together and try to see what you can do, collectively, to put partisan stripes aside and let's get a deal so that these workers have gainful employment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

MR. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, normally, I say I'm honoured, privileged and happy to talk and represent the people of my District of Terra Nova. There's no happiness here today. I will say, I'm going to speak on behalf of the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue, he has a touch of laryngitis and I know a lot of his people.

Full disclosure from 2011 to 2019, the company I ran was the largest single subcontractor that the refinery has had for the last 20 years. I had, at times, 160 men and women working at the refinery, personally. This affects not only my constituents, it affects my family, it affects my friends, it affects my colleagues and it affects all of Newfoundland and Labrador. I speak today, not only as the MHA for Terra Nova, but I speak as a voice for the fine men and women that work at the refinery, staff, the members of Local 9316 and all the businesses that are spinoffs that are in jeopardy because of this. Make no mistake about it, they're in jeopardy.

The oil refinery – and it's been said here a few times today – represents not just employees. It represents families; it's kids that play hockey; it's the scouting movement; it's a big deal that these people aren't going back to work.

Last night, I received multiple phone calls. I had a voicemail on my phone 4 o'clock this morning. I talked to a grown man last night at 11:30 who wept like a child; and there were no assurances to give him.

In all fairness, I've talked to the minister about this several times and he's been full disclosure to me, and I really thought that last week this deal was still on the tracks. I guess it came off pretty quick.

What this refinery means to the province is an opportunity, not just to refine oil from other places, but some of our own. I think we can't lose sight of that. It is, as one of the Members mentioned earlier, a cornerstone of our oil industry and the loss of it would be catastrophic to the oil industry.

People come here to explore and get oil out of the ocean floor because they think that there may be an opportunity to refine it here also. We have a great terminal next to the refinery in IMTT.

The minister always uses key phrases: What solutions do you offer? Well, one of the solutions I would offer that could help, not only the refinery, but our oil industry is for government to immediately start to explore the possibility of an LNG transfer plant here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We hear all the time that COVID is restricting us and we're not in a place, and then you pick up a newspaper and you look at Nova Scotia who's moving forward with a \$10-billion project – not \$10 million, \$10 billion. We need to find a way to move things forward and help these people. The only way to do that is to explore options.

Jus today in the media, our own Premier was saying this is the same situation faced all over Canada today. I have to tell you, I'm a Canadian, I wore the uniform for Canada; I'm proud to be a Canadian, but I don't really care what's going on in the rest of Canada today. What I care about is what's happening here in this province. If the best we can offer people is it's happening everywhere, we have some big, big problems.

We need to start looking for solutions and we need to start investing in tomorrow today. I

understand our financial situation. I understand the situation going out of this, but if we don't invest during COVID, when we come out of COVID we will be years behind industry in other provinces and nobody is going to want to set up here – nobody.

The oil refinery right now has some issues and one of the things – like I said earlier, the minister is always looking for solutions. If you want to know how we can help a sale go forward, I'll offer some solutions. The first thing is I think that we need to immediately find a way to help the refinery prepare to idle and shut down for the winter in a means where it can be opened up again in the spring, or find a way to open it immediately and operate it until a sale happens. The latter being the preference.

I would assume everyone in the room would understand that a share purchase of this refinery would be much better than an asset purchase. The only way for a share purchase to go forward is if this refinery is operational. If that means investment from government in order to help the refinery succeed over the next five or six months in order to close a deal, then I think it's something we ought to explore.

The other thing is I'm not for a second suggesting that government purchase the refinery, but I am suggesting that we have a full division in OilCo that could be looking for opportunities here. These opportunities could present a path forward for the refinery and for the province. We still import a lot of oil from away and we have a lot of oil that's coming from offshore that we could be developing.

The next thing is there's a pipeline that should and ought to have been built between the refinery and IMTT a long time ago. That would make the refinery a far more viable place to operate. It would give us a better market for the oil and the gas that comes in here and out of here, and it would open up shipping lanes.

Two and a half weeks ago we had ships out in Placentia Bay that couldn't get in full of jet fuel. I'm quite certain there are Members of government that understand that we were critically close to running out of jet fuel here in Newfoundland 2½ weeks ago because ships couldn't get in for wind.

If anybody here in this room has any illusions and they think for a second that we can operate this Island with only importation of oil and propane and diesel and gasoline, we have a hard time ahead of us. The minister alluded to it earlier; at the end of the day it's going to cost us more. None of us want to hear higher costs, but it's not going to cost us more if we can't get it.

I can tell you, there are seniors, there are businesses and there are just regular men and women who do heat their homes and run their homes with propane. Just imagine running out of propane, not being able to cook, not being able to heat your house. It's a reality if this refinery isn't operational.

We look for solutions every day and we're looking to pass blame. I will say that I think people were legitimately caught off guard here, but I also think we need to be more involved in what happens going forward. We need to offer any kind of assistance we can, be it monetary or in tax breaks or in electricity breaks or other things in order to make it succeed.

The bottom line is we can't control what's happening right now. I've heard that so many times from government: We can't control what's happening – we can't control what's happening. Here's what we can do: We can start planning and we can start investing in tomorrow. Do you know what? It isn't happening. There aren't solutions. There isn't a plan, and we need to do it.

This refinery is our first opportunity to embrace a situation, collectively, and try and find a way through it, because 500 people sounds like a big number, but guess what? It's a lot more than 500. It's 2,000, and then it's a lot more than 2,000 because now you have 2,000 people unemployed and you can probably take that and magnify it by an order of three because you have children and wives involved. This affects thousands and thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. You know what? They don't even want better, they deserve better and we should be giving them better.

The Minister of Finance said a couple of times, and it's a phrase that I've used too, and it's two things. One is that our people are our greatest asset and made reference to the refinery and

what a great asset it is. Well, I'll tell you now, our refinery is only a great asset if it's operational. Our people are only a great asset if they're working. We need to find a way to get this refinery operational and we need to find a way to get our people back to work.

It's easy to assume there may be someone else on the horizon, but we need to consider that there may not be. One of the options we have to consider is assisting Silverpeak in operating this refinery as it stands right now. If it means 500 people returning to work, I think we gain more than we lose.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, I look at Placentia West - Bellevue; I look at CBS; I look at Placentia - St. Mary's; I look at the Terra Nova District; I look at the District of Bonavista, and what you're really considering is all of Eastern Newfoundland is greatly affected by this, but it's more than all of Eastern Newfoundland. It's all of Newfoundland. It's everybody in Newfoundland.

As the Member for Harbour Main said earlier, the building trades work in there for shutdowns on a very frequent basis. When they're in there, there are 300 to 400 men and women in there that don't work directly with the refinery. That happens annually, every year. That is not going to happen.

Just one more thing: The Member for Labrador West alluded earlier that he lived through this in 2014 with Wabush Mines. Well, I'll tell you, I don't think there are many people in this room who haven't lived through this before, either with the fishery, with the shutdown of Wabush Mines in '86; with Corner Brook, with the shutdown of Wabush Mines again in 2014, with the refinery –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. PARROTT: – the moratorium, yes; Abitibi. There you go. It goes on and on and one. This list goes on and government has always found a way to help. I think now is the time.

I'll say to the minister, I bring a lot of experience with the refinery. I actually know the proponents that own the refinery. I've met them

several times. I believe that there is a path forward and I think it can be found collectively. I don't think politics needs to be at play here. What I think we need to do is come together.

I'll also say we have to stop worrying about what the rest of Canada is doing and start worrying about what Newfoundland is doing. I'm sick and tired of hearing, that's what the rest of Canada is doing. It's a global pandemic. Pick up the newspaper and read. Nova Scotia is investing in LNG; the rest of Canada is trying to find a way forward. We're sitting back watching our industry disappear. It's not acceptable.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I'd really like to tell all of the people that work at the refinery or are affected by this that my thoughts and prayers are with them. I certainly hope for a brighter tomorrow. My office is always available and I'm always available to talk to people. If there's anything I can do for them, I will. I hope we find the path forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm literally only going to take about five minutes to speak here. I think it's important and I think this debate today – or discussion, because it's not really a debate. We all agree, so it's a discussion. I think it's important for a variety of reasons. I'm hoping that anybody who looks at North Atlantic refinery will read some of what's said here today and that's the basis in which I want to make some remarks.

I remember when the refinery was commissioned in 1973. In fact, I have a bloody big medallion commemorating the opening of the refinery. My parents were invited out. They put on a big spread with lobster and everything else. They brought back this medallion, a keepsake. But the most recent operator, Silverpeak, was the most efficient operator of that refinery. They were profitable and the only operator, really, of that refinery that made it profitable. It was profitable because they put

hundreds of millions of dollars investment into the refinery to make it more efficient.

I met the owners when I was minister of Finance on many occasions, as did the current Minister of Finance, who was then the minister of Natural Resources. I know that the new Minister of natural resources will have an opportunity and probably had an opportunity to meet the current owner. He took a great deal of pride in the fact that he had made that refinery efficient and profitable.

The owner, or one of the owners, certainly loved this province and the employees at the North Atlantic refinery; he was committed to the refinery. Really, this is very COVID related. He had invested almost 90 per cent of the revenue from that refinery back into the refinery. It, perhaps, made him vulnerable because when COVID happened and the oil war happened, the refinery, like many refineries globally, couldn't operate profitably with the global price war and the prices of oil. They temporarily shut it down, losing money monthly because it was shut down, but it made them vulnerable because they had reinvested so much back into the refinery.

Anybody looking at the refinery is getting a refinery that's been retooled, that's efficient. It's producing 135 barrels of oil a day. That's the capacity out there. Many people have talked about the fact that it's about 400 jobs; there's about \$85 million annually in payroll at that refinery. It is significant. The average wage out there is about \$115,000, so it's a significant contributor to the local economy out there. The reality is the workers out there helped to make the refinery what it was under the current operator. The workers are a solid workforce and had obviously, as well, taken pride in the operation of the refinery.

The refinery puts about \$300 million into the provincial economy annually. It's 5 per cent of the provincial GDP. It's hundreds of millions, as I said, invested into upgrading the refinery since 2014 and making it more efficient. The refinery itself puts about \$1.5 billion in economic impact for the province with about 5,600 induced jobs, 900 supply chain jobs from that refinery. It is significant. I know one of the previous speakers talked about a company that evaluates refineries globally, and this refinery is one of the top-

ranked refineries. It's certainly in the top half of all global refineries as far as its economical production.

One of the things to keep in mind is 60 per cent of all fuel and home heating supply for this province comes from the North Atlantic refinery. So anybody looking at the refinery – I mean, they've got a set market; it's produced here; it's sold here. Sixty per cent of our provincial supply of fuel and home heating comes from that refinery. A hundred per cent of the jet fuel in the province comes from that refinery. It is fuel security for the province so it's obviously important to government.

Some of what was going to happen at the refinery – and I won't go into it because I know that it's probably proprietary in nature – but some of the additional investments that the current operator was going to make at that refinery. The reality is for the last three, four or five years that refinery operated as a profitable entity. Obviously, the impact that the current owner had on that and the efficiencies out there were working.

Unfortunately for the current operator, because of COVID and the global oil war, it became very difficult for them. But whoever is looking at that refinery is picking up a refinery that is running well, is profitable, is efficient; it is a good operation with a solid workforce.

Mr. Speaker, government and ministers are not always at a liberty to talk about what they're doing in a situation like this because it is proprietary and it does impact not only the current owner but potential future owners. I can tell you, rest assured, to Members of this Legislature, to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, that this is something that government is working on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. TIBBS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I won't take much time because I know everybody wants a little chance to speak here.

We're talking today about the numbers – millions of dollars, thousands of jobs and whatnot – and I just wanted to take a second and let everybody know what that looks like on the surface, as we go a little bit deeper here.

There are going to be people over the next couple of weeks here have to look at their children, whether it be mom or dad, and tell them that they can't join hockey. After playing with their friends for six or seven or eight years, they're going to be told that they can't do that anymore. It's a simple thing. A registration and some hockey gear, it should be simple, but the mental wellness that comes with that or the private mental health, you feel like a failure at that point. You do. There are going to be people not make mortgage payments, food. You hear it all the time. It's very sad to look at and it's nobody's fault, of course.

I listened to the Minister of Energy and he cares; of course he cares. We all care in here. I had a great conversation with him a couple of weeks ago, actually. If I could just pass along a word of advice – I'll give you my story first. In 2016, I lost my job drilling and I came back and tried to pick up some odd jobs and stuff in the oil and gas industry. Just to, again, put a face to it, my youngest son Xander broke his seeing eyeglasses. I didn't have \$300 for a new pair. I had to Gorilla Glue them back together and send him to school like that. I'll never forget how that made me feel. This is how people are going to feel coming up now over the next week, month. Then we get to that really, really, really scary word called Christmas.

Again, we're trying to find the best solution here. I heard earlier on the Minister of Energy – I'm sure he's trying to do the best job possible – talk about we have to keep decorum and keep calm and whatnot. If I could offer some advice from a dad who's gone through it all before and is looking to all of us for some solution, I'd personally, with all due respect, disagree. I think that we're not showing enough emotion when it comes to dealing with the federal government, for instance.

June 18, 2020, from Burnaby, BC, to Saint John, New Brunswick, down through the Panama Canal, a one-month trip is how long it took an oil tanker to get there because this federal government failed to get a pipeline across this country. You go out West, it's absolutely decimated – 17 years I spent there – and I mean decimated. You can tell by the wave of blue that came across there, they're upset, they're angry, they're mad. They have nothing left out there. There is nothing to look forward to. They're trying to pick themselves up now because they're a great bunch, too.

All I wanted to do was just take a minute and put a face to it because, like I say, something as simple as hockey registration, it's going to be a sad, sad day when you look at your child, as a dad or mom, and say: I'm so, so sorry, I don't know how to tell you this but you can't join your friends this year after being with them for six, seven, eight or 10 years. You'll feel like an absolute failure. I just want those people to know that you're not a failure, by no means, and we will do our best to try and help you. It takes a lot out of you.

One more minute on mental health; I suggest we all keep an eye on it because the mental health pandemic is going to grow here in the province and it's going to be worse than COVID. I guarantee it. It's going to claim way more lives. It's going to claim way more families. So whatever we have to do to work together to come up with a Plan B. Maybe we should have seen this coming possibly. I don't know, but I'm sure we all have to work together and put whatever assets or effort into getting these people back on track. Like I say, it's thousands of families and it's sad to see. We learn from it, as well, as we move forward and that's something we have to do.

If I have one message for you across the way, if I have a message for us, it's get more emotional. If you have to get angry, get angry, because we are in the fight of our lives right now. Those people are fighting for their lives. Not just a job, but it's their actual lives. If that takes you guys, us guys getting angry and emotional, by God that's exactly what we have to do and that's what the people of the province want. So I suggest we pick up our socks. We're going to be

here for the long haul and take on what we have to take on.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll only spend a few minutes. I agree with the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor, because I know we were chatting before about your situation, and it's very passionate and it's very real. It's very real to a lot of people.

I'm just going back as a person who has been around a while, and some people may say too long, but I go back to the cod moratorium. I was involved then with Clyde Wells. That was devastating to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and they all worked together. I remember the late John Crosbie, what a great man. I remember when he and Clyde Wells were sitting down, how can we get over this pandemic?

One of the things they worked on, both the federal government and Clyde Wells as the provincial premier, was to build a platform for Hibernia. That created a lot of jobs. It was a concrete platform. A lot of people said in the long run you would lose royalties, but in the short term you would gain a lot of people, it would keep them in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador for the short term. That's the kind of co-operation we need here in this House. I know sometimes it creeps in, because I understand the emotion. I understand the government aspect of it also.

I go back again to Corner Brook Pulp and Paper. I actually was one of the ones that got laid off back in 1980 when it was shut down. I had to go to university. At the university, when we were all there, there was not a lot to eat. I had a dime. I was too scared to spend it because I may have to call home. So we all know about the emotions. We all know about it, and it's tough. It's tough on everybody. It's absolutely tough.

The Member for Terra Nova, you must have to go home and every person you see, that's going through, you must want to just to take them and hug them and say we're going to work on it. It has to be tough. You're a person, you know these people.

I look at the Corner Brook Pulp and Paper mill; I'm going back to probably 2011, 2012 when they were going to shut down because of the pensions. I remember, and I have to give him credit, it was Jerome Kennedy, he was the minister at the time. I remember myself and former Premier Dwight Ball going over and sitting down: What can we do? He gave us all a little duty. My duty at the time was to be the liaison with the unions. We shook hands and we said, okay, we'll all work together. At no time would we ever speak in public. We used to ask a question on behalf of the workers and we used to give the premier or the minister at the time the question. Just to say, here's a question coming, get an update. It worked well. It all worked well.

I agree with some of the suggestions here that somehow if we need to go a bit further to get some people from the Opposition and the NDP. I also would include the Member for Terra Nova and the Members from other areas that are really with a lot workers to be involved with the confidence that everything we work on they would be a part of it. If it ever comes down to that point where we need it.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, I have to say – and I know the minister of development is there now listening and he's listening quite attentively. I have confidence in that man. I have confidence in him. There's one thing I can assure you – I can assure you one thing, he will be honest. He will be upfront. He will be honest. That's what we need here. We need a minister who's going to take the lead from the government, who's going to say the way it is, good, bad or indifferent.

Let all of us be honest with each other on this here. This is too big to play politics with. We worked through it before. I go back with the Corner Brook Pulp and Paper mill on several occasions. I know there were a few other issues that we all worked on – Opposition. It has worked in the past. What we need – and I said it earlier, Mr. Speaker, we need to park our colours

outside the room, all of us. We need to do it. We had a lot of catastrophes over the history of Newfoundland and Labrador and we're faced with another one.

I agree with the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor when he said there's a personal toll on this. As a former councillor, I understand what you're talking about. It's real, and the stress and the mental anguish on it. My advice to the government, as someone who has been through a lot of this before, is to be diligent on the work that you're doing with it. It's very early. Be open with the people that you're going to be dealing with in the Opposition and the Third Party.

I'll say to the minister, this is a role now that you're in that happened in the last little while, but I have confidence in the minister that whatever can be done will be done. It's a situation that I think we all have to come together and we all have to find some way to have our own input, not for the betterment of our parties but for the betterment of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and, down to a more finer point, better for the people who are going to be suffering because of this.

I just want to offer my support to everybody, to all the families and to all the Members who are affected because there's going to a lot of stress on the Members that are directly affected by the workers. I can assure you, you're going to be affected also when you get the calls and you're going to feel a part of frustration where you want to do so much and there's only so much you can do until we work this out.

Again, to the government, I feel confident with the minister at the helm that this will work out somehow in a positive way. If there's anything I can do – and I'm speaking on behalf of the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands who's been around for a long while also, count on us for any advice or anything that you need done.

This is one of the times in history for us, not just for the province – and we all talk about the money it's bringing in, that's a big part of it, but for the personal toll on people in Newfoundland and Labrador. This is a point where 40 of us have to come together and work together for the betterment of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, so the kids that the Member for Grand

Falls-Windsor was talking about can go to hockey.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Seeing no further speakers, I'm going to adjourn the House until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

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