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Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

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1 June 2016

The House met at 2 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

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

MR. SPEAKER: A point of order, the hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today on a point of order under Standing Order 1, General Rule, Application of Standing Orders & cases not provided for.

Under Standing Order 1, “(1) The proceedings in the House of Assembly and in all committees of the House shall be conducted in accordance with the following Standing Orders and with the sessional and other orders of the House.

(2) In all cases not provided for in these Standing Orders or by sessional or other orders of the House, the Speaker shall be guided by the following in the order which they are stated: (a) the usages, customs and precedents of this House; (b) the Standing Orders and sessional orders and forms and usages, customs and precedents of the House of Commons of Canada and those of any province or territory in Canada; and (c) in all cases not provided for above, the usages, customs and precedents of the House of Commons at Westminster in the United Kingdom.”

The volume of *House of Commons Procedures and Practice, Second Edition*, edited by O’Brien and Bosc, is a key procedural authority used by the Canadian House of Commons. It is a compendium and a codification of parliamentary law and precedence as it exists in Canada and it applies and is frequently referred to here in the House.

Chapter 4 of O’Brien and Bosc deals with the House and its Members and it says the following: “One of the Member’s primary duties is to attend the sittings of the House when it is in session, unless the Member has other parliamentary or official commitments, such as committee meetings, constituency work or parliamentary exchanges. This obligation is

enshrined in Standing Order 15: ‘Every Member, being cognizant of the provisions of the *Parliament of Canada Act*, is bound to attend the sittings of the House, unless otherwise occupied with parliamentary activities and functions or on public or official business.’ The Speaker has traditionally discouraged Members from signalling the absence of another Member from the House because ‘there are many places that Members have to be in order to carry out all of the obligations that go with their office.’”

Mr. Speaker, yesterday during the proceedings of this hon. House of Assembly the Member for Mount Pearl North used social media, Twitter, to signal the absence of Members of this House of Assembly during the course of our proceedings. He made these postings while occupying his seat in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I’d like to draw your attention to a ruling made by one of your predecessors in the role of Speaker in this House almost four years ago on May 9, 2012, regarding an accusation made on Twitter by this same Member, the Member for Mount Pearl North.

That Speaker in his ruling said the following: “Here is a point I would ask you to keep in mind, or one of the points I think it is significant to be guided by: had this accusation of lying been sent while the House was sitting so as to escape being sanctioned for unparliamentary language while still making the accusation, I believe it would be a prima facie case of privilege. I remind all members of the privilege they enjoy as members of this House and with that privilege comes a responsibility that all of us have to maintain the integrity of this House.”

This ruling is significant, as the Member for Mount Pearl North is once again trying to do through the back door that which he is explicitly prohibited from doing from his seat in the House of Assembly. By signalling the absence of Members of this House during proceedings here yesterday on social media – as the Member for Mount Pearl North did yesterday – the Member is in violation of the rules of this House as laid out in O’Brien and Bosc.

This is in the least a violation of the rules of order of this Legislature; however, Mr. Speaker, more concerning is the fact that this Member’s

behaviour may, depending on your ruling of our rules, procedurally, actually have constituted a prima facie case of privilege, which is an even more serious violation of our rules.

With these points in mind, I respectfully request that you review the postings made by the Member for Mount Pearl North and make a ruling on his behaviour accordingly.

Thank you.

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was going to say I'm surprised by the point of order, but given its origin, I'm not. This is clearly an attempt to change the channel for the government and take away from the important issues that we need to debate and discuss in this hon. House. I'll stand by my comments yesterday. Anything I wrote myself does not reference individual Members of this House. I think the hon. Member knows quite well that retweets do not necessarily equal endorsements. Anybody familiar with the social media space and with Twitter would know that.

I don't believe, Mr. Speaker, that I've violated any rules, but I'll certainly await your review and ruling and if there is anything that I need to do differently in future based on your ruling, I'm certainly happy to do so. But having been here for a long time, I didn't write anything yesterday myself that would constitute a violation of the House rules. This is a desperate attempt by the Education Minister to try and change the channel. They're having a rough week in the House, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I haven't seen the tweets being referred to. I will review those tweets, but I will say that it has been ruled in this House on previous occasions by previous Speakers of the House that doing something through social media which would be considered unparliamentary if done on your feet

in the House is still considered to be unparliamentary.

I will review the postings by the hon. Member. We'll review the Twitter posts. If there was a reference made that would be considered unparliamentary if said on the floor of the House, it would be considered unparliamentary.

The Speaker is bound by previous rulings of the House of Assembly. I will take time to take it under advisement. I will rule on this either later today or tomorrow.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today we have the Member for the Districts of Fogo Island – Cape Freels, Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, Harbour Main, Cape St. Francis and Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

The hon. the Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels.

MR. BRAGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is once again a privilege to rise in this hon. House to bring birthday greetings to one of the residents of my district. This lady would have loved nothing more than to be sitting in the gallery today, watching this government in action.

In 1927, this lady was born on the Northeast Coast in the community of La Scie, but due to family hardships, she transferred and grew up in the St. Anthony orphanage. She remembers attending the funeral of Dr. Wilfred Grenfell.

From St. Anthony, she moved to work in St. John's where she met and married her husband. They moved to Wesleyville to raise their family. During this time, she became involved in her community and an active caller to *Open Line* where she expressed her strong political opinions.

To this day, she leads an active life, driving herself wherever she desires to go, including to Grand Falls-Windsor and Gander for visits to friends and family there.

Today, surrounded by a loving support network, Mrs. Vera Barbour celebrates her 89th birthday.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in wishing Vera a very happy birthday.

Happy Birthday!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L’Anse au Clair.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to acknowledge a woman who has chosen Labrador to be her homestead and has contributed immensely to the region since that time. Judy Pardy settled in Cartwright in 1972, and since then has made an immeasurable impact on the economic and social development of Labrador.

She has worn many hats over the years, working at Hudson’s Bay Company, Labrador Airways, Pardy’s Store and a litany of other jobs. She has also committed her heart and soul to volunteerism, spending 15 years as a Girl Guide leader and playing a role in the establishment of two community youth networks, six family resource centres, among a number of other vital projects in the region, including the shrimp processing facility in Charlottetown.

She recently travelled to the Truth and Reconciliation hearing with two victims of residential schools. It was an overwhelming experience for her. She is currently assisting senior families and upgrading their homes, and she continues to work as a peer support volunteer.

Judy has excelled in her many years as a volunteer, lobbyist and advocate, and she’s known as the go-to person in her town whenever there is a need.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in expressing gratitude to such an exemplary woman who has committed her life to making her little corner of Labrador a better place to live.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John’s East – Quidi Vidi.

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

I rise today to salute a constituent and tireless volunteer who was recognized in April for her contributions to one of our major tourist attractions.

The East Coast Trail Association named Mona Rossiter as the winner of the Flamber Head Award at their annual volunteer recognition event.

The Flamber Head Award is given to members of the East Coast Trail Association who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to volunteerism and the association.

Mona took on the role of Vice-President of Marketing and Communication about three-and-a-half years ago. If you follow such things, you have seen for yourself how, in the words of the board, “Mona’s knowledge, expertise and passionate support of trail have been instrumental in setting the pace for marketing and communication.” The East Coast Trail has an established and lively presence on social media.

The board made special mention of Mona’s leadership role in overhauling and enhancing the marketing of their major fundraising project, the Tely Hike.

That hike, I remind the hon. Members, takes place this Saturday, and there is still plenty of time to sponsor Mona or another participant so the valuable work of maintaining and enhancing the East Coast Trail can continue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PARSLEY: Mr. Speaker, today I give rise to share another enlightening and positive story from my district.

Saturday I shared the guest list with Members from Conception Bay South and the Member for Topsail – Paradise in awarding service medals to firefighters in CBS.

To Fred Kennedy, Lawrence Pond Road, Upper Gullies, a 20 year, long service medal recipient, congratulations.

In my short six months as a Member of this government, I had the privilege of attending two firefighters' anniversary banquets. The first, in Avondale, was a celebration honouring their 30th year of fire protection volunteer services.

It is appropriate that we honour our firefighters, the men and women who no matter what, night or day, are firefighters first.

I quote Ambrose Redmoon, "Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather, the judgement that something else, is more important than fear."

Thank you for your unselfish service, dedication and professionalism. We appreciate you, we are proud of you.

I ask Members of this House of Assembly, in recognizing that silent gratitude isn't much use anymore, to proudly applaud together in appreciation of their personal achievements.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize one of the most active volunteer fire departments in the province. Last year, the Torbay Volunteer Fire Department answered 234 calls.

For the past 42 years they have served the towns of Flatrock and Torbay, with 40 dedicated members that are on call 24/7, and Chief Mike McGrath has been there since day one. The department takes great pride in the level of training their members have.

Mr. Speaker, the department has a very active ladies auxiliary. They work side by side with the department, and the work they do is really appreciated.

Both town councils of Flatrock and Torbay have played huge roles in ensuring the department has the resources it needs to do their job.

At the annual firefighters' ball, several members were recognized for their outstanding work and dedication. Best attendance award went to Captain Ken Dodd and firefighter Shelaine Wade. Honorary member inductee was firefighter Pat Butler. This year's William Manning Award for firefighter of the year went to Captain Ken Dodd.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating and thanking all volunteer firefighters for their dedication, hard work and commitment.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: I rise to congratulate Mr. Don Northcote of Hermitage-Sandyville for receiving the St. John Ambulance Life-Saving Award on May 26, 2016 for his heroic efforts to save the life of his eight year old son, Lincoln.

Lincoln had run ahead of his family at the local swimming hole and jumped right in. Horrified, his mother, Nina, saw him go under. Don immediately jumped into action and flew down the trail and into the water to grab his son, who, after the longest seconds of this family's life, was not moving. Don retrieved Lincoln's limp body and commenced CPR while waiting for the ambulance to arrive. Had it not been for Don's quick decisive action and knowledge of CPR, acquired through a St. John Ambulance course,

all witnesses do not think that Lincoln would have survived.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me to offer special recognition to Mr. Northcote for his very deserving receipt of the St. John Ambulance Life-Saving Award. By telling his story, we can highlight to all parents just how important it is to have some type of first aid and emergency response training, because one never knows when something tragic will happen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The Commemoration of the First World War and the Battle of Beaumont-Hamel

MR. SPEAKER: Today for Honour 100, we have the Member for the District of Stephenville – Port au Port.

MR. FINN: I will now read into the record the following 40 names of those who lost their lives in the First World War, the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, Royal Newfoundland Naval Reserve, the Newfoundland Mercantile Marine or the Newfoundland Forestry Corps. This will be followed by a moment of silence.

Lest we forget: Dugald Steed, Owen William Steele, John Sydney Stephenson, William Stephenson, Charles Stevens, Alfred Stevenson, John Stewart, Peter Stewart, Ingram Strickland, Frederick Stockley, Levi Stockley, Edward Stone, Harry J. Stone, Henry Stone, Lyman Stoodley, George Alison Strange, Harry Groves Strathie, Frederick Stratten, William James Stratton, Edward J. Strickland, Walter Strickland, Ward Strickland, Ambrose William Stride, Bransome Stride, George Stringer, Charles St. Clair Strong, Norman Wheatley Strong, Ross Strong, John Stroud, Adolphus Stuckless, Silas Stuckless, John Sulley, Thomas Sullivan, Michael Francis Summers, John Sutton, Patrick Sweeney, Frederick Joseph Targett, Elias Tarran, Albert E. Taylor, Alfred Penny Taylor.

(Moment of silence.)

MR. SPEAKER: Please be seated.

Statements by Ministers.

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to proclaim May 30 to June 5 as Safe Kids Week.

This annual awareness campaign takes place across Canada to focus attention on preventable childhood injuries. Parachute Canada, a national charity, coordinates activities with provincial safety advocates. This morning I joined Len LeRiche from Safety Services NL and students at Topsail Elementary school to officially proclaim Safe Kids Week in our province.

I am pleased to note that 2016 is the 20th anniversary celebration of Parachute Safe Kids Week. Over the course of those two decades, this campaign has shed light on important information. For example, many Canadians are surprised to learn that preventable injuries kill more children every year than any disease.

As summer holidays will soon come for school children, I reminded the students at Topsail Elementary that they need to wear bike helmets on all public roadways in the province. I also showed the children how to check if a helmet fits properly, which is important, because a properly fitted bicycle helmet can decrease the risk of serious head injury by as much as 85 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage children and parents throughout the province to reflect on Safe Kids Week, and keep safety at the forefront of everything they do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. As the Official Opposition, we,

too, recognize May 30 to June 5 as Safe Kids Week throughout the country.

We'd like to recognize Parachute Canada for their efforts regarding the prevention of injuries and saving lives. Their focus this year is keeping children safe at home, at play and on the road. We encourage everyone to be in the conversation.

This summer, as we get out there, it's important that everybody realizes that children like to play, and we have to be very careful and make sure we're watching at all times. Any injury that can be prevented or a little bit of advice that can be given will be huge.

Let's hope all kids stay safe this summer.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Preventable injuries kill more children every year than any disease. I didn't thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement, but I do thank him.

This is the second year we are celebrating Safe Kids Week with a mandatory bike helmet law in this province. I hope this focus has helped reduce bicycle-related hospitalizations among children which were twice the Canadian rate when the legislation was introduced. I look forward to that information from the minister.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise in this hon. House today to announce changes to regulations that will provide operators of public swimming pools in our province with greater access to trained lifeguards.

Having lifeguards present on the pool deck to provide critical rescue and life-saving services when they're needed is a key aspect of pool safety. As a government we are committed to ensuring the safety of recreational activities for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. These new amendments to the *Public Pools Regulations* reflect that commitment.

First, we have lowered the lifeguard minimum age from 17 to 16 years of age. Secondly, we have included the Red Cross Lifeguard program as an acceptable lifeguard certification program.

These changes come at the recommendation of Recreation Newfoundland and Labrador, the Lifesaving Society and the Canadian Red Cross. They are consistent with most other jurisdictions across the country.

The combined effect of these changes will provide public pool operators – especially those in rural areas – with access to an expanded number of qualified individuals for their facilities. The changes will also benefit young people being trained as lifeguards, as they will now be able to be employed as lifeguards a year earlier.

I'm pleased to stand and highlight these amendments today. I'm confident they will have a positive impact on communities throughout our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement today. Not only would we like to share in thanking lifeguards, both professional and volunteers, but also we'd like to take the time to thank Recreation Newfoundland and Labrador,

the Lifesaving Society and also the Canadian Red Cross for their input, and also their continued dedication to the safety of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, I'll take a moment, as summer approaches, to remind all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians of the importance to be aware and mindful of each other's safety at all times, especially when it involves water activities including swimming.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Lifeguards are indeed key to ensuring the safety of the public as they enjoy public swimming pools. However, a quick call to the Red Cross informs us that the Red Cross Lifeguard program has not yet been approved for rollout in this province and the timeline for offering this course is also not defined.

I ask the minister, while it seems like a great initiative – and it is – when will young people in the province be able to take advantage of it?

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Yesterday in the House of Assembly the Minister of Natural Resources indicated she had received a copy of Mr. Ed Martin's contract on or about March 4.

I ask the minister: How did you come to receive that contract? Why did you ask for it?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for the question. I, in the course of my duties, asked for a copy of the contract. There wasn't one existing within the Department of Natural Resources and I could not find one, so I asked the former chair of the board if I could have a copy.

We were doing a lot of work around Muskrat Falls, we were doing a lot of work with EY, and I just asked for a copy of the contract. It is in the course of my duties.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I will ask the minister: When did you first familiarize yourself with the contents of the contract?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I asked for a copy of the contract on March 3, I believe, and on or about March 4, I was delivered a copy of the contract. I perused it at that time. I didn't take it in absolutely – I think he asked me for details on the contract. I perused the contract and put it in a file, which is where it belongs, because of course the contract is with the board of directors of Nalcor.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, I think the minister said that she perused it on March 4, around the time that she received it.

I ask the minister: Did you bring a copy of that to your meeting on April 17?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you again for the question.

Mr. Speaker, when we were requested by Mr. Martin to meet on the evening of April 17, we certainly were happy to do so at the request of the former CEO of Nalcor. I did not bring a copy of the contract because I didn't think it was required at the time. Again, the contract rests with the board of Nalcor. It was signed by the former chair of Nalcor and the contents rest with the board of Nalcor.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, I'll ask the minister: After your first meeting on April 17 then, before, in preparing for the meeting on April 19, did you then re-familiarize yourself with the contract or bring a copy of it with you to the meeting on the 19th?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you again for the question.

Mr. Speaker, I can say that, again, the contract rests with the board of director. The chair of the board fully acknowledges that it rests with the board of directors. It was signed by the former board of directors.

No, I did not peruse the contract myself to familiarize myself. We were having discussions

that Mr. Martin raised and I did not have the opportunity to bring the contract with me. We were having discussions around what his direction would be for his future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: So just to be clear, Mr. Speaker, the minister is going back to a meeting on the 19th, knowing that they were going to discuss the future of Mr. Martin with Nalcor, because that's what the meeting of the 17th turned out to be about – going back to one on the 19th, she had a contract. So you didn't familiarize yourself again with the contract before the 19th. I believe that's what the minister is saying.

Can you confirm that, Minister?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I've already said, Mr. Martin requested a meeting on the night of April 17. We were able to grant his request for a meeting. He came in. He spoke to us about three options that he saw were before him. We had a good discussion around those three options.

We came back again and said let's get some time – which is a prudent thing to do, is take some time between hearing some things and making a decision on some things. Usually, you'd take some prudence in time to reflect on that, which we did. We had a further conversation on April 19.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, now we're finding out the minister is not going to answer questions. We've seen that here in the House before.

I'm going to ask the minister – because you said the contract was with the board of Nalcor; you're having a discussion about Mr. Martin's future. Did you invite anyone from the board to attend either meeting on the 17th or the 19th?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To be clear, again, it was Mr. Martin who requested the meeting with the Premier on April 17. During the course of that meeting, it was determined we'd have a follow-up meeting on the 19th. So it was at the request of Mr. Martin that he had a meeting with us. It was at his direction. He brought whom he wanted to that meeting.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The question wasn't about the 17th. The question was about the 19th. So going into the 19th meeting you knew exactly what was going to be discussed. You didn't bother to familiarize yourself with the contract that Mr. Martin has.

So at that point in time, knowing that you're saying the contract's with the board, did you bother to call anyone or contact anyone on the board and invite them to come to that discussion about Mr. Martin's future?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the responsibility of who was coming to that meeting was with Mr. Martin. He was the one who requested our time on the evening of April 17. He was the one who came in, at his initiation, to have a meeting with us.

As a course of that meeting, we said we'd get together the 19th. If he felt he had to have somebody else at the meeting or wanted to bring someone else or have further conversations, Mr. Speaker, he certainly could have invited them to that meeting. It was really Mr. Martin's meeting.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Minister, on the 19th your meeting was a follow-up to the 17th, is what took place. You knew you were going back to a meeting on the 19th. Are you telling me, as the minister responsible for Nalcor – you say yourself the contract was with Nalcor, you're discussing Mr. Martin's future, you're discussing his employment contract – that you never brought or invited or thought to invite anybody from the board to participate in the discussion on the 19th? Is that what you're saying, Minister?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the question, but I think it's very important to remember that Mr. Martin requested the meeting. Mr. Martin reached out and asked for the meeting. Mr. Martin knows his relationship to the board. Why would I prejudge the CEO of Nalcor – the former CEO of Nalcor – in terms of whom he's going to invite to a meeting?

Mr. Speaker, he knows his relationships and responsibilities. He knows his contract. He knows the relationship with the board and that contract. So I think that would have been Mr. Martin – if he thought it was required of him to have somebody at the meeting, he would have had them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'll ask the minister: During the work you're doing to prepare your work and so on, did you bother to look at the *Energy Corporation Act* to determine and understand what your responsibilities are when it comes to Nalcor, who you appoint and who you're responsible for, because that's very clear in the act?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I find it difficult, to say the least, that the hon. Member would question whether or not I was familiar with an act belonging to my department. Let me just say that, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I'm very familiar with section 7 and section 9 of the *Energy Corporation Act*. I know whose responsibility it is, I know good governance and I know that it is the board of directors who are responsible for that relationship.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, under the *Energy Corporation Act*, it's the CEO, the chair and the board who are all appointed by government – by Cabinet, actually. It's all those appointments. Her position is that it's the board that is responsible for Mr. Martin, yet the minister neglected to do her own work and her own due diligence by inviting a representative of the board to a meeting to discuss Mr. Martin's future, Mr. Speaker. She neglected to do her own job, neglected her own responsibilities.

So I'll ask you again, Minister: Why did you not think to invite the chair of the board to come to such an important meeting?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think he's asking the question to the wrong person. I'm wondering why Mr. Martin would – if he felt he had to have somebody with him at the meeting, he knows the relationships, he knows the responsibilities of the board of directors, he knows the responsibility of the chair, Mr. Speaker. And that is good governance.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, good governance makes the minister responsible – it makes her responsible. It's your responsibility to step up and take charge. It's your responsibility to lead the file, not to follow, Minister.

So you had a meeting with Mr. Martin about his future and his contract with the board of directors. You're responsible for the board of directors. You're responsible for Mr. Martin.

Why did you not think to invite the chair of the board to come to such an important meeting?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I know the Member opposite is quite animated and upset this afternoon. I can be very clear here today, Mr. Speaker. I think Mr. Martin knows whom he should invite to his own meeting – his own meeting. Remember, he asked for the meeting.

How do we know that he didn't have a concern about the board or something that he wanted to express at that meeting? He understands the requirements under the act. I can tell you, Mr. Martin is a very intelligent man. He knows the requirements under the act. He knows to whom he reports. He knows the fiduciary responsibilities of the board. I think, Mr. Speaker, he would have invited whom he felt was required to be at that meeting that time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I ask the minister: Who does the chair report to?

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

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

I know you recognized me, but the minister couldn't hear the question.

Who does the chair of the board report to?

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I don't want to give a governance lesson here today, but the role of the board of directors, the responsibility of the board of directors is to the corporation. The shareholders – and that is all the people in Newfoundland and Labrador – have a reporting mechanism. The chair of the board is appointed by the government, as had been the board members.

Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that the board didn't have as many members on it. I understand from Mr. Martin and from the former chair that they were working very hard with government to ask them to put more board members on the board, but the former government did not fulfill their requirement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

So the minister says good governance is – well, she's responsible for good governance is what she's saying. She's now throwing responsibility somewhere else. We've seen this government do that before.

Minister, you claim that it wasn't until you returned from Houston, in your trip to Houston, before Mr. Martin's resignation was – actually that he was fired. Now you say it wasn't until you were back from Houston.

Do you stand by that? Is that true?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, they're kind of loose with my words. What I did say was I did not see the severance – or I think in a former question was a termination agreement – the severance agreement until May 9 when I returned from Houston. I did not see the severance agreement.

At no time, actually, was this government given a copy of the document, asked to comment on the document, asked to review the document, asked to sign the document, because of course the board knows the responsibility of that severance agreement and the contract with Mr. Martin rests with the board.

I received a copy when I returned from Houston, because the government received a copy on May 5. I was travelling at the time, but when I came back into the province on Monday I certainly saw that document.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, minister, while you were travelling to Texas – I know you were there on government business – didn't your officials keep you abreast of what was happening with your own department?

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

MS. COADY: Of course, they kept me abreast of what was happening in my own department,

Mr. Speaker. I certainly saw the headline on Wednesday, May 4, that said about the severance that was paid to Mr. Martin.

On May 5, the Premier's office received a copy of the severance agreement. On May 5, I was travelling back. On May 6, I was at the hospital with a family member. On May 9, when I was back in my office, I reviewed the severance agreement.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we were not asked. We did not see the severance agreement. We were not asked to review the severance agreement. We were not asked to sign the severance agreement. It rests with the board.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We are aware the minister says that she wasn't aware of the details until some weeks after.

I'll ask the minister: Didn't you receive an email from the chair of the board of Nalcor on the morning of April 20?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We did receive an email from the former chair of the board at 8:55 a.m. In that, he said that the contract rests squarely with the board – rests squarely with the board.

The former chair understood that the contract rests squarely with the board. The act says it rests with the board. I'm not sure why the Leader of the Opposition doesn't understand that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I ask the minister: When did you reply to the email?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I did not reply to the email. I did not reply to the email. It was addressed to the Premier and to me. The Premier replied to the email at 9:25, saying he'd speak after the board meeting.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I didn't realize you'd addressed me, thank you.

Minister, Mr. Marshall had stated that he had a conversation with the Premier prior to the vote taking place.

Do you know this to be true?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I cannot comment – and the Premier will be back tomorrow, you can ask him yourself. I cannot comment as to a content of a conversation between these two gentlemen. I was not privy to it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

So, minister, are you telling us that you saw there was a reply to an email but you didn't get updated and briefed on the most recent updated information before you went before the microphones to brief the people of the province. Is that what you're saying?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the 8:55 a.m. email from the former chair of the board, the contract rests squarely with the board. That's what he said.

We were busy having conversations with Mr. Martin and Mr. Martin's team about getting prepared for our 11 o'clock press conference. Mr. Martin's was going out at 11:45. Yes, there were lots of conversations with officials, with Nalcor, with Mr. Martin, to prepare to go public at 11 and 11:45.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

So, the minister was too busy to follow-up.

Minister, I'll ask you this, then: When did you finally have that discussion with the chair of the board, Mr. Marshall?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can say that I did not have a conversation with the chair of the board of Nalcor. The Premier had one at some time, I'm hearing in the morning of the 20th. I understand the Premier responded – the email was addressed to the Premier and the minister. The Premier responded saying he'll catch up with him. I thought that was adequate. If the former chair needed my attention, he certainly could have gotten it that morning. We were speaking to Nalcor on and off all morning.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

So what we have here is we have a significant movement of changes happening at the largest Crown corporation in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The minister was too busy to follow-up at the time because there was too much going on. We know that government knew on April 20 that Mr. Martin was terminated, and the minister had knowledge and was familiar with the contract of Mr. Martin but failed to follow-up with the board of directors who was responsible for it.

Is that what you're saying, Minister?

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

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

I just want to make sure that the Leader of the Opposition understands. I had multiple conversations that morning with people talking about getting prepared for the 11 o'clock and 11:45 press conference.

I want to just remind the Member opposite that Mr. Martin said in a news conference following his scrum: Mr. Martin, do you feel you were pushed out, asked the reporter. Mr. Martin: No, it's my decision.

At 12:15 Mr. Martin was scrummed, as I just said, and he was asked about the status of his severance. He said he indicated to CBC that it's still up in the air and that it was with the board.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: I'll ask the minister: From whom did she obtain a copy of the settlement agreement?

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I travelled back from Houston on May 5. The Premier's office received a copy on May 5. When I was in

the office on May 9 – I explained that I wasn't in the office on May 6, I was out because of a family illness. On May 9, I was given a copy of that by the Premier's office and we had a discussion concerning the same.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

After weeks of us in the House of Assembly trying to seek information here, the minister decided, in the middle of the night, to release a piece of information, the documentation pertaining to this matter.

Minister, why did you decide to release a document pertaining to this matter in the middle of the night, a May 10 letter to John Green?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It certainly wouldn't have been my choice to release it in the middle of the night; you can believe you and me. Mr. Speaker, it was in response to the comments – the release of the severance agreement last evening. As you saw, there were some questions about the direction. I think that's the germane point, whether or not government gave direction to the board.

The questions were concerning the direction that we may or may not have given the board. I made clarity around that to the new board of Nalcor because we have to recognize we have a new CEO, a new board that is steering this company in the right direction. So we released that as soon as the other documentation.

Mr. Speaker, the reason why we want to go to the Auditor General is so that all of this information is out there, and the reputations of those involved are there as well.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Now that the Minister of Natural Resources has decided to release documents to the media in the middle of the night that suits her own needs, I'll ask the minister: Will you now table all the records, emails and documentation in the House as your government has committed to do? Will you release them in the House and make it available to the people of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do have the emails I referenced earlier. I would be happy to make those available. I made available last night in response to having the severance agreement out there – I made the letters available. The severance agreement is out there.

Mr. Speaker, we have an Auditor General's process here. We have asked the Auditor General because the germane point is did or did not the government give direction to the board? I can tell you, in my view, no, they did not give direction to the board; but we want to have an independent body have a look at the chain of emails, the exchange of information, the severance agreement and that is with the Auditor General.

If he's asking if I will release the emails of that morning, I certainly will this afternoon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's great. After weeks of asking for information, we're finally going to get a little

relief. At least it won't be in the middle of the night this time, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Minister of Finance when she took the unusual step of criticizing the leadership of Nalcor in her budget speech, were your statements intended to provoke the constructive dismissal of Mr. Martin.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, two points, as the minister just referred to, the day that Mr. Martin stepped aside, in his words, he very clearly said that it was his choice to do that. In the context of the budget speech that, I, as the Minister of Finance, had to present in this House, the context of the financial situation that was facing this province required that every single thing we could look at, we would look at. And that included Nalcor.

Mr. Speaker, we have a serious financial problem in this province. We have had to borrow \$3.4 billion this year, of which \$1.3 billion is related to an equity injection into Nalcor. The performance and the cost and the schedule associated with Muskrat Falls are very serious concerns, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on April 20, the Premier and the Minister of Natural Resources told the people of the province Mr. Martin has stepped down.

I ask the Minister of Finance: You knew, in the case of resignation, Mr. Martin would not be entitled to severance, as with your experience on a Nalcor board; did you discuss your knowledge of the contract with the Premier?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, as I said to questions from the Member opposite from the Third Party on Monday, I have a fiduciary responsibility, as a former director on the board of Nalcor, not to disclose confidential information. I had no conversation with any minister. I had no conversation with the Premier around the contents of Mr. Martin's contract.

And, quite frankly, for the Member opposite to insinuate that I should, I would ask him: Are you suggesting that I break the law, Sir?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader, for a very quick question.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, I'd ask the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board of Newfoundland and Labrador just to do her job. That's all we're asking over here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: She spoke of fiduciary responsibility, that's related to obviously inherent things that you would know that you wouldn't disclose (inaudible) –

MR. SPEAKER: I ask the Member to get to his question.

MR. HUTCHINGS: – contract which is now been made public.

I ask her again: Did you meet with anybody? So if you're saying you can't due to fiduciary responsibility, can you carry out your duties as Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board? How do you do that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Member opposite that I am very capable of doing the job that the Premier of this province has asked me to do.

Mr. Speaker, I will remind the Members of this House that over the last two weeks we have seen

the Members of the Opposition, that party there, ask over 102 questions around the issue of Mr. Martin's severance. They have not asked one question, not one, on the safety issues that happened this week up in Muskrat Falls. Quite frankly, that is unacceptable.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Midnight on Sunday we had an accident at Muskrat Falls that could have been a major catastrophe.

I ask the Minister of Natural Resources: What inquiries has she made and what responses has she received concerning the circumstances around the accident at Muskrat Falls on Monday that injured seven workers on site?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, as we know and the people of the province know there was a serious incident at Muskrat Falls on Sunday night. One worker was hospitalized; the other seven were treated at the scene. That is now with Occupational Health and Safety. There is a review on the site. They are doing an investigation on the site and of the incident, as we speak.

Mr. Speaker, this happened Sunday night and I just wanted to inform the people that Occupational Health and Safety is doing their due diligence, the workers of Occupational Health and Safety, to ensure the safety of all workers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I thank the Member for the question because it is a very important issue for all the workers at Muskrat Falls that safety is a paramount issue for this government. Occupational Health and Safety is there doing the work, and I thank the workers who are up there making the place safe for everybody.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Minister of Natural Resources: Can she give us an update on the court case and the issues between ANDRITZ and Astaldi and how this will affect the scheduling on the project.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As you know, this is a contractual discussion that is going on between two companies, one of them being, of course, Nalcor. They're working, I know, to resolve the issues around that. They're going to continue to work around those issues.

This is part of a large construction project. There are going to be these kinds of contractual obligations and requirements that are going to end in dispute at some time. I know that Nalcor is working on that and I have every confidence that our new CEO Stan Marshall will take this in hand.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance was on the board of Nalcor for five years and was even chair. She was one of the architects of the lucrative contract giving over \$6 million to CEO Ed Martin after being dismissed. There are similar contracts for other senior management at Nalcor.

The minister was also the architect of a budget taxing books, closing libraries, schools, cutting jobs, home care hours and crucial drugs for seniors. The most regressive and worst budget this province has seen, grinding our economy to a halt.

I ask the minister: How is either of these in the best interests of the province?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite has asked two separate issues; one was around the compensation package that was in place in 2005, prior to my joining the board, that was renewed in 2009 as has been publicly disclosed. As a former board member, the confidential discussions that happened as part of any director's agreement or disagreement with things that went on at the board table are confidential.

Mr. Speaker, my role as Finance Minister, we presented a very difficult budget. Quite frankly, we are in a financial situation that nobody in this province expected because of the poor planning of the former administration and the lack of attention to taxpayers' money. We'll continue to do that hard work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier made it very clear he has grave concerns about the schedule and cost of the Muskrat Falls Project.

I ask the Minister of Finance: How can she continue to just pour an additional \$1.3 billion of the people's money into the Nalcor trough in light of this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that as a representative of this government, as a representative of the constituents in the district that I represent, that I have extreme concerns about the cost and schedule liabilities related to this project. That is why I support our government in our work with Ernst & Young to do a review of all of the cost and schedule and to make sure that the things that need to be done to protect the investments of the people of the province are done.

Mr. Speaker, the reason we are in this situation today, quite frankly, is that a government did not provide the oversight and the governance to a company that was running a multi-billion-dollar project, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, it is parliamentary practice that when a minister reads from a text in the House that she table those documents. During Question Period, the Leader of the Opposition was asking the Minister of Natural Resources – she was reading from text in her hand. I ask that she table those documents.

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

MS. COADY: I think, Mr. Speaker, he's referring to – I did refer to Ed Martin's news conference, the information from Ed Martin's news conference. If you'd like to have those documents, I would certainly be happy to provide those.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. COADY: You can have it. I'm happy to do so, Mr. Speaker. It's the notes from his press conference of 11:45 a.m.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I table the annual performance of WorkplaceNL in the House here today.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to Standing Order 11, I shall move that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 2, 2016.

Mr. Speaker, I further give notice under Standing Order 11, I shall move that the House not adjourn at 10 p.m. on Thursday, June 2, 2016.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

MR. SPEAKER: It being Private Members' Day, we do not have time for petitions. I will ask the Member whose name the motion is in to present the private Member's motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House urge the government to postpone the commencement of full-day kindergarten to avoid other decisions that will negatively impact students. Seconded by the Member for Mount Pearl North.

Mr. Speaker, it's indeed an honour to present the private Member's bill. For those who are in the gallery and those who are watching at home, just

an explanation of what a private Member's bill is all about.

It's an opportunity for a private Member in the House of Assembly to present the bill that they feel will enhance the quality of life for citizens in our province. It's something that gets debated by the presenter and six other Members in this House of Assembly, by the Official Opposition and the Third Party and also by the government party. The intent is to present something that people feel will indeed be an enhancement across the board.

I've had the privilege this year to speak to two previous ones that were presented here. I'm happy to say that we could all agree and all, at the end of the day, voted in favour of those. As a matter of fact, one of them we had an amendment to that was accepted by the government and then voted on and accepted.

These were very important issues. One was about honouring the veterans, particularly around World War One. It was something that a lot of us spoke very passionately about because it's something we see the benefits of. It's part of our history, it's part of our culture and it defines who we are.

The second one that I had the opportunity to speak to was around the Wabush miners' pension and how they have been devastated by the cuts by no design of their own. We all met and discussed here about how do we better improve that. I give credit to the Member for Labrador West who presented that. We made an amendment that we felt enhanced it. It was accepted by this House and passed unanimously.

I'm presenting what I feel and what our Opposition here feels is in the same light. It's something around improving the quality of life for people in this province, particularly the students, who every day go to our schools, who every day have hope about inclusion, who have a plan for their future, their parents are engaged, how the administrators, how the communities themselves benefit from having those students have a good quality of education.

What we're talking about here is all-day kindergarten. I have to make it totally clear for those who are listening – and I've had a number

of emails over the last few days where it was made public that I was going to present this, where people have said no, Dave, we understand there are some fiscal restraints here, but we agree with all-day kindergarten. We like that. We would have loved to have it when we had it.

I went back to everybody and I say here in this House – and I know everybody on this side agrees with it – we wholeheartedly support all-day kindergarten. It was our administration who developed the process, researched it, came up with it and made it part of our mandate to implement. The issue at hand right now – but that was at a different time. We were in a different place financially.

Right now the province is in a financial challenge. As a result, we accept that and we understand that. We understand exactly that the government at this point have some fiscal challenges that they have to deal with. This is one of the things we would understand and support, that this wouldn't be the right time to implement.

Our own administration, our own caucus have said, if we were the government now we would make it perfectly clear, while we support all-day kindergarten and we will implement it one day, we would have to delay it. We're asking the government to do the same thing.

There is no politics to this part of it, because there are tens of thousands, and I mean tens of thousands of people, parents – people who have no direct connection to the school system, don't have grandkids, don't have kids in it, have no real connection – realize what's happening right now, while they support all-day kindergarten, if we implement it at the process we're using right now, it's going to be to the detriment of the existing 1 to 12 grade system that we have. That's not acceptable.

We've made major strides over the last 20 years to move the education system forward. We don't want to make it regressive. If we invest the money in all-day kindergarten right now for a small proportion of the students who no doubt could benefit from it, but it would not be something that would be detrimental to them because we're not taking away something they had. Because we're implementing this, what

we're doing is taking away existing programs that students, administrators, councillors, organizations, the not-for-profits who oversee this, the unions – everybody has seen it as a benefit, as something that has made our education system progressive and has made us move up the ladder, could be more engaging, and particularly, more competitive when it comes to our education to get people to the post-secondary level.

It's ironic, but it's a positive move when you hear the federation of student unions, who deal with the post-secondary, saying they have a challenge right now and they have a fear that if all-day kindergarten, the way it's being implemented – and what's being announced as the cuts that would be to the mainstream school system right now, would be detrimental to students being prepared for post-secondary.

They support all-day kindergarten, but their objective and everybody else's here is to make sure the quality of education improves. No doubt, all-day kindergarten, when implemented, will go a small way in improving that. The cuts that are being proposed now are going to be dramatic. There's not a student, there's not a teacher, there's not an administrator, there's not an organization out there who has an education background – and those being from the Faculty of Education, to the English faculty, to the vice-president of the university – who doesn't have a concern of where we're going right now.

As a result of what we're proposing, the implementation and the costing related to that, it's having a major impact on some of the other things we would have liked to have done. Things around school closures, things around, obviously, teacher layoffs, which are dramatic, cancelling or deferring infrastructure projects that are very important here. We've talked about that in this House numerous times, about projects that need to move forward. It's very important to the communities.

I even had the Members of the government side get up and present petitions for infrastructure projects that are related to schools in their own districts – and rightfully so, congratulations to them to do it because they are important projects.

But as we invest in all-day kindergarten right now, at the expense of things like that, then we have a real problem with it. I know the tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of people in this province who become more and more aware of what impact this is going to have will be totally against directly putting that in right now; but, no doubt, would support all-day kindergarten, when we're ready, in a year or two – when we are ready. When financially we're ready to do that, that will be the benefit, but taking away existing programs and services is not the right way to move our education system forward.

When you're talking about doing combined grades, multigrade classrooms, these are things we do in some places – and the minister will get up later and he'll tout that we've been doing it for years, no doubt; but I have hundreds from people who will talk around small communities it was done because at the end of the day, we wanted to keep the resource there, to ensure that those resources in the school were open so that everybody in the community, every student in the community, could benefit from our education system.

They'll also talk about we've had to do it because of our infrastructure challenges. That's why over the last 10 years we've invested in 62 major projects, building new schools or major renovations to schools over the course of a year – it is a major investment because, in some cases, you had no other choice to do multigrading, you physically didn't have the space.

We invested in modular classrooms as a temporary solution, not as ongoing for decades and decades. That wasn't the intent. In some cases, it took a decade to get a new school in place. In some cases, unforeseen growth in those communities dictated that you needed to build on even before you were completed, but we started that process and we moved it so dramatically forward that it was being touted as a positive move for education.

The NLTA, the Federation of School Councils, even the Federation of Students' union have seen that. The individual school councils saw the benefits and were very supportive of what we were doing.

What's happening now, one of the biggest impacts – I shouldn't say the biggest, one of the immediate ones, and it's a big one. One of the immediate ones is the Intensive Core French program. Keeping in mind, for those who are not familiar with it, there are two streams of the French program that you have. You either do French Immersion when you come right into the mainstream school system, and not every student chooses to that. Sometimes it's not available for every student. Sometimes parents want to choose a different route, let their kids not have to be so engulfed into it right now, to see how they fit into the school system.

But then when you get grade six, by that time, you'll have an understanding if that is of interest to you, if it's something that you will be able to handle – because it's a little bit more intensive; that's why obviously the labelling of Intensive Core French – a little bit more to catch up, but it's that option to be able to do that and then go on to the mainstream French system in junior high and high school.

What we're doing here now, we're eliminating half the opportunities for students to be engaged in Intensive Core French. One of the most humiliating things – and this is the emails and letters I get from people – those kids who get into it now are chosen from a lottery draw. They get a letter sent home after the fact. These are grade-five students, 10 year olds who have no idea why they can't go into a school system or a grade they are comfortable with, or a type of leaning they wanted with their friends that they came right up through from kindergarten. Now they want to continue with that. In some cases, we have two in the same family. One gets in the system and one doesn't.

These are that things that are the major cuts. It's not an attack on anybody or the government here. It's a realignment of exactly where the priority should be here. If the priority by the administrators, by the unions involved, but particularly by the parents and by the students says we need to go another route because we don't want to have our education system fall backwards, then I would think any government should be smart enough and more open enough and engaging enough to listen to that particular group.

That's what we're asking them to do. That's what we're asking here with this private Member's bill. What I will be engaging – I will get to speak again from another 15 minutes at the end of it – is I'm going to be encouraging all Members, particularly on the government side, to reassess exactly the impact this is going to have in their own districts, but on all students in this province, and do the right thing. Vote for something that is progressive, not regressive.

We will get to all-day kindergarten. Hopefully, the economy turns around, oil prices, diversification, all the other things we need in this province take off quicker than we thought and maybe it won't be a long stall for all-day kindergarten. Those parents and those students can avail of those extra services.

There are other things that have gone part and parcel with the amount of money we're investing here that could be better used in the areas where we don't have to cut – 54 libraries. Do you think they don't have an impact on students? Of course they do. Everybody's got them. The minister has gotten hundreds, if not thousands, of emails regarding the impact it's going to have. A lot of our public libraries are in schools. There's a partnership there. People gain from that. When the seniors in the community are engaged with the students in the community, it obviously has a positive impact.

We're going to jeopardize that because we're going to invest in something we've never had and there's not a big outcry to have. No doubt, everybody feels one day we should have it, but not at the expense of an existing system that we have.

Some of the other things we've done: reducing post-secondary scholarships for those who could avail of it to offset some of their cost of going. These are some of the things that because we're spending money in all-day kindergarten, they're having an impact on our education system.

Cuts to Memorial University: I see why the Federation of Students' union have an understanding of if you cut on one side of it, it has a long-term impact somewhere else. If you invest too much or not in the right areas or in another area, it has an impact, there's only so much money to go around in any sector.

I was a minister, so I know. I fought for my piece. I knew what I had to do with the money I had. It could only go so far. No doubt, the Minister of Education has the same challenge.

We're asking, look at the monies that you're going to invest in all-day kindergarten, delay it for a period of time. Take that same investment, put it back into reducing our cap sizes, doing less layoffs for teachers, making sure programs that exist continue to exist, find other ways to improve our education system, invest in some of our infrastructure programs to ensure overcrowding is not an issue, to ensure that we've got sustainable schools, that communities that are growing have that ability to engage new families coming in.

The first thing a family will look at, when they're going to move from one community to another, particularly if they're coming to this province, is what is the school system like. What programs does it offer, but particularly what is the ability to engage their students.

They're not going to want to bring a student into an overcrowded classroom. They're not going to want to bring them into a school system where there's no cafeteria, their physical activities are limited because they can't get outside, the space has been used for modular classrooms or there are not enough teachers to do proper supervision and the students end up at their desk for four or five hours a day. That's not conducive to engaging any group, particularly engaging and promoting our significant movement forward on our education system.

Tax on our books; while it's going to generate a minimum amount of money, the savings we could have by not implementing all-day kindergarten right now and waiting until our fiscal reality changes and our fiscal line is in a better place, would be a benefit to everybody. It would mean more students can be engaged in reading. Their family members can be more engaged by buying books and reading. There's a better way of doing this and a better way of ensuring that our education system moves forward.

I would think, I would hope and I'm fairly confident that if not all, most on the other side appreciate the benefits of education. Appreciate

that we've come a long way from the day I was in school and, no doubt, some of the other Members were in school and where we've gone to and how we compete in that sense. No doubt, the Minister of Education – he has an education background – understands there are challenges.

You can't offer all programs for every sector, but you can offer the programs that are going to better equip the students to be able to be engaged in education, to be successful in education and to have better opportunities for choices. The objective in our education system has always been engagement and preparation. We prepare them for the next stage of life. The next stage after our primary and secondary school system is our post-secondary.

What we're doing here by investing in all-day kindergarten now when we're not ready for it – not that it's not a valuable point, but when we're not ready for it – is at the expense of our present students. The opportunities they're going to have for future careers, the opportunities they're going to have to be better engaged in the school systems, their own physical and mental health in the school system. These are the key things that we need to address.

So I'm asking – and I'll have another opportunity the last 15 minutes of the House today to implore and almost beg my colleagues on the other side to see how we can move this forward and do the right thing and improve our education system.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster): The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm pleased to stand and support the implementation of full-day kindergarten in Newfoundland and Labrador, whereby some 23,000 students, children, in this province will manage to catch up with the rest of Canada, finally, starting in September of this year.

Just a couple of notes about what the Member just said. I'm not sure the Faculty of Education – actually, I'm pretty sure there's nobody at the university who has been speaking out against full-day kindergarten, and whatever federation of student councils he's talking to, I've not heard from any of them either. I know there have been letters to the editor supporting full-day kindergarten, but the Faculty of Education, and I don't know who the federation of student councils are, but I haven't heard from them.

It's interesting that the Member has a change of heart now at the 11th hour and wants to pull the rug out on the 23,000 or so students who are going to benefit from this over the next four years. I remember in December of 2013, when I was an independent Member of the House of Assembly, I was called over to meet with the Minister of Education of the day. He said, we're going to do full-day kindergarten. I said, oh, are you really? He said, yes, we're going to do it in – we're going to announce it, we're going to do it in September of 2016, it's going to be in the budget. I said, well, my preference would be that you phase this program in, and I gave him the details of what I was thinking. They went against what we had recommended and set aside \$30 million for full-day kindergarten.

As I've said repeatedly in the House of Assembly, it's unfortunate the Member hasn't gotten it, that millions of dollars have been spent on this program. They promised it in their election platform, as did all the political parties in the province in the election. I overwhelming hear from parents that they support it, not just those who have children kindergarten age.

The other thing I find odd is that in 2013 their government cut 160 teaching units; yet, in 2014 they didn't reinstitute 160 teaching units, they announced full-day kindergarten. Last year, in 2015, they cut another 78 teaching units. They cut 238 teaching units over that two-year period. They didn't cancel full-day kindergarten. They cut 238 teaching units, they increased the class-size cap, they cut specialist teachers, they cut school administrators, they made all sorts of cuts to education and they didn't back away from full-day kindergarten. So to say this is not politically motivated is surprising.

It's also interesting to hear this Member, who was minister of Transportation and Works, talking about how school overcrowding is a terrible thing, that students eating their food at their desk is a terrible thing and not having a big enough gym is a terrible thing. Well, why didn't you do something about it?

It's just ironic to see him talking about Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, where he stood up in the spring of 2015 and guaranteed those parents in that community – guaranteed them, he was certain. He told CBC that school was going to be ready for September 2016. He went around knocking on doors during the election. I'm pretty certain he told people that very same thing.

That school is not going to be ready for September 2016. We'll be lucky if it's ready sometime during the 2016-17 school year in the winter or the spring. We'll be lucky of that. So it's highly ironic that he basically is trying to blame all that on somebody else when the blame sits squarely on his shoulders. That he takes no responsibility for it is completely irresponsible and disgraceful.

I just want to say a few things that are actually factual about this program. Kindergarten has been around since the 19th century. That's how long it's been around. The half-day model really comes from the fact that we had a couple of world wars – I wasn't born – in the early 20th century and there was a shortage of teachers, especially elementary school teachers. There was a shortage of teachers. A half-day model was largely adopted in the United States because of a shortage of teachers. That's the history of the half-day program.

The full-day model is what really was envisioned. In 1968 and '69 when Dr. Phil Warren recommended that we implement kindergarten in the province, because it largely didn't exist, it was something new to us. The half-day model is what was adopted because we were following along on practices in other jurisdictions.

There are schools right now in Newfoundland and Labrador that have actually been offering full-day kindergarten under the current allocation. I don't know if the Member wants

them to get rid of that in those communities as well. Maybe he ought to tell the people in Churchill Falls, for example, that they shouldn't have a full-day program. Other schools on the North Coast of Labrador and so on, I don't know if he wants to do away with that as well.

The program that we have – that the previous government stood by and now is throwing some 23,000 children in the province between the ages of zero and four years old, throwing them under the bus. This model was envisioned based on good pedagogical practices when it comes to kindergarten.

The whole idea that the environment in the educational setting as a third teacher – if you think the first teacher is the parents of the child, the second teacher is the teacher in the classroom, and the environment of kindergarten is the third teacher. That is the pedagogical basis for the full-day program. This completely adheres to that mission that dates back to the German ideal of kindergarten or 'childgarden' that dates back to the 19th century.

It's the 21st century, and the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador is mired in the 19th century when it comes to educational practices, and predates the early 19th century in terms of what they want for children in Newfoundland and Labrador. It's breathtaking that anyone would have that lack of understanding of what is modern and what is important in our education system.

As we said a number of times in the House of Assembly, every jurisdiction in Canada, other than our own, has some form of full-day kindergarten at present. This Member wants us to jettison their plan based on the incompetence of his administration when they were in power. Things that they didn't get done, the debt that they ran up, now he wants to throw tens of thousands of children in this province under the bus because he wants to score cheap political points, and it's nothing more than that.

I've been meeting with lots of people, school councils, and about a quarter of them have said to me that this is an option they would want to pursue. A quarter of them, and I have spoken to hundreds if not thousands of parents who support –

MR. LANE: (Inaudible).

MR. KIRBY: I don't know why the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands is heckling me over here. I'm just trying to participate in the debate. This is not how you participate in the debate, I suggest. If you have something to say stand up and participate in the debate.

In any case, Madam Speaker, this really goes to the heart of the quality of education that we want for our children. This is why we're implementing the program –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: – this year.

People have sent me – the odd critic will send me academic articles, because you can find things that people assume discredit the full-day program. It's funny, because if you actually read through these, if you read through these academic studies that are legitimate, I have not found one that does not say one thing positive about a quality, play-based, full-day kindergarten program and its impact.

One of the things that are in almost every one – and one of these I have is a really good meta-analysis of full-day kindergarten studies that have been conducted to date. It demonstrates that those children who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds inevitably benefit throughout their school years from this. Children whose parents don't have a lot, children who have low literacy in their families, children who don't have the opportunity to go to a half-day play-based child care program, those children, by and large, to a study – and I would like to see one that doesn't demonstrate this that looked at that particular variable, that does not show that is a fact. That is a fact. There are other benefits of this program. We have talked about it here until we're blue, red and every other colour in the face.

There are 20,000 articles – 20,000 articles – that you can go and get on the Internet that show that quality, play-based, full-day kindergarten

benefits our kids. And the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador is standing here today saying, no, let's continue with educational practices that predate the nineteenth century. It's ridiculous. There was a document prepared under the previous government that goes into heavy detail, pages and pages of a literature review, of a research review that looked at all of the more recent contemporary historical studies of full-day kindergarten that they said it was a worthwhile program that would benefit our children tremendously.

When they were cutting 238 teaching units in the province – they cut everything – they still proceeded with full-day kindergarten. And you can go back to Hansard in 2014 where Members on the government side, the PC administration at the time, were imploring Members of the Opposition to vote for the budget because you know that full-day kindergarten is worth it.

Over a two-year period, where they announced 238 teaching unit cuts, everything from the principals right on down, they still went ahead with it and they implored everybody else to support them because it was worth doing. It is absolutely unbelievable.

Now they're of the opinion this doesn't give children a significant start in school. It's not worth it to give children, especially the poorer children, the underprivileged children, the children who do not have what more affluent children have in this province, it's not worth it any more to make sure those kids get the best start that they can get in life.

They don't want our children in Newfoundland and Labrador to have the same opportunities as children in British Columbia, as children in Alberta, as children in Ontario. Ontario has a universal, full-day kindergarten program, not just for five-year-olds, like we're going to be in September; they have it for four-year-olds as well. They are way ahead of us; Ontario is. We are so far behind because of the inaction of the previous government. They had 12 years to bring this in.

It was a Hail Mary pass towards the end that they brought it out. We will be basically still way behind Ontario if we do this. If you look at the other Atlantic provinces, they have been way

more progressive under governments of different stripes – it didn't matter – in implementing full-day kindergarten, not just for five-year-olds. Our program is going to be optional. Some of these provinces have a mandatory program, a legislated statutory attendance for kindergarten in their provinces for full-day kindergarten, and ours is still optional.

If there's anybody out there who thinks well, don't do this because for some reason despite the 20,000 or so research studies that are easily available, all of which show some benefit in one form or another, if they don't believe it, then they still have the option of not participating, should they want to, but other programs have not gone down that road even. They are way, way ahead of us. If you think about all of the research on neuropsychology today, a child's brain development, we know that it is absolutely important that we get them at the earliest years –

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: I could go on, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you. I really appreciate the time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

It's indeed a privilege to get up here today and speak to this motion brought forward by the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island. It was interesting to see the minister get up beforehand. Part of his statement there, just to show how angry he was getting towards another Member here, here's the person leading the Department of Education, supposed to be setting an example to the children of Newfoundland and Labrador, it is shameful, very shameful.

Madam Speaker, this budget that was brought down there are a lot of things in the budget that, at the end of the day, it's all about choices. It's

about choices the government made and everybody – parents, school councils, students, educators – realized that there had to be some difficult choices made in this budget. What I'm going to talk about today are the different choices that government made here when they did their budget.

What I'm hearing – and the minister just said he's met thousands and one-quarter are saying go ahead with full-day kindergarten. That leaves me to think that 75 per cent of the people – the thousands of people who are out there – 75 per cent, he's not listening to them. He's just not listening to 75 per cent of the people. He said he met thousands, so 75 per cent of the people are like me.

I am 100 per cent in favour of full-day kindergarten, but here it is. I bet out of the 75 per cent of people he just talked about are telling him they want to see full-day kindergarten go ahead, but not at this time until finances are in place so we don't need to do the cuts we're doing to people, to our communities, to our children, to schools, to education in this province.

Here's a choice that you make. The choice is let's introduce full-day kindergarten in September, or let's close libraries down now. Let's combine classes, let's increase the cap on the number of students in classes, let's cut programs, let's put children on a bus when it's dark in the morning – grade kindergartens on a bus in the dark. Safety should be the most – we look at anything with our children. We had a great Member's statement here today and I applauded the Member and said how our children should be – safety. In the summertime when you look at them out running around you just hope that nothing happens, and you're always concerned about safety. Parents are like that; we were all like that. The number one concern is the safety of the children.

Here we are making a decision that costs a lot of money. It's not a decision that we're saying this is only a couple of hundred thousand dollars; this is millions of dollars. It is millions of dollars that we're going to invest in full-day kindergarten – which we all agree with. I agree that we need full-day kindergarten. I think it's a great program; I think it's something the

province does need and it'd be very beneficial for our children.

But I look at the choice that we've got to make. The choice is simple: Do we cut education? We came a long ways. I can remember going to school when I was in class in grade 11 with 40-odd children in the class with me – 40-odd. The education that you get with 40 children in a class versus 27 or 28, it's unbelievable. It gives our teachers the capacity to be able to teach. It gives our children the ability to be able to learn.

We're changing all that. This Education Minister is stepping our education system backwards; he's moving us backwards. I got to get back, because the way I want to talk today, I really want to just say that I am in favour of full-day kindergarten. I really am in favour, but this is not the time to do it. Our finances can't afford to do it. Do not cut education. Do not do what you're doing to the children of the province, cutting education.

Everyone – I know, I spoke to different Members here in the House of Assembly, and I can tell you, ask your school councils. I go to regular school council meetings; I spoke to all the school councils in my district. As a matter of fact, I'm going to talk a little bit about a school council clear of my district now shortly. They all are telling me: Kevin, look, delay full-day kindergarten. Delay it for a few years until hopefully our finances will get in better shape and we'll be able to afford it.

Madam Speaker, it's like going out and buying a new car, or like going and purchasing a major thing for your home or whatever. If you don't have the money in your pocket to do it right away, you try to save up a little bit so you can get a down payment so it isn't as harsh on the system; or, do you go out and buy a new car and say, okay, I'm not going to pay for the groceries this month or I'm not going to pay for my light bill? Because that's what this is doing. It really is.

Same-day kindergarten is a great thing. It would be a great thing to have, but we can't afford it right now at the expense of our children, at the expense of our schools. If you look, there are five schools scheduled to be closed in the

province. We're closing schools and we're bringing in same-day kindergarten.

The minister mentioned the poor children. There is no doubt about it, any child, I don't care if they're poor, rich or middle class, I treat all children the same. Anything we can do for our children, no matter what they are, I think education is paramount. We need to get a great education.

Our choice, where is it? It's in rural Newfoundland. In rural Newfoundland there are 54 libraries being closed. Now, I'll ask the minister: If a child doesn't have Internet service in their house, doesn't have resources at home, where do you think, in these 54 communities, that child is going to be able to go get the resources, the ability to go use a computer? Maybe they won't have a computer in the house. Maybe they don't have Internet in their house.

So tell me, for \$1 million you're shutting down 54 libraries in this province, and we're bringing in same-day kindergarten? Seriously, for \$1 million, that's what it's costing. That's what I said when I first started. It's all about choices.

We agree that full-day kindergarten is a great thing. We agree with full-day kindergarten, but the choice to do what you're doing here today and what you did in this budget, the choice is not right. Talk to the school councils, talk to the parents. The minister said he's after meeting with thousands, and 75 per cent of them are against full-day kindergarten; 75 per cent that he met with. So he's not listening. That's typical for this government.

We're seeing all kinds of protests at schools. I've been to three silent protests, very well organized. They just want to be out there and show, look, here we are. I went to a protest down in Torbay at the high school. We had over 100 high school students come out to protest busing.

We talked to parents at the elementary school, their concern is they're going to have to put their children on the bus in the dark 56 days of the year. Think about it. Think about the safety of the children. In the dark getting on the bus, a little child – we just talked about the safety of children today, about how young children are

running around. It's true. Just think about those things. That's all I'm asking here today is for you to reconsider and think about the priorities.

I want to talk a little bit about libraries in my district. We had an issue at the library in Torbay. The library board in most of these towns are all volunteers, and I want to thank them for all the work they do. They're concerned – I bet every one of you who know your library boards really know that these people's main concern is to provide something for children, to provide something for our seniors. To make sure there is a place people can go to use the Internet and the sharing of books. The more we can encourage our children to read the better it is.

At the one in Torbay, there is a great Mother Goose program there that they all get in on. I know my niece's little fellow, he used to just love going over. His nan used to take him over all the time to the Mother Goose program, which is great. I heard the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune tell me the same thing. It's a big day the morning they all go down and they have reading time. That's good, because that's really educating our young children.

Here we are, we're going to close libraries. We're closing this. They're talking about our children. They're talking about how important – we agree that full-day kindergarten is huge, but don't close libraries at the expense of it. It's a choice that you made. This is a choice. We're asking you to look at the choice you're making and not close the libraries. Don't close the libraries.

Do not put grades five and six in the same class. Do not, as the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. K. PARSONS: No, it's not called Cape St. Francis.

Anyway, he just said a story about French and how for core French they have to pick names out of a hat. That's what we're doing, picking names out of a hat for education. That's what this is coming to.

I'd like to speak about this for a little bit, from Mary Queen of Peace. Mary Queen of Peace parents – now parents, the school council, the same thing. There are two Member across the way who have constituents of theirs going to Mary Queen of Peace. I was asked by the people from their districts to present a petition here in the House of Assembly. I said no problem at all, because a good few of them are former constituents of mine. When the realignment came in, I had a good part of Stavanger Drive and I met a lot of these people that way, and I had no problem doing it.

Here's what's happening – and I could name off one of my schools or I could name off a school in Mount Pearl, but I'm just going to talk about Mary Queen of Peace a little bit here now. There are 700 students at Mary Queen of Peace. If you look at Mary Queen of Peace, 700 students, it's a K to 12. For the last year, the first time in 10 years, they got an extension on their school. Over the last 10 years they had some pavement done, they had new lockers put in, but last year they got an extension put on their school.

This year, due to the cuts that are going to be in this budget, the cuts that are going to be at Mary Queen of Peace, they're going to lose three teaching units and it's going to result in grades three and four being combined and grades five and six. Madam Speaker, 14 children won't be able to take Intensive Core French – 14 children's names will not be picked out of a hat to do French, that they want to do.

We saw examples of a little girl on the front page of the paper crying. We're after hearing about twins. One got picked and one didn't. What are we doing here? What are we doing to our children? Think about it. Really think about this.

We're looking at a school that we're going to introduce full-day kindergarten to next year. Right now, they have to split the day in half because they don't have any cafeteria facilities. So we're going to introduce more children, they don't have a cafeteria. They have no functioning library. They have no computer lab for their kids. The kids are split to times so that there's enough room outside for them to play. That's not in rural Newfoundland; that's right here in St. John's. That's just one I picked. I didn't pick

any one down in my own area, but that's what the parents –

Do you know how many names from your districts signed this petition so far? Almost 500 parents in your district signed a petition talking about education. At the end of their petition this is what they said – this is what they want the government to do: “To instruct the school boards to delay the implementation of full-day kindergarten until such time as the province’s financial circumstances improve and restore programs, teacher allocations and class-size caps to 2014 levels.” That’s all we’re asking. We’re asking what the parents are asking. We’re asking what the school councils right across this province are asking for.

Madam Speaker, I only have a minute left. I wish I had a little bit more time because I really want to touch – we’ve done a lot in education since I’ve been here and over the last number of years. I can remember listening to *Open Line* shows in the '90s when school was closed down because of mould and everything else. There were a lot of issues in my own district. I’m very proud of the investments that were done in my district. Holy Trinity High was opened in 2008. There’s another new school getting built right now for five, six and seven. There was an extension put on Cape St. Francis, with two modular classrooms because of the increased size, a beautiful little school. St. Francis of Assisi right now has another extension on that also.

Investments in education have been fantastic in my district, and I’m very proud of the investments they done and so have they been done right across the province. Right now, it’s just not the time to introduce full-day kindergarten. Let’s not cut education. Let’s keep education where it is to –

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

MR. K. PARSONS: – and when we can afford it, do full-day kindergarten.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I’m privileged today to stand in this hon. House and speak to the private Member’s resolution that the Official Opposition has presented for us to debate this week. The first thing I wanted to say, Madam Speaker, is I have a tremendous amount of gratitude to the constituents in Windsor Lake who have elected me to be their representative in this House. It is a privilege to be standing up and discussing any topic, including those that touch very closely to the constituents that I represent in my district.

I certainly want to acknowledge that, like many Members in this House of Assembly, I have had communication with my constituents around their concerns around the education decisions that were made as part of this budget. I’ve had the opportunity, in my own particular case, to meet with representatives of the school council for two schools in my district and had discussions not only with those individuals, but also had contact with a number of parents who have expressed concerns.

I have tremendous empathy for the families that are going through and being impacted by the transition. I think the school board, as the Member opposite referenced, when the school board made the decision to implement a lottery, I am not sure I would have chosen that option. Certainly, it has created a huge amount of concern for those children who believed they were going to get into Intensive Core French and now can’t.

Madam Speaker, I’m also elected to represent the entire community of my district and we are in this House representing the entire population of the people of the province. For the 23,000 children who are now in the queue, so to speak, to take advantage of the opportunity of full-day kindergarten, I’d like to share in the time that I have remaining, some of the things that, I believe, make this social policy decision a very important one.

I want to correct the Member opposite. The Member for Cape St. Francis referred incorrectly

to 54 libraries closing, when, in fact, my understanding is some 26 of those, if the numbers are correct, are actually in schools and remaining open. Madam Speaker, as has also been discussed in this House, he is also incorrect when he speaks about the remaining libraries that the Minister of Municipal Affairs has spoken frequently in this House about those libraries being part of the work that his department, in conjunction with the Department of Education and the libraries board to see what are the unique and innovative ways we can –

MR. K. PARSONS: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Cape St. Francis, on a point of order.

MR. K. PARSONS: Madam Speaker, the hon. minister just said that I was incorrect. I have a copy of their news release and it says library closures, and there are 54 names on the library closures, and it's a news release that came from the department. So it says 54 library closures. So that's where I'm getting them, Minister. Have you changed something since then?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Madam Speaker, I can't explain why the Member opposite doesn't have the most current information. Certainly, we will endeavour to provide him with that information post-haste.

When we talk about the children and the choices, the social reasons for implementing full-day kindergarten are very, very clear. Full-day kindergarten is associated with a diminished –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. C. BENNETT: It's associated with improved early word reading, it is associated with academic achievement, and more

importantly, it is associated with a predictor of long-term health.

In British Columbia, the full-day kindergarten that was implemented there led to an increase in grade four educational attainment. Students in full-day kindergarten, based on a study by Hough and Bryde, outperformed half-day students in language arts and math.

Madam Speaker, when we look at the social and economic impacts of why it's important to make this investment, the early years are the most important years. Between the ages of three and six children will develop the most intellectually that they are capable of; it's when the most brain synapses develop. It's one of the reasons why we have to provide every child the opportunity to enter school on a level playing field and take away any disadvantage that any child in any corner of our province, from coast to coast to coast, whether it's on the Island or whether it's in Labrador, take away any potential disadvantage that child may have when they enter school for the very first time.

Early years, as I said, are very important. We've seen that full-day kindergarten students from families with low socioeconomic circumstances continue to achieve at par with the rest of the school district. As the district develops standardized tests, we see improved performance.

There were some other points and some sources of reference on the validity of investments in full-day kindergarten. The Upper Canada District School Board says that students who attend full-day kindergarten are 5 per cent more likely to achieve academic success in grade one reading, writing and math scores, while reading levels were 6.4 per cent higher for full-time students.

Families, as has been referenced in this House, will have decreased stress of finding child care and increased family income so they can support early learning. Full-day kindergarten has been associated, as I said earlier, with diminished socioeconomic status differences in the early word reading. Progress, as measured on kindergarten report cards and readiness for first grade, were rated significantly higher for children in full-day kindergarten.

There is more time for the children and their teachers to devote to language arts and mathematic activities. Students in full-day kindergarten outperform, as I said earlier, half-day students in language arts and math.

Madam Speaker, the former government made the decision in their budget of 2014, I believe, to begin phasing in full-day kindergarten. I remember it very clearly because it was during the by-election for the former district that I represented, the district of Virginia Waters, that the government decided it was going to implement full-day kindergarten.

Madam Speaker, I understand the Members opposite talking about difficult choices, and this budget certainly has been one that has been very difficult. We have a very difficult fiscal situation in our province. As a society, as parents, as a community, to say that we pick one child over another child who's just entering school – 23,000 of them will be entering school over the next four years.

To hear Members opposite talk about choices about the education for the most vulnerable people, the youngest children in our province, quite frankly, I think it begs the question as to why they feel the need to associate those two things. I think as a government – and as they did when they were in government – supporting the development of young people in our province, most importantly, young children who are developing at a faster rate between the ages of three and six and can be supported through the early learning opportunities full-day kindergarten provides them, is an extremely important social policy.

The Member opposite spoke very eloquently and passionately about a school in my district, Mary Queen of Peace. One of the things that I'd certainly like to ask the Member or remind him, he spoke about Mary Queen of Peace getting an extension for the first time in 10 years, and then he read a litany of things that the school doesn't have.

Madam Speaker, I would ask, for 10 years why didn't they make those investments? Why did it take the implementation of full-day kindergarten in their 2014 budget to begin the process of investing in schools in that district?

When the Member opposite talked about teaching units, as I have explained to the constituents in my district, the school board will continue to assign teaching units throughout the course of the summer with the final decisions being made just before school opens.

I take quite exception to the Member opposite speaking about the investments they made in education. At the same time, they had the highest royalties, they had the highest oil production. They had every opportunity to invest in full-day kindergarten much earlier than they did, but coincidentally only decided to implement full-day kindergarten during a budget that was announced during a by-election.

Madam Speaker, as a mom I understand. I have constituents that are very, very, very upset about the changes that this budget made for their individual children in schools in my district. I'm sure we all have those situations happening, but our responsibility here in this House is to make sure that when we make decisions about investments, that we think of the broader community and we think about not only the people we represent but, in my case and in the case of this policy decision by our government, the 23,000 children who are going to take advantage of full-day kindergarten.

I think for the Members opposite, I understand the need for them to speak to this issue. This is a very important issue about education for our children, but the facts are: oral language, thinking abilities and coping in grade one set the children's trajectory for achievement that are difficult to change. You get one shot at it. When you set them up for success in kindergarten, they can do much better in subsequent grades.

Self-regulation or the capacity to manage our behaviour, emotions and attention, shapes the quality of thinking abilities and coping essential to emerging literacy, numeracy and inquiry skills. As I've said earlier in this debate, between the ages of three and six the brain's neuro-circuit networks responsible for maintaining attention and focus undergo a growth spurt building on earlier neuropathways that manage emotions and behaviour.

Madam Speaker, I recognize there has been a loud voice from constituents around many of the

districts, not all the districts in Newfoundland, but certainly those districts where the combined classes or the busing changes, and certainly the intensive core French are most felt.

Our government went to the people of the province and campaigned in several – I campaigned in a by-election, plus a general election, on full-day kindergarten. The reason I did it is because as a mom I believe very passionately that we must make sure that those children who don't have the advantages that other kids have enter school on the same footing, and full-day kindergarten provides that opportunity for them, Madam Speaker.

We see health outcomes that are better. They have a greater chance of completing post-secondary education. They have lower crime rates and substance abuse issues. They are more engaged and involved citizens. They do so because they learned to play and socially interact. They have strong language and wise decision-making skills because they got them in kindergarten – in kindergarten. It's a critical investment in families. It has an impact on population growth, making it easier on families to have children and reducing the cost of arranging care for the other half of the day.

Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity, and to the House, to be able to speak to this issue today. I look forward to listening to the rest of the debate and recognize the difficult situation the province is in. This is a very important progressive – not regressive, progressive social policy.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

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

I am pleased today to stand and speak to the private Member's motion with regard to full-day kindergarten. A motion that is not asking for full-day kindergarten not to happen, but is

asking that it be put off until we have the money to make it happen.

I, personally, and our caucus have been calling for full-day kindergarten for a long time. We have been completely supportive of full-day kindergarten. We know very well – and it's been part of our policy – that a full-day kindergarten combined with a solid, early childhood education play-based model is one of the best things that could be done for children, providing opportunities for all children and a level playing field for children.

What this government has done though – and I want the government Members to listen clearly to what I've said. We fully support full-day kindergarten, but we're extremely disappointed that this government has chosen – because that's the thing, it has chosen – to put it in place at the expense of other things in the educational system, instead of recognizing their responsibility to make sure that the resources were there so that nothing else in the system suffered if all-day kindergarten was put in. I think this is an extremely important point.

They will try to make it sound like we are against all-day kindergarten when they know we're not. We have to make sure the public hears what we're saying clearly, and I think they do.

I have spoken with parents. I've spoken with teachers, specifically kindergarten teachers who are saying to me: Ms. Michael, we want it, but we've gone so long without it we can go a few more years until the money is there. Now the thing is, the government could have chosen to put it in without making the rest of the system suffer. This is the thing they have to take responsibility for.

I have in my hand today a statement and call to action, it's called a Belief Statement and Call to Action which was actually signed in the last two days by the Presidents of the Canadian Teachers' Organizations of all the country. They were meeting here in St. John's. They are here right now. Their meetings end today. These presidents developed a Belief Statement and Call to Action. They developed it because of "... overwhelming concerns on educational reform,

inclusive education, austerity budgets and teachers' mental health and wellness."

There are a couple of points in this statement which are extremely important that the Presidents of the Alberta Teachers' Association, the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association, the Nova Scotia Teachers association, I think it's the Manitoba Teachers' association and the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens.

All of these presidents have put this statement together, and it says:

"WE BELIEVE... that austerity budgets undermine the strength of our public education system as students and their teachers lose out, and families are left out.

"WE BELIEVE... that publicly funded public education must be fully funded to support student learning.

"WE BELIEVE... that a successful inclusive education model requires sufficient funding and teachers/educators to ensure student needs are addressed.

"WE BELIEVE... that fiscal deficits must not be solved at the expense of the public education system or on the backs of our children."

I'm not reading their whole statement. I'm reading parts of the statement that are very pertinent to what we're discussing here today. If this government thought the time had come to put all-day kindergarten in place, I would have applauded it 100 per cent if it didn't mean that at the same time others in the system were going to suffer.

The government is adding 142.5 kindergarten teachers to our system, and isn't that wonderful. That would be wonderful if at the same time the government weren't removing 219 teachers from the rest of the system. Cannot the government side of the House see how idiotic that is? It would have been fantastic from an economic perspective, not just from the perspective of education. It would have been fantastic from an economic perspective if 142.5 teachers were added to our system; 142.5 more trained kindergarten teachers working; 142.5 more

young people coming out of university with jobs; 142.5 more young people looking at a future in this province. But what we have happening is 142.5 moving in and the loss of 219 from the rest of the system. I don't care whether the government calls it loss by attrition or whatever they want to call it. It's loss of positions. It's loss of places where people coming out of university can go. We have people who are going to be retiring and the positions are going to be gone. This is the issue.

If this government had not put in place an austerity budget, which they admitted on April 14 was going to weaken our economy, if they instead had put in a budget that was built to strengthen our economy and put in a budget that was going to make sure we have new jobs happening in the province instead of a loss of jobs, which they admit is going to happen with this budget, if they had done the opposite, how much more sense that would have meant.

So look at, what do we want in the educational system in September 2016? We want all-day kindergarten. Well, then make that happen, but don't make it happen by, at the same time, adding another 135 classrooms in our province with as many as 2,400 students in multigrade classrooms.

One of the issues around that is multigrade classrooms are going to be a lot more in urban centres where teachers have not been used to teaching multigrade, where training is not going to happen to help teachers in multigrade, where there's not going to be a curriculum developed, a specialized curriculum, because that is required with multigrade classrooms.

The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and just after him, the Minister of Finance, are making it sound like we are backward here in on the Opposite side, that we don't understand what should happen. They're the ones who are backward. They're the ones who are tearing our system apart. They're the ones who are leaving our parents and our children and teachers in absolute confusion.

The multigrade classroom model is going to involve 135 teachers with limited experience and training in multigrade teaching. I've heard the minister say there will be one day of training

for teachers. This is unbelievable. What's going to happen is that we're going to have administrators who are absolutely confused.

We're going to have children – in a school, for example, where you have three children, say, grade five, and you have three children too many for the class-cap size, those three children are going to go into probably a grade four classroom or a grade six classroom, all by themselves in a multigrade classroom. That's not multigrade teaching – that's not multigrade teaching at all. They're expecting parents, teachers, children and the Opposition Members in this House of Assembly to accept it without asking any questions. How they could do what they're doing and think that we're all going to say isn't that wonderful, it just doesn't make any sense.

This government has had, as we have, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people from various schools who are speaking out and saying this can't happen, just as they've had thousands say the levy shouldn't happen. We've had hundreds turn up on the doorsteps – thousands turn up on the doorsteps here with regard to all of the issues, at one time hundreds of parents last week with teachers and the children.

What are they thinking? Nobody is against all-day kindergarten. I don't need to stand here as a former educator and explain why I understand all-day kindergarten is good. What I'm saying actually is that what they should have done was put all-day kindergarten in with the extra funding that was needed for all-day kindergarten to happen.

They also seem to be rushing the whole process from another perspective, Mr. Speaker. They are putting all-day kindergarten into schools without looking at the issues with regard to space. So what we're having is modular classrooms in a very rushed manner being added to schools.

They are putting the all-day kindergarten in place without thinking about other things that are going to happen because of it. For example – and this was one I've raised before in the House, but I'm happy to raise it again today – the additional burden on the St. John's School Lunch program. Starting all-day kindergarten in September means 700 more mouths for that

program to feed, with government not giving any help to make that happen.

In May, just earlier this month, the chair of the School Lunch Association said it would require another \$400,000 extra per year to make this happen, but we had the Minister of Education and the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services back and forth throwing the ball of responsibility. Why government has put something like the School Lunch program under Child, Youth and Family Services, I have no idea, because it's an educational issue. It's school lunches in the school system.

The breakfast program is seen as a responsibility of the Department of Education, but the lunch program isn't and this doesn't make any sense. So here we have a program that really requires to be paid attention to being tossed back and forth. One minister saying, it's not my responsibility, and the other one saying, I'm not ready to meet with you yet. This is not acceptable.

So the way in which the government has decided to put in all-day kindergarten without looking at the implications for things like the School Lunch program, without looking at the implications of what it's going to mean to have this burst of multigrade classrooms without training, without resources, what it's going to mean for inclusive education, is just not acceptable.

Put it on hold. I totally believe in it. The Minister of Finance knows that I believe in it. The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development knows that I believe in it. But I don't believe that unless they were willing to make sure that the adequate resources were there to make it work in September, 2016, I don't believe it should have been put in place in 2016. That doesn't mean I don't want it put in place.

This budget would have been a much better budget if they had looked at the extra teachers, number one, as a benefit, and instead of putting new teachers in one area and hauling them out of another, putting more teachers in. The thing is it's all rushed; it's rushed from every perspective. I know that when we get to September there's going to be confusion out there – maybe not in every school, but there is going to be confusion.

They are sitting there thinking we know what we're doing – no, they don't. That's what really amazes me, because they should know what they're doing about this one. Both ministers should know that this is not the right way to go. So I ask, what was the impetus? The NLTA is saying slow down, the time is not right. We want it, but it's being planned too quickly. The school councils are saying slow down. The kindergarten teachers are saying slow down. The administrators are saying slow down. Everybody involved in the educational system are saying that it's not being done right. Yet, they sit there just smugly thinking, we're the only ones who know what's right and what we doing.

Well, I have news for them. They're not. It's not right. We will be voting for the private Member's motion. Not because we don't believe in full-day kindergarten, but we believe in the best possible full-day kindergarten program that we can have in this province. Doing it in September is not going to be the way to do it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): It's been indicated that the hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains and the hon. the Member for Terra Nova would be sharing some speaking time, given consent from the Opposition.

I recognize the hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for Terra Nova and the Opposition House Leader and the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi. I won't be long. I've listened to some of the comments by all Members. I listened to the comments by the Member for Cape St. Francis on an early rising of kindergarten kids to catch the bus.

I'd just like to make one point, Mr. Speaker. We all know what the benefits are from full-day kindergarten. I just wanted to make one point and that point is many of the communities in the district I represent have had full-day kindergarten for many years now. Actually, I think some of those students are now in grade

five and six. So it is being done. It's been done quite effectively. We hear the benefits of it.

One last point is that, I live in an area where there is no busing and we go to school in the dark. A lot of those kids walk to school, Mr. Speaker. There's no such thing as waiting for a bus. We're out there doing full-day kindergarten.

I thank the Member for Terra Nova for giving me his time. That's just the one point I wanted to make.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure if you're going to reset the clock or not and allow me time to speak to this. I appreciate the opportunity to stand up and speak to the resolution today. I want to preface; my comments today are based on considerable experience prior to being elected as an MHA. I spent a considerable amount of time working with individuals with disabilities. In particular, a lot of that was with preschool children. I was engaged in the school system working with those children and helping with achieving their developmental milestones.

I'll also say that my comments today are based on the fact that I'm a former school board trustee. So the education outcomes of students were paramount to my experiences and my time on the school board. The last thing I'll say; my comments today are going to be prefaced by the fact that I also was a founding member and chair of a family resource centre for about 10 years, so I have fair amount of experience when it comes to the development of children. I want everybody to understand really where my comments are coming from.

During my time working with kids with disabilities, I worked with a program that's still valued tremendously in this province; it was the Direct Home Services Program. The goal of that program was to work with kids who have

developmental disabilities, achieve as many strides as possible in their development because they were going to be entering the school system.

Through that program, there were really five core areas when you think about a child's development. You're looking at academics; language; physical, both gross motor and fine motor skill development; their social and emotional development; and, also their self-help skills. All of those things are required, as kids go into the school system, and in particular, going into kindergarten.

During my time, we used to look for every opportunity that we could find to promote kid's interaction and their growth with their peers. So there was a program that was called Head Start. I utilized that along with the families to maximize those opportunities so the kids could learn to interact with their peer groups.

Once kindergarten started we were – and it was half-day kindergarten, with the exception of my colleague for Labrador talking about they've had full-day kindergarten for a long time. Most of the schools on the Island portion have half-day kindergarten. We'd utilize that to our benefit so that we could promote the skill development of these children.

I started to look at – well, let me back up. I thought as the Members opposite starting speaking today, I was starting to be encouraged when they said they all support the implementation of full-day kindergarten. Then my heart saddened when I heard comments by the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island say, but it don't know how progressive we can be – sorry, I wish the Members opposite vote for something progressive not regressive.

Now, having been somebody who has worked with children in their skill development for a very long time, I don't consider when you're trying to enhance a skillset and the development of children as regressive. We have an opportunity when it comes to child development up until the age of 12. So from the time a child is born until about age 12, are really the formative years. That's when kids learn the most.

Any expert will tell you from a child development perspective that the core years are those of when a child from birth until about age five or six, that's when they learn exponentially. Those are the times we need to capitalize on and provide the best opportunities for children, and they will pay dividends as we go forward.

I had a look at some of the research which has been commented on already by the Minister of Education, has been commented by the Minister of Finance in talking about in Ontario. I took a look at some of that in terms of the research and the data. Now I've known a lot of this in my previous capacity, but I felt in terms of the House today it was important to bring some of that back.

In terms of the research in Ontario, they look at very similar things that I had been helping children learn as I was providing those home-based therapy programs. They were looking at physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognition, communication skills and general knowledge.

What they concluded in the research, Mr. Speaker, is that students in full-day kindergarten are better prepared to enter grade one and will be more likely to be successful in school. Students improved their readiness for grade one and accelerated their development.

Comparison of children with two years of full-day kindergarten instruction and children with no full-day kindergarten instruction showed that kids in full-day kindergarten reduce risk in social competence development from 10.5 per cent to 5.2 per cent. Now, that's significant when you can reduce those kinds of risks for kids because they're provided opportunities to interact with their peers, not on a half-day period or three hours, but they are there for the full day. Reduce risk in language and cognitive development from 16.4 per cent to 4.3 per cent. Again, tremendous gains by providing these enhanced opportunities.

I also had a look at some research that was done in the US, and in particular at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The particular research I had a look at said that by 2000 about 88 per cent of five year olds in the United States

were enrolled in school-based kindergarten programs. Some of the commentary, Mr. Speaker, they talked about is that because more and more children participate in pre-school programs, kindergarten is no longer the first school experience for many children.

So I revert and talk about my experience with family resource centres. In family resource centres, the main objective is to provide positive parent interaction for children, and it's play-based. So you're providing those opportunities on a daily basis where families can drop in with their children. They can learn all kinds of things, programs like little chefs, there's reading and story time, there's positive play. All those kinds of things are happening at family resource centres.

The point that comes out in this research is that children who come into full-day kindergarten, they're used to long days of interaction. This is not a new thing for them. This is a continuum of their development. When you think about child care, you think about family resource centres, and then you progress into full-day kindergarten, this is the natural progression, in my mind.

It is something that has been happening across this country. We are the last province in this country to bring in full-day kindergarten, and rightfully so. We should be doing it.

The research also talks about that many children are used to full-day programming and many seem ready for full-day kindergarten. I think that's an important piece. That in terms of child development that children are ready, because the child of today is very different than say when I was a child, or when my 23-and-a-half-year-old daughter was a child, those opportunities didn't exist, but they exist today. Kids are more mature. They are able to handle full-day kindergarten.

The one piece that I – when I read this last night, and it goes back to my experience around working with kids with disabilities, and some of those children that I had been involved in, I went into homes where single parents, it was parents that unfortunately because of the socioeconomic status in the province, that they were kids who were having difficulty with their development and were considered to be at risk. How do you

help children who are at risk because of the socioeconomic development? Well, you provide opportunities where they can learn from others. Full-day kindergarten, in my mind, is a great example of how that can happen.

This research talks about that. That is one of the great things that happened for kids who are at risk in their development, and you can help them overcome so they become more productive members in our community. Their progress as they go through the school system is so much greater.

It talks about in the research, there's higher long-term achievement; higher achievement for disadvantaged and low-income children, as I've said; higher reading scores in early grades; fewer grade retentions. Of course, we talked about retention issues as we were campaigning back in the fall. It was something we were going to take a look at as a government. Well, when you think about the development of a child and you want to lessen the probability of retention, then having full-day kindergarten is certainly helpful with that.

It also supports the kind of thinking we were having as we were sitting around school board tables and talking about the Canadian Test for Basic Skills and the Criterion Reference Test. Those were tests we use in our school system to assess, how well are our children doing. That was paramount to us as school board trustees that we wanted to make sure we provided every opportunity possible for children to excel. We wanted our schools to excel. So full-day kindergarten really helps with that.

The last thing I want to move into is to talk a little bit about, what other options do families have? During my time in the Family Resource Centre we had taken a look at child care. I had a look at some of the numbers in terms of child care centres in this province. There are about 200 in this province, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, about 118 of them are on the Avalon.

I've heard over the last number of weeks about, what are we doing to rural Newfoundland? We're really not doing a lot to support rural Newfoundland. Well, I can tell you, we don't have a lot in terms of child care centres and regulated child care centres out in rural

Newfoundland. We need to do more of that. I've talked to my colleagues about it, that it's something I'd like to see as we move forward, that we start addressing that issue.

We have family resource centres that are available for families to go and help children learn better developmental achievements and achieve their milestones. We don't have enough regulated child care centres. So we need to provide other opportunities. I see full-day kindergarten as really – that is the answer in terms of us moving forward.

I've heard the Members opposite talk about what's happening in schools, delay it, this is not the right time. I quickly start thinking about our discussion on the legacy fund. The reason we don't have a legacy fund is because there was no planning. The reason we want to provide better opportunities for our children is because we want to plan. Full-day kindergarten is really going to help us with that, so that we've got better participating members in our society.

I'm obviously in favour of full-day kindergarten. Having worked with children and looking at their development for a number of years, I think this is a great step forward. I'm pleased today to be able to stand up and speak for full-day kindergarten, but I'm certainly obviously against the motion that's been brought forward.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise and participate in this debate this afternoon. I want to acknowledge previous speakers who have taken part in the debate this afternoon.

We're not here today to talk about whether full-day kindergarten is a good thing or a bad thing. All three political parties in this House of Assembly today –

MR. LANE: Four.

MR. KENT: And the Independent Member as well, I know, shares the view that full-day kindergarten is a good thing. We all believe it's the right thing to do; it's just that the Opposition parties believe it's not the right thing to do right now.

It's really unfortunate we find ourselves in that circumstance. I say that personally as well. I definitely have a vested interest in this issue. I have one child in the school system and two children who will soon enter the school system.

My middle child is starting kindergarten in the fall, Mr. Speaker. So if full-day kindergarten proceeds as planned, he will benefit from full-day kindergarten. I would love to see him participate in a quality, play-based, full-day kindergarten program at our neighbourhood school. I see tremendous value in full-day kindergarten, but unfortunately we've got to look at the greater good. While I'd love to see him benefit from full-day kindergarten in September, not at the expense of my other child who will be in grade two, and not at the expense of all the other children in the K to 12 school system. So that's really what this debate is about this afternoon.

The Minister of Education said today that somehow our party – and perhaps he implied that the NDP as well – doesn't support quality, play-based, full-day kindergarten benefiting our children. Well, nothing could be further from the truth. We fully support the concept of full-day kindergarten. All parties, as I've said, are on record as believing it's a good policy, it's a good program, it's one that we should implement, but this is not the year to do it. The impact it will have on our school system overall is detrimental.

I also want to acknowledge the comments of the Minister of Finance. I know from my own personal experience that for a long time, prior to entering public life, prior to entering provincial politics, she has been a strong advocate and proponent of, not only early childhood education, but full-day kindergarten. In fact, to be totally honest with this House, as I always am, it was discussions with her and people like Kathy LeGrow, who's another tremendous advocate for early childhood education and development and full-day kindergarten, it was through those discussions that I became a more

vocal proponent of full-day kindergarten and lobbied for full-day kindergarten within our caucus and within our Cabinet of the day. So I'm a believer, and it's really unfortunate that we have to stand here and suggest that it shouldn't proceed this year because of all of the cuts that are going to be made to the education system as a result.

I also want to acknowledge the comments from the House Leader for the New Democratic Party. She quite eloquently pointed out that nobody except the Liberal government seems to believe that we should proceed right now. I know there are some parents and there are some teachers who do believe we should proceed in September, and I respect that. That view needs to be shared and those voices need to be heard as well, but overwhelmingly what I'm hearing from parents, not only in my own district but right across the province, is that full-day kindergarten should be delayed.

The NLTA is saying that full-day kindergarten should be delayed. School councils are saying that full-day kindergarten should be delayed. Teachers are saying full-day kindergarten should be delayed. Administrators are saying full-day kindergarten should be delayed. So all we're asking is for government to listen.

Just because there was a budget vote yesterday, doesn't mean that it's too late to make changes and to make adjustments. The cuts that are planned for the education system in the coming year are devastating. We're talking about school closures, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about teacher layoffs. We're talking about the cancelation and deferral of infrastructure projects.

Two issues I hope to have a few more minutes to talk about – we we're talking about combined grade and multigrade classrooms at a level that we've never seen before. In urban areas where we've never had need for multigrade classrooms before and we've never seen them before, and educators aren't necessarily all prepared to handle that either.

We're talking about reductions to Intensive Core French. This budget has been an attack on French education in our school system. One of the implications of driving forward with full-day

kindergarten is that some of these cuts are required within the K to 12 system.

Another impact is library closures. So on one hand we're pushing forward with this great new policy, one that our government initiated and one that I believe is good policy. We're going to now push forward while we close libraries in communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Lunch time busing is being eliminated in many schools in our province. There are going to be reductions in scholarship programs in the coming year. We've seen cuts to our post-secondary institutions. We're now going to be the only province in Canada that's going to have a tax on books, Mr. Speaker. We're going to see increased class-cap sizes throughout our school system in Newfoundland and Labrador.

By delaying full-day kindergarten we can't stop all of those things from happening, but surely, if we were to delay full-day kindergarten, then some different decisions could be made within the education system. That's what parents are calling out for. That's what educators are calling out for. That's the reason the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island has introduced this motion here today.

I'd like to delve into a number of those issues; I know I will run out of time. To put it a little more into perspective I'd like to talk about issues in my own district and at schools that I'm directly familiar with. I want to talk about the impact of full-day kindergarten and the resulting budget cuts that are being made elsewhere in the K to 12 system.

There's been lots of talk about Intensive Core French. Unfortunately, the Minister of Education and others are trying to pit rural Newfoundland and Labrador against urban Newfoundland and Labrador. That's shameful, Mr. Speaker, and it's not necessary. It's also not an accurate depiction of what this issue is all about.

Intensive Core French has been on the go for a while. There are many benefits to second-language learning when it comes to Intensive Core French and other French programs that are being cut in this budget. Some of the benefits of second-language learning: It provides a focus on

literacy skills, it facilitates learning of additional languages, it develops cultural appreciation and diversity and it enriches personal development opportunities, increases employment opportunities. At a time that's pivotal in young people's education, the Intensive Core French program is a really valuable one.

Would I like to see it offered in every single school in Newfoundland and Labrador? Absolutely, but based on numbers, based on population realities, that's not practical, Mr. Speaker. To suggest because it's not practical in some schools, we should now take it away from many, many schools that have benefited from Intensive Core French for many, many years, it's a ridiculous argument and it's not one that we can support.

Many of you have heard the story of the family who went public with their case. An angry father posted on Facebook and it went viral. It was a 10-year-old girl who, as a result of a random draw, won't be able to participate in Intensive Core French in her school in September. The headline that ran in community newspapers across the province and in the daily paper as well was: Girl, 10, says politicians heartless if they don't reverse education cuts. I don't have much time, so I won't quote the article at length.

Let me share with you a note I received from a parent in my own district. For the very first time children at one of the schools in my district are being denied the opportunity to take part in Intensive Core French because of these budget cuts. It was a case where only a few children were disqualified as a result of a random draw that previously hadn't taken place in this school.

She wrote: My child was one of three who did not get chosen for Intensive Core French. She is devastated. Her teachers recommended this for her. I am incredibly upset. She is a smart, sweet, good girl who deserves a good education. She is selfless and shaved her entire head for Shave for the Brave this year after raising almost \$1,000. I moved my kids back home to Newfoundland in 2007 after my husband passed away so that they would have a better life and education, and now this. I honestly cannot believe my child's education has come to this. I don't know who else to voice my frustrations to, but you seem just as frustrated.

I am frustrated, Mr. Speaker. I'm frustrated by the decisions of this government. Pitting one community against another and deciding the fate of children's education by random draws in this day and age; none of that is acceptable and there is a better way. One of the suggestions that we've put forward – and we're highlighting it again today and we believe it's not too late – is delay the implementation of full-day kindergarten. It's having an impact on all kinds of schools in all kinds of communities.

Let me talk about another school in Mount Pearl. It's a school that's already overcrowded. The overcrowding problem is further compounded in a significant way by full-day kindergarten because now there are more kindergarten classrooms needed. It's not just about ratios, Mr. Speaker. There isn't enough physical space in the building to accommodate a quality play-based learning program in full-day kindergarten.

The school board is working hard to make the best of a bad situation, but there's limited play space. There are tremendous parking issues at this school. Children are already eating lunch at their desks. There are concerns about lunchtime supervision as a result of full-day kindergarten. The problem is getting much, much worse as a result of proceeding with full-day kindergarten without taking the steps necessary to better accommodate it.

Just to highlight the further impact on French programs, French immersion has been further capped as a result of the overcrowding at this school to accommodate full-day kindergarten. They are actually taking down cloakrooms in the kindergarten classrooms to make the limited space a little bit bigger to accommodate the play-based learning program.

The school needs six more classrooms, but there is only space to install two portables. As a result, the overcrowding problem will be even more significant. Meanwhile, at a school down the road, elsewhere in Mount Pearl, six classrooms will remain empty – will be empty, sorry, not remain empty. They will be empty in September as a result of budget cuts.

There's a solution to all of that, Mr. Speaker. There are solutions to those kinds of challenges, but this government is refusing to listen. For the

first time in decades, we're going to have combined-grade classrooms, multigrade classrooms in one of these schools in Mount Pearl. It's not necessary and it's not going to make learning better. It's not going to improve the quality of education for our students and it doesn't make sense.

Those are just some examples from my own district. I want to give you one more related to my own district. It's not just the primary schools and the elementary schools that are concerned, Mr. Speaker. I met recently, along with my colleague, the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, with a school council of a junior high school in Mount Pearl. They outlined a number of concerns related to this full-day kindergarten decision. Their plea to us was to lobby government and advocate that government delay full-day kindergarten to avoid some of these pressures that are going to be created throughout the K to 12 system, which is why I'm highlighting them this afternoon.

Changes to class-size caps at the junior high level will significantly impact curriculum outcomes and classroom management issues. Junior high is an important stage in a young person's life and in their education path as well. Increasing class caps at the junior high level will negatively impact the quality of education in our province.

The school council expressed concerns about inclusive education. There's already a challenge with under resourcing in this area. As a result of this budget, the problem is getting worse and pushing ahead with full-day kindergarten only makes that matter that much worse.

Teaching units are being eliminated –

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

It being 4:45 p.m., we have to revert to the Member who moved the motion.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I look forward to hearing the conclusion of debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we go further into the final stage of debating the private Member's bill, I would like to thank the following Members who participated in a very open and engaged and, I must honestly say, sincere – it may not be the same view we feel over here, but I think from their perspective, sincere from where they're coming from and their understanding and their experiences and what they hope to gain from this. I want to thank the Member for Mount Scio, Cape St. Francis, Windsor Lake, St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, Torngat Mountains, Terra Nova and Mount Pearl North.

Mr. Speaker, the first thing I need to clarify for my colleague for Terra Nova is nobody over on this side, particularly, would ever suggest that implementing all-day kindergarten is regressive. The point here, and the private Member's resolution I'm putting in, is it's regressive if we continue by supplementing the cuts to our education system based on the principle of putting in extra teachers to do all-day kindergarten and taking them out of the mainstream school system. That's our regressive point here.

It has already been proved it'll be regressive by the NLTA. It's proven by the Federation of School Councils, by Memorial University professors, by every school council in the province and I guarantee you by every administrator, educator, every parent and I have numerous letters from kids from seven-year-olds to 12-year-olds saying that will make a regressive process.

One day, with all-day kindergarten, will it do what it's set to do, what the research shows that it should do? We're looking forward to it. That it will give additional supports and will give an extra opportunity for people to be able to engage in the education system and be successful. That's the intent of it. That's why it's this administration that developed it, researched it.

Did we take into account the Opposition's views on it? Of course we did. We understood that. A number of us had backgrounds in the education

system and, no doubt, great bureaucrats in our system here and the administrators in schools and the education system itself, the school board, had input into it. That's why we helped develop the process and actually had a plan of implementing it this year but when we looked at our fiscal realities, that wouldn't be realistic at this point. We had hoped that this administration would look at the same thing.

Unless you could find a successful way to rejig your budget to keep the existing school system where it is, the cap sizes, the programs for Intensive Core French, the not blending the classrooms, to being able to invest more in infrastructure, to ensure that, putting those extra resources into all-day kindergarten, we would be applauding. I would have hoped one of you guys would have brought in a Member's motion here that would have added something new to it and we would have been the first ones to jump up, beat the drum and say thank you, you did the right thing.

Unfortunately, you can't balance it off by doing damage on one side that's more detrimental than the positive benefits that are going to be put in. That's a reality.

I'd like to be able to say I know everything about the education system, but I know only a little bit. What I've learned since then is immense because it comes from the real educators; it comes from the people who live it every day. It comes from parents who have special needs kids, what impact that may have on them. It comes from the bus association, bus drivers who know the impacts they're going to have on changing things here. It comes from communities that I've had the privilege of dealing with and communicating with about infrastructure projects being held off.

Everybody has challenges here, but not one person has said this is not a good idea. I think even the naysayers say no, no, it should happen. What we're saying is right now if we implement this through the process that this administration is using, we're going to do more damage to our education system. Everybody else seems to be echoing that, at least the majority of the people. I haven't heard out of the thousands – and I have letters, emails and documentation. I have everybody who sent me reports and research

documentation – has said doing this right now the way we're going to do it, or the way you're proposing to do, it would be in any way, shape or form improving the education system. It doesn't show. It doesn't equate. It doesn't add up. The numbers are not there.

So when that's being echoed by so many people who have a speciality in those fields, then I, as the critic for the Opposition, and us as the Opposition – and I know the Third Party have already echoed it and I know my colleague, the Independent Member, has said the same thing and has echoed the same thing from their own districts. I was fortunate enough to be engaged with probably 30 of the 40 districts in this House and getting feedback from constituents in those areas, and particularly those in the administration and direct delivery of the education system.

They see some real challenges with it, outside of the fact they are not confident that we're even ready for all-day kindergarten, outside of the costing or the effect it's going to have on anything else. That's another issue and that's what we're debating here right now. They're not confident that the intent, while it's moral over there, is actually going to be beneficial in the next number of years because things are not ready to go. Teachers are not comfortable that they haven't had the proper training at this point, that all the administrative situations are not in play, that the infrastructure is not all ready to go, that it's not going to be more of a detriment than the moral intent that you had to improve our system.

While that, no doubt, was on the high ground and was meant to improve our education system, it's not going to achieve that goal. Add in the fact that we're already seeing the impacts it's going to have on other parts of our education system. My colleague already talked about the Intensive Core French and the impact that's having. There are a multitude of issues there which again opens up about career opportunities and choices within our education system. The one thing we've been trying to do for the last number of decades is give students choices, be broadened a little bit more.

The Minister of Education talked about that we're so far behind. I dispute that argument.

There's no doubt there are probably areas we have to improve in, but we're that far behind – I think we've been fairly successful, our graduates and that. What we've been doing in the last period of time is finding ways to give them better access to programs and services, particularly in our primary and secondary school system to better prepare. And we've been doing that through investments over the years.

These changes right now, again, will not benefit the students in the big manner that we would have all wanted them to, that I think everybody here believes in, every educator, every parent and everybody engaged in the system would want it to happen. So that becomes a part of the challenge that we face right now around why we would implement this at this point.

One of the biggest concerns that have been echoed to me is about engagement. People have said – during our administration, we engaged certain sectors to see if this was plausible, would it fly, how it would be implemented and what would work. There's no doubt we probably had an ambitious time frame at the time, but that's why I've already talked about it and our leader had already talked about it last time in the last election that we would have to revisit our timelines, not the implementation of all-day kindergarten, it would happen, eventually, when we could do it.

It was around our time frames, if we were ready for it, but particularly if we were financially ready for it so it didn't, in any way, shape or form affect the quality and level of the education system across the board, particularly from one to 12, because it serves no purpose to prepare a kid to come out of kindergarten and then all of a sudden, for the next three or four years, have challenges in the schooling system. We've defeated the purpose, and then be regressive further down the road.

That wasn't the process that we had planned to do. I would think and hope that wasn't the process that you guys, when you had your debate around the budget lines, would have intended to do. But by making the additional cuts, by committing to the millions that would have to be invested in all-day kindergarten in this budget, and then having to balance your budget in your education portfolio, then deciding

I am going to have to cut somewhere else by changing cap sizes that reduces so many teachers I need, by not allowing certain programs to be offered, by not moving forward on certain projects that were necessary, then obviously that has an impact. And that is what is being echoed to us and all Members of the Opposition.

I'm just going to recap again some of the things that this is going to have an effect on. We're talking school closures, teacher layoffs, deferred infrastructure projects, combined grades and multi-grade classrooms, reduction to Intensive Core French, library closures, lunch time busing eliminated, reduction to post-secondary scholarships, significant cuts in Memorial University operating grants, tax on books and there are a number of other impacts it is going to have, particularly in some of these communities.

My colleague for Cape St. Francis talked about issues now around the change in busing, of young kids going to school in the dark and coming home in the dark, challenges that maybe 30 or 40 years ago were accepted. We've moved. We progressed to the point that that no longer is a progressive process for our education system or our children. It is all about protecting them but it's also about giving them a better quality of education. That was the plan from what we proposed as all-day kindergarten.

I want to talk about the NLTA release, just to say about some of the key people here who are a bit disappointed that the engagement didn't take place. That they weren't really engaged, or the advice they've given, if it wasn't a true engagement process, at least by them sending emails and letters to the minister and to the Premier, that it wasn't listened to. That it wasn't taken into account.

When they talk about things here; that teachers will not be ready. Layoffs are going to have a detrimental effect on the class. Class sizes are going to have a detrimental effect on the level of education. We all know this. This has been posted.

One thing about the NLTA, they haven't hidden anything. They put it out to all their members. They put it out to the media. The president, who I met with, has had numerous discussions. He's

reached out to the minister with these concerns. They've had discussions, but from his perspective and from our perspective it went on deaf ears.

The Federation of School Councils wasn't as kind. They were adamantly disappointed and upset that there hasn't been a better approach to all-day kindergarten and an open dialogue around the impacts it would have. Your administration started a great process, let's go around the province, let's engage all our citizens, let's find out what they want. Let's tell them what they're going to do, but I don't know if they didn't listen to them because I'd like to see which one said put in all-day kindergarten but cut all of these other programs that we've made to be progressive over the last number of years.

I sat in on a couple of sessions; I can't remember anybody saying that one. They definitely haven't said that. I didn't hear that one. I know the Federation of School Councils didn't say it for a fact, because I met with them on numerous occasions and not once have they ever said they were proposing all-day kindergarten but here's a list of the 10 or 12 other things that I just outlined you should cut to make our system move forward. That didn't happen.

As you can tell by the hundreds of protests – and I have to give credit to I love education founders and the whole movement there around let's get out and talk about how we all as a society want to move education forward. Let's encourage all levels of government to move education forward; but, particularly, those elected to the House of Assembly. Let's get them to debate the real merits of how we move the education system forward.

Everybody agreed; all-day kindergarten, a good thing. I met with numerous ones. I was at the protest. They all talked about it. They were encouraging. They all reached out to their respective MHAs, regardless of what political party, and asked them to support moving the education system forward. If you could do it with all-day kindergarten and not cut the existing system, they would applaud it. Without a doubt, you'd be all heroes, but what you're doing right now and what you did yesterday in that budget is not only regressive, it's going to

be unbelievably detrimental to our education system.

The minister talks about wanting to catch up. We're going to fall so far behind it's going to be frightening. That's been echoed by everybody. The true educators, the people who live the experience, and the parents who have to deal with the situations after the fact, with their kids trying to catch up in the mainstream school system.

We've talked to a number of students, a number of parents, and school councils who've said, at the end of the day we need a better approach. The best approach here is either go back and invest in all-day kindergarten and put back in the money for the existing school system we have to move it forward, or delay, as we're proposing, all-day kindergarten until we're ready to do it, but bring it in – you'll get unanimous support that one day all-day kindergarten should be part of our mainstream school system, as long as we still have the supports that are existing, and we build on those supports and add to it over the next number of years.

Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat now as we go for a vote on the private Member's bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the motion as put forward by the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island?

All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

Sorry.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: I declare the motion – now you can rise.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips ready?

All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

CLERK (Barnes): Mr. Paul Davis, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Kent, Mr. Brazil, Ms. Perry, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Petten, Ms. Michael, Mr. Lane.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against the motion, please rise.

CLERK: Ms. Coady, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Haggie, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Crocker, Ms. Cathy Bennett, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Trimper, Mr. Warr, Ms. Dempster, Mr. Browne, Mr. Mitchelmore, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Letto, Ms. Haley, Mr. Bernard Davis, Mr. Derek Bennett, Mr. Holloway, Ms. Pam Parsons, Mr. Bragg, Mr. Finn, Mr. Reid, Mr. Dean, Mr. King, Ms. Parsley.

CLERK: Mr. Speaker, the ayes 9, the nays 25.

MR. SPEAKER: I declare the motion defeated.

It being Private Members' Day, the House is now recessed until 1:30 tomorrow, being Thursday.