



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLVIII

SECOND SESSION

Number 32

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA

Thursday

November 9, 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we begin today, I'd like to welcome some very special guests to the Speaker's gallery. With us today we have Cyril and Jim Costigan, who are sons of the late Mr. Cyril Costigan, who was a World War II veteran and whose memory will be honoured by a Member's statement today.

A very great welcome to you, gentlemen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Member's statements today we will hear statements from the hon. Members for the Districts of Bonavista, Mount Pearl – Southlands, Labrador West, St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, Harbour Main and Cape St. Francis.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour to be able to speak in the House today.

When you hear Bonavista, the thing that comes to mind for many is John Cabot; however, for most people who live there, it is Betty Fitzgerald.

Betty has been a pillar of the community for countless years, serving on council for 28 years with 20 of those as mayor. A trailblazer, Betty was the first female elected to the Bonavista town council. During these years she has seen the good and the bad, taking it all in stride and working hard for the betterment of the town she loves. However, after 28 years, Betty decided to retire from public life.

Even though Betty is leaving public life, that doesn't mean she's going to be any less active. Before and during her time as mayor, Betty was an avid volunteer. It wasn't uncommon to see her lead the charge in organizing a parade, a

luncheon for seniors, promoting or sitting on several committees, or anything else that was community oriented.

Betty is passionate about the *Matthew* and T. K. Kelloway seniors club and I'm assured that she will continue to work with these organizations.

Please join me in congratulating Betty on her many years of service to the Town of Bonavista.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to stand in this hon. House to recognize the tremendous success of a very community-minded sports organization within the City of Mount Pearl.

The Mount Pearl Men's Slo-Pitch Softball League began in 1978 when a group of guys came together to form six teams and began playing ball at St. David's Field. This proved to generate great interest within the community and has continued to thrive and grow ever since.

Currently, the league is comprised of 16 teams and over 200 players who play out of the new Richard Levandier Softball Complex, named after a tremendous community volunteer and past president of the league. Much of the success of this league can be attributed to all the players, past and present, who understood and accepted the spirit of the league which was to play ball, have fun and meet new friends.

Besides playing ball, the league is very active in the community in making numerous charitable donations and participating in various community events in Mount Pearl. There is so much more to this league than softball. It's about friendship, it's about family and it's about community.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating the Mount Pearl Men's Slo-Pitch Softball League on 40 great years of sport, camaraderie and a commitment to their community of Mount Pearl.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize a very special group of people in Labrador West – the Labrador West Big Landers.

In January, Junior Humphries formed a Special Olympics group who meet every Wednesday for events and activities such as holiday parties and cake decorating. They now have 21 athletes and over 20 volunteers who have dedicated their time and efforts to make this a success and to participate in community events like the Berry Run.

Recently, the group visited the Labrador City fire hall and they plan to join the Community Living Association for their annual bus ride around town during the Christmas season to view all the Christmas lights.

The community outreach has been tremendous. The forestry department asked them to participate in the annual torch run and the Community Gardens has offered them a plot, so growing vegetables will be in their future.

Later this month, two members of Special Olympics Newfoundland and Labrador will visit Labrador West to conduct a coach's clinic. They will train volunteers who coach these athletes.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in recognizing the efforts of the volunteers and committee in making Labrador West an inclusive community.

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.

Choices for Youth recently received a \$25,000 Orange Door Award grant to help prevent and end youth homelessness in Canada. The grant comes from the Home Depot Canada Foundation.

I am happy to rise to congratulate Choices for Youth for the invaluable work they do in the District of St. John's East – Quidi Vidi and across the St. John's metro region. The grant will support the organization's Youth Leadership Council, a group of young people who work to break down barriers for youth.

Choices for Youth is non-profit, charitable, community-based agency that provides housing and lifestyle development supports to youth, operating 10 core programs to support over 1,000 young people each year in the St. John's metro region.

Choices for Youth is one of eight recipients across Canada of this grant. Congratulations to Choices for Youth.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking them for the vital work they do for at-risk youth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PARSLEY: Mr. Speaker, on this Remembrance weekend, I rise to pay tribute to the late Cyril I. Costigan.

Born July 31, 1921, Cyril served as a World War II veteran, enlisting on June 6, 1940 at the age of 18. He went on to serve until August of 1946, serving in places such as the Gulf, the North Atlantic, the North Sea and the English Channel. Following World War II, he began service with the Merchant Navy before returning home to the province in 1959.

He married in 1947 to the love of his life, Mary K. Hawco of Holyrood and raised nine children: five boys and four girls. At the time of his passing on April 20, 2017, at the age of 95, he

had 15 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren. I had the pleasure last week of presenting his wife, Mary Kay Costigan, with her 96th birthday certificate.

During his life, Cyril loved to volunteer with the community, especially with the Royal Canadian Legion and minor hockey. In 2012, Cyril was also given the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, which he cherished greatly.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to pause for a moment as we reflect on the life of Cyril I. Costigan, an outstanding Canadian who dedicated his life to serving our great country.

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 rise in this hon. House today to recognize Jamie Wilkinson, who was awarded MusicNL's Unsung Hero award for his tireless work to foster music in our province.

Jamie was raised in a very musical family in Flatrock. His mother, Madonna, says Jamie always loved music and played his first drum kit at the age of three.

Jamie played with the Celtic Fiddlers, performed with the pit band at the Arts and Culture Centre and was a member of the popular band REDLINE. But Jamie's highest impact was fostering music through his teaching career. He left a profound and lasting mark as he found ways to match every student with a perfect song or a piece of music to showcase the best they had to offer.

Jamie accomplished all this while living with a serious heart condition. Such was his love of music that even waiting for a heart transplant in Toronto, Jamie joined three orchestras.

Jamie passed away in May at the age of 39, but his musical legacy lives on in the many students

he taught and inspired. He was so deserving of the Unsung Hero award.

I ask all hon. Members to join with me in remembering Jamie Wilkinson today. Rest in peace, my friend.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the dedicated and accomplished graduates of Memorial University of Newfoundland.

I recently had the privilege of attending Memorial's fall convocation in St. John's and Grenfell Campus in Corner Brook, where graduates from throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, across Canada and around the world earned their degrees.

Their tenacity and creativity will serve them well as they begin the next phase of their lives, building a brighter future for themselves, their families, communities and our province.

We are firmly committed to providing affordable and accessible post-secondary education in Newfoundland and Labrador. This government values Memorial as a world-class, post-secondary institution and we appreciate its valuable contribution to our social, to our cultural and our economic development.

As Remembrance Day is this weekend, I would also like to acknowledge our university as a living memorial to the Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who gave their lives during the First and Second World Wars. The university was founded in the hope that freedom of learning would ensure their sacrifice is never forgotten.

As this fall's more than 900 graduates clearly demonstrate, this proud legacy remains strong.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating our newest graduates.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. We join with the minister in congratulating and recognizing the many bright and accomplished graduates from Memorial University.

As minister, I, too, had the distinct pleasure of attending a number of convocations. I would leave each ceremony with a renewed sense of pride and encouragement, having witnessed the wonderful group of individuals that accomplish great things and were prepared to move on in to the workforce, each of them ready to make an impact.

Unfortunately, it's through decisions by this government that today's graduates have an uncertain future if they wish to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador.

So while we congratulate the more than 900 graduates and wish them all the best, we encourage government to consider those graduates and what the future holds for them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I'm happy to celebrate the years of work and study that has gotten this fall's 900 graduates to the momentous occasion of their convocation.

Congratulations also to the faculty and staff who contribute to making Memorial a world class post-secondary institution, even in spite of this government's successive cuts to funding for the university and to student financial assistance programs.

I ask the minister: What measures is this government taking to help these graduates find work and to stay in this wonderful province?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.'

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House to announce that on Tuesday, November 14, I will be providing the Fall Fiscal and Economic Update to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. OSBORNE: This update follows on the release of the 2016-17 Public Accounts in October, and will highlight the province's economic outlook at the midway point of this fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, since taking office our government has faced unprecedented challenges due to the fiscal mismanagement of our predecessors. Through a balanced approach to fiscal management, we have made progress in reducing the annual deficit from a projected \$2.7 billion, or \$4.38 million a day that we had to borrow from the former government, to just \$1.1 billion last year.

Our plan is a multi-year, whole of government strategy that covers fiscal, economic and social policies. We are focused on improving public sector efficiency, strengthening our economic foundation and delivering programs and services that are important to the public in a smarter and more efficient way.

Mr. Speaker, returning to fiscal balance and creating the conditions necessary for economic

growth and private sector job creation remain our main priorities as a government. I look forward to once again updating the people of our province on our progress towards these goals.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. We, as well as the people of the province, certainly look forward to this year's update.

It is interesting to hear the minister speak about the success of government's balanced approach. I'm not sure many, aside from his colleagues next to him, would agree with such an assessment. Since taking office, we have witnessed a government operating with no clear direction, no clear plan. That lack of vision has manifested itself into two failed budgets and (inaudible) irresponsible decision-making result in 300 taxes and fees that have driven economic indicators in the wrong direction.

Mr. Speaker, you need not take my word for it; just simply read the latest Auditor General's report. The AG stated the numbers in the fiscal policy is unlikely to be reached by 2022-23. Government's plan to return to a balanced budget would only occur either by revenues increasing in a sustainable manner or expenses have to decrease if achieving targets by 2022-23 can be done. No clear plan for this has been put forward.

I can only hope, on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, that this government is now prepared to present a clear, sustainable, realistic plan that relates to our province's –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. Member's time has expired.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I look forward to seeing what he will be presenting next week.

I note the government's plan is focused on private sector job creation. I say to the minister, taking care of people's health and social needs and maintaining a strong public sector to do so, something that stimulates our economy, should also be part of this government's priorities.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to announce that new, more secure driver's licences and ID cards are now being delivered across the province.

Last month we unveiled the new tamper-proof, laser-engraved polycarbonate cards, which help prevent identity theft.

The new system for issuing these cards is now live for those using our online services. Over the coming weeks, all Motor Registration Division offices will also begin using it to serve customers who visit their locations.

Mr. Speaker, the existing system was acquired through a public procurement process. Through a joint procurement agreement with the other Atlantic provinces the new system achieves cost savings of 68 cents per card. We also have eliminated the imminent cost of replacing the existing system's hardware.

I am pleased to report that the new, more efficient system will not have a negative impact on jobs, but will allow our staff to serve

customers faster. It also has rigorous safeguards to protect our customer's private information.

This initiative is part of *The Way Forward* commitment to pursue service delivery that is "Digital By Design." It is just one of the changes at Motor Registration Division over the past two years that improves services to our customers.

In April, we also introduced an advance appointment booking system for Motor Registration Division in Mount Pearl, which is producing excellent results and helping reduce wait times.

We look forward to sharing news about additional service improvements in the coming year.

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 her statement. Mr. Speaker, I feel very positive about what's happening. We support any measures to protect residents of the province from identity theft, fraud or forgery. Hopefully, these new security measures on driver's licences will do that.

I should also add, while the new appointment service seems to be working well – and I can attest to that – I'm hearing from people that are not aware of the service, or for some reason are not using the service, that there are still lineups for hours at Motor Registration.

I look forward to increased measures to further improve those wait times.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. It's good to hear about service improvements at the Motor Registration Division in Mount Pearl, which serves so many people daily in this province. The priority should be faster customer service, given the historically long wait times that have occurred. I notice the minister didn't give us any figures on that.

If it is the case that this new initiative will benefit both customers and employees, it will be good news, but that news has to be gotten out there to the public.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL to update this House on the department's progress on occupational stress injury presumptive coverage for first responders in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: I thank the Member opposite for the question. We are actively pursuing improvements to the policy around PTSD and mental health. Mr. Speaker, as I stand here and talk today – earlier today I was talking to my staff, we're arranging a meeting with interested groups.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Minister, it's certainly good news to hear that you're doing some work on this. We know Alberta, Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia – Nova Scotia just last month – passed various forms of legislation to ensure that front-line responders, both career and volunteers, are protected in our province.

I ask the minister: Will you also review legislation that has been brought in by other provinces to ensure a broad range of first responders are protected in our province?

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Definitely, Mr. Speaker. We'll do a complete jurisdictional scan across the country. As I just said a few minutes ago, we will meet with all interested groups in the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm glad the minister is going to do that cross-jurisdictional scan and also meet with groups. I think it's also important to meet with actual front-line responders themselves, and also those who have been known to be treating front-line responders: psychiatrists, psychologists, other health professions and so on.

So instead of just the groups, Minister, will you also meet with those that are on the front lines in Newfoundland and Labrador every day protecting the people of our province?

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I say to the hon. Member I've been engaged with Fire and Emergency Services and a lot of people on the front lines through the Fire and Emergency Services since we took office back in 2015. Our next step as a government and minister responsible for Fire and Emergency Services is to work with WorkplaceNL to

develop some kind of program for first responders.

I have met with first responders on a regular basis. I have met with Fire and Emergency Services. There's a meeting being arranged in Corner Brook with police, RCMP, Constab and the fire department. We're well aware of it.

Like I said to the previous Member who asked these questions before, presumptive cancer – we got it done. First responders – we will work with first responders to get something to help the first responders who protect all of Newfoundland –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I appreciate the response from the hon. minister. I'm aware there are programs underway. Minister, with all due respect, this is about what happens to first responders after they become ill.

I know you did bring forward presumptive cancer legislation for firefighters. I'm glad that you added what we wanted to see in there, that you did it for volunteers as well as career firefighters. I hope this happens the same thing with PTSD.

I ask the Minister of WorkplaceNL: Will you also include a retroactive component of your policy or legislation?

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, I say to the Leader of the Opposition, you had 12 years to bring it in. You were actually the minister who was responsible and wouldn't bring it in. The paper that you had, that your government had, it only included professional firefighters.

This government is willing to work and we are working with first responders. We will do a scan all across Canada. We will do what's right for the first responders in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, because we respect what they do. We're not going sit for 10 years like the other government did and do nothing. Now, here's what you have to do.

We are dealing with them. We will find a solution and we will thank all the first responders by ensuring their families are going to be secure and their livelihood will be secure in a responsible manner.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I take grave and serious offence to the comments by the minister opposite. If he knows what he was talking about, he would know that PTSD and impacts on first responders are better known today than it ever was before. It's only in recent times that the accumulation of exposures of traumatic events on first responders is recognized as an impact to first responders. It's only recently recognized that when you work in an area where you're impacted by trauma on a daily basis.

So for you to stand up and go: The previous administration, b'y, you had 12 years to do it. Well, I say to the minister: People didn't understand it until the last couple of years, including this hon. Member. It's important you do what you do, as people understand, as policies evolve, opportunities evolve that you bring forward legislation and I'm glad you're doing it. Minister –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I'll say to the Leader of the Opposition, this is a serious issue. I don't want to turn this into politics, but I can

tell you one thing, when we first took over and I had the responsibility for Fire and Emergency Services, I sat down with the Newfoundland and Labrador Firefighters Association. They had two things on their agenda: one was presumptive cancer for the volunteers and second was the post-traumatic syndrome, which they said we had a priority trying to get that government to listen to it for years. So don't go saying this just came about for the last year or two. It was on their agenda and you were responsible.

We will work with first responders. We will thank them for the work they do. We will help to protect their families, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you one thing, I don't need a lecture from that Member who had the opportunity and wouldn't do it.

We will get it done.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Maybe if the Member listened more he'd understand more about it. He says he doesn't want to turn it into politics. Well, he did that himself, Mr. Speaker, as he always does. Blame it on the previous administration, blame it on somebody else, because that's what they do over there, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to hear the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL is working on changing a policy because first responders – not only firefighters, but all first responders – need it.

I'll ask the minister again: Will you consider a retroactivity clause for your policy in your new legislation?

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say to the Leader of the Opposition, that as a person

responsible for Fire and Emergency Services and deals with a lot of first responders – and I've been dealing with the minister on a regular basis on this. She's going to be (inaudible) stand. We're going to be supporting that.

I can say to the Member opposite, we just don't talk politics. We brought in presumptive cancer within a year. We brought it in for the 5,700 volunteers across the province. So we don't blame it on this government. We take concrete steps to get results, which we have done.

We made a commitment; I made a commitment that we will work with WorkplaceNL and the minister. His door has been open. We made a commitment that we will work with him to get all the first responders to see how we can protect the families. We will –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, over and over we hear the minister opposite get up and say, I wasn't going to speak to this, but I'll only take a minute. He never takes a minute. And he says I won't make it political, then he makes it political; I won't blame you, and then he blames us. He does it all the time, Mr. Speaker. We're well accustomed to it.

My very important question on this very important issue, which they seem to be dodging, is very simple to the Minister of WorkplaceNL: Minister, will you consider retroactivity?

Nova Scotia just did it; Nova Scotia's minister talked about the importance of retroactivity. They just passed their new legislation.

Minister: Will you consider – I'm only asking you if you'll consider that as you talk to front-line responders in Newfoundlanders and Labrador.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, as I said, WorkplaceNL is reviewing its policy as it pertains to mental health issues, including PTSD, and we will take everything under consideration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, according to an article in *La Presse* on Wednesday, the federal government is interested in financing a regional transmission line linking Quebec to the Atlantic provinces. Federal Natural Resources Minister Jim Carr said, "I am encouraged by what I have heard from elected officials from both provinces."

I ask the minister: What elected officials has the federal minister spoken with – you, the Premier – and certainly the content of those discussions?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, we read the article yesterday, and the translation that came following that certainly supports Minister Carr as the federal government willing to consider investment in things like transmission and so on within the Atlantic provinces.

There have been discussions around energy transmission related to the Atlantic provinces for a number of years. CFTA, which was the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, which came into effect on July 1 of this year, it has publicly been known. It was publicly disclosed and talked about, the free flow of electricity through Quebec and how the rules would be designed to allow that to happen for the first time in our history, I would say, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to negotiations with Quebec on other issues – one around 138, the economic corridor that would occur – Mr. Speaker, this government is all about partnerships and relationships.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER BALL: If we can find a benefit for Newfoundland and Labrador –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just to clarify with the Premier, I'm asking: Have discussions taken place with Minister Carr in relation to a possible transmission link, and is it tied to development current or future in Labrador?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, what I will say to that is all levels of government, especially from my office as the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, we meet with our Atlantic colleagues on a regular basis, all of Atlantic Canada, and from time to time, at least once a year, we will meet with a number of the governors that come out of the New England area.

Mr. Speaker, there is interest, if the price is right, to actually produce some kind of corridor. As I said, it's part of an investment by the federal government into transmission in Atlantic Canada. Certainly, we would welcome that. We always look for opportunities to actually – if there are wealth opportunities available for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, well, we want to explore that because that could bring benefits to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Surely, goodness, they need some benefits given the monumental task that we have to deal with, with Muskrat Falls.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the current Nalcor CEO, Stan Marshall, has a different contract from that of other previous CEOs, which allows him to hold potential conflict interest in competitors like Fortis, competitors that do business in the hydroelectric sector in parts of North America and surely have an interest in talks about electricity transmission.

I'll ask the minister: Has Nalcor CEO been involved, or will he be involved in any way, in any discussions about a national electricity transmission line?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Allow me to correct the preamble to the Opposition Member's question. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Marshall's contract comes in line with the *Conflict of Interest Act*. That was the change in the contract, was to bring in the requirements of the *Conflict of Interest Act*. So I'll correct him on that.

Mr. Speaker, at this point under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement – and I discussed this in the House, I believe, back in May, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian Free Trade Agreement does include some causes around energy transmission. Across the country they asked us to please engage in bilateral discussions with Quebec. We will do that. It has not started at this point.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll advise the minister, we don't know what was determined by the conflict of interest tribunal and review because they wouldn't release the report to the people of the province to see it. So I'll certainly take exception to her commentary about the conflict of interest.

Has the Nalcor CEO recused himself as minister, as he said he would, or been recused by government to avoid any appearance of possible conflict?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm sure the Member opposite will take exception, and I take exception to this as well, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Marshall's contract was brought in line with the *Conflict of Interest Act*. That was the change within the contract. It was very important for this government to ensure conflict of interest was covered in the contract, unlike the former administration.

Now, having said that, we have gone through the Conflict of Interest Commissioner to make sure Mr. Marshall is not in any conflict on any files. I went further, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that Mr. Marshall understood the perceived conflict of interest on Fortis.

I can say this, Mr. Speaker: We have yet to engage on the discussion around transmission.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just remind the minister that the prior contract for the CEO disallowed any holding of shares of any competitors in the hydroelectric and, particularly, Fortis. The new contract she brought in allowed holding of 5 per cent shares in Fortis – very different, Mr. Speaker. That's what the issue is all about.

Mr. Speaker, will any future agreements have transmission infrastructure beginning in Labrador as the beginning of the east-west hydroelectricity grid?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As part of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, the internal trade agreement within our country, there has been a discussion. This government has been very forthright with our colleagues across the country saying that we believe that energy transmission in this country should be free flowing. Mr. Speaker, I've been saying this for many, many years. This government has been saying it. We need the free flow of electricity in our country.

Mr. Speaker, our colleagues across the country have asked us to engage in a bilateral discussion with Quebec. We have agreed to do that. Those discussions have yet to occur. We are in discussions about the development around the Labrador Trough, around mining opportunities as the Premier said, and we're pleased to continue those.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know the challenge we've had for decades is the free flow of transmission from east to west in regard to the hydroelectric capacity current and future in Labrador.

I'll ask the minister: Would your government support a federal Quebec transmission line that excludes Labrador and would go south through Quebec, rather than start in Labrador?

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, we can't deal in potential fairy-tale things. I'm saying to the Member opposite and to entirely the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador that under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, we are going to have a discussion with Quebec, as requested by all our colleagues in the country, on transmission.

We have yet to do so. When we do so, we'll understand more about what we can possibly discuss. But I will say this, Mr. Speaker, anything this government does will be in the best interest of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Well, Mr. Speaker, the best interest of Newfoundland and Labrador will not be served if new transmission infrastructure spending by the federal government starts in Quebec and goes south.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: What the minister has just said, she seems to think that she would support that – that she wouldn't support that the condition needs to be that it starts in Labrador and goes east to west.

So I'll ask the minister again, get up and confirm, is that your position, a starting position?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS: COADY: Mr. Speaker, there's one thing I dislike, and I'm sure the Member opposite would equally dislike it, is when people put words in your mouth.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS: COADY: I did not say that. I did not say anything of such that he has indicated.

Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, we're entering into a bilateral discussion with Quebec to talk about the transmission of electricity. That is incredibly important. As we all know in this province, we have energy to transmit to other provinces and to the United States. It is to the benefit of the province that we'll be entering in the discussions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: I remind all hon. Members to please respect the fact that I've recognized a Member and I'm only going to hear from that Member, please.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your protection.

In the article, Mr. Speaker, the Natural Resources Minister is quoted as saying our province has agreed at the request of the other provinces and federal government to discuss with Quebec a proposed transmission line.

Could the Minister of Natural Resources confirm if the province is acting at the request of Ottawa, or is this something that was driven by the initiative of this government?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One more time, let me reiterate and repeat: Any discussions with any province will be in the best interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: If we talk about transmission, no matter what the issue is, we do so with the evidence that Newfoundland and Labrador will be a better place to live.

There have been a lot of questions today in this House of Assembly about transmission, where transmission begins and where it would end. Mr. Speaker, you talk about the hypocrites, the doublespeak today.

Why doesn't the Member answer this question: Why did they allow the Emera transmission line to start in Newfoundland and Labrador, bringing

no benefits? They get 20 per cent of the free power. They have no issue about where transmission ends and begins. They're trying to protect their legacy of Muskrat Falls.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Here we go again, Mr. Speaker. The Premier says there's no benefit, but in the AG report that's just been released, he recognized \$1.1 billion in revenue that they're saying they're going to generate by '22-'23, which includes up to 75 per cent for Muskrat Falls.

So you can't have it both ways. You can't generate revenue and not support it. Which is it, Premier?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, thank you once again.

If we go back just a few years ago when the Member opposite, a few of them, sat in a room, I think it was in some summer – I think it was in July, whatever the year was now, but they determined that the rate of return for hydro and the hydro assets would be nearly 9 per cent.

The profit that comes from the rate of return is coming out of the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That is the profit that we're talking about.

I will guarantee you this: the rate impacts on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, whatever the profits are, will go back into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, from Nalcor and his own CEO, the profits they're talking about, which they have indicated, is coming from excess sales. So you can't have it both ways.

The Premier said in the past there's no market for excess sales, yet he's building it into his fiscal forecast. Very simple, we've asked a number of questions and he still hasn't been able to answer the question.

Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the Minister of Natural Resources: Has any discussions taken place in regard to the 2041 contract expiring?

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, allow me to be abundantly clear and I'll speak slowly this time.

Mr. Speaker, the discussions that we're having with Quebec arise from a public disclosure by the Premier and the Premier of Quebec around mining and around the development of the Labrador trough.

We have yet to engage in any discussions on transmission at this point. The discussions are solely around mining and we are having great discussions around how to develop and how to do economic development in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Environment. It is: Why did you flip-flop and today order an environmental statement on the Grieg aquaculture project?

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I take kind of exception to that. This is an important issue for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, especially in the Burin Peninsula, Placentia West

– Bellevue, Burin – Grand Bank district. They've been heavily involved in this.

What we have done today is that we have to ensure and protect the environment, but we also have to be cognizant of the economic impact, so we're creating a balance here today. We are working with the company. We're working with all the agencies. We're saying, okay, we want an environmental impact study done so we can look at the impact of this project as it follows through the court system.

We're working with the company, we're working with the people from down there and we're working with the MHAs –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I remind the minister two weeks ago he told me I didn't care about the Burin Peninsula, and I told him I cared about the environment. Now today, all of a sudden, he cares about it as well, so I'm glad to hear that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: When we asked the minister in the House of Assembly on October 19, actually the exact date, about the environmental impact statement, the minister would not answer the question. As I said, he made other references.

Why now are you ordering an environmental impact statement?

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, just for the record, the previous government, they allowed three projects to go ahead without environmental impact studies – three that they allowed without it. So they obviously understood at the time the guidelines that were put in place, the regulations

in place, were sufficient or they wouldn't have allowed it.

Mr. Speaker, what happened, we met with the company. The department officials met with the company. We explained the process. This company is committed to this area. They're committed to it, but they're also committed to the environment. This is not if we take one or the other; we have to strike a balance. Salmonid Council in a CBC interview said we know it's here, we just have to strike the balance, and that is what we are doing here today to strike the balance for economic and –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South for a quick question; no preamble, please.

MR. PETTEN: Why is it taking you so long to pay attention to a project and make a decision on an environmental impact statement after sitting on your desk for two years collecting dust?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment for a quick response, please.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, first of all, what a shame to the people down in the Burin Peninsula. What a shame that this project came in for one year, not two – once again, not two. For all the work that's been done by both MHAs in the area, all the councils in the area saying that we're collecting dust – with all the work that has been done, all of it done. It's shameful for you to make such a statement that here we are as a government trying to protect the environment, but understanding the economic impact for the area.

For the Member opposite to make those statements, which are totally inaccurate, which is totally false, Mr. Speaker – we're here to find the balance. We will find the balance to protect the environment and for –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Any talk with Quebec and the federal government regarding our energy is of the utmost importance to the people of this province. But as we know, we had to hear about it in the media.

I ask the Premier: Will he finally keep his promise on an open and transparent government and tell people what's happening now and keep them informed every step of the way?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, the interim Leader of the Third Party noticed something in the media today. This was actually in the media in July. It was in the media much before that, as a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, at the Council of the Federation. I met with Philippe Couillard, the premier of Quebec, and we did a joint announcement which was publicly articulated in July of this year.

I'm not so sure if she missed that or not, but it was publicly articulated. As a matter of fact, I even brought down some of the copies of the press releases. I can share that with you, which we announced in July.

The CFTA was publicly announced with the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, which we were successful in being able to negotiate. That was put out publicly. I have copies of that here that I can share with you just as a reminder.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, everything we do is –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Your time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

That's one of the most disingenuous answers I've ever heard. We've learned in the media, with regard to Minister Jim Carr's announcement, that the government will be talking with Quebec about transmission of electricity to the Maritimes through Quebec.

I ask the Premier: What will be the role of the existing Maritime Link in any transmission deal with Quebec?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, I have to address the preamble. Suggesting that this was disingenuous, I have a press releases right here: July 19, 2017. I was only responding simply because the Member opposite was accusing me of doing something and not making it publicly available.

The discussions that we are having ongoing with Route 138 and the mining trough in Labrador West trying to create employment for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, we have put that out there publicly. So to think that this was disingenuous on my part, Mr. Speaker, is simply not fair, not factual. Everything is out there in the public.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, the enormity of the complexity of the Muskrat Falls Project is perhaps one of the most critical issues our province has ever faced. People are afraid of increasing power rates. They are afraid for the fiscal situation of the province. They are afraid of the reliability and stability of the project. They don't trust Nalcor and even worse, they don't trust how government is dealing with it.

People no longer know who is in control. Now more than ever, it is absolutely crucial that all parties work together. We need to use every

parliamentary tool available to guarantee accountability and transparency and re-install in the people a sense of confidence.

I ask the Premier: Will we make true co-operation possible in this House and strike a select parliamentary committee to specially deal with the legislative oversight of the Muskrat Falls Project?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time is expired.

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a very serious issue facing our province. Muskrat Falls has consumed this government. Mr. Speaker, I have worked diligently and methodically to bring the project to a better place. I can't change the past, however. I can't change the past. I can't change why this project moved forward, the assessments and assumptions around this process.

I can say this government is committed to a public inquiry. We've said that. The Premier has said that. It's very important to get to the answers of these questions.

Mr. Speaker, I've been consumed with ensuring that we have better oversight. We've expanded the Oversight Committee and put independent people in the oversight. We have a new board of directors as well, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time is expired.

The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre for a very quick question; no preamble, please.

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

I ask the Premier: After two days in a row, how can he assure the people's confidence in this project, if not by collaboration with the various Members in the House who have been elected by the people? This is not playing politics. This is good politics, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier for a very quick response, please.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, can I get 60 minutes and speak to this? Because I will tell you that we have put in – the Oversight Committee has been enhanced with independent oversight. The IAC gave members, like the Members opposite, the friends, whoever she would have wanted to, if they wanted to be part of the Nalcor board. For the first time in the history of this province, it was completely independent. The board has been enhanced.

We're calling for an inquiry. I will say to the Members opposite that a select committee, as she's suggesting right now – guess what? The power rates would be tripled by the time the work was done on that, Mr. Speaker.

We will use the necessary process to keep the rates down for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It's a priority of ours.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The time for Oral Questions has ended.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees

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

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

I have here today for the House a report of the Standing Orders Committee dated November 9, 2017.

MR. SPEAKER: Further reports by Standing and Select Committees?

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

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

I have here today, in follow-up to the Premier's answer in Question Period, a copy of a press release dated July 19, 2017, which is entitled, "Newfoundland and Labrador and Québec Set Out to Develop a Cooperative Agreement."

I table this for the benefit of the Members opposite.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Child And Youth Advocate Act, Bill 26.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, the Prescription Monitoring Act, Bill 25.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

I give notice today that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, Serious Incident Response Team Act, Bill 24.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I'm going to apologize in advance because the next motion is quite lengthy, but I have to read it in its entirety.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion:

That the following Standing Orders are amended to come into force on the date of their approval:

1. Standing Orders 4(6) and (7) are repealed and the following substituted: (6) The names of the candidates shall be printed on the ballot paper in the order of their surnames; or if there are two or more candidates with the same surname alphabetically arranged in order of their other names.

(7) Each Member present in the Assembly who wishes to indicate his or her choice for the Office of Speaker shall proceed to one of the voting booths at the Table and mark the letter X in the box beside the name of the candidate for whom he or she intends to vote.

2. Standing Orders 8 to 11 are deleted and the following are substituted:

Annual Calendar

8(1) Unless otherwise ordered, the House of Assembly shall meet each year (a) for the winter-spring sitting, commencing not later than the first Monday in March and concluding not later than the first Thursday in June; and (b) for the fall sitting, commencing not later than the first Monday in November and concluding not later than the first Thursday in December.

(2) The House shall not meet on the days which are paid government holidays.

(3) During the sittings held under Standing Order 8(1), there shall be (a) one constituency week for every three sitting weeks unless varied by the calendar provided by the Clerk under Standing Order 8(5); and (b) a break commencing after the end of the sitting day on Maundy Thursday until the third Monday following that date.

(4) In a calendar year in which there is a general election, the government may indicate to the Speaker that the commencement of a sitting will

be postponed or varied or that there will not be a sitting and the Speaker shall inform Members.

(5) On or before January 31 of each calendar year, the Clerk, following consultations with the Government House Leader, shall distribute to all Members a calendar indicating the intended sitting days for the next calendar year.

(6) On or before January 31 immediately after the commencement of this Standing Order, the Clerk shall also prepare and distribute in accordance with Standing Order 8(5) a calendar for the sitting days of the current calendar year.

(7) If the government advises the Speaker that the public interest requires the House to meet at any time because of emergency or extraordinary circumstances, a reason for the recall must be provided and the Speaker shall (a) advise Members that the House is to meet at the specified time; and (b) advise Members of the reason for the recall.

(8) The winter-spring or fall sittings of the House referred to in Standing Order 8(1) may be shortened or extended by the passing of a motion with notice made by the Government House Leader which motion shall be decided without debate or amendment.

Daily Sittings

9(1) The time for the meeting of the House is (a) 1:30 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays inclusive; (b) 10 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. and 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. on Wednesdays.

(2) At 5:30 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday the Speaker shall adjourn the House.

(3) At 5 p.m. on Wednesday the Speaker shall adjourn the House.

(4) When the House adjourns on Thursday, it stands adjourned, unless otherwise ordered, until the following Monday.

Business to stand over

10. All business not disposed of at the termination of a sitting day shall stand over until the next sitting day when it will be taken up at the stage where its progress was interrupted.

Extended sittings

11(1) The Government House Leader may move that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday afternoons but notice of this motion must be given at a previous day's sitting and once put by the Chair is not debatable.

(2) Notwithstanding Standing Order 11(1), at midnight on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, unless the closure rule (Standing Order 47) is in operation, the Speaker shall adjourn the House.

3. Standing Order 24(3) is deleted and the following is substituted: 24(3) On Wednesday except when otherwise ordered by the House, after motion, of which due notice shall have been given, the following shall be the order of business: (a) from 10 a.m. until 12:30 p.m., motions of which notices have been given by the government and government orders; (b) from 2 to 5 p.m. following the ordinary daily routine of business (i) motions of which notices have been given by private Members (ii) motions of which notices have been given by the government and (iii) Member's orders.

4. Standing Order 25 is repealed and the following substituted:

Statements by Members

25(1) On each sitting day up to five Members, other than Ministers of the Crown, may be recognized to make a Member's statement

(2) Each statement shall be no more than one minute in duration.

5. Standing Order 91 is repealed and the following substituted:

Form of petition

91(1) A petition may be either printed or written and must be in substantially same form as the form of petition contained in the appendix.

(2) The prayer of a petition must appear on each page of the petition.

(3) A petition must be written in English or accompanied by a translation certified by the Clerk.

6. Standing Orders 93 and 96 are repealed; and

7. The petition template in the appendix is repealed and the following substituted.

I'm not going to read this one. This is just a description of what the petition should look like. Again, this is notice of the motion which we shall debate at another time.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

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

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

WHEREAS deaf and hard of hearing children in the public education system of Newfoundland and Labrador are not receiving full and equivalent access to a quality education because of the lack of appropriate full-time resources; and

WHEREAS from 1964 to 2010 deaf and hard of hearing children were provided with a full-time quality education in the Newfoundland School for the Deaf, but deaf and hard of hearing children currently placed in mainstream schools receive only a fraction of a school day with a teacher qualified to instruct deaf and hard of hearing children;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to undertake an immediate complete and thorough assessment of the supports in place for deaf and hard of hearing children by a committee of at least two independent and recognized experts in the field of deaf and hard of hearing education, and to accept the recommendations of these experts, and in the interim, take measures to honour the support commitments made to all current and future students upon closure of the Newfoundland School for the Deaf in 2010, to ensure that all deaf and hard of hearing children are provided with access to a quality education equivalent to hearing classmates as well as access to sign language.

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

I'm pleased, Mr. Speaker, to stand again and to present this petition to the House today with well over 200 signatures from people around the province. We have, of course, people from St. John's; we have people from Torbay; signatures from Mount Pearl; signatures from Brigus South; signatures from Musgravetown. People around the province who are absolutely concerned about what is happening to our deaf and hard of hearing children in our so-called inclusion educational system right now, and I say so-called because this government is proving they really do not understand what inclusion means. Inclusion is not just having children all together in a classroom no matter what their needs are, unless those needs are being met.

What we're hearing from parents of deaf and hard of hearing children is that the needs are not being met. Maybe some are getting the full needs they need, but by far they are not. That's why I'm happy to stand and present this petition because I really absolutely believe that the minister has to know what's going on is wrong. The report of the Premier's Task Force on Improving Education Outcomes didn't even mention the inadequate supports for deaf and hard of hearing students. It didn't even acknowledge that the deaf were in the schools.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to rise today and present a petition on behalf of the people of the Ferryland District.

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

WHEREAS Mutton Bay Bridge, located in the Trepassey area, is approximately 50 years old and had a bridge inspection report completed in 2015; and

WHEREAS the inspection report identified significant structural issues with both the substructure and superstructure portion of the bridge; and

WHEREAS the 2015 inspection report recognized the substructural condition as poor and repair within one year; and

WHEREAS the superstructure condition was identified as fair and called for inspection in one year and expansion joints repaired within three years; and

WHEREAS the deck is identified as fair and repair within one year, identifying immediate repair of handrails; and

WHEREAS the 2015 report advised a repair date of 2015 and recommended the structure should be rehabilitated or replaced with bottomless arch soon and in the interim deck asphalt and approach asphalt should be repaired, as well as guiderails with hazard markers installed;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to immediately attend to the repair recommendations and confirm replacement date of the bridge, in accordance with the 2015 inspection report and that this is a serious issue that impacts the lives and safety of the travelling public.

Mr. Speaker, this is a piece of infrastructure on the Southern Avalon that, along with some road upgrades, we've been lobbying for in the past number of months and last year. This one in particular has caused some grave concerns obviously to the residents, those who live in the immediate area and certainly as part of the Irish Loop. We know the tremendous economic return and other developments ongoing in the region that supplies traffic in and out.

This piece of infrastructure has no remediation done to it since 2015 when the report was done, and the engineering and inspection report was done, which is with TW. Even the immediate repairs or emergency repairs have not been done. We have a situation where the rails are off the bridge and into the river below. There's some concern with the decking and the stability of that decking. We're not sure if a recent engineering has been done to determine the safety of the piece of infrastructure.

I know under the Roads Program by this government, somehow this bridge never got into their five-year Roads Program which calls into question, what we've always asked about: How are all these assessments of roads and bridges being done in the province? If you can't see the overall list, how do you know where a piece of infrastructure ranks on it?

Basically what they did, they picked a bunch of roads and bridges and ranked them and said we're going to do this. We call on government to act on this, and act immediately.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the adult dental program coverage for clients of the Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Drug Program under access and 65Plus Plan were eliminated in *Budget 2016*; and

WHEREAS many low-income individuals and families can no longer access basic dental care; and

WHEREAS those same individuals can now no longer access dentures;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reinstate the adult dental program to cover low-income individuals and families to better ensure oral health, quality of life and dignity.

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

Mr. Speaker, I've had a chance to speak to this, and I've had a very positive response from people who've watched the telecast and who've been outlining and signing the petition about the impact this is having.

While I understand there are economic challenges in this province, and I have no doubt they're decisions that have to be made, but sometimes the decisions that have to be made have to be relevant to improving the stake that people have in this community. Taking away dentures and cancelling the 65Plus program is doing a detriment to quality of life, to people's oral health, to their ability to be active in their communities.

In a lot of cases, it's actually having a psychological effect. Unfortunately, I had a psychologist call me, one of her patients had dramatically lost weight, had some psychological issues because of it, because of not being able to have dentures. She was very, very concerned about her physical health and what it was doing. She was down to 87 pounds because she couldn't eat because of the mental anguish she was going through. All it would have taken was to do the dentures.

I have to give credit. In this case it took a lot of interventions. It took going through the

minister's office. It took pushing. It took specialists, when psychologists are starting to come in and write letters to you. It took all of that, and this family to go to bat, to be able to get intervening supports from the minister's office and to get this covered.

While I applaud that being done there, I am worried about the thousands who don't get that opportunity, who are still going through turmoil, who themselves are facing physical ailments because of this. Their quality of life and their dignity of life is eliminated here, because there are minimal amounts of money being saved. There has to be a better way of doing this. We have to look at reinstating this and giving people a proper quality of life.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

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

I call Order 2, third reading of Bill 17.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, that Bill 17, An Act To Amend The Labour Relations Act No 2, be now read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: I'm sorry; I recognize the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

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

I know we don't always stand and speak in third reading, but we may. I want to do it because there was a point that I brought up in Committee, I think it was, or it may have been in second reading, and pointed something out to the minister. I was hoping to get more of an answer than what I got.

It had to do with the fact that the terms of the regular members of the committee are all two years. My concern about it, the fact if they all start at the same time, you could have terms all ending at the same time.

When the minister stood and spoke at the end of second reading, he did acknowledge that staggering issue had been something he'd thought about. I hadn't used the word staggering, but that's what it is. Are you going to stagger appointments to make sure that not all two-year terms are ending at the same time?

I had pointed this out in my questions and then so had the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands. He said that, within the legislation, they will have the capacity to make sure that the committee that we have will take care of staggering opportunities. I think maybe there was a bit of hesitation in what he was speaking of there, but the point that he was making was the capacity is there in the legislation to take care of staggering opportunities. He says that they will make sure that it is there and certainly that will bring that point to the particular Labour Relations Board.

My point is it's not in the legislation, so I don't know why the minister says that the capacity to stagger is in the legislation. Obviously, the capacity to stagger is there, but it's not in the legislation. It seems to me that at the beginning of this process, the legislation needed to say that with the first of these appointments, you actually did have to start some kind of a staggering program.

What the minister is almost saying is that there's nothing to stop us from doing it and I'll make

sure the board understands this, but it is not in the legislation and it would have been such a simple thing to do. I really felt I needed to stand and point it out again in third reading.

Now, whether the minister wants to respond, I don't know; he may. But it would have been such a simple thing to do to have that taken care of in the legislation.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly thank the Member opposite for bringing this to the floor again. As I stated and I think as we went through it in the second reading and we went through it in the Committee of the Whole, I think through the Independent Appointments Commission, staggering is already there. The people that we have representing, if you look closely at what is existing there now, they were all appointed at a different time. So if they were appointed at a different time, they are going to be coming off at a different time and as a result of that we do have, within that, flexibility so that we do not have all members coming off of the board at the same time.

Really, without having it built into the legislation piece, what we have there by the actual appointments that have been made through the IAC gives us that, because it's already staggered there. That should not be a problem. We fully understand that we would not want to have a board that's composed of 10, 12 people and that all 10, 12 people would come off the same time. That would not be good practice and it's certainly not practice because, as I said, the capacity right now, with the appointments that are made, some of them came on at 2015, some of them are coming on at 2017 and some are coming on at – so in the existing structure that we have, that opportunity is there. It is a really, really good point, because we cannot have everybody going off and taking corporate knowledge with them. That's there now, and I'm comfortable knowing that if this is going through, we still have the ability to do that.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Labour Relations Act No. 2. (Bill 17)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Labour Relations Act No. 2," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 17)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Members Of The House Of Assembly Retiring Allowances Act And The Portability Of Pensions Act, Bill 21, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Members Of The House Of Assembly Retiring Allowances Act And The Portability Of Pensions Act, Bill 21, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: All those in favour, 'aye.'

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

This motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Members Of The House Of Assembly Retiring Allowances Act And The Portability Of Pensions Act," carried. (Bill 21)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Members Of The House Of Assembly Retiring Allowances Act And The Portability Of Pensions Act. (Bill 21)

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

When shall the bill be read a second time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 21 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Order 6, second reading of Bill 13.

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MHA for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville, that Bill 13, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act, be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 13, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act." (Bill 13)

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this hon. House to speak to Bill 13, an amendment to the *Highway Traffic Act*. Today, we are proposing amendments which

will allow for increased penalties for select offences.

The Highway Traffic Act is a very significant piece of legislation in our province, which regulates drivers and motor vehicle use on our highways. It is important that we, as a government, regularly review the act to keep current with changes in safety codes, vehicle design and other highway safety improvements.

Mr. Speaker, last month, amendments to *Highway Traffic Act* came into effect, which include tougher penalties for impaired drivers in this province, and I want to acknowledge the support of all Members in this hon. House for Bill 68. These amendments include new rules that will help ensure our young people develop safe and sober driving habits.

Impaired driving has devastating and far-reaching effects on our communities and our families. According to a 2015 report from Statistics Canada, our capital region has the highest impaired driving rates per capita for any municipality in the country.

We know that impaired driving is the leading criminal cause of death in our country. On average, four people are killed every day in impaired driving crashes in Canada. Nearly 60 per cent of motor-vehicle crash deaths are related to impaired driving.

We've all heard heart-breaking stories about impaired driving in Newfoundland and Labrador communities. It is time for us to change the story on impaired driving in our province. The impaired driving amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* are a step in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, we also know that there are many other unsafe driving practices on our highways that are also endangering lives. All too often, we witness first-hand the drivers who are using cellphones or other electronic devices, or even engaging in activity such as applying makeup, for that matter.

In late 2016, during an RNC blitz targeting distracted driving and speeding, police issued 421 summary offence tickets over three weeks. Of those tickets, 125 were for distracted driving. Recent statistics show that 90 per cent of fatal

collisions and 29 per cent of incidents causing major injuries involved some form of distracted driving.

Mr. Speaker, time and time again we've all witnessed blatant disregard for safety on our roadways. We've seen the driver who carelessly weaves in and out of traffic or we heard the news stories about the person who has been caught speeding excessively, and we've certainly all heard the sad stories of loss of life on our highways.

I've met personally with individuals and families who have had their lives forever changed because of incidents on our highways. I can tell you how profoundly I've been impacted through meetings with groups, such as Stand for Hannah, who are coping with an unimaginable loss.

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador want change, Mr. Speaker, and want to make our towns and our communities safer for everyone. A recent Aviva poll on distracted driving indicates that Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest percentage of support for technology options that blocks texting and other messaging functions while driving. In fact, support was at 86 per cent compared with 78 per cent support across Atlantic Canada.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we are continuing our efforts to improve road safety in our province. Although the *Highway Traffic Act* is frequently amended, a thorough review of penalties under the act has not been conducted in a number of years. This has resulted in some penalties that are very insignificant, so our goal is to find ways of increasing compliance and enhancing public safety.

Increased fines have been proven to alter behaviour and serve as a deterrent. Our research and our jurisdictional scans include many examples of decreases in violations when penalties increased. For example, when the City of St. John's raised the fines for blue zone parking violations it resulted in a decrease in the offences. With that in mind, my department undertook a comprehensive review of all penalties under the *Highway Traffic Act* that are currently less than \$100. The proposed amendments will result in significant increases

to a number of offenses with an aim of continuing the dialogue and enhancing public safety.

Driving with an invalid or no driver's licence is an offence which presents an immediate risk to safety on our roadways. Mr. Speaker, driving with an invalid or no driver's licence, the penalties currently for this offence are low in relation to the seriousness of the offence: \$50 for the first offence, \$100 to \$200 for the second offence, \$300 to \$500 for subsequent offences. It is proposed that penalties be increased to \$300 to \$600 for the first offence, \$800 to \$1,100 for a second offence, and \$1,100 to \$1,600 for subsequent offences.

The issue of uninsured drivers is also a great concern for our government, and offenders of insurance laws are passing on unnecessary costs to abiding citizens. Operating a motor vehicle without insurance already carries a significant fine from \$2,000 to \$5,000. However, failure to provide proof that an insurance policy is in force only carries a fine of \$25 to \$100 today. Increasing the fine for failure to provide proof of a valid insurance policy will help curb this behaviour. The proposed amendment for not providing an insurance policy will increase to a minimum of \$100 and a maximum of \$175 for a first offence.

Mr. Speaker, driving with an obstructed windshield also poses a considerable threat to public safety, which not only impacts the driver of the vehicle but also the passengers and pedestrians. I'm sure we've all seen the driver who fails to clear snow from the roof of their vehicle and it comes sliding down, obstructing the windshield when they brake. Currently, the fine for this offence ranges from \$45 to a maximum of \$180. Under the proposed amendments, this fine will increase to a minimum of \$100 and a maximum of \$235.

Mr. Speaker, we are all aware of the public discussion in our towns and our communities around the modification of vehicles that comes to the forefront time and time again. Unauthorized modification of vehicles, such as an aftermarket lift kit, which raises the vehicle above the regulated height, places the public at risk. It not only changes the handling of the vehicle, because of the shift in the centre of

gravity, but it also changes the impact zone if the vehicle is involved in a crash.

Modification of vehicles and equipment can also generate nuisance situations such as excess noise from a modified exhaust system or extremely bright lights from LED light bars. Motorcycle noise from modified exhaust systems has certainly been a topic of discussion in our towns and our communities. Increased penalties will help address this matter. Furthermore, a school bus picking up or discharging children with defective safety equipment or vehicles with defective brakes or bald tires also presents a very serious public safety risk.

The current fine for such offences carries a minimum fine of \$20 and a maximum fine of \$90. It is recommended that these penalties increase to \$100 minimum fine and \$170 maximum fine.

Mr. Speaker, we know that vehicle inspection requirements are a vital part of the public safety program. All commercial vehicles are required to have an inspection conducted annually, and twice annually for school buses and ambulances. Furthermore, inspections are required for passenger vehicles upon sale, and all vehicles when ordered by a peace officer because of concern of mechanical fitness. These inspections help ensure that vehicles on our roadways are mechanically fit and reduce the risk of vehicle failure.

The current fines for these violations are low in comparison to the potential seriousness of this offence. Through these amendments, the minimum fine of \$60 will increase to \$100 and the maximum fine will rise from \$120 to \$160.

There are a number of other increases to various penalties under the *Highway Traffic Act* that we are also bringing forward through these amendments. Fines relating to vehicle plates and stickers, notifying the registrar of changes in information and driving too slow or in the wrong lane are some of the other items being addressed in these amendments to the act as well. In most cases, the amendments will result in a minimum penalty of \$100 for these types of offences.

So as you can see, Mr. Speaker, the new legislation builds upon our commitment to

making our roads, our highways and our communities safer for everyone.

I also want to acknowledge the input we received from law enforcement in our province. Every day these officers are patrolling our roadways and see these offences in action. I want to express my gratitude for their willingness to continuously work with us in our efforts to improve road safety in this province.

I also want to acknowledge the feedback we received from our stakeholders including taxi operators and mayors on the Northeast Avalon. Through our various legislative changes, our objective is to help the people of our province develop safe and sober driving habits.

I respectfully move these amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* to ensure continued support of road safety for everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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.

It's indeed another privilege here today to get up and to be able to speak on this bill and represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: I listened to the minister for the last, I think, 10 or 15 minutes, or whatever it was, 12 minutes maybe, talk about Bill 13. There was a lot of things that the minister brought forward that are not in Bill 13, but it was bringing in initiatives that government probably brought in over the years or something like that. She talked about impaired driving and the City of St. John's is the highest city in Canada, and she also talked about distracted driving and stuff like this.

As everybody is aware in the House, and everybody is aware right across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, we have major

issues. We have issues on our highways these days that are so devastating. It's just so devastating to families, it's devastating to communities and it's been devastating right throughout this whole province.

I'll be corrected perhaps, but I'm sure that this was probably one of the worst summers and falls that we've had in a long, long period of time. I know that the fatalities on the provincial roads this summer have really been hard on Newfoundland. When you hear tell of families, a child left with mom, dad and brother gone, it's so heart wrenching that it's unbelievable actually.

I know there's a lot of talk on the Veterans Memorial Highway out in the Bay Roberts area and a couple of accidents that are after happening out there. People are trying to find solutions, but a lot of these fines and everything else that are brought in today – we all have to take responsibility for our roads. We have to take responsibility for our driving habits. We have to take responsibility for making sure that we don't allow people to be impaired when driving; we don't allow distracted driving and stuff like this.

This bill today, Bill 13, I'm hoping that the increase in fines do play a role in any safety. The priority, bar none, on our roads and with any legislation that we bring in here to the *Highway Traffic Act* should be about safety.

I went to the briefing; I spoke and I asked a good few questions at the briefing. I'm looking at some of the fines and the increase from \$25 up to \$100, and from \$100 up to \$175; they're nice increases and stuff like that. So there were a lot of questions that I asked during the briefing. During that briefing I said: Why are we doing these things? We not talking about impaired driving, we're talking about your windshield cracked, proof of insurance, and there are a couple here that I'll talk about a little later that really surprised me they were so low, actually.

The department officials said the increase in fines was based on feedback they had from various mayors. The gentleman doing it said I even had some from mayors in your district, either Pouch Cove, Flatrock, Torbay, Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove or Bauline, and he

said from the public prosecution and also from enforcement. He noted also that these fines, while they're gone up, there's no jail. As you look at the bill itself it shows the amount of days that you could also be sentenced to a jail term, from one to four and stuff like that.

What I did, I went back to the mayors in my district and I called them, because I wanted to know their concerns. I told them of the increases and stuff like this and they were, along with me, anything that will make our highways safer, make our highways so people don't have accidents, whether snow is coming off your roof and goes down in front and causes you to have an accident or whatever, but their discussion basically to the RNC and I guess to the department was they wanted more presence in the area, with more enforcement and stuff like that. They felt that the enforcement piece is huge for a lot of communities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I have talked to a lot of people also and we talk about highway safety, and that's what the minister spoke about earlier. I think highway safety also, if you talk to people, they'll tell you whether it's the Veterans Memorial, whether it's the Trans-Canada, whether it's the Torbay Bypass or whatever, that the number one thing when you talk to people, they say the biggest reason people will slow down, people will abide by the rules, is the presence of RNC and the RCMP on our roads.

I just wanted to go to that point because it was mentioned in my briefing that the mayors in my area were the ones that came forward with this. I just wanted to go and see what their concerns were. Like I said, their concerns mainly were on the presence and the other thing that they were concerned about mainly is speed. A lot of times we're finding now, in some areas, that speed plays such an important role, especially on smaller roads in districts. We're noticing now – I will just give you an example: the Indian Meal Line in Torbay. One time, 15 years ago, there were probably, I'd say, 25 homes on Indian Meal Line. Now, on that line that goes from my district to the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island, I'd say there are probably 1,500 homes, and the speed on that road now is unbelievable. There's after being accidents and

everything else. These are the concerns that we got.

Again, Minister, I applaud for anything with safety, and there are some things here with safety, but I wanted to just reiterate that it was said that the mayors were – but this was their concern, so I think that the major concern that people are having is they want to see presence and presence, they think, is the number one way that we can reduce what's happening on our highways.

I also talked to law enforcement. I spoke to several members of the RNC and I explained the bill and what was coming in. I gave the example of a dirty licence plate. You, being a former law enforcement officer yourself, would understand this. With a fine of \$25 for a clean plate – you yourself, another law enforcement officer, the Member of the Opposition here, leader, and a good officer at that he was.

Anyway, I just spoke to him and, in most cases, I think both would agree that sometimes when this happened, say, with a snow storm or a drift or something behind your house, if you came up behind somebody and noticed that their licence plate was covered with snow, more or less it would be to haul the person in and give them a warning and say, listen, you probably never noticed this this morning, or it could be some mud or something that got threw back on your car, at your licence plate, and it would be a warning.

Now, moving that to \$100 probably will make it a fine that's worth prosecuting when it comes to the cost. So I don't know if that's the reason why the fines have gone up from \$25 to \$100.

There are some interesting ones. There is one there that really interests me was class of licence. The current fine is \$50 and now it's going to be moved up; the second offence is \$100, \$200. But that's a pretty interesting one, too. So someone who's driving a front-end loader or a heavy equipment truck and has a regular licence is only to get a \$50 fine. I don't want to see people on the highways that are not qualified to drive specific equipment.

I know myself when I drove, I had a class licence that I had to have because I drove a fish

truck one time and it had air brakes, so I had to get my air brake endorsement. I don't know if it still continues because that was probably 15 years ago, but in order for me to be able to drive that truck, I had to have that endorsement. It's pretty amazing to see that people are allowed on the highway with just – and that's all they'd get is a \$50 fine. I think that's a pretty serious offence and we need to make sure that we really do have qualified people on the road.

Now, one that I looked at also was slow driving. It's a hard fine for any police officer to be able to give to a person. I look a lot of times when we see slow drivers and not to – my mom and dad were seniors in their driving and I'd be in with them a scattered time and they would drive slow. Sometimes people do drive slowly for some reason. It may be their age; maybe they're nervous. I know my mother never liked to drive in the dark and stuff like that. Sometimes that's an interesting one to do.

To move it from \$45 to \$80 – and I'm sure once that person gets hauled in, there is some discretion used and see what the thing is, but it is important because sometimes slow driving does cause accidents and sometimes because people are in a rush. Today, it seems people are in a bigger rush to travel more so than they ever did before. So it is a serious offence, but again moving that from \$45 up to \$100 and \$235.

What I did do, I asked and the minister said there was a jurisdictional scan done across the country. In the briefing, I asked if there was one and they told me there wasn't. They said – and you can go back and just ask because I'm sure. So what I did, I went and checked the same fines. Now, they're named a little bit different. We say failure to keep an identification plate clean; in Ontario it's called a dirty plate. We changed ours: it was \$25 to \$100 and the new fines are going to go from \$100 to \$175 and in Ontario it is \$85. There's no high or low or stuff like that in there.

Also, driving without a proper licence, it's called, the one we mentioned there, we moved it from \$50 to \$300 to \$600, high and low. I'm going ask a few questions when we get into committee on that because I really don't understand that part of it. In Ontario it was \$260, but most of the fines that we moved from \$25 to

\$100, in Ontario right now they just have the flat rate of \$85, is what it looks like to me.

I just want to make the point that anytime we do anything to make our roads safer, it's a real good thing. Sometimes, some of these – failure to change your name is an interesting one, too, that I looked at. It says failure to notify the registrar of a change in name on your registration. Sometimes you can see that that can happen. I suppose you could get married or something like that and then you don't change your name, it doesn't happen. Again, a lot of these as you know will be under – I guess you know more about it than I do, Mr. Speaker. It would be under the discretion of the person who hauls them in, but it's interesting, stuff like that.

Driving a motor vehicle with the windshield covered with snow, an obstruction of your vision. That's another one that I know we all probably over the years, we've all been a little bit guilty of that. You clean off the roof and you clean it all off and there's still one little blob that will end up coming down when you're coming down the road, but it's very dangerous. It is so dangerous. When you think about it, a blob of snow coming down and blocking your vision – because sometimes what happens, the wipers can't clean it off, so you have to get out of that car and stop it.

Those are obstructions that people need to know that there are fines. I'd say in some cases you'll find there are a lot of people who don't realize: Listen, you can get a ticket for that now. It's going to be \$100 to \$235, in that range. I think those are the things we have to educate people about because I'm sure nobody wants to have a big blob of snow come down on their windshield when they're driving on any road or any thoroughfare in the province.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting, though, I know the fines have changed and there's no – like I mentioned earlier with the jail time. It drives me completely crazy – honestly, it really does – when I listen to the news in the mornings and you hear the night before that some person got picked up last night and owes \$4,000, \$20,000, \$30,000 in fines.

I'm sure everybody in this House is in agreement with me that just seems like it's

absolutely – I really don't understand it sometimes. I'm wondering why we don't – like for a person with proof of insurance, and it's gone up now for invalid driver's licence, for example. I'll give you that one.

The third offence, it was \$300 to \$500 but it's moved now from \$1,100 to \$1,600. I'm wondering, Minister – and I hope it does work, that it will deter people from doing it, but I'm wondering, do they really care? Because when I look at a person that owes \$40,000 or \$30,000, I think – the Justice Minister is here now, too. I'd like to say to the Justice Minister, I think there has to be some way that we have to make sure that these people pay their fines and we don't have this.

It is not fair to the law-abiding citizens and people in this province who will go pay their fines and go do what it takes to make sure their vehicles are safe and everything else when we have people out there who really don't care. It is just a bug with me. It just drives me completely crazy, when I'm sure – and you also, I know you do, you're shaking your head. It does have an effect on so many people in this province. We say why are we abiding by the rules when you see people out there getting away with what they get away with?

So while these rules are coming in, I hope they're coming in for the safety – the minister did say that. She talked about other aspects of, like I said, distracted driving, impaired driving and the different regulations for what we need on our highways to make it safer.

Also, I don't know how we'd do it, but I spoke to another person the other day. He owns a garage. We talked a little bit about different safety and stuff like that. I know years ago when everybody had to get their inspection on their vehicle, it had to be inspected in order to get your stickers every year, but I'm just thinking out loud now. I'm wondering if for some of the vehicles we see on the road today, whether the windshield is broken or whatever, it just seems like someone can go buy a vehicle and they get the stickers. It looks like the stickers are good on it for a while and they really don't care.

So I'm wondering, Minister, if you're looking at vehicle inspections for vehicles of a certain year

or something like that. Would that be something we could do?

I understand why it was brought in and, hopefully, traffic enforcement would be able to identify vehicles on the road that shouldn't be on the road safely, but sometimes it's hard to identify a vehicle when you just go along and see that the vehicle looks okay, but the person puts on their brakes and all you hear is the squeaking and the bumping and everything else. So is that vehicle safe enough to be on the road?

Again, I'm not saying we should inspect every vehicle, but maybe it's something we should be looking at. Maybe it's something we should be looking at under the Department of Transportation and Works, that we do periodic checks. I know they do every now and then, but I think it's something we should be doing. Again, it's all about safety. It's all about safety on our roads.

The other thing I just wanted to talk about and we are talking about safety and stuff like that. I know talking to another friend of mine who works in the insurance industry. He showed me on his phone, the selling of a vehicle and the main reason to sell the vehicle was because of where the sticker was. So selling the vehicle in July and the sticker is good until next June. That was the selling feature on the vehicle. That's wrong, because that's probably another uninsured driver out there. Again, that's another issue with safety on our roads. We have too many uninsured drivers that are out on the roads also.

I support this bill. I will be asking some questions, like the reasons why the fines have gone like they have and why we don't do things a little different, more so like other provinces. I just want to make sure that everything that we do here is for the right reasons, and is for the reasons of safety on our highways.

Again, Minister, I know your preamble, it's like what I'm talking about here, a lot of it is not about the bill and it's more about what we talked about in safety and stuff like that. But talking to the people, like I said, the mayors in my district, we all should be able to work together and make sure that presence on the highways – which I believe is the biggest factor to any highway

safety; the more presence we have, the safer our highways will be because people will abide by the laws and the rules.

Fines are great. Fines are a way to make sure that people realize that I can't have snow on my roof, I can't have a cracked windshield, I need to make sure that my name is changed on my registry and that I get it changed. Again, like I said to you, Mr. Speaker, those will be judged by the person who is hauling you over what they are.

But we have a big problem in our province. It's a huge problem and my heart goes out to all the families that have lived through what they had to live through on the highway. We have too many happening. It's way too much that we're putting families – we're breaking them up; we're breaking up communities.

I just hope that everybody looks at this bill and says, okay, it's another means of safety. But the only way that we can keep our roads safe is if we abide by the rules ourselves, keep our speed limit down and make sure that we're very cautious of how we're driving. It's not only us. It's somebody else; it's some other family that needs to be safe.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville.

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

Thank you to the hon. Member for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis for his eloquent words and I share many of the concerns that he has as well about –

MR. K. PARSONS: (Inaudible.)

MR. B. DAVIS: The beautiful district.

MR. K. PARSONS: (Inaudible.)

MR. B. DAVIS: No. Don't get carried away over there.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand here today and speak to Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act. At this time, with our government moving forward on improvements to help ensure the safety and increase safety on our roadways, it's a win for all of us in this House of Assembly.

I, as well, was surprised at the lowness of the fees as we started to look at them, but that's why we're addressing them here today. We are trying to bring those fees more in line with the work that's required to police them, for the enforcement of them, but also to increase the tolerance of what people have to expect when they do something wrong.

Since becoming the parliamentary secretary for Service NL, I've seen time and time again the level of interaction that our department has with the public on a daily basis. There are not many services that the general public participates in that Service NL does not touch them in some way.

We have a high level of interaction that comes with a responsibility as well to ensure that we are providing the best possible services that we can to the people of our province. Service NL, through the Government Services Branch, is responsible for highway safety legislation in the province through the administration of the *Highway Traffic Act*.

Mr. Speaker, the *Highway Traffic Act* is a very significant piece of legislation, with more than 215 provisions, as well as 17 associated regulations. The act gets amended on a fairly regular basis, since its original enactment, to improve the highway safety and adapt to changes in vehicle technology, driver behaviours and other conditions that may come up.

Some of the amendments we have made recently include changes for allowing for the licence of certain three-wheel vehicles like the Polaris Slingshot. When new types of vehicles are introduced to the marketplace, we have a duty to ensure that those vehicles are up to the standards that everyone needs to expect for safety.

Last May, we also amended the act so that the registered owner of a vehicle can be charged when a vehicle is being observed illegally

passing a school bus or speeding in a school zone. Most recently, we have made a significant change to the *Highway Traffic Act* with regard to impaired driving, as our minister alluded to earlier. Requiring new drivers to maintain zero blood alcohol level is a beginning of a generational change to encourage safe, mindful drivers.

Like any review, it is important that we look at the information before us and determine what we can improve on. It is important for me personally to make sure the people of Virginia Waters – Pleasantville and, in turn, our province at large are as safe and secure as they can be.

One very important fine increase is about failing to produce proof that a policy is in force when a driver is pulled over. Driving uninsured is a large issue in our province, as the Member opposite has mentioned as well, and something that we really need to address. Increasing the fine to \$100 and a second offence and subsequent offence to \$175 will hopefully help to deter some of the people getting behind the wheel that are not insured.

Traffic issues are something I'm very familiar with through my time on city council. I was lucky enough to develop close working relations with the RNC and I'm glad to see Chief Boland and the new Deputy Chief Woodruff in the gallery here today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. B. DAVIS: Congratulations.

It shows the great support and community-minded nature they have. They want to make our communities safer for everyone to be in, and I've had the pleasure of working with both individuals on numerous occasions for policing traffic with the City of St. John's. So thank you to those individuals for the great work they do and the great work that the police forces in our province do.

I witnessed first-hand many of the issues that there are in our communities with traffic. Traffic complaints are one of the most things that you receive as city councillor when I happened to have that hat on. While on council, I sat on policing traffic, we dealt with many of the traffic

issues around our community. Most of these problems can be addressed with traffic-calming initiatives, having meetings in the community, talking to the people who are driving through their neighbourhoods. These initiatives include speed limit reductions, enhancing road paints, speedbumps, roundabouts, driver feedback signs, increased enforcement as discussed earlier, bump outs, as well as many, many more initiatives.

It is my hope that these fine increases that we're talking about in the changes to the *Highway Traffic Act* today will come together with the efforts of the RNC and the RCMP and will have a positive impact on people's driving habits within our province.

One of these continuing issues include making amendments that improve the quality of life for the residents, such as increasing fines for modifications of tailpipes of cars or motorcycles. It's a very big issue in my district and in St. John's, but right across our province. The fine has now been increased five-fold for your first offence to \$100 and, in turn, subsequent offences to \$160. This change will hopefully help curb the problem people are facing in our downtown and around our cities and towns during the warmer months.

As my time on council, recent complaints from residents in St. John's, this is a very huge issue in the summer in particular, but hopefully something that we can try to curb with these changes.

In the case of the *Highway Traffic Act* there are a number of penalties that were less than \$100, which warranted updating, and many of those were in the \$20 to \$25 range. We needed to address those concerns. The purpose of any penalty is to act as a deterrent or to change negative behaviour. When it comes to highway safety, there is no room for such negative behaviour.

The RNC does a fantastic job, I know, in my own district with their education on fines and giving little tidbits of information to drivers through their Twitter feed. We've all seen them: If it's snowing today, make sure you clean off your windows; you could get a ticket for that. Nuances that make driving in our city much

safer and our province much safer, and I thank them for that.

Every day thousands of people travel on our roadways in our province. Each vehicle carries a mother, a father, a child, a grandparent or a friend. We tend to take safety for granted, but we need to stop doing that. It is incumbent upon all of us to take into consideration every time we get behind the wheel, but all too often this is not the case. Updating the *Highway Traffic Act* like we're doing here today is about trying to change behaviours.

These updates are about changing the way generations think about driving and understanding the responsibility each person has and takes on their shoulders every time they sit behind the wheel. It is our goal to make new generations of responsible drivers, and that has to start here today.

Every infraction under the *Highway Traffic Act* has the potential to have far-reaching consequences for everyone travelling on our roads. That is why it is important for us to take steps, such as Bill 13, to make changes and improve wherever and whenever we can.

Driving without insurance, failing to comply with vehicle inspection requirements, modifying a vehicle, operating a vehicle without proper equipment – all of these offences have the potential for serious harmful impacts.

An important update in Bill 13 is the offence for slow driving. It has been increased to \$100 for the first offence, to \$235 for subsequent offences. This has often gone unnoticed. Slow driving can be just as dangerous as speeding.

We have all fallen behind slow drivers on a highway and seen people pass at dangerous times taking their lives and others lives into their hands just to get ahead. Passing on a solid line, passing on a turn and many other reckless actions can be caused by slow drivers.

Slow drivers can cause people behind them to get frustrated and cause accidents. So making those fines for breaking speed limits either way will hopefully take that a little bit more seriously.

It is also important for us to note that fines for failing to observe traffic-controlled devices, prohibited parking or stopping, this is especially important in our districts and in communities with schools, even more so with children in elementary school age.

Many children assume crosswalks are safe zones and cars will automatically stop at a flashing orange light or anything like that. We sometimes assume that ourselves. We're all guilty of walking across the road without looking because we see the flashing lights. We should always be looking. It's important for people who are driving to always stop at those places.

This amendment will also make the roads safer for construction workers who are working on our roads and highways. It is our wish for people who see these blinking red and orange lights that instinctively want to stop then, not slow down and not continue on.

Road workers are taking their lives in their hands to make our roads safer and more enjoyable for those who have to travel on them for work or leisure in all types of weather. We owe them the courtesy to stop when required, instead of rolling through caution signs.

Changing the fines for failing to observe traffic controls, from the low end of \$100 for first offence and then so on to \$170, is increasing how serious we are taking the offence and how serious drivers should as well.

As the Minister of Service NL stated, research shows that increasing penalties help to decrease the number of offences. The lower the number of offences means the lower number of offenders. With less offenders comes less unnecessary tragic deaths and more people arriving home safe and sound after their trip.

In 2016, there were 44 fatalities on our highways; 44 people lost their lives on our roads. Most of these deaths were preventable and were caused by someone speeding, someone texting something or someone not giving the road the attention it deserved. It is our goal to make sure that in the coming years those numbers never get that high; one is too much.

We are doing our part, Mr. Speaker, to bring those numbers down. The hard work of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary has been able to reduce accidents in the jurisdiction they police by 25 per cent over the last four years. Now it's our turn to help lower those numbers.

I agree with the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis about the presence that law enforcement has on curbing bad behaviour. I have to say, we have to do that better, too.

I know there are some complaints about these fee increases, but, Mr. Speaker, they are unfounded.

AN HON. MEMBER: Fines.

MR. B. DAVIS: Fines, and are unfounded. Those people claiming that this is just another revenue, it's not true.

Mr. Speaker, it is our hope that with these amendments you will see a significant decrease in the number of violators. In turn and in fact, the ideal outcome would not be collecting revenues at all, as it would mean the behaviours are changed and in turn making our highways and roadways much more safe.

Our government hopes that the amendments we are proposing will once again remind motorists of the responsibilities they have when they drive on our roadways through our towns and communities. Our government is making these changes to ensure safety and well-being of everyone in our province. Whether you are a driver, a passenger, a worker, a pedestrian or a cyclist, you should be able to be around the roads and feel safe and secure.

Road safety is everyone's responsibility, Mr. Speaker, and it's time the fines reflect that.

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'm happy to stand this afternoon and speak to Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act, an important bill in many ways. And I think the minister, the parliamentary secretary in particular and also my colleague from Cape St. Francis have pointed out very well the reasons for being concerned about what is happening on our highways with the increased – certainly seems to be – number of fatalities this year in particular. I don't know the stat on that, but certainly I think we would all agree that the fatalities have gone up.

We do need to do what has to be done to try to make the roads safer, make drivers more aware of their responsibility. Because very often roads are being blamed for accidents when in actual fact – and in some cases that's definite and in some cases ruts in roads and that kind of thing are causes of accidents. We also know that human behaviour is probably the most significant cause of accidents on the road and fatalities on the road.

We have to try and find ways in which to impact human behaviour, and we all know from various experiences in this room that that's not easy, whether it's parents trying to impact the behaviour of children or law enforcing people trying to impact the behaviour of drivers. It's not something that's easy to do, and we do have punitive measures to try to do that when it comes to driving and driving infractions. I do applaud the government for wanting to get at that.

Now, this bill, I think, does a bit of a mix because when the briefing was held, you know, the department officials said that the reason for increasing the fines was to dissuade motorists from committing offences under the *Highway Traffic Act*. Some of the offences in this bill are offences which, in actual fact, could really be very dangerous. For example, driving with so much snow on the windshield that one can't see out the windows.

I would say it's not just the windshield. I've seen cars – not often, but I've seen cars after a snowstorm with a windshield, just the wipers having cleared a small space and, with their glove, just having cleared a bit of space on the driver's window, for example, or on the other

side and the rest of the car completely covered in snow.

That, in and of itself, is something that we can obviously see would be a safety factor, but then here as well we have things like identification plates not securely fastened in a proper fashion. Now, we do need the plates fastened in a secure way but, at the same time, it's not a major safety feature like driving with the windshield almost completely covered in snow.

We have a mix in this bill of infractions that are safety infractions and some that aren't, not directly. I'm not faulting that; I'm just pointing out that there are different reasons for having penalties for drivers.

The government says that this bill is not related to revenue whereas, in actual fact, it is. I'm not saying that's wrong, but I'm saying let's acknowledge that revenue is also part of it. Because, right now, according to the briefing that we were given and the information from the officials, the current fines do not cover the administrative cost for levying the fines.

So that's no good. They haven't gone up in a long time. I think they did acknowledge that it's been quite a while. They didn't give the number of years, but it's been a very long time since the fines went up. And costs go up, so we do have to have enough revenue to cover the administrative cost. That's not a problem. I don't have a problem with it, but let's acknowledge it that part of this is not just safety, it's also increasing revenue from fines that are levied. Just be open about that; just say that that's part of it because it is.

One of the things, though, before going into that, I wondered, were the fines going up astronomically? In actual fact, in the information that was presented again in the briefing, there was a jurisdictional scan done – I think the minister may have mentioned this. In actual fact, across the country, there's really no set pattern or amount for most fines, but we're not out of balance with schedules of fines in other provinces. I suspect we're pretty high though; that's my guess.

The thing I want to raise – I don't want to go through all of the points that have been made

already; I don't see the need to do that. What I want to raise is the fact that we just don't fine drivers for infractions of the regulations, we also have our demerit points system.

The demerit points system might, in actual fact, be a greater deterrent than fines. I don't have proof of that, but it is one of the other ways in which we try to penalize people and try to make our roads safer is through a demerit system. With the demerit system, you really do run the risk of having a driver's licence suspended. It doesn't happen the first time; you lose so many points for different infractions, it adds up and eventually you can lose your licence.

I have a feeling that's a greater deterrent. Now, we would have to do more investigation into that. Apparently, there is some discussion going on inside of the department for future legislation around demerit points. I hope the minister might be able to give us information on that in second reading, as she clues up second reading when the time comes, because I think it would be good to know what the discussions are that are going on.

As I said, I think it's a greater deterrent because we do know that, very often, people who get picked up for an infraction, it turns out – and I think this was pointed out by my colleague for Cape St. Francis. We hear these announcements: so and so was picked up and may be under the influence or whatever and you find out that they may not have their driver's licence updated; and secondly, they owe, in some cases, hundreds and sometimes thousands of dollars in fines.

Obviously, for those people, more fines do not stop them from driving dangerously or breaking any law they want to break. They just don't pay the fines and they keep on driving. Now, would it be the same with the demerit system? When you get to a point where your licence is gone, then it makes it makes it a bit more of a deterrent factor, I think. So it is one thing that I would like to hear the minister speak more about.

With demerit points, it's much more equitable as a penalty. When you have more income and you have a fine, you pay that fine and everything is over with. You can't pay the fine, you may not pay it, your bill gets bigger and bigger, but there's no equality there.

Income impacts who gets to pay a fine, who is able to pay a fine. So you could have somebody who has a fair amount of money, does something, it's a big fine, pays the fine and it's over with. However, with the demerit points, it doesn't matter what your income is, it's all based on what you have done and you lose the same amount of points for what you've done. There's more of an equality in the system with demerit points.

I mean we do use demerit points, so I don't understand why is it that at this point in time, when the department was going to be bringing in new legislation to get at making our roads safer, why not at the same time study how demerit points could have gone up as well? That's why I do believe it is about safety, but I also think a high priority was also making money. Again, I'm not saying that we don't do that. We have to and we certainly have to cover the administrative costs. I suspect that more than the administrative costs will be covered.

I urge the minister that if she really is absolutely concerned about safety, then we also look at coming up with a system around demerit points which makes it more punitive than it is at the moment.

I think these are my main points, Mr. Speaker. I will wait to hear the minister respond to me at the end of second reading. If she doesn't, then I can bring the point up again in Committee and ask her direct questions at that time.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): The only Member for Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure for me to rise in this House today to speak on Bill 13, which is the amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act*. I guess this is an act that is continuously under review and revision and it has been, certainly, since our time in office. We've taken action to update the *Highway Traffic Act* to make it more modern and meet today's society and the jurisdictional scan that we have across the country.

These proposed amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* will result in significant increases to fines for a number of offences under the *Highway Traffic Act*, some of which are – most of which, actually, are currently less than \$100 with an aim of increasing compliance and enhancing public safety.

The offences include infractions such as driving without a valid driver's licence, failing to provide proof of insurance, illegal vehicle modifications and driving without clearing snow from a windshield. The offences vary from one to the other.

These amendments, Mr. Speaker, build upon our measures, as a provincial government, to improve road safety in the province. I know the Member for Cape St. Francis alluded to the number of accidents that we've had in this past year, which has been extraordinary, I would be bold to say, because it's been terrible.

We know that whether any of them are related to any of the offences we're looking at today, I guess that's not for us to determine, but we have to be proactive as best we can to make sure our highways are safe; not only our highways, but our streets and side roads and byways as well.

As I said, we've made some recent changes to the *Highway Traffic Act* through impaired driving legislation, changes that allow charges to be laid against the owner of a vehicle that illegally passes a school bus or is found to be speeding in school zones or construction zones. We've made a lot of changes, Mr. Speaker, but as the *Highway Traffic Act* goes, there's always room for more revisions as the need arises.

All of these offences that we're talking about here today pose an immediate danger to public safety, and motorists have a responsibility to their fellow citizens to ensure they're operating their vehicles in a safe manner. Highway safety, Mr. Speaker, is a serious concern for us in Newfoundland and Labrador, and our actions hopefully will help ensure the safety of drivers and passengers on our roads.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about – and the Leader of the Third Party alluded to it, talking about the fines increases being a revenue generator. I will acknowledge she was not against that, and that's

good, but, Mr. Speaker, this is not about increasing revenue. This is about putting fines at a level where it will be a deterrent for drivers on our highways to offend any of the regulations that are out there.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, there have been occasions, and I'm sure if we looked in to this across the country, there have been occasions when increase in fines has done quite the opposite. Actually, because of the deterrent they provide, overall revenue has decreased rather than increased. This is not about getting more money for the coffers. This is strictly about improving highway safety.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: This is strictly about improving highway safety. I think we need to remember that when we're speaking on this bill, and certainly people would normally, or generally, deduct from what we see here today as a revenue generator. But it is quite the opposite, because history has shown that if you put in strong enough deterrents that revenue will decrease.

Hopefully, we have put these fines at a level where they are a deterrent. We've gone across the country; a jurisdictional scan has been done for the other provinces regarding these offences and what other provinces have put in as fines. While we are not at the low end, we are not at the high end either. We are sort of, I wouldn't say the middle of the road, but I think we're in the quadrant where it will be a deterrent and is consistent with most of the provinces across the country.

If you look at some of the fines we've instituted here in this act – you look at Alberta, and I use this one as an example, have set the fines for drivers whose windshields are obstructed with snow at not more than \$25,000, meaning this is probably a significant issue there in Alberta. In Ontario, it is set at \$85. So there's quite a disparity across the country when you look at from province to province where these fines are today.

These amendments that we are putting forward today, I think, will keep Newfoundland and Labrador consistent with the rest of Canada on fine levels for driving offences.

Mr. Speaker, before we go any further, I just want to take you through some of the fines we have implemented and some of the increases that we see. Some are significant, certainly they are. Again, they're there to act as a deterrent. The one I just alluded to for snow on the windshield – I just lost it for a second. Anyway, I'll get to that. Failure to produce a vehicle licence, for instance, which was at \$25, maximum is \$100, that's gone from \$100 to \$175. I mean, this is not exorbitant.

One that we should all be aware of, maybe it's time for a little education here, is failure to keep identification plates clean. Part of that, of course, is making them identifiable to law enforcement or to anybody, I guess, but your licence plate has to be identifiable, has to be clean.

As you know, in recent years we've had a little issue with some of our licence plates that have deteriorated to the point where they are no longer readable. We as a government have allowed these plates to be replaced –

AN HON. MEMBER: At no cost.

MR. LETTO: – at no cost to the driver, because it is not their fault that the licence plates are no longer readable. We did have a bad batch of them it seems, but they are being replaced.

At this time, I would encourage any person out there who's driving a vehicle with those licence plates on that they should be a little proactive and make sure they get them replaced because it's at no cost to them. I know in some of the rural areas of our province that's not as easy as driving to Mount Pearl, for instance, and walking into Motor Registration and getting them replaced, but I would encourage them to get them replaced. As I said, it's at no cost to them.

If you were stopped today with an unidentifiable or a dirty licence plate that the law enforcement people cannot read, that fine today will be a minimum of \$100 as opposed to \$25 previously. It's a good practice, and as a responsible driver it's incumbent upon you as a driver to get that replaced so you do have a good licence plate on your vehicle.

Even if they're not securely fastened in the proper position, because sometimes you'll see licence plates of some vehicles, some older vehicles especially, they could be hanging off. They could be tied under the bumper or tied under the trunk with a piece of rope and hanging down. That's not acceptable, Mr. Speaker. Again, that fine has increased from \$25 to \$100. So get it fixed.

No licence for class of motor vehicle has gone from \$50 to \$300, the second offence would be \$100 to \$800 minimum and subsequent offences will go from \$300 to \$1,100. That's significant. There are rules and regulations out there that we are expected to abide by as responsible citizens, and highway driving is certainly one area where we need to be responsible. Because as so many people have stated in the House here, we've had a terrible year on our highways in regard to accidents – as late as this past week. We have to do something to improve the safety of our highways; there's no question about it.

As a government, we recognize too that it is not all personal reasons or faults causing those accidents and we have to do our part as well to make our highways safe, hopefully not only by having good pavement down and no potholes or no ruts, but also laws and deterrents in place that people will abide by the laws.

Failure to deliver a licence has gone from \$25 to \$100. We even put in one – because it has also been brought to the attention that sometimes we not only have too fast drivers, but we have too slow drivers. That causes frustration, frustration causes negligence and negligence sometimes causes accidents. Even in the case of slow driving it has gone from \$45, the minimum, to \$100.

Hopefully, in these regulations, we covered many of the bases. But as with the *Highway Traffic Act*, it's always open to revision and it is always improvement. We will continue to monitor that, Mr. Speaker.

Talking about highway safety, since we took office as a government we've implemented many actions that improve the safety of our highways. Not only in fines, but I'd just like to briefly update the House on some of the things that we've done.

I think one of the biggest things we've done is around impaired driving in our province. Back in March 2017, we announced amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* that highlighted the problem that exists around this bad practice. It's unfortunate that we continue to see that today; hopefully, it's not as prevalent as it has been, but nevertheless we still hear about it. Organizations like MADD, who we met not too very long ago, continue to be concerned about the high level, sometimes high number of impaired drivers being caught on our highways and some that have caused serious accidents.

We implemented some measures back in March of 2017 that we think – and MADD agrees with us – will, again, act as a deterrent. That's what this is all about, Mr. Speaker. This is not about creating revenue, I want to stress. This is about deterrence, a deterrent to doing things that make driving unsafe. That's what this is all about. This is not about revenue; I want to stress that. This is about a deterrent for drivers to taking actions that make our highway driving unsafe, not only for the driver but for all the people that travel our highways.

You only have control of one vehicle and that's the one that you're driving. You don't have control of the one that's coming towards you. You have no control over that vehicle. The only vehicle that you have control over is the one that you're behind the wheel of. So it's incumbent on everybody – not only you as a driver, but it is incumbent on everybody to follow the *Highway Traffic Act* and to follow the rules and regulations of our highways.

In March 2017, Mr. Speaker, we announced amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* by (inaudible) the problem around impaired driving in the province. The amendments included set a zero per cent blood-alcohol content for drivers under 22. We're not here today just implementing changes; this has been an ongoing thing. That's what I wanted to demonstrate here.

Impose mandatory interlock as a condition of licence reinstatement for impaired driving offences. We made access to mandatory interlock much more accessible in the past year. There are many more stations now that can do this. I might add that people are taking advantage of it and it is working.

It provides authority to make regulations that require the roadside impoundment of vehicles for impaired driving offences. Again, we've seen that happen. It's working. Zero tolerance restrictions have shown to reduce impaired driving-related crashes among young drivers. Hopefully that continues, Mr. Speaker, because we want the young drivers of our province to be able to access and get their driver's licence when they're of age to do so. We've made that quite accessible, but we also want to stress on them that it's not okay to drink and drive. They have to learn that at a young age.

This amendment also extends vehicle impoundment to include impaired driving. Impaired driving is a serious issue in Newfoundland and Labrador and the Liberal government's actions have helped to ensure the safety of drivers and passengers on our roads.

Mr. Speaker, what we see here today is just another attempt on behalf of us, as a Liberal government, being responsible to the people of this province, to implement measures that will improve the safety of our highways. We hope that what we see here today will act as a deterrent.

I want to go back to it again; I want to keep stressing it. This is not about generating revenue. This is about making our highways safer; making drivers more responsible. Think before you act; think of the consequences that you may incur if you do not follow the *Highway Traffic Act* and the safety rules of our highway. These are significant fines, in most cases.

We hope that the fines that we've implemented here today – and we want to stress these are fines. These are not fees; these are fines. They're fines and they're only imposed if you create an offence and you deserve it. It's not a fee for a service. It's a fine that is imposed if you commit an offence.

So, Mr. Speaker, if you follow the *Highway Traffic Act*, if you follow the rules and regulations of the roads, you will not have to pay any of this that we've implemented here today. This is only here if you decide that you're going to be irresponsible, if you're going to break the rules, if you're not going to follow the safety laws and regulations of our highways, then

you'll be open to getting a fine. That's what the *Highway Traffic Act* is all about.

My time is getting short, but it's been a pleasure for me to stand here today and talk about this. I think it's another significant, responsible move on behalf of our government, something that we've been doing since we took office in November 2015. We try to make responsible decisions to help the people of our province, the safety of our province, the safety of our people. We have a lot of resources in this province, but the greatest resource we have is our people and we want to do everything in our power to protect that valuable resource, Mr. Speaker.

What we see here today is just another example of the types of things that we want to do to ensure the safety of our people and that people can travel our highways in comfort knowing that the highways are safe and that they will reach their destination safely.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time today. I look forward to the rest of the debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Placentia West – Bellevue.

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure to stand and speak to Bill 13, amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act*. Indeed, I have to say, I commend the Minister of Service NL and commend her parliamentary secretary on the robust legislative agenda they've put forth this week. It takes a lot of time.

For my constituents and those who are watching at home, you just don't show up Monday morning with an idea that you put on a piece of paper and bring into the Legislature. It's a lengthy process, Mr. Speaker. It requires a Cabinet process. It goes through Committees of Cabinet. It goes through the departments that are responsible. Ultimately, it would make its way to the Cabinet table and then the Government House Leader and the ministers will bring it down into the House.

It's a lengthy process. For those people at home who think this is just something the Minister of

Service NL came up with this morning, thank God she doesn't have that much power and clout, Mr. Speaker. There are checks and balances on the Minister of Service NL because she gets quite opinionated from time to time, my good friend from Placentia – St. Mary's.

In all seriousness, we're here to discuss a very important bill, something with very serious implications as it respects road safety. As has been mentioned by my colleagues on both sides of the Legislature – and I thank all my colleagues who have spoken to this piece of legislation – the safety of our roadways is extremely important, Mr. Speaker.

I think back to some very devastating news that I've received as an MHA since being elected. When you look at just recently, a few months ago we had a family of three – one girl who was left at home, but three of them passed away near Bellevue in my district. Anything that we can do, anything that we, as Members of the House of Assembly, can do to advance the agenda of safer roadways, safer driving practices, safer training for our young drivers, it's always a positive thing.

Bill 13, Mr. Speaker, will build upon the measures that our government has already taken to improve road safety here in the province, such as the recent changes to the impaired driving legislation.

I was in Rushoon in my district, Mr. Speaker, I believe it was around the 21st of September – I stand to be corrected on that date. Earlier in the year, I attended the 10th annual Cory Kenway basketball classic. Cory was a young man from Baine Harbour who died as a result of an alcohol-related crash. His mother and father, Randy and Julie, became very active with MADD Burin Peninsula.

MADD Burin Peninsula really became the impetus for Bill 68 last year that brought together the changes to impaired driving in the province. Mr. Speaker, something I'm very proud of, I have to tell you, to be a part of something – I was very proud to stand and vote in favour of to make our roadway safer, but to send a message that Newfoundland and Labrador, we will not tolerate impaired driving

in this province. We want our roadways to be safer.

I was at the Cory Kenway classic, it was the 10th year, and for the duration of the 10-year history, the team that Cory played on, the Christ the King School Crusaders, never won a tournament, but this year they did. It was quite a celebratory moment. I remember standing in the gymnasium, I stood in the middle of the gymnasium – and this was, of course, all still in debate and discussion within our caucus and within our government – and I said this is one commitment that I will make, that we will improve impaired driving legislation.

Mr. Speaker, to be there seven or eight months later in September, at the graduation where Cory's mom, Julie, was the guest speaker – the graduating class chooses their own guest speaker every year and they asked Julie to come. This is how important the family is to the school community. That I could stand there and say: Tonight at midnight, the new impaired driving laws will come into effect, the same laws I promised here in this very gymnasium, and that this government came through on, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of that. I'm extremely proud.

I thank the minister of Municipal Affairs, who was minister at the time, for bringing it in, as well as the Speaker, he became minister shortly thereafter, and the current Minister of Service NL. Mr. Speaker, I expand on that and I thank my colleagues for allowing me some time to speak of that because it truly is important, but getting back to what we're discussing here now.

The amendments we have here today will result in a number of fines being increased with the aim of increasing compliance and enhancing public safety. All of the offences that are listed here in this bill pose an immediate danger to public safety and motorists, and motorists have a responsibility to fellow citizens to ensure they're operating their vehicle in a safe manner.

These fines, as the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi has said, are not a revenue generator, Mr. Speaker. There's no doubt that, if you give someone a fine, there's a revenue generation that occurs, but the point I believe the minister was trying to convey – and she did so quite eloquently, I must add, Mr. Speaker, as did her

parliamentary secretary quite eloquently here today – is that the deterrence is there. It's real. That's the aim, the objective, Mr. Speaker, is not to generate a whole pile of revenue to the Treasury; it's to make our roadways safer. It's to encourage safer driving. It's to act as a deterrent.

Many of my colleagues have spoken to the numbers of fines that are now increasing to a minimum of \$100, some to a maximum of – I'm looking at one here, a maximum of \$1,100, Mr. Speaker, some at \$1,600, some \$234. Some of the offences that would be affected by this include: driving without a valid licence or without the correct class of licence, failing to produce a valid driver's licence or proof of insurance, driving with an obstructed windshield – we all heard the story of somebody driving from Swift Current area in my district, God love them, just after striking a moose and almost got as far as Holyrood with a smacked up windshield – operating a vehicle without proper equipment or of improper construction and failure to comply with vehicle inspection requirements.

So, as I've said, Mr. Speaker, this is all designed, the maximum fines for these 17 offences under the *Highway Traffic Act* will increase to \$100. We are very pleased to be bringing forth these amendments.

Yesterday, we had the pleasure, with the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation and the Premier, to launch the Business Innovation Agenda. This was a wonderful announcement that we can talk lots about in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I raise it because we have an opportunity as a government to make lots of decisions that affect different perspectives in different areas. At our core, the role of government is to make a safe environment for its citizens and Bill 13 here today hits that bill in every regard – pardon the pun, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, I'm very much in favour of this. I'm very pleased to see the Minister of Service NL, an advocate of safety herself for so, so many years and accessibility, of course, in the community. I'm so happy to see changes being brought forth and the plethora of legislation that she's brought to the floor of the House this

week. It's quite amazing, actually, the number of hours that has to go into this from the department's point of view and from the minister and her parliamentary secretary, so thank you both for your efforts.

Thank you to all my colleagues for coming together in this Legislature, working together to make our roadways safer, Mr. Speaker, and collaborating to ensure that everything that we can do in our power from a legislative point of view, any tools at our disposal are dispatched with the idea of making it a safer roadway for the motorists, the travelling public, the residents and visitors alike to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I will take my seat. Once again, I thank all my colleagues for the opportunity to speak here today, to work together and collaborate on this bill, but also of course to the Minister of Service NL, who is herself a fervent advocate of safer roadways. It's very important that we continue this work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to stand in the House today and say a few words about Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act. Mr. Speaker, I'll say from the get-go that I will be supporting the bill. I think that all Members of the House are going to be supporting this bill. I'm sure we're all interested in making our highways and our roadways safe for the people of our province.

Certainly, part of that is deterrence, part of that is having fines and appropriate fines in place for those who choose to break the law. Of course, as has been said by some of my colleagues, enforcement is also another critical piece in that puzzle. We can have all the fines we like; if we don't have enough enforcement there, then the fines are not worth the paper they're written on.

I have to say that the RNC in this area do a good job and I'm sure the RCMP do a great job in

some of the rural areas and on our highways as well. I guess you can never get enough enforcement or too much enforcement. There'll always be people looking for more and, rightfully so, but it is important that we do that and that the fines are in place for people who decide they're going to break the law for whatever reason.

Mr. Speaker, just to be clear, though, and to try to bring things back on track here a little bit, the bill that we're actually discussing here, the *Highway Traffic Act* – all we're doing is we have 17 sections of the *Highway Traffic Act* for which there are fines. What's being done is these fines are being increased, which is fine. As I said, it needed to be done and I'm certainly not going to object to it.

It has nothing to do with impaired driving or any of those other Criminal Code offences. That was brought in, in the last session of the House, I believe, and the whole House supported it. It was a good move. I acknowledge and applauded the government at the time for bringing it in and I will do so again. It was good legislation, working with MADD Canada to bring that in and to make the laws tougher on impaired driving, but that was done last session.

What this bill is about, as I said, is simply raising the fines for a number of offences under the *Highway Traffic Act*. It has nothing to do with impaired driving or any of that.

Many of the offences that are listed here on this bill, as has been said, are safety issues, without a doubt. If we're talking about, for example, someone who – as has been referenced here – has snow on the roof of their car, on their windshield and so on and that could obstruct them in the wintertime, that can cause an accident, no doubt that is a safety issue. No doubt it's important that we have appropriate measures in place and appropriate fines to deal with that.

Somebody driving with a cracked windshield – that's another one. Somebody who's driving too slow – and this has been referenced, of course – that can be a real hazard. I've experienced that myself on numerous occasions. I'm sure every Member of this House has had that experience where you're driving down a highway or

whatever, like a one-lane highway – it could be like the CBS Bypass comes to mind as one example, or the Torbay Bypass – and you get behind one person who's going maybe 20 kilometres or whatever under the speed limit and then you have a big snarl-up of traffic. That can cause people to get frustrated, get road rage and then they take unnecessary chances passing on solid lines, on curbs, on a turn or on the crest of a hill and so on, doing things that they wouldn't normally do. It doesn't make what they did right, but you can see it does drive people, sometimes, to that behaviour when you're behind someone who is going way too slow. It's important that we have deterrents to deal with that as well.

I'm not going to go through every one of them, but there are a number of things here that I totally agree are related to safety. It's important that we acknowledge that and it's important that we address that, but not everything here on this list is related to safety. Unlike what has been said by some Members that it is all about safety, no, not everything is.

One of them here is not having your licence. Not that you don't have a licence, but not producing a licence. Basically, what that means is I have a driver's licence; it's a valid driver's licence. I had my wallet in my pants. I go home, I get changed or whatever, put on a pair of jeans and I forget to take my wallet out and put it in my back pocket. I drive down the road, I get hauled over and the police officer says: Can I see your licence and registration. You say: I left my licence in my other pants. I have a licence, it's a valid licence, I just don't have it on me. That's one of the fines that are being increased here.

Now, I'm not saying it's wrong, I'm not speaking against it, but that really has nothing to do with safety. The officer can very quickly in his vehicle – they have computers and they simply ask you for your name and your date of birth. It will all come up on the screen on their computer system whether you have a valid licence or you don't. It's the same thing with vehicle registration if you don't have your sticker on it. They can very easily type in your licence plate number and it will come up whether your car is registered or it isn't.

I'm not saying that you shouldn't have your driver's licence on you. I'm not suggesting that, but I am saying that if I left it home but I have one and it's valid, that's got nothing to do with safety. It's got to do with me not following the letter of the law inadvertently leaving my wallet home, which anybody can do, but it has nothing to do with safety.

I'm sure in those cases, 99.9 per cent of the time when it comes to some of these things, that police officers will use their discretion. The only time I would suggest the police officer is going to actually issue a fine to somebody for a minor infraction like that would be if that person was being totally uncooperative.

Perhaps at that point in time, the police officer might use his discretion or her discretion and say because this individual is being so uncooperative and abusive – perhaps they might say, you know what, you don't have your licence, here's a ticket. But in 99.9 per cent of the time, I'm sure you'd just get a warning and they'd say just a reminder you're supposed to have it on you at all times, I understand you could leave it home, whatever.

That's one of the fines that are being increased here. When we asked the department officials – we had our briefing about that – they were quite upfront about it. As the Leader of the Third Party said when she spoke, they basically said for some of these, the fine levels were so low that if somebody were to actually contest the ticket and had to go to Traffic Court, the cost associated to actually going through that process – the fine doesn't even nearly come close to covering off that cost.

That doesn't mean that this is a cash grab because it's not. I really don't view this – there's going to be little to no financial impact on the government coffers with these measures, I would suggest. It's not. Anyone who takes this and says, oh, this is just a big cash grab, it's not. I really don't believe that is the case. But there's no doubt that some of the fines are so low that they have to be at a reasonable level to justify today's costs of prosecution. It has to be reasonable – not a gouge, but reasonable. I believe for the most part this is.

There was a point raised which was not really addressed – well, actually, there were a couple of points. There was one point raised by the Member for Cape St. Francis, which I never thought of at the time during the briefing – neither did he at the time because we were both at the briefing together; he didn't raise it, I didn't raise it, but he did in the House today and I think it's a very valid point – and that is the one that says no licence, section 43(4): No licence for class of motor vehicle. Currently, it's \$50. We're suggesting it would go to a low of \$300 and a high of \$600. That's a significant jump.

My only point on this one is I think it should be higher. On that particular one I would argue it should be even higher than that because unless I'm misinterpreting what that section means, then you could in theory have somebody who only has a Class 5 driver's licence drive a car and here they are driving a major piece of heavy equipment, maybe with tons of material onboard, a big 18-wheeler or whatever, or a big fuel truck or something like that, whatever the case might be, with air brakes and everything else, driving that down the highway with only a Class 5 driver's licence. To think that was only \$50 for that just boggles the mind. I guess it had to be an oversight. I'm sure it had to be.

That's why this one, I guess, is getting a big jump, which I'm glad it is. If anything, it should be higher because that's the same as driving with no licence at all. There's no way you can compare driving a car to driving one of those big pieces of heavy equipment. I do support the big jump here. If anything, I think it should be an even bigger jump, but that's fine.

The only other point I wanted to make was the issue was raised about people who have thousands of dollars in fines and it just continues to grow and grow. We hear about it in the media – \$10,000, \$20,000, \$30,000 in fines. How could that even happen?

Well, obviously, what it comes down to is that you have an individual who continuously breaks the law. In all likelihood they don't have a valid licence, they have no insurance and they have no registered vehicle. They'll take that and they get caught and they get big fines for it. In all likelihood, as I understand it, that vehicle gets

impounded by the police. Then they go out next week and they purchase another piece of junk for \$300 or \$400 or whatever, another old jalopy that's not even fit to be on the road.

They go out with no licence, no insurance and no registration once again. They get hauled over. They get charged with no licence, no registration and no insurance, all kinds of defects on the vehicle and so on. Impound the vehicle, and a couple of weeks later they go out and they get another piece of junk and do it over again and over again and over again. They have no licence to begin with, so you can't take away a licence they don't have. They don't care. They have nothing to lose. You can't get blood from a turnip if they don't have the money to pay it.

Even though there are jail times associated to the *Highway Traffic Act* in lieu of fines, we all know the issue there is that we just don't have space at Her Majesty's Penitentiary to enforce jail time on the *Highway Traffic Act*. There are people for years, so I've been told – and I stand to be corrected by the Minister of Justice if I'm wrong – but people, I'm told, for years now who have been convicted of impaired driving and having to serve weekends at Her Majesty's Penitentiary. They simply go down on a Friday and they say there's no room at the inn, sign the book to say that you've tried to come and serve your time and then we just give you credit for the weekend served because it's not your fault we don't have room. And next weekend they do the same thing, same thing.

You hear about people actually being convicted of impaired driving, a criminal offence, and they're serving no time. Even though they're sentenced to weekends, they've served nothing because there's no room at Her Majesty's Penitentiary for them to serve – sign the book and go home.

Based on that issue we're certainly not going to be in a position to utilize the jail-time provision for failure to pay these fines. The only thing I could see or, certainly, one of the things I could see as a suggestion – and this has been suggested, this is nothing new that I came up with; people have been saying this for years. If we were to consider – and I'll be honest, I don't know exactly what's involved; maybe the minister is already looking into it, I don't know

– having the licence plate associated with the person, not the car. If somebody gets their car impounded now because they have no licence and no insurance, they buy another old piece of junk, they still have a licence plate on it so they can drive around for weeks or months until they get hauled over eventually and then they get caught again.

If the licence plate wasn't on the car, it came with the person; they would never have a licence plate. Hence, any car they had would have no licence plate on it, which would make it blatantly obvious to the police or to a citizen to be able to call the police and say: Hey, there's a guy driving down the road with no licence plate. It gets him or her off the road much quicker.

If it's not already been looked into – and it may very well be because it's nothing new and it's being done in other places and been suggested many times by people. I've heard it. Certainly, I think it's something that if you want to talk about making the roads safer and road safety, that's one way to make it safer, by getting these chronic lawbreakers, in terms of get them off the road.

The people who have the \$20,000 and \$30,000 in fines, get them off the road for good. By having the licence plate go with the person, not the car, that makes it a lot easier, I would suggest, to get them off the road. It's not related to this bill per se, but then again, neither are the changes to impaired driving. I take a little bit of latitude in going there and making that suggestion.

Anyway, all in all, Mr. Speaker, the bill is what it is. It is making some increases. Some are safety related, which is good; some not necessarily safety related. But we do have to cover the cost of prosecution and so on. I don't think the rates are exorbitant. I think they're fairly reasonable and I will support the bill.

Thank you.

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

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

It's a pleasure to have a few minutes this afternoon. I shouldn't say a few minutes because I know I get 60 minutes and I'm looking at the clock for how much time we have left. I may just use the rest of our sitting. I see some concern.

Anyway, I'm sure I'm not going to speak for an hour, Mr. Speaker – I'm sure that I won't speak for an hour. What this bill is about – and I know some have said it already – it's a bill, an act amending the *Highway Traffic Act* that essentially increases certain fines under the *Highway Traffic Act*.

Mr. Speaker, as everybody knows, I spent 25 years as a career in policing in our province. I worked with the *Highway Traffic Act* on a regular basis. During the years, I wasn't – some people said: oh yeah, you weren't a real police officer because you were only the media officer, but I only did that for the last four years of my career. Most of the other 21 years were actually engaged operationally.

Actually, as the media relations officer, I was still deemed to be operational; I wore a uniform and drove a marked patrol car. For most of the other 21 of my 25 years, I did a variety of roles and for the most part spent most of my career in operational roles.

It wasn't unusual for me to have a copy of the *Highway Traffic Act* and all the accoutrements that go with it with me on a daily basis. It has been some time since I really had a look at it. I had a look at it when preparing to speak to this bill today. This bill is about increasing fines on a number of aspects and I'm going to offer some thoughts on that as well, as other Members of the House have done today.

There's a list of them that have been chosen to be increased. I'm not sure why some of these were considered and why others weren't. We'll probably get in to that more in Committee. I'll comment on some now.

I certainly don't intend to blindside the minister with some of the questions I'm going to ask in Committee. As we listen to debate, it's not unusual – after I sit down, someone else speaks to it and raises a point. That leads to other questions in Committee, but I do have some

questions on why some were increased and some were not.

I know that both the RCMP and the RNC are primary enforcers. There's also the Highway Enforcement Branch of Service NL that also does highway enforcement. There are other peace officers within the province that have abilities to enforce certain aspects of our *Highway Traffic Act*, parking regulations and so on.

The *Highway Traffic Act* is made up of the main act itself and I think there are – well, under charge sections there are over 200 sections of offences under the *Highway Traffic Act* and then there are also regulations. Under regulations, there are regulations that deal with ambulances and buses, taxis, commercial vehicles, licensing and equipment of vehicles, for example. There's a regulation that talks about how vehicles must have a horn, your tires must conform to a certain standard, you have to have a windshield – these types of specific requirements that vehicles in our province are required to have. All of those come with fines as well.

This amendment is strictly to the act to amend some of the main sections in the *Highway Traffic Act*. I think it's wise – and, again, I was thinking about this preparing for this bill over the last few days – to break it down because quite often it's looked at in three different kinds of categories.

There are non-moving violations. A non-moving violation would essentially be a parking ticket, or if you parked your vehicle somewhere and it's committed a violation because it's parked, it's non-moving. Then there are moving non-hazardous violations. So a violation saying you're driving with a broken windshield could be considered to be a non-hazardous – I think they're a non-hazardous moving violation. It would be a good example of that. Or you're operating a vehicle that's not registered.

Under the *Highway Traffic Act* you're required to have registration for your vehicle. You're required to have it tagged and a licence plate on your vehicle with a validation tag attached to it as well. If you violate any aspects of those types of legislation, it's considered to be a non-hazardous moving violation. Then there are

hazardous moving violations. So there are non-moving, non-hazardous moving and then hazardous moving.

Hazardous moving violations are generally those that create a risk or a danger because of the way the vehicle is operated or moved: you've run a red light or a stop sign or speeding. Some of the ones that are listed here in this bill are non-hazardous moving and some are hazardous moving.

For example, failing to produce a vehicle licence currently is a minimum \$25 fine. When you see minimum, generally speaking, that's what's applied to offences is a minimum fine of \$25. It's being moved to \$100. Identification plate not securely fastened in a proper position; that would be a non-hazardous moving violation. If you move your vehicle without it, you've moved it. It's a violation, but it's not a hazardous one. That was \$25, now going to \$100.

Not to be confused either, Mr. Speaker, because a \$25 fine for an identification plate not securely fastened in the proper position is not an unregistered vehicle. That's a different offence. You can have your vehicle properly registered, but if you don't have that identifier, that identifying plate attached to it, then the fine becomes \$100. It has gone from \$25 now to \$100. They've increased the fine for not even having your plate attached to \$100.

The other one that's really of interest here, Mr. Speaker, is on slow driving. Under section 111(1) of the *Highway Traffic Act* the slow-driving penalty right now is \$45 to a maximum of \$180, but a \$45 minimum. They're moving that to \$100.

It's interesting on that one – and at some point in time maybe the minister can make note or we'll ask about it further – because it's only recently the Minister of Transportation and Works has talked about slow driving and, in particular, Veterans Memorial Highway. We've seen a significant number of fatalities and serious collisions on Veterans Memorial Highway just in recent weeks and months.

The minister made some commentary because he uses the highway on a regular basis. As he goes back and forth to his district he uses

Veterans and he talked about slow-driving vehicles being a concern and an issue. I don't disagree with that.

When we were in government we brought forward changes to the *Highway Traffic Act* to prevent heavy equipment, slow operating, like backhoes and that type of thing, from driving on highways where the speed limit, I think, was greater than 80. The issue arose because the Outer Ring Road – in the mornings you'd quite regularly see thousands of cars.

On any given day there are 35,000, 39,000, 40,000 cars travel over the Outer Ring Road and then you have a backhoe going along at a very slow speed and was very dangerous. It created significant danger on that highway with such heavy traffic moving so fast. So we brought in rules to say, if you're a slow-moving vehicle, you can't drive on that highway.

It was about the capacity of the vehicle. What slow driving is about is how you operate a vehicle, if you drive it too slow on the highway. If you're driving on a highway at 100 kilometres an hour and all of a sudden there's a vehicle in front of you travelling at 40 or 50 or 60 kilometres an hour, it creates a hazard. That fine has increased from \$45 to \$100. It probably could have been increased even more, Mr. Speaker.

In 2016, the government implemented 300 tax and fee increases and 50 brand-new fees to the people of the province. I think about these penalties for breaking the law. For me, really, if you're going to increase the penalties for serious matters that are causing harm, as the Minister of Transportation and Works has talked about slow driving, then you could – well, they're not going to be revenue generating in a big way – certainly increase them to be a bigger deterrent. Also, they would be revenue generating, but the point of doing it is not to be revenue generating. It's to be a deterrent for people operating like that.

The speeding laws right now, if you operate a motor vehicle over the speed on regular conditions between one and 10 kilometres over the speed limit – not many get those, but some people do – it's a \$50 fine. If you're 11 to 20 kilometres over the speed limit – if you're on a 100 kilometre an hour road and you're doing

119, you'd get a \$100 fine. If you're 21 to 30 over, so on, a 100 kilometre road, like the Trans-Canada Highway, if you're doing 121 to 130, it's a \$200 fine. If you're doing over 31 kilometres over the speed limit, it's a \$300 fine. They're the minimums again.

If a person was to get caught twice in a short period of time, they're likely going to get the higher fine, because there is a step-up process on some of those offences. They're considered to be very serious. Also, slow driving is considered to be serious. So I think there might have been some room as well for increases in some of those fines.

When we get to Committee, we may ask the minister to give us some examples, explanations of why some were increased and why others weren't.

As an example, Mr. Speaker, there are fines for bicycles that are generally around \$25. Pedestrians, there are offences. Despite the fact they're not regularly enforced, Mr. Speaker, the *Highway Traffic Act* lays out offences for jaywalking, walking, crossing a road obstructing traffic, not using a street corner or a crosswalk. Those types of things are there.

Then there are others, like, for example, failing to yield the right-of-way to an emergency vehicle is a \$300 fine. That's if you don't pull over so an emergency vehicle can pass, it's even a bigger fine. Then there are ones around radar detectors and so on.

Mr. Speaker, there's a broad range of fines. One of my colleagues referenced earlier, the Member for Cape St. Francis, about a cross-jurisdictional scan of other fines and other fees in other places and found they are really inconsistent.

Last summer, I found myself to be in Nova Scotia. I picked up a rental car and went downtown and parked my car. Then when I went back to my car there was a ticket, because I was – if I remember correctly, Mr. Speaker, 180 millimetres – the rule in Nova Scotia is you have to park within 180 millimetres of the curb. So that's six inches. I think I was 210 millimetres from the curb because the person who gave me the ticket came back and took out the measuring tape and I said I'm sorry, I don't carry a

measuring tape when I travel. I think I was 210 millimetres, if I remember correctly, from the curb.

AN HON. MEMBER: You are joking.

MR. P. DAVIS: I'm not joking. No, I'm serious. I was 210 millimetres which is, what, 7½ inches when I wasn't supposed to be any more than six inches from the curb and I got a ticket for it.

If I remember correctly – because I had a look at it at the time – Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador, I think it's 300 millimetres or 12 inches; it's much longer. So Halifax had this anomaly and I ended up getting a ticket. I remember I said to the person who gave me the ticket: I'm sorry, I didn't carry a measuring tape with me. But I didn't even know that it was 180 millimetres, which is a really small amount that you had to park close to the curb. Anyway, I ended up getting a ticket for it, the ticket was paid and we move on.

I remember in my early times – yes, it was 180 millimetres, that's what the offence was. The Members opposite looks like they're kind of saying: Really? Yes, it was 180 millimetres that you're supposed to park to the curb in Nova Scotia. I think I was 210 millimetres and I got a ticket for it, so it wasn't much – bad Paul.

Mr. Speaker, I remember earlier in my career in policing, when I first joined back in the '80s, we were lucky if we got in a patrol car because we spent a lot of time walking beats and walking downtown. You almost had to earn your time to get ahead.

I see the Member for Baie Verte – Green Bay knows about this because he went through the same process. He was a couple of years ahead of me, a little bit older than me, but he broke a trail maybe. It didn't matter about the weather; you spent a lot of time on your feet and outdoors. As time went on, then you spent more time in a patrol car because the junior people, the newest people in the RNC, would spend time walking the beats and doing downtown. That's the way a lot of policing was done back in those days.

But you always had to answer to your supervisors and your sergeants, and they would

always encourage you to make sure that you enforced the *Highway Traffic Act*. We didn't know it all the time, but sometimes you'd get a call from your sergeant saying go down to such-and-such a street and have a look. There are a lot of cars parked illegally down there or someone is having a social at their house and obstructing traffic. You'd walk your beat down and you'd issue tickets. Sometimes you weren't sure why you did it because they just told you go have a look at such-and-such a street because there's a problem down there; you would go down and, sure enough, you'd find it. But I only learned that a lot of times it was because it was based on complaints.

The Member for Baie Verte – Green Bay might remember what I'm talking about. I remember a time when there was a police officer and he worked one of the areas and didn't have access to a patrol car and time to do the *Highway Traffic Act* enforcement very much. Anyway, I remember one month he came in, he had one ticket he gave out, hazardous moving violation he gave out for the whole month. The sergeant told him you have to do better. The next month he had one ticket and the sergeant said: Look, you have to do better than that. The month after that he came in with two tickets. The sergeant called him in and said: I told you that you got to do better. He said: Well, I had 100 per cent improvement. What do you want me to do? Because he went from one to two.

There was a focus on it in policing, and there is today. I see today that RCMP and RNC use some very strategic approaches to enforcement of the *Highway Traffic Act*. We see them on the Outer Ring Road from time to time. I refer to the Outer Ring Road because I drive it virtually every day. We've seen them set up now – they use very technically advanced pieces of equipment to clearly identify in traffic. Because one time, back in my day, if you had 10 cars coming towards and they were all doing 110 and one was doing 115, from a half kilometre away it was really hard to tell which one it was, but you knew someone was doing the speed but you couldn't tell.

They have equipment today to actually identify those vehicles, and sometimes they'll set up targeted approaches in problem areas, and so they should. If there's an area where there's a

high level of collisions or a high level of violations that are happening, then it's good for them to target those areas and to make efforts to keep our roads safer.

Mr. Speaker, this past summer, we know there was a high number of police officers who were deployed to Labrador. I know the minister has said a lot of them came in from outside the province, but a lot of them were also from within the province. They were deployed to Labrador on the movement of equipment down there. I've heard and I've been told that some of the units, such as people who do traffic enforcement, that were taken and moved to Labrador.

I also respect the minister's comments that he's made in the past to say he doesn't direct policing, he doesn't and he shouldn't, and I'm glad he doesn't; but it's worthy of at least the government to say we're going to look at this, because we have to make sure there's strong enforcement on our highways. Because when we have the number of fatalities that we saw in a very short period of time in late summer and into the fall of this year – and I know, because the minister has expressed it before that it's been a concern for him and he wanted to make sure that the right things are happening.

We know that there was a reduction in policing over the last couple of years with the RNC. There had been a commitment to increase the RNC complement by 20 – 10 were already added and then there were 10 more to be added – and there was four redundant positions that were eliminated. So of the 20, there was only actually an increase of six. I know that they are continuing to recruit and train new police officers, and so they should because there are a lot of current police officers who are eligible for retirement.

Mr. Speaker, when you think about the safety of highways, it's a multi-faceted approach; it's just not about these increases in fines here. I know the minister referred to safety. Increasing the fine for failing to produce their vehicle licence is not really going to do anything to improve safety. Failing to provide proof that an insurance policy is enforced is probably not going to do a lot to improve safety, but I understand the merit

of it and in trying to move in that direction to add to that safety.

I'd also encourage the minister and the government to look at other aspects, such as the design of roadways and the enforcement that exists. And not only the number of officers that are on the highway, but how much time do they actually have for enforcement. I'll give you an example because, quite often, it's the traffic officers who also are the accident investigation officers. The RCMP has a process like that; the RNC has a process like that.

The ones who are doing enforcement are attached to units who investigate serious collisions. Any time there's serious personal injury or other extenuating factors, then it's the higher trained traffic, technically trained people who do those investigations. They're quite often also the ones who issue tickets and focus on enforcement.

Now, all officers do that. Any police officer has a right to do traffic enforcement; however, there are also aspects of policing where they're responding to calls and doing investigations and their mind and their focus is not on targeted approaches to traffic enforcement, strategic approaches to traffic enforcement with a goal of creating safer roadways. That's the traffic people who do that. They're also the ones who do investigations.

Having so many critical collisions, serious collisions in our highways – just look what happened over the last few months – ties up those resources. It's important to make sure – and I'm sure the minister has had discussions and I hope he has with the RCMP and the RNC in this area, to talk about how we have to slow speeds down.

There's a correlation between targeted enforcement, lowering collision rates. If you're lowering collision rates, you're making our highways safer. We also know that if you lower collision rates, then insurance rates hopefully will come down with that. You're doing something to reverse the trend of higher insurance rates.

People don't need higher insurance rates. The insurance companies in 2016 budget got hit with

a 2 per cent increase on their operations, because they pay a tax directly to the government on their sales. On their own sales and their own volume of business they pay a tax – I can't remember the name of it, but there's a tax on it and I think it's 2 per cent.

Consumers pay 15 per cent. I was talking to someone the other day, they said: Do we still pay 15 per cent HST on insurance? I said: No, you don't. Because it's not HST; it's actually a retail sales tax. So HST is a combination. Harmonized sales tax is a combination of taxes that are collected for the federal government and the province. The federal government gets them and they filter those provinces' share back to them. The retail sales tax or the tax on insurance in our province is 15 per cent; 100 per cent of that goes directly to the province.

It's important to take efforts to reduce the rate of insurance. I know that there are discussions ongoing right now. The government are having discussions right now about our insurance system in the province and how we make improvements to it. Through that process, I hope they give great opportunity to engage with a variety of stakeholders, some who believe the system we have now works but can work better and some who think we need a different system. I hope that they'll engage with all of them.

My point is that if we're going to do enforcement and there's targeted enforcement and the human resources and technical resources and the time on the street doing enforcement is available, then that slows vehicles down. The theory is it makes drivers safer, more cautious, more fearful that, oh, there's probably a police officer around, or I might get a ticket if I do this or I do something else.

Impaired driving is the same way, Mr. Speaker. People believe if there's a likelihood they might get stopped on the way home tonight, then hopefully they think about they're less likely to drink and drive. When we were in government, we changed the rules in this province to allow police officers to stop vehicles on the highway to check to make sure they're in compliance with the law.

It didn't exist before. Back in my time, we had to have a reason to stop a car, stop a truck or a

vehicle on the highway. Either they crossed over a line, they didn't use a proper indicator, they had a headlight out or tail light out or maybe it was the licence plate light out. You had to have some reason under law to stop them. We changed that legislation to allow police officers to stop vehicles to check to ensure that they're in compliance with the law. So an officer can stop a vehicle, I want to see your driver's licence, I want to see your registration, I want to see your proof of insurance and, at the same time, the officer can assess the driver to determine if there are any other factors that may be a concern to the officer.

That was done in no way as a revenue generator, but as a way to make our highways safer, to give policing a better tool and a broader range of authority. I remember there was a lot of talk here in the House – and, if I remember correctly, there were Members who actually voted against it because they felt that it could lead to an abuse of power by police. But it was done so that police could ensure people were in compliance.

The minister, in introduction to the bill today, talked at some length about impaired driving and changes they made to give better tools and to reduce the likelihood of impaired driving. I feel that they're all good, they're all steps, none of them will cure it all, but they are all steps to reduce impaired driving.

I can honestly say, Mr. Speaker, I would think that I probably charged hundreds of people with impaired driving or failing the breathalyzer and types of offences during my career. I spent lots of hours in the breathalyzer room and on paperwork and in court afterwards on people who were charged with impaired or impaired driving offences. Sometimes it was a refusal of a roadside test, sometimes a refusal of a breathalyzer, sometimes it was failing a breathalyzer and sometimes it was done through blood tests – which is a complicated process now, of course. You have to get warrants and there's a streamlined process to make that happen. The federal legislation, that comes under the *Criminal Code of Canada*.

But they're all steps in the right direction to improve the tools for police and also to make our highways safer. Because there's only one chance: When that car comes crashing down the

road on the highway, on the wrong side of the road, or fast-moving vehicles that weighs 2,000 or 3,000 or 4,000 or 5,000 pounds that are colliding head-on, there are going to be catastrophic results. Once that happens, it's impossible to take that back.

So all of those steps are in the right direction, but I'm not sure increasing the fine for failure to produce a vehicle licence – and I just use that as an example – is going to do anything to improve the safety on our highways.

Mr. Speaker, when we get to Committee, I'm going to ask about some of the fines, why they were changed the way they were. For example, slow driving – I mentioned that one – has been increased to \$100. Did the minister give consideration to make it higher? Why is slow driving – which the Minister of Transportation has recently spoken publicly about, a serious matter on our highways and the safety of our highways today. Why is that \$100 when failing to produce a vehicle licence, a registration licence, is the same fine? I don't think one can be compared to the other. I just use that as an example of some of the questions and discussion we may have when we get to Committee, Mr. Speaker.

So having said all that, I'm going to take my place. I thank the minister for making strides to try and improve safety on our highways. Like I said, we'll have some questions on it but, certainly, another small step in the right direction.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I am going to take just a few moments to speak to Bill 13. I think that these amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* are certainly very positive. I'd like to first begin not just by commending this minister, but there have been three ministers that have served in this portfolio in the last two years, including yourself, Mr. Speaker. You can say that I'm sucking up to the Speaker here, but

the fact is, including the current Minister of Municipal Affairs, we've had three ministers in this portfolio.

I mean it's not I think, unless you're in that portfolio, that you realize how large it is; it really does affect every Newfoundlander and Labradorian. It's all encompassing. It's very much an enforcement portfolio in many ways, enforcing legislation across this province.

I'd also like to thank the staff within the department who have been doing a tremendous amount of work. Just when you look at our legislative agenda, especially in the last two years, we've had significant number of pieces of legislation here in this House that has come from Service NL. So I think that's a credit to the ministers that have run this portfolio; I think it's a credit to the staff and the bureaucrats that work in this department.

I'd also like to credit our ministers because this speaks to a wider agenda that we have of road safety. This is just one piece of multiple pieces of legislation that have come to this House that are looking at improving the road system in our province, improving the safety of people that use the road system.

It's done in conjunction – again, Service NL is just one part and I've spoken about this before. In fact, I think I answered a question during Question Period recently where I said our Department of Justice, which handles enforcement in terms of our police forces, our RCMP and our RNC – when we look at Service NL that handles highway enforcement and administers the *Highway Traffic Act* and when we look at the Department of Transportation and Works and the work that they've done in improving the actual physical structure, the roads, I mean, just the amount of work that they've done and the changes that they've made to improve road quality in this province has been significant. All of that in conjunction, I think, is working towards making our roads safer.

Now, the fact is that no matter what you do, unfortunately, we deal with tragedies in this province when it comes to road safety. This is something that we've seen quite a bit of, unfortunately, during this past summer and the past number of months. It's something that

touches home to all of us. I think a lot of us have – again, where we have such a small province, if they are not directly connected to us, they are indirectly connected to us in some way, shape or form. Any step that we can take to improve road safety is something that I think is ever important, but it's taking on even a greater significance given what we've seen here in the last little while.

I thank the minister for bringing in this piece of legislation. I would point out to the general public, there's more coming. There's more legislation coming, more steps being taken.

What I want to speak about, because the fact is this *Highway Traffic Act* is enforced by members of the RNC and the RCMP. One of the things we talk about really is we talk about the enforcement side, we talk about a deterrent side, and one of the ways we deal with deterrents is by increasing the penalty, there's no doubt.

I heard at some point, and I don't think anybody was talking about this being used as a revenue generator. Look, if we want to get into the problems that we have in this province when it comes to our fiscal situation, you're certainly not going to make it up by increasing in revenue here. That's not, for even a second, what this is about.

What this is about is saying to drivers that driving – and this is something I preach about, especially when I talk to youth. I get to go to a lot of schools and it's a constant message that we put out there. It is a privilege; it is not a right. It's an absolute privilege. By doing so we need to lay out that there are strict penalties when you want to take this privilege and you want to abuse that privilege. We look at the steps we have done here. In fact, in many cases we were for a number of years on the low end and, by making the changes that we've done here today, I think we are putting us up in the median on a number of steps.

The minister has already taken steps to combat things like impaired driving. We've taken significant steps as a government to put in legislation and regulations that we think will make our roads safer. We have an issue in this province, as we do across Canada, but in this

province we have an issue when it comes to impaired drivers.

In fact, I just had a meeting – one thing I have done, I keep in constant contact with the RNC and the RCMP. We just had a meeting the other day because we're talking about road safety, talking about different campaigns. One of the things that blew my mind, I just found this out recently, and there are going to be more things coming out. It is not just Service NL; Justice is going to be taking steps in the near future to show that we're not just talking about safety – we're committed to taking action to improve safety.

One part of this is there has to be awareness amongst people that are using the roadway. They have to take responsibility as well. One of those things that blows my mind, Mr. Speaker, we used to have – we all know the buckle up campaign that was out there, signage was around. We had for a while, in the early 2000s, 98 per cent compliance with that, but when we see – and this is not related to the bill per se, but we're talking about the same subject here.

Right now, when it comes to a number of the accidents that we're dealing with, there's a 35 per cent rate of accidents where seat belts are not used or used appropriately. That's absolutely amazing. Thirty-five per cent of fatalities being caused are caused by people that are not buckling up or they're taking steps to not use it appropriately.

This just amazes me that somebody will take the effort of buckling up the seat behind them and not having it on in front of them. It's not even the laziness – and that's what it is, it's laziness. Either that or there's another word that's a big harsher. You know what, if you're not using it, I'm sorry, I can't help you. If you can't put it on in front of you, that's one thing, but to actually take the time to put it on behind you, not ahead of you, you're taking your own life into your hands. And not just that, you're putting other people at risk.

So, again, there's a responsibility here that we have to take and you're going to see a lot more coming out about this in the very near future. We'll get into other situations where people are doing things like the way they recline their seats

and they're sitting in their seats; again, not getting the proper use of the safety equipment that's in your vehicle.

There's a responsibility out there to use the car properly, to drive the car within the speed limit, to take steps here – when you look at obstructed windshields and we're talking about without proper equipment or improper construction. We're failing to comply with proper – and it's things like even keeping your licence on you. There's a reason that you have it, there's a reason that you have to show it. There's absolutely no reason not to have it with you.

What I would say is one of the things about police, we entrust them with great power and with that great power comes discretion. They have discretion and that's why it's not black and white, sometimes there is grey. We trust our police so much that we give them the discretion, as they should. That's what we want to see in our police forces, to use good judgment, proper information, knowledge. We have great police in this province, we have great police in this country and we give them that discretion.

Now, what I will say is we have a significant deterrent effect that we are adding here with this piece of legislation. Hopefully, people don't need to have this deterrent. There's a better way to spend your money than be spending it on this. It's avoidable, Mr. Speaker. Follow the law and you won't be paying it. Stay off your phone and you won't be paying it. Drive within the speed limit and you won't be paying it. If you're driving impaired, don't even get me started.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's right.

MR. A. PARSONS: Again, one of the big things we're going to see in this province very soon is we're going to see legislation – we're seeing it federally – when it comes to impaired driving as it relates to cannabis. It's going to be a huge shift in our public. I say to people, driving is a privilege and there's soon going to be legalization of cannabis. Well, there is no legalization of cannabis and driving. There's no combination. So people need to take that into effect. If you want to do both that's fine. You're soon going to have one taken away from you, and that's how we'll put it out there.

There is absolutely no tolerance. It's one thing to put your own life at risk, we don't want to see that, but when you're putting other people at risk – and don't just think about yourself. Think about your family, think about your friends, think about your co-workers. It's not just you. Then look at the other people who are out there and their family, their friends and their co-workers. As I said, we're a small enough province that one tragedy hits home with a number of us. One tragedy hits home.

We're taking a number of steps we think, and there's more to come hitting different areas. I'll be working with our police forces when we talk about other things we can do when it comes to strategic enforcement. I know our minister down there and the minister before him have done a great job when it comes to making investment into our roadways, something that has been needed and will continue to happen. There's been a lot done there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: There's a cumulative effect, there's a cumulative campaign and this is something that you're going to see. We're just getting started. It's going to continue to happen because at the end of day, you know what, we're very lucky to have a province where – it's a very big province. It's a very beautiful province. We have a lot of roadway, I think 10,000 kilometres, and our job is to make every one of those 10,000 kilometres as safe to drive on as possible.

I think this is a deterrent effect. I'll be supporting it. I know the Members on the other side will, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this today.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, given the hour of the day, I would move that we adjourn debate on Bill 13.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the House do now adjourn.

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

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I adjourn debate now, seconded by the Minister of Service NL, I would move that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

This House does now stand adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 o'clock.

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