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Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

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The House met at 2:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we start the proceedings today, I want to welcome some special guests to the gallery who are from my district. There are twenty-one Grade 10 students from Random Island Academy on Random Island. They are accompanied by their teacher Curtis Blackmore, and Kim Hansford who is driving the bus for them today.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have members' statements from the District of Port au Port; the Member for the District of Bonavista North; the Member for the District of St. John's West; the Member for the District of Kilbride; the Member for the District of Torngat Mountains; and the Member for the District of Bellevue.

The hon. the Member for the District of Port au Port.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this hon. House to congratulate the Stephenville Historical Society on their grand opening of the Regional Museum of Art and History this past summer.

The Regional Museum of Art and History tells the many stories of those who have come before us, what their lives were like and how their cultural values sustained a way of life on the West Coast of Newfoundland and Labrador. The museum highlights our Aboriginal history, the Harmon Air Force Base legacy, our railway and transportation history, and our French and Scottish ancestry.

Creating a space for our precious historical artifacts is important. These keepsakes will be preserved and displayed for enjoyment of all forever. We indeed have a proud heritage to be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join with me in congratulating the Stephenville Historical Society on preserving and showcasing our proud heritage and history. The Society is to be commended for their dedication and hard work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSS: I take great pleasure today, Mr. Speaker, in standing to recognize Reginald and Ethel Norris of Newtown.

In the spring of 1943, Reg was working at St. John's and had a very short turnaround at home in Newtown. Although he had made arrangements with the Church of England clergy from Badger's Quay, there was some inconvenience and his wedding had to be delayed. While walking home to Newtown, Reg dropped in on the United Church Parson in Wesleyville, and had a more agreeable conclusion.

On May 21, 1943, the bride, Ettie Tulk of Newtown, was delivered to Wesleyville aboard the Miss Newtown. It was a day that the groom says the sun could split the rocks. In the middle of the sunny afternoon, Reg and Ettie were united as husband and wife by the Reverend Clarke at the Jubilee United Church in Wesleyville.

This past winter, February 23, Reg turned ninety, and on August 5 this year Ettie will turn ninety as well. Ettie was delivered by a midwife in her family home. In fact, she still lives in that house today, ninety years later.

Honourable colleagues, please join me in wishing Reg and Ettie Norris a very happy 70th wedding anniversary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Cowan Heights Elementary School on its very successful Shave for the Brave event held in March.

Mr. Speaker, this was the school's third time doing this event and it has grown each year. This year children from Kindergarten to Grade 7 participated, along with a teacher and some parents as well. In total, Mr. Speaker, sixty-five heads were shaved.

Geoff Eaton, founder of Young Adult Cancer Canada was on hand to pass out yellow toques to all those who shaved, including the only girl participating this year – a Grade 1 student who donated her braids and then shaved her head. Mr. Eaton also presented a special toque to a very brave Grade 2 student of Cowan Heights Elementary who is a cancer survivor.

Mr. Speaker, Cowan Heights Elementary raised over \$17,500 at this year's event and I understand that many students have already committed to the school's fourth annual Shave for the Brave next year.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating the entire Cowan Heights Elementary School community on their tremendous success and continued commitment to Shave for the Brave.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. DINN: Mr. Speaker, the City of St. John's Youth of the Year Award was presented on Tuesday, May 7, 2013 during the Recreation Division's Annual Youth Week luncheon.

This year's recipient is Natasha Noel, a Level III student, Youth Action Committee member and class president at Bishop's College High School. One of her most active roles is Volunteer Co-ordinator for the Aquatic Therapy Program at Easter Seals Newfoundland and Labrador, where she also routinely volunteers as a coach for the Sledge Hockey League and Wheelchair Basketball Program. Natasha is very passionate about helping to provide a variety of therapeutic recreational activities for children and youth with physical disabilities.

Natasha has led fundraisers for local organizations like the Street Reach Program and Nature Conservancy of Canada. Her benevolent spirit, and continuously expanding desire to help others, makes this seventeen-year-old student truly remarkable.

I ask all hon. Members of this House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Natasha for being awarded the City of St. John's, 2013 Youth of the Year and to thank her for her many hours of dedicated volunteerism.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate Mrs. Ruth Flowers of Hopedale on receiving the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Award.

Mrs. Flowers has been a driving force for Aboriginal women's rights for well over forty years. She served as a town councillor and Mayor in Makkovik and Town Clerk in Hopedale, where she was instrumental in getting the RCMP services to many communities on the North Coast. She also played a major role in the

Labrador Inuit Association by serving as the President of the Women's Chapter.

Mrs. Flowers has countless awards of recognition to her credit, including the prestigious Order of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, Captain Sid Hynes and the good people at Canship were so impressed with her care and commitment that they flew her and her daughter to Seoul, South Korea to christen the tanker, the *M.V. Kometik*.

Mrs. Flowers now resides with her husband in the Inuit community of Hopedale.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Mrs. Ruth Flowers on receiving yet another award of recognition, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Award.

Mr. Speaker, there is a special place in my heart for Mrs. Ruth Flowers – she also happens to be my mom.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the 2013 graduating classes from the great District of Bellevue.

On May 3, 2013, I had the great privilege to attend the graduation of Fortune Bay Academy in St. Bernard's with seventeen graduates. On May 10 it was my pleasure to attend the graduation of Tricentia Academy in Arnold's Cove with thirty graduates; while my CA attended the graduation at St. Joseph's All Grade in Terrenceville where there were nine graduates.

On May 3 there were nine graduates from Swift Current; and on May 11 Crescent Collegiate from Blaketown had ninety-three students graduating.

As the young men and women adventure out into a world of much uncertainty I encourage them to evaluate their opportunities. The choice they make will shape the future they will have.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating the 2013 graduates of all five schools: Swift Current Academy, Fortune Bay Academy, Crescent Collegiate, St. Joseph's All Grade, and Tricentia Academy and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. F. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand today to announce an important step in strengthening the provincial government's relationship with Aboriginal people and organizations in the Province – the development of an Aboriginal Foundational Document for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, the final document will outline government's vision for a principles-based relationship built on respect, honour, and trust.

The Aboriginal Foundational Document will outline the provincial government's commitment to approaching Aboriginal issues in a strategic manner. It will also serve to highlight significant shared achievements resulting from strong partnerships with Aboriginal organizations in the Province.

Consultation will occur with provincial Aboriginal organizations to introduce the concept of the foundational document, discuss the draft document, and gather feedback. These consultations will allow for meaningful discussion that will help to inform the development of a final document and are expected to occur this summer.

We have made great strides, Mr. Speaker, toward strengthening our relationships with Aboriginal people and organizations, particularly over the past decade, through the negotiation of land claims, self-governing and other agreements, and our commitment to ensuring appropriate consultation and dialogue with Aboriginal organizations.

Our government has continued to maintain a strong government to government relationship with the Nunatsiavut Government and tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, Premier Dunderdale will be hosting a joint Cabinet meeting with members of the provincial government Cabinet, President Sarah Leo, and members of the Nunatsiavut Government Executive Council.

The development of an Aboriginal Foundational Document, in partnership with Aboriginal organizations in our Province, will help to establish a framework for respectful relationship between the provincial government and all Aboriginal people in Newfoundland and Labrador and a strategic approach to Aboriginal issues.

I look forward to the completion of the final document and to building an even stronger relationship with all Aboriginal people and organizations in our Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, I applaud any initiative that any government would take in strengthening relationships and opening dialogue with Aboriginal groups in our Province. I am hopeful that this venture will also include other Aboriginal groups like the Qalipu, Innu Nation, and NunatuKavut. I have certainly been an advocate for Aboriginal issues; I have certainly brought them forward in this House, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes, I think that this government has heard them for the first time.

I am happy to see that this government is moving, it is listening, Mr. Speaker, and I certainly wish all the best to your Executive Council for the Executive Council meetings tomorrow. Certainly I love to hear some forward movement on the issues. I also give my support to helping government in any way to make this initiative go forward. Again, I applaud this statement, it is a start, we will see what happens from there, and I wish all the best with the meetings tomorrow.

Thank you.

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement today. I welcome this foundational document initiative. I hope that it will strengthen relationships between government and the peoples of Labrador. I also see the government is planning consultations for the summer, as they say, to inform the document as well. They are going to be doing that in partnership with the Aboriginal organizations that are there.

I also hope the government will address the NunatuKavut nation as well and include them in the ongoing documentation of what is happening, and wish them all the best, too, at the same time, in this particular initiative.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to update this hon. House on recent advancements made to improve airstrip operations on the Coast of Labrador. An advanced Global Positioning System-based set of flight instrument procedures has now been developed and published for use by aircraft landing in Black Tickle, Cartwright, Makkovik, Nain, Natuashish, and Postville.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador engaged Genivar Inc. through a contract valued at approximately \$221,000 to develop procedures which will help improve landing frequency for aircrafts, reduce delays, cancellations, and diversions to alternate locations in poor weather conditions. The project developed a total of twenty-four instrument procedures, including twelve approach procedures and twelve departure procedures for the runways at each of the three Labrador communities.

Mr. Speaker, these instrument procedures were published by NAV CANADA on March 7 of this year. These improvements are welcomed by the aviation community as they ensure a safer environment for aircraft that provide private travel, supply shipment, and emergency services in the region.

Prior to these enhancements, pilots landing on these communities were required to break from cloud cover and align aircraft with the runway visually. These new instrument procedures developed by Genivar Inc. allow pilots to align the plane while still within cloud cover, providing for an easier landing process. Our government is helping improve aviation safety and accessibility of the transportation system for residents living in these remote communities along the Labrador Coast.

Airports in Charlottetown, Mary's Harbour, Port Hope Simpson, St. Lewis, and Williams

Harbour already have these advanced instrument procedures published for use and NAV CANADA is in the process of also designing procedures for Hopedale and Rigolet.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the importance of improving access for residents of coastal communities. These airport improvements are another example of the strategic investments being made to strengthen the overall transportation network throughout the Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, certainly any improvements in terms of navigational aid to the airstrips on the North Coast is something that is long overdue.

I have witnessed a number of aircraft accidents at the airstrip in Nain alone, Mr. Speaker. Along the Coast, there have been several tragedies to do with air navigation. Just this weekend, I was late getting back to St. John's because of weather conditions that could have been improved upon with the introduction of the technology that we have now.

I have seen, I think, in the 1990s at the height of mineral exploration, I was actually working as a monitor, and I recorded 180 aircraft takeoffs and landings in Nain on a single day. It is hard to believe, Mr. Speaker, but it is true.

Mr. Speaker, the best airstrip on the North Coast of Labrador was actually built in the 1950s at the height of the cold war and that was in Saglek, just north of Nain some 400 miles.

I applaud the minister on taking this initiative on and increasing navigational aids. There is more

to be done. I would love to see the day when we can have big –

MR. SPEAKER: I ask the member to complete his comments, please.

MR. EDMUNDS: – aircraft land on paved runways.

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister of an advance copy of his statement, as well. For the investment that government is doing, \$221,000, it is small measure, we know. There could be a lot more money that is sunk into the improvement of runways to raise the CAT ratings for some of these airports. We know that the runway visual rating can be low with regard to weather, but we can do more improvements with hard infrastructure investments, for example, that would be able to allow more flights to be landing at some of these airports and to be able to improve access.

I would like to remind the government, too, that \$221,000 right now is an important investment, but we could see more money.

MR. SPEAKER: I ask the member to conclude his comments, please.

MR. MURPHY: Thank you very much.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, last week I had the great privilege of opening the Provincial Theatre Arts Festival, and then attending many of the performances which took place in the host city of Corner Brook.

The talent and commitment displayed by the students, teachers and volunteers, both onstage and behind the scenes, was absolutely

incredible. I am always impressed by the quality of our school-based theatre productions, Mr. Speaker, and this year's festival did not disappoint.

On a personal note, Mr. Speaker, I have been attending them for about twenty years. I am always impressed with the students and the work that they do there.

As a government, we know that involvement in the arts helps students to discover and develop their artistic talent and creative skills. It helps to build confidence and self-esteem, and contributes to a student's overall personal development. The \$50,000 in annual support for the Provincial Theatre Arts Festival program is just one way in which our government is promoting the arts within our schools.

Mr. Speaker, in 2005, the provincial government introduced Cultural Connections, a program designed to support and enhance arts programming in our schools. Since that time, over \$17.4 million –

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. JACKMAN: Seventeen-point-four million dollars has been invested in musical equipment, art supplies, books –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: – music festivals, heritage fairs, and other programs and activities to benefit students and participating artists. That program, Mr. Speaker, did not exist before. We introduced it, and we continue to support it.

In addition, we have substantially increased the allocation of specialist teachers to the system over the years. This includes teachers for music, theatre, and art. We also introduced an allocation of specialist teachers at the primary and elementary level – an allocation which did not exist before, Mr. Speaker. Again, we introduced it. In fact, there will be 246 more specialist teachers in the education system in September than there would have been under the allocation model approved under the previous

Administration – and a great many of them are specialists in the fine arts. I believe that speaks to our commitment to the development of the whole child.

Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues in this House to join me in congratulating the organizers, participants, volunteers and audiences, who all contributed to making the 2013 Provincial Theatre Arts Festival a resounding success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the minister that certainly the arts are very important in providing a well-rounded education to our students. It is regrettable that so many of our students are not going to be able to take part in arts programs. Due to school closures by this government, they are going to have to be on school buses for an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening for ten hours a week, Mr. Speaker, when they could easily be taking advantage of arts programs if they were not being bused like cattle from one jurisdiction to another.

It is also regrettable that the minister responds with a Pavlovian response whenever he hears small class sizes. If you would reference the 2005 C.D. Howe paper – this government subscribes to C.D. Howe Institute – he would find out that only in the first few grades is small class size a big advantage. After the students are sufficiently socialized, those teachers can go to slightly larger classes. They can be freed up to provide more arts programming, more sports programming and more assistance to students who are struggling. The slavish adherence, a rubber stamp for students, simply does not work. We need a little more creativity in the education system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Thanks to the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I also extend congratulations to all who helped make the 2013 Provincial Theatre Arts Festival successful.

The minister is wrong on many things, but I have to admit that he is right when he says the current government introduced the Cultural Connections program.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: This year his government also cut the Cultural Connections program which will serve to diminish –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: - students' exposure to Newfoundland and Labrador music, art, culture, history and heritage. This government also cut tens of millions of dollars and made tens of millions of dollars in cuts which will result in fewer specialist teachers in music and in fine arts. I suggest the minister consider the full story the next time he gets up to make a statement.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday the Premier reacted to the Conservative Party's loss in Labrador by saying that it would not help relations with Ottawa and

that those relations are currently difficult. The Premier even admitted to a passive approach to Stephen Harper has not worked on issues like search and rescue but she has done nothing to change this approach.

I ask the Premier: Is it unrealistic to think that doing the same thing over and over again will produce different results, so why have you not changed your approach to Stephen Harper?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what approach would be suitable to the Leader of the Opposition. There certainly have been a number of approaches used in the last ten years, all of them roundly criticized by our colleagues opposite.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have an obligation and our government has an obligation to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and that is to represent their interests, not only here in the Province, but federally. We do not have a great deal of help with that. Presently, we do not have any MPs nor do we have any help from the Opposition MPs, nor do we have any help from the Opposition parties in this Legislature.

We take our obligation very seriously. We will work with what we have, and we will continue to advocate on behalf of the people of this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We understand this morning that Nova Scotian MP Peter MacKay will be our federal representative representing Newfoundland and Labrador in the Cabinet.

I ask the Premier: Did Prime Minister Stephen Harper consult with you on this appointment?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister did not consult with me on this appointment. He has no obligation to consult with me nor did he use any opportunity to consult with me. I do not wait for the Prime Minister to consult.

Mr. Speaker, as I said in my previous answer, our obligation on this side of the House, that we take very seriously, is to represent the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We will do that with or without the help of the Prime Minister, with or without the help of the Opposition parties, and with or without the help of the sitting MPs in Ottawa.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the Premier herself said it is important to have someone inside the tent. We do not have anybody inside this tent now with Nova Scotian Peter MacKay, I say, Mr. Speaker.

With four Conservative senators in Ottawa, with four in Ottawa already –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BALL: – will you now advocate to have one of those senators appointed to the federal Cabinet?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what the Leader of the Opposition's problem is. They were advocating and campaigning for the Liberal MP to be elected, the Liberal candidate to be elected in Labrador. Obviously they did not feel it was important to have somebody inside the tent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to criticize the people of Newfoundland or Labrador for exercising their franchise and electing people who they feel are best going to represent their interests. What I do commit to, to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, is that we will work with whatever we have to work with. While we have a voice and while we have strength in our bodies, whether we are in this House or outside, we will fight for Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: I say to the Premier, what we are looking for is someone who is from Newfoundland and Labrador to work on our behalf. We are looking for our representative, I say.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: The Premier has let Stephen Harper off with this trick before. We have seen this in the past. Appointing senators to the Cabinet is nothing new to the federal government, I say, Mr. Speaker. We have seen it from Quebec. We have seen where they have added senators to strengthen the Cabinet.

I ask the Premier: Will you finally stand up to Stephen Harper and advocate to have one of our four senators appointed to the Cabinet?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I do not need any advice from the Leader of the Opposition on standing up to Stephen Harper on behalf of the people in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is something he never does, Mr. Speaker. Even when he was in Ottawa, he did not even take the opportunity to meet with Stephen Harper's ministers to advocate for something he asked for in this House every day, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what he is concerned about and what his party is concerned about is what works for them, not for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BALL: Yesterday in this House the Premier talked about her travel plans. I can assure the Premier, we have met with federal Cabinet ministers and we are advocating for things on behalf of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I say to the Premier: Will you stand up for Newfoundland and Labrador and ask for one of our four senators to be appointed to that Cabinet?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this party goes to Labrador, speaks to the people in Labrador, and says vote for our Liberal candidate because they can represent your interests better in Ottawa in the Opposition benches than inside Stephen Harper's Cabinet. Then he has the face to come to this House of Assembly and argue that Newfoundland and Labrador is disadvantaged because we do not have a Cabinet representative.

This is the kind of hypocrisy we have come to expect from this party across the way, Mr. Speaker. We do not need to hear it. We are here to stand up for the rights of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and we will do it every day of the week.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If the Premier is sincerely standing up for Newfoundland and Labrador go ask Senator Marshall, go ask Senator Doyle, go ask Senator Wells, go ask Senator Manning, go ask Prime Minister Stephen Harper if he will allow one of those to be our representative, I say, Mr. Speaker.

Just yesterday, I watched the Premier as her caucus –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BALL: – gave themselves another standing ovation on this Budget 2013. Today, NAPE released a poll, and not surprising, 71 per cent opposed and 81 per cent believed that Budget cuts should be reviewed.

I ask the Premier: As you pat yourself on the back about Budget 2013, the vast majority of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians oppose this Budget; will you consult with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The accuracy of polls is something that is always in question, although there is always relevant information in the polls. What took place in BC last night certainly shows you the volatility of polls.

Mr. Speaker, one of the interesting responses that I saw in this poll when you go to the section called the economy, buried in the back, is that 62 per cent of the people feel that their personal or family situation is excellent or good right now, and 83 per cent feel that their personal or family situation is better or about the same it was five years ago. Eighty-eight per cent of the people feel their personal financial situation will be better or the same twelve months from now, including 88 per cent of union members.

I guess what I am saying, Mr. Peepers – Mr. Speaker - it is how you read the poll.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. KENNEDY: What did I say? Mr. Peepers?

I guess the point is, it is how you read the poll. You can interpret how you see it.

MR. SPEAKER: On that note, please be seated.

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, we have been saying for weeks that this government did not do proper consultations before bringing down Budget 2013. Cuts in this poll confirm that 84 per cent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians agree with us; proper consultations were not done. Failure to consult has become a hallmark of this government.

I ask the Premier: Why do you insist on cutting government off from the very people of

Newfoundland and Labrador, the people you are supposed to represent?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is an inherent problem with consulting people about a Budget, especially if you are making cuts. To think that you can go to a group of people and say we are going to cut your group by \$1 million and for them to agree. I am not really sure how you consult on a Budget other than to do what we did.

We did pre-Budget consultations throughout the Province, Mr. Speaker. We listened to what the people of the Province had to say. They said to us that health care services and education services were very important.

To point out another interesting thing about this poll is that 79 per cent of the people polled said they knew a little or nothing about the Budget. Polls are in the eyes of the beholder, Mr. Speaker, and you see that which you want to see.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister is right that 79 per cent of the people in Newfoundland and Labrador did not feel they had enough information on this. All on the backs of just spending \$150,000 on a PR campaign with a Toronto-based firm.

I say to the Premier, instead of spending money on the PR makeover, why don't you just talk and engage with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I indicated, the polls oftentimes are in the eyes of the beholder. One of the interesting points again on the economy is that 72 per cent of the people polled say the economy is better or the same than it was five years ago; and 70 per cent of the people polled say that the economy will be better or the same twelve months from now.

What this poll does, Mr. Speaker, it supports this government's economic platform; it supports the plan that we have. I think it is 68 per cent of the responders said that despite the cuts in public sector, the effect would be minor or have little impact on the person or family, Mr. Speaker.

This poll can support everything we are putting forward; it is how you look at it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I asked the Minister of Transportation and Works yesterday if he would live up his commitment from Estimates to release the Hatch Mott MacDonald report on the Corner Brook hospital. He stated there was no such thing in Hansard.

I would like to table for the House, Mr. Speaker, or give it to the minister, a copy of Estimates, the audio and written excerpt of the audio where the minister and his deputy would give me the report.

I ask the minister: Now would you live up to your commitment from Estimates and release the report you committed to, and your deputy minister?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I indicated yesterday, we receive many requests for information from members opposite and other persons as well. I indicated to him yesterday that we are considering the request that he made. We will do that, keeping in mind that the protection of personal and private information has to be reviewed and has to be looked at in keeping with the laws of the Province, as we would do with any type of request.

As I said, we are doing that. We are reviewing his request. We have to keep in mind the protection of individuals and also commercial sensitive information. When we complete that review, we will let him know.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, the minister yesterday said that this did not exist in Estimates.

I ask the minister: How can you expect to have confidence in this House when you, as a minister, make a commitment in this House of Assembly and you do not honour your commitment to the people of Western Newfoundland? Will the minister please live up to his commitment and table that report on the hospital in Western Newfoundland, please, on behalf of the people of Western Newfoundland?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There seems to be an echo here in the Chamber today, Mr. Speaker, because I seem to be hearing the same information coming from the opposite side over and over. I will review the information that he is tabling here today to see what he has before him. Again, I have indicated

yesterday and again here this afternoon that we are considering his request. We will keep in mind the requirements and parameters that we have to do, according to the laws of the Province, and as we do that we will consider his request.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Justice said that impacts on Aboriginal victims were considered before he made the drastic cuts to the Justice Department. However, we know that justice, as it relates to Aboriginal victims of crime, is a mess.

I ask the minister: How could you make further cuts to a system that is strained to the point that there is very limited protection for the victims of crime?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I stand to be corrected by Hansard, but I think what the member just said does not reflect what I said yesterday. If memory serves me, the Speaker asked for a question without preamble and a very short response. My recollection of the question is: In contemplating further budgetary decisions, will you think about Aboriginal rights and justice? I said yes to that.

I do not recall saying anything about, as what is referenced by the member in his preamble to that question.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, judges continuously defer court cases that impact victims of crime. They say it is in the interest of the court's time, but the reality is that it is due to a lack of court resources. On top of this, the

minister has cut back on circuit court visits throughout rural parts of our Province.

I ask the minister: When can we expect to see positive change in the area of Aboriginal justice, instead of regressive cuts?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would certainly invite the member to table any comments that he is attributing here today to any judges throughout the Province. I am not aware that any judge has made that comment, but I would certainly invite him to table it and share it with me, and I would be glad to follow up on it outside the House.

Back to the previous question, we have made significant investment in Justice in this Province across the entire spectrum of justice services. First and foremost, is providing safe communities and ensure a fair and representative justice system for all individuals, and that includes all those who live in Labrador and part of the Aboriginal community. We will continue to do that. We have made significant investments in Innu and Inuit court worker positions. We provide victim services and probation services, Aboriginal court interpreter, and the list goes on.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, while children in this Province pound the streets begging for education dollars, the minister defends the disgraced Eastern School District one-free drink policy. He also praises the equally disgraced board chair Milton Peach, who he appointed to the transition team.

I again ask the minister: Will he do the honourable thing and dismiss former Tory MHA Milton Peach from the Eastern School Board and drop him from the transition team?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I think there is a responsibility on us in this House to provide correct information. I read through Hansard yesterday, and the member gets up and throws out a piece of information that indicates Mr. Peach spent \$50,000. That is what he said. You can go through Hansard and see it. You throw that out there irresponsibly. I doubt very much if the member even knows the man, and he is damaging a person's reputation.

I, Sir, appreciate the work that the trustees of this Province do. I would ask him to go and confront each one of those and tell them they are not putting time, energy, and commitment into the job they do. They are doing it for the people of their Province. Mr. Speaker, it is shameful what this member is doing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. Barbe, time for a quick question please.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, the minister is often on record defending our school boards as democratically elected, which they are supposed to be.

MR. SPEAKER: A quick question, I ask the Member for St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT: Yet, the Tory transition team is not democratic. Instead, they are the new ayatollahs of education.

I ask the minister: Will he let democracy flower in our school system again by giving us back our elected boards before the 2015 provincial election?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education, for a quick response.

MR. JACKMAN: Talk about flowering, Mr. Speaker, it is time for the member to bloom.

Mr. Speaker, it is hard to decide. One minute they are saying we are controlling education from Confederation Building; the next minute he is telling us to interfere in the process. It is time for him to make up his mind, Mr. Speaker. To be quite honest with you, I do not think he can.

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

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

A 2009 joint government-Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro study on power alternatives for Coastal Labrador stated it was reasonable to confirm there were alternative energy resources that, under the right economic conditions, could be developed to reduce diesel generation in many communities. Mr. Speaker, less than six months ago, then Minister of Natural Resources told the media a report on small hydro developments for Coastal Labrador was weeks away.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Will she table that report?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Nalcor has been engaged for some time in a study to try to find alternative ways of providing energy to Coastal Labrador that will be cheaper for the people on the coast. We all know right now this government is providing many subsidies that are reducing the cost to the people on the coast so that what they pay is much less

than the actual cost of manufacturing and providing the power.

Right now, Hydro is looking at two small hydro projects that would possibly connect to some of the communities and eliminate diesel generation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MARSHALL: In addition to that, with respect to that study, there is more engineering that needs to be done and there is further consultation that is going to be done with stakeholders near those prospective sites. Mr. Speaker, there is also a wind study that is now in progress. We are looking at that alternative. That will (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

What I asked was: Could we have some of these reports tabled?

I ask the minister: How many studies and resource giveaways will need to happen before we live up to our obligations for the people of Coastal Labrador?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, as I just said, the hydro project is ongoing. Further engineering is being done, further consultations are being done. There is also a wind study in progress that is going to be gathering data over the next two years for the Towns of Hopedale, Cartwright, Nain, Makkovik and L'Anse au Loup.

We are also studying a large-scale diesel system to provide enough power to interconnect a cluster of communities in Southern Labrador. That work is ongoing. As soon as that work is completed we will be very happy to tell the people of this House, more importantly, the people of the Coast of Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

In government's disastrous 2013 Budget, we see the richest nickel mining company on earth get a \$177,000 gift from government to explore hydro potential for the Voisey's Bay mine, yet the people who live in the communities along the South Coast of Labrador, especially Black Tickle, get nothing.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: When will this government give timelines to the people of Coastal Labrador with regard to their energy needs?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, a bit of a reversal I say for the Leader of the NDP, who is always quite boastful of the role she played in the development of the Voisey's Bay mine, and the role she played on the environmental assessment panel, and the benefits that were negotiated for Labrador. Now, mind you, she omits that she agreed to a tailings pond in Labrador while she objected to one on the Island, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: She omits that piece, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we are really interested in mining developments in Labrador, not just because for their own sake of the benefits they bring to the people in terms of employment, Mr. Speaker, and the revenues they bring to the Treasury. Mr. Speaker, they also enable generation of electricity that works not only for them, but for the people of Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I once again remind the Premier of what I said. The largest mining company in the world that makes billions upon billions upon billions of dollars, that is what she is talking about.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, my next question is for the Premier.

The latest Harris-Decima poll contracted by NAPE reports that 71 per cent of people who know something about this year's Budget either oppose or strongly oppose it, and 81 per cent of those polled believe government should review all the cuts announced in the latest Budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Faced with the hard facts, will she now allow a proper review of the Budget cuts?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, the poll certainly contains relevant information, Mr. Speaker. We are aware of the political climate that exists. Quite frankly, we expected that there would be opposition to the Budget any time that there are job cuts.

One of the interesting comments is that 88 per cent of the people polled said that their personal financial situation will be better or the same twelve months from now, including 88 per cent of union members. I find that is an interesting statistic, Mr. Speaker. Then when we look at the economy, 72 per cent feel that the economy is better or the same than it was five years ago, and 70 per cent feel that the economy is better or will be the same twelve months from now.

Mr. Speaker, there is all kinds of information in the poll. There is information that can be looked at in different ways. It is quite startling when you see the number of people who knew a little or nothing about the Budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Harris/Decima poll shows that half of the people in Newfoundland and Labrador think that the brutal layoffs in the government's 2013 Budget were based on inaccurate data.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: How can she explain that half the population thinks that she and her government fired people they may not have had to fire?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess according to the polls with a 20 per cent lead twenty-eight days ago, the Liberals would not have a majority government in BC today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: Mr. Speaker, polls are something that is helpful to governments, to parties in assessing where they are going. There is information in here we will certainly look at. Again, I will use 50 per cent. Fifty per cent of those polled said the cuts will help reduce the deficit. Fifty per cent –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENNEDY: So cuts will reduce the deficit. Mr. Speaker, 83 per cent of the people said that their personal or family situation is better or the same than it was five years ago.

There is information in it. We have to take all of this with a grain of salt. I would certainly say to NAPE that you can spend your money better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, over half of the instructors at the Happy Valley-Goose Bay campus of the College of the North Atlantic have lost their jobs due to Budget cuts and the elimination of core training programs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: Why is the college cutting programs and laying off instructors, when it should instead be delivering training programs to people in Labrador so they can take advantage of job openings and economic development opportunities there?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, the College of the North Atlantic plays a very important role in the economy of this Province and preparing people to take the jobs that are necessary. As the economy changes, the programs that are offered at the College of the North Atlantic have to change as well.

Not just are programs eliminated in the Happy Valley campus, Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about the programs that have been added to the campus or will be added. We will be adding Environmental Monitor, Construction Craft Worker, Occupational Health and Safety, Truck Driver, Heavy Equipment. We will also be adding Cook and Carpenter.

Mr. Speaker, the addition of these courses is to help people of Labrador prepare for the jobs that will be available in Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Last year Hibernia Management and Development donated \$150,000 to College of the North Atlantic to purchase assistive technologies to support students with disabilities. Because of Budget funding cuts, the college has laid off most of the resource facilitators who were trained to use these donated resources.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: Can the minister then tell us how this is supposed to help students with disabilities to get the training they need to find decent employment?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, what I would like to just add to the previous question is that the

Opposition talks about the cuts. What they did not add was there was going to be eleven new instructors hired at the Happy Valley-Goose Bay campus.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to students with disabilities and the services that are offered, oftentimes the services are moved from one campus to another based on the needs of the students who attend that particular campus who require supports for persons with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, as students enrol or complete the programs, the number of services for people with disabilities changes based on that enrolment. What I can say confidently, Mr. Speaker, is that the supports offered to students with disabilities at the College of the North Atlantic will not be reduced.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the ferry replacement program's failure has led to more pressures on the present fleet of vessels operating around the Province. The latest news entails that the *Grace Sparkes* is out of service to Bell Islanders for at least another month.

Can the minister please tell this House and the people of Bell Island what the problem is?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On May 3, a mechanical issue was discovered on the *Grace Sparkes*, which has been providing supplementary assistance to the people of Bell Island while the *Beaumont Hamel* is in for a refit. It was immediately taken to dry dock in St. John's to undergo repairs. Many repairs have been identified. There are parts that are on

order that had to be manufactured, which is underway. It is being done as quickly as it can.

In the meantime the *Flanders* has been providing very good service to the people of Bell Island. Instead of making ten trips a day now, we have added extra staff and we have taken other arrangements to increase that to sixteen round trips a day so we can provide the best services we can to the people of Bell Island.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is no doubt that they have to go back and revisit the program.

Mr. Speaker, the *Apollo* is going to be doing the Straits run again this year but government is also going to be doing another RFP for service, leaving the possibility that we will be having the *Apollo* for another two years after that.

She is fifty years old, Mr. Speaker. The AG said in 2000 that ships over twenty-five years should be replaced.

Does this count for chartered vessels as well?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I should explain to the member opposite, when you want to secure and find new vessels, it takes a considerable time to do that. It can take two years to construct a new vessel anywhere in shipyards through the world, anywhere up to two years, sometimes a bit longer, sometimes a little bit shorter.

It is not like if you are to say, for example, I want to buy a new car or new taxi cab or

something, you can go down to a lot and buy one. It is not that easy, Mr. Speaker.

The ferry services in Newfoundland and Labrador are highly regulated by the federal government. They have very high standards and requirements. Vessels are very difficult to find. So we have a new process we are going through to provide a better service to the people of Labrador. We are in the tendering process for two new vessels, a new swing vessel, as well as a new vessel for the people of Fogo Island and Change Islands, and we will continue to make advances, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is time for a very quick question without preamble.

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, can the minister please provide an update to the progress of the ferry replacement program?

MR. SPEAKER: A quick response from the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank him for giving me the opportunity to continue where I was because we have a tender underway, a process underway, to secure two new vessels: a new forty-two meter swing vessel, as well as a new vessel to replace the *Winsor* on the Fogo Island-Change Islands run. That tender will close the end of this month. We look forward to reviewing those opportunities.

As well, we are entering into a long-term new process for the people of Labrador, which will have new vessels up there to provide better service.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

MR. KING: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: The Government House Leader, on a point of order.

MR. KING: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, in Question Period one of the members opposite, in posing a question in Education, referenced volunteer trustees, as well as a former member of the House, as an ayatollah, and I believe used it in a negative sense. In the negative sense, Mr. Speaker, ayatollah would reference violence, an individual who was connected with mass murder and death.

From our perspective, I believe it was a very inappropriate characterization, and I would ask the member to withdraw that particular characterization.

MR. SPEAKER: The Speaker will undertake a review of Hansard to see the comments that may have been made during Question Period.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

MR. SPEAKER: I would ask members if they would leave the Assembly quietly, please, I say to our guests.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Members must see the end is near.

In accordance with section 19(5)(a) of the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act, I hereby table minutes of the House of Assembly Management Commission meetings held on February 27, February 28, and March 20, 2013.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. KING: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice under Standing Order 11 that I shall move that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 16, 2013.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I give notice under Standing Order 11 that I shall move that the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. Thursday, May 16, 2013.

MR. SPEAKER: Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, I say to the member, have not been provided with detailed evidence that justifies government's decision to remove Adult Basic Education from College of the North Atlantic; and

WHEREAS residents of Newfoundland and Labrador are concerned that government's decision to remove Adult Basic Education from College of the North Atlantic will lead to a decline in already low provincial literacy rates; and

WHEREAS residents of Newfoundland and Labrador are concerned that government's decision will limit access to Adult Basic Education services in remote regions; and

WHEREAS residents of Newfoundland and Labrador are concerned there will be a decline in the availability of supports to assist Adult Basic Education learners; and

WHEREAS government's research shows that educational attainment is the most important determinant of earnings and sustained attachment to the labour market;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to provide the full details of the enrolment, graduation, and funding analysis that were carried out to justify –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: – the decision to cut Adult Basic Education programs at College of the North Atlantic.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, there are petitioners here from Gander, from Catalina, Bonavista, Bay Roberts, Rencontre East, Springdale, King's Point, and Burgeo. The member is asking about Labrador. Certainly, we have had lots of petitioners from Labrador, as well as the Island portion of the Province regarding this issue.

There have been two petitions presented here in the House of Assembly over the past number of weeks regarding Adult Basic Education. This one is asking for government to provide a more detailed rationale for its decision. That is not something we were able to get from the substituting minister, the Minister of Justice at the Estimates Committee when we were dealing with this particular Budget this year.

I think in the interest of transparency and fairness, it is only right that government provide a more thorough explanation. In fact, there was a letter to the editor. Perhaps the Member for Burin – Placentia West saw this yesterday.

There was a letter to the editor in the *Southern Gazette*, which services the Burin Peninsula, yesterday asking for government to do this very thing.

We know there are going to be, certainly quite possibly detrimental effects of privatizing this program and handing it over to the private sector at institutions that may or may not have the same level of service, the same level of quality as the College of the North Atlantic has. We also know there are a good number of instructors at College of the North Atlantic who teach in this program, who now live and work in rural Newfoundland, who will not be able to do that any further. I have corresponded with a number of individuals by e-mail.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member that his time has expired.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the Member for Burgeo – La Poile that he has a little better than a minute to deliver his petition.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker: WHEREAS students of the Adult Basic Education program at the College of the North Atlantic do not wish to attend privatized educational facilities; and

WHEREAS College of the North Atlantic has the most accredited Adult Basic Education program in Newfoundland and Labrador; and

WHEREAS students are concerned as to the availability of private institutions and whether or not they can accommodate additional students;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House to urge government to reverse this damaging decision to students and reinstate the Adult Basic Education programming at the College of the North Atlantic.

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

Mr. Speaker, I have been entering this petition a lot and that is because I have a lot of them. There are a lot of people affected by this short-sighted move.

Just so people out there realize, there are people out there watching these proceedings. They hear what the members in here are saying. I get e-mails on that.

I have one here that is commenting on statements made by members on the other side when they talk about Adult Basic Education. Some of the stuff they say here, they are using the terms trumpeting false assertions that private colleges have a higher success rate. It goes back into what we have been saying, the information going out is wrong. We need to rethink it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

MR. SPEAKER: This being Wednesday, Private Members' Day, it is 3:00 o'clock and I will now call upon the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island to introduce the motion on the Order Paper in his name.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure to be able to present the motion here:

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the establishment of the Task Force on Child Exploitation and Drugs, a joint effort between the RCMP and the RNC.

It is seconded by my hon. colleague from the District of Port au Port.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at this, we see coming out of this Budget another opportunity for us to invest back in, not only supporting the people, but particularly protecting those who can be very vulnerable in our society.

Mr. Speaker, what we have done here, we have taken the initiative to collaborate with two great entities in this Province, the RNC, the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, and the RCMP, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, to come together and look at using their resources, their expertise, their specialties, their history, and their collaborative efforts to make sure that we address a particular need here. That we address the benefits of supporting those who may be vulnerable, and how we are going to address future needs.

What we have done here, Mr. Speaker, is invest \$1 million directly through this Budget so that we can add additional resources and put the system in place that better benefits the people of this Province. We are going to be focusing on organized crime groups.

While our economy is booming, and while in past history we have been always a year or two behind having to deal with some of the negativities in society, the reality is with a global economy, with our notoriety on the global world, with technology, and with the advancements in organized crime, people are targeting what goes on in this Province. They are targeting the fact that we may have a vulnerable society here, and we may have people who can be exploited. So we want to make sure we get ahead of this.

While we are already doing reactive stuff and both police forces have been very diligently working in these areas, particularly around drug enforcement and dealing with the exploitation of citizens, particular children. We now want to be able to bring those expertise together under one unit, add additional resources to be able to now be proactive so we do not run into additional issues down the road that we are not ready for.

We want to be realistic around the fact that we know technology is changing. So we are going to have to evolve accordingly and try to stay ahead of it so that we can protect the people in our society. What we have done here, Mr. Speaker, is bring together the two forces. They have sat down and said we need to have an approach that works to the benefit of everybody

involved and continues the ultimate policing that we are already doing.

Mr. Speaker, there are three main elements when you come to policing in our society here. It is the traditional. On the streets, making sure people are safe as they move around. Making sure people feel comfortable in their own citizen homes, they are comfortable in dealing with their neighbours, and they are comfortable in being able to be free in our society.

There is also community policing, where we go out in the community. We engage the community. We ask the community to be a partner with us. We try to find out what is the best approach that we could use to make sure people are protected and that they feel part of the solution as we move things forward.

There is also intelligence-led policing where we look at who is out there, who are the people that we need to be watching for? Who are the ones that we cannot trust? The reality: There are bad guys out there; we need to protect our society against those bad guys. How do we do that? We have to gather the intelligence that is necessary to know what it is that they are trying to do, where they are going, who they have partnered with, what their philosophy is, and how they are going to try to change when we catch up to them to be able to get around what we are doing. That is part of this whole philosophy of what is going to be put in place.

This new task force will start addressing those issues. This task force was not taken lightly. As I mentioned earlier, we have two very unique police forces here doing similar work with different jurisdictions, yet they intertwine. Now it only makes sense that they come together and pool those resources. As a result when they sat down and this was decided and the Minister of Justice and his officials looked at it and talked to the two police forces, it was decided let's roll this out; how do we do it? The best way to do this is let's do it right.

The best way to do it right, let's go to other jurisdictions, other provinces. Let's look at what is happening where. Let's ask them what they

have done that worked. Let's ask them what stumbling blocks they ran into. Let's ask what cracks they have noticed since they put the programs in place that we now can fill before our program is up and running.

The two police forces travelled various parts of this Province, met with other police forces, met with other Ministers of Justice, met with other partners that are involved in dealing with issues like this, met and discussed with international police forces and other particular entities that would be of benefit when developing a task force that would address particularly around drug enforcement, proceeds of crime, and exploitation of children.

When they did that, Mr. Speaker, they came back and sat down and brought all their resources in the room from both forces and some of the other outside agencies that would know how you deal with these types of things. What they sat out then was the philosophy and the process that would be used.

Mr. Speaker, they are about to roll that out. They have now started to put in place the infrastructure. They will be adding additional resources, people with specialities in the IT industry, those who have a speciality in being able to deal with national and international police forces, those who will be able to deal with particular avenues of investigation.

Mr. Speaker, what they want to be able to do is identify where we are in the crime spree here and what it is that we are going to have to deal with. What they have identified – and while we were talking about this and we had a briefing on it, we had an open discussion with the members there. I had experienced my stories in my previous life of being at different conferences and I had spent nearly thirty years in working with youth at risk and child exploitation. We talked about where we were. For a number of years, Newfoundland was on the low end, and that was in a positive way. There was not a lot of gang activity. There was not a lot of infiltration by biker gangs. There was not as much exploitation of children because we were not on the radar.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this is one of the bad things that come with prosperity and I guess it comes with the global entity now, and the ability for the media to know who you are. As a result, we have people who are targeting this Province, and they are targeting some of the vulnerable people that we have here. They are targeting because it is all about finances. They want to be able to gain money for whatever crime that they are involved in.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: As a result, Mr. Speaker, we talked about how we have moved very quickly. At one point we were not even on the radar. Even the national stats would say Newfoundland does not register here, but in the last five years it started to move forward; in the last year-and-a-half, dramatically. We now know there is infiltration by other police forces into some of these biker gangs, some of these organized crime groups. Newfoundland and Labrador is actually being targeted, actually on their radar, as to how they organize and how they get some of their members down here and how they look at can they set up a legitimate business so they can move their money through it and gain through proceeds of crime.

As a result, this joint effort here between the two task forces and the Justice department will now start addressing that as a collaborative effort.

What we have looked at here, Mr. Speaker, is that there are many advantages to working together, as I mentioned earlier. You now cover not only this whole Province from the tip of Labrador to Conception Bay, but you also cover nationally and internationally because both of these police forces have the ability, have the resources, and have the contacts because of their former investigations and because of the officers that they have recruited over the years and the expertise and the training that they have had, to be able to use that expertise to make sure every resource is at their disposal to address certain issues relevant to this.

They want to enhance the relationship that they have with the communities. They want to be able to use agencies that are out there. We have the Department of Justice, we have the penitentiaries, and we have all the agencies who work with children who are exploited, or work in the areas of rehabilitation around drugs. We also have people who we know work in areas where there are questionable proceeds of crimes and how the money is being laundered. As a result here, all of that expertise will come together and they will be segregated so at the end of the day people will have a speciality to be able to address those types of issues.

We have a very strong policing model; we always have. For the last sixty years, Mr. Speaker, the RNC has been very active everywhere here – or the RCMP, I should say, has been very active here since Confederation. The RNC and the Rangers before that have been very active in community policing, very active in protecting our society. Again, that would continue.

The benefits here – we are going back and saying there are some jurisdictions. We are not the first and we are not the lead on this, but far from it are we the last. There are three other jurisdictions that are doing similar here. We have had the ability to gain from that, to be proactive, and move things forward. That is where we go as part of this.

It should be noted, this is not a pilot, Mr. Speaker, by no stretch. We want to make it clear to the people of this Province that we have invested over \$1 billion in police forces since this Administration came in. Every year since 2003, we have increased the amount of money we put into policing in this Province.

That shows the commitment of this Administration, this Premier, the Minister of Justice, and this caucus about protecting the citizens in this Province. We are now saying we can invest more money, get a better bang for our dollar, use the expertise we have, and make sure that we in the best efforts here address issues before they occur. That is where we have really gone.

This is going to be a permanent entity, Mr. Speaker. There will be additional officers dedicated to it. There will be all kinds of resources. It is a living entity. Every year it will be reviewed; it will be resourced accordingly. If it is identified that the trends have changed and there are more resources necessary, that will be all addressed. Both police forces then will use existing resources they have to make sure things can work in a very expeditious way.

They also want to really make sure that the victims themselves are also supported. That will be done with the partnerships that are going to be developed in the communities. There are a number of agencies there. One good thing about the police forces in this Province, they do not work in isolation. They understand the benefits of the community. They understand the benefits of agencies that are supported by government, supported by the private sector, and communities themselves. They understand the volunteer sector. They are going to use all of those resources. They are going to collaborate and engage all of them to make sure the citizens in this Province are protected, and particularly the ones who this program is going to be set up to address.

I would note and I would hope as this is being presented, discussed, and debated that the hon. members in the Opposition would support this wholeheartedly. I would think the Opposition Government House Leader, who noted that this is a great investment for the people of this Province, would get up and support that, and particularly, with his legal background, would see the benefits. He has worked in the legal profession. I expect nothing but a wholehearted, 100 per cent support in this House for this resolution.

I do want to stress, Mr. Speaker, that this is a proactive approach. We have taken the lead like we have on numerous programs and services. We want to be trend-setters. We want to be trend-setters not because it is stylish, but because it is the right thing to do and it benefits the people in this Province.

This investment is a start in making sure that we use the partnerships we have, and we resource them properly, so that we can address those particular needs. We know as we develop as an economic forecaster and we move forward, and the benefits of this Province from our financial investments are going to be amassed, that we know we are going to face some social issues. As part of that, we want to make sure they are less of a burden on the citizens here, and the fact that we have the resources to deal with those. That is where we are, Mr. Speaker.

Two police forces coming together, again, as I said earlier, is another opportunity not only to collaborate in this entity, but also to look at what other things they do here and how we can work together. It has to be kept in mind that criminals do not worry about jurisdictions. They do not stop at the border of Outer Ring Road because it is the RCMP's jurisdiction and change what they are doing. So now we have a better opportunity to share information, to know who the bad guys are, and to know who they are associated with. Those are the benefits we are going to do as we move this forward.

It is also going to look at how, Mr. Speaker, we are better going to be equipped to identify those on an international basis who may want to exploit the citizens in this Province. We now look at media and we are looking at social media and what impact that has. We now know people in various parts of this country and internationally are identifying particular people here. They are not only identifying victims; they are also identifying their partners in crime. It is very easy for them to check records. It is very easy for them to make contacts to identify who in here can be their avenue for exploitation. We have to be very cognizant of noting those now.

The fact is the two police forces in their own jurisdictions would have that information at their disposal. They would know who it is that are on their watch lists. They would know who could be drawn into from a national or an international crime spree. They would know exactly, Mr. Speaker, who it is that are at the most risk of being able to take advantage of the good citizens of this Province. That is why this collaboration

and this task force is going to be an extreme benefit to the people of this Province.

In talking to both police forces, they see the benefit to each other, too. This is not an, us and them. That is the one thing, and I really got that in the meeting we had with them. It was not an, us and them. It was the opposite. Normally in jurisdictions federally and provincially, there is always a little tug of war, but far from it. Not only was it very cordial and open, but it was very supportive in the sense that both realize they have specific talents and specific experiences. They want to build on that. They want to take that and learn from it, and share the resources they have.

Mr. Speaker, I see this as moving very quickly, but quickly in a sense that we do not have to spend time, a two to three or four-year process of recruiting new officers, training new officers, getting them familiar with the landscape, the demographics, the crime sprees, the partners, the agencies that we normally deal with and how the justice system works here. It is the opposite.

These are two entities that have already been doing an unbelievably positive job in dealing with issues like this who are now going to break down any barriers and break down the fences. There are no jurisdictions. What this is, is a common goal by two common agencies who have, with the support of this government and multiple agencies and organizations out there, come together and address the particular needs of supporting and protecting the citizens of this Province.

Mr. Speaker, from my perspective, it was an honour to be able to do this and put it forward. I know my colleague from Port au Port will speak very highly of that also.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to turn it over to somebody in the Opposition now to say some words about it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

I am happy to stand here today and speak to this private member's resolution. It is a very short one. It is a very simple one, but that makes it even easier to agree to and support.

I will be the first one to say that many of the PMRs that are entered in this House, especially the ones after the Budget, were very much back patting initiatives but this one I think is very honourable. It is the right move and it is the right step to take.

How can anyone not support the establishment of a Task Force on Child Exploitation and Drugs and a joint effort between the RCMP and RNC? I will say in my preface, very clearly we will be supporting this resolution. We think it is the right step to take.

I just want to take some time over the next fifteen minutes to speak to not only the resolution but what the resolution hopes to combat and the money that has been allotted, what that hopes to do. Also, maybe some background on justice and policing in the Province.

I think the first thing I like about this – again, this is nothing new. This was something that was announced pre Budget. There was a big splash about it, as there should be because it is good to see. These are major issues.

We hear about child exploitation, we all know of the drug issue. We hear about the prosperity in this Province. We hear about the Alberta money, the oil money, and the oil and gas money. With that come a lot of social ills. There are a lot of social ills that come with that. One of those is drugs. I have had a number of conversations with various members of the police forces and they tell us it is huge. It is absolutely huge. It is one of their biggest fears.

You hear about the drugs that may have been popular twenty to thirty years ago and now you

hear about what is popular in this Province. For a lot of us, it is names and terms and drugs that we have never heard of that are so scary. It is absolutely frightening when you see the effects that they have on people.

The thing about it, it is affecting all courses of society. It is affecting the vulnerable people. It is affecting lower-income people, but it is affecting people within the highest income brackets as well, because many of these people have the money, the income to support these habits.

One thing I would like to see and I will talk a bit more about this after. I guess the first issue is the combating of the problem on a law enforcement side. What I have done is I have had an opportunity to review the press releases and to review the information that was announced by the minister, by Chief Johnston, and by our Assistant Commissioner, Ms Hardy. I have had an opportunity to speak to both individuals, the best of the best, people that we are very proud of to have leading our two police forces in this Province.

I have more of a familiarity with the RCMP. Being from rural Newfoundland and Labrador, I always had the RCMP presence. I have especially had the good fortune, once I started practicing law, and especially now after being in politics, of speaking to members of the RNC. In fact, today I was down at the Adventist Church, along with the minister, and along with the Member for St. John's Centre to pay our respects on the Memorial Day. It was a great service. It was a nice way to thank not only our members who have passed in the line of duty but our members who still serve us every day.

What we have here is a million dollars that is allocated to the task force. It will be a joint effort. We are dealing with things like organized crime. Now, when we think about organized crime sometimes we have an antiquated notion of what organized crime is. A lot of us have had absolutely no exposure to it, but if you see some of the – I use the term, gangs. Gang implies something a bit different,

but these outfits, these operations are complex and they are coming from all over the world.

One only has to look at – actually, it was a report done by CBC's David Cochrane. I think he may have won an award for it. It was Operation Roadrunner, and just to see the coverage of that. I do not know if members in the House saw it, but just to see a plane landing on Bell Island and dropping off drugs and leaving again. It is actually mind blowing when you are watching this footage.

I thought it was great that the media took the time to do such a great report to show the average Joe and people, all of us, to see what is actually going on that we do not see, but the police see it. They are monitoring it. They are following it, and any more money that we can put into policing efforts to combat this, because it is not just the drugs. The drugs often tie into the other seedy aspects of our society.

There are a lot of issues we hear about that are associated with this. That is why, when you bring in the child exploitation, and the organized crime goes hand-in-hand with drugs. What this is leading to is – we talk about the people distributing and producing the drugs, that is one thing, but I have a big fear about the people who are consuming the drugs. The people consuming the drugs are often finding themselves in a lot of trouble, and it is not just in the justice system. It is people that even if they are not caught up in the justice system for the sale or the possession of illegal narcotics and drugs, they are people who are getting hooked, and that is where we need to continue on.

Now, government has made some steps in that direction. We have addiction centres coming. I believe there is one in Grand Falls-Windsor. I believe there is one in Carbonear.

AN HON. MEMBER: Harbour Grace.

MR. A. PARSONS: Harbour Grace, sorry; I get the districts confused sometimes.

These are steps in the right direction, but what I would always say – and I know government will

not confuse what I am saying here. They sometimes say we oppose for the sake of opposing. In this case, I am not opposing; I am saying let's continue to do more. Right now, when it comes to methadone, there is still a five-month waiting list when it comes to treatment; it is a five-month waiting list. I know we are working at it, but we cannot stop and we cannot settle until those wait-lists for treatment are reduced.

I do not know about other members, I would assume that they have, but when you are dealing with constituents who come in and they are trying to get in – out my way they go to Humberwood. I am sure a lot of members have had constituents who have had to go to Humberwood. Trying to get in there, the wait-list is huge.

We have to deal with these people. They are good people, but they have a problem and they are looking for help. The longer that it takes to address that problem, the longer their life is on hold and the longer they are unable to make any progress whatsoever or, in many cases, contribute – they cannot contribute.

I commend government's efforts here and anything we can do to support the police, peace officers, and the support staff in that effort that is great. I know government did not expect me to commend everything. I commend this, but I would say I still have concerns over the cuts from the past Budget, which this went hand in hand with it.

We had this announcement which was good, but we did see a \$3.8 million decrease in funding to the RCMP in the Budget. On one hand we are putting a task force together, which is good, but on the other hand we are seeing positions cut in the forces which is contradictory in many ways. We saw ten officers – again, I make a point that I made earlier in this House that I found out on the weekend. Sometimes this can get complicated because the RCMP is federal but we have a provincial contract with them so there are pots of money.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. A. PARSONS: What is going on is there are empty positions in the RCMP that are not cut, but there is no plan to fill them for the foreseeable future. That is what we are being told.

These members are not going to speak out. That is just against what they do. These guys, the rank and file, they do their job, they want their comrades, they want their brothers in arms to be there, but they cannot say what they want.

I put this out there. We have to make sure that we continue providing the resources, and there was a significant cut. The amount of money cut to Justice may not have been as high as other cuts, but the effects were certainly profound and felt by a lot of people. It did have a big effect. It certainly got a lot of notoriety and news.

It was not just officers, too. It was the civilian members and public service members in it. It is a lot of these people who are not on the ground doing the actual police work, but they are behind the scenes doing that critical work that contributes to investigations, that contributes to the logistics, and that contributes to the smooth running of an operation. We saw a significant decrease in funding to the RNC as well. Again, there were seventeen positions cut in the RNC. A lot of times we had information management, laboratory, clerks, and communications.

Do not confuse this with my support for the initiative that is being described in the private member's resolution. That is there and I support it wholeheartedly, but one cannot mistake the fact there were cuts to RNC, cuts to RCMP, and cuts in their ability to their jobs. That is both rural and urban. We are seeing that everywhere. We saw detachments cut. We saw positions cut.

The other thing I have a concern about is with this cut. We saw the Family Violence Intervention Court cut. That is one, but there was also another one that got some talk. Actually, I remember in the last Estimates I had

a conversation with the former Minister of Justice, and that was about the drug court.

Now, that is something that if you talk to a Crown attorney or if you talk to a defence attorney, we need to recognize the fact that not every offender is the same. A lot of these offenders, whether it be individuals with mental health issues or individuals with drug addiction issues, we have to recognize that when it comes to the court process and the sentencing. We have to recognize that. We do not need to waste our resources.

Sentencing has to take into account all the factors of the offender. The principles of sentencing demand that, and your background can play a role in how you are sentenced. It seems to me quite logical and evident that if somebody has a drug addiction issue or a mental health issue, and many times these go hand in hand, obviously, then we have to take that into account. There should be a court that can handle this.

The prosecutors, the Legal Aid people, and even private defence attorneys are saying, look, they are getting lost in the shuffle. They are getting lost in the shuffle here and we cannot have that. The easy thing to do is to just set out a punishment that might be house arrest or it might be incarceration. Incarceration is obviously needed and it is a good thing, but it is not always beneficial depending on the offender. We take something like house arrest. That is a great thing as well. Of course it might get a little harder with the probation officers being cut in many areas. A lot of times there may be concerns that come out of that. I hope not. I did have a good chat with the director of probation services who has assured me that service will be provided. I tend to believe what she said and I think she is a fine individual.

When we talk about the sentencing, we need to make sure the programs are there. Part of this drug issue, it is not just the deterrence and catching the people distributing it, it is treating the people who are the market. We have to look at the market for these drugs. We have to try to do whatever we can to make sure that the people

who are afflicted with these addictions can be given that treatment.

I urge government to continue on with the progress that they have made in that regard with the addiction centres. Let's not stop there; let's not rest on our laurels. Let's reduce the wait-list. Let's make sure that the funding to Justice does not get cut. Let's make sure that there is more for addiction services. With the prosperity that is driven by our oil and our gas, which we are all reaping the benefits of, come the downsides to that. We need to address the downsides to that as well.

I have taken the opportunity – I have looked over and I do not have enough time to talk about it all. Actually there was a Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights that dealt with The Sexual Exploitation of Children in Canada: the Need for National Action. It is something that we do not hear a lot about all the time but one case is too many – one case is way too many. When you do hear about it, it is often grotesque and sick. I have no sympathy for the offenders of this nature.

Anything we can do to increase the police presence and the police ability to prosecute and investigate these – and it goes into the minister's statement that was made yesterday about cyber-bullying. With the oncoming and the huge proliferation of online chats and social media, most parents do not know what their children are doing, who they are communicating with. It is scary.

My child is not old enough to do that yet, but many members here have children who are. It is absolutely frightening to think that our young ones are out there and can be stalked by predators. Anything we can do to look at that, I say you continue on with it.

In the interest of time, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this PMR. I look forward to the comments by other members, and I will take my seat at this time.

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNECT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am delighted to stand in this House this afternoon to second the motion that supports the establishment of a Task Force on Child Exploitation and Drugs, a joint effort between the RCMP and the RNC as put forth by my colleague, the hon. Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

Indeed, it is a privilege and an honour to stand today and speak on this motion. When you can bring forth a motion or resolution that helps and protects our people, it is indeed a good thing. Mr. Speaker, I cannot foresee any circumstance under which there will not be unanimous support for this private member's resolution.

Budget 2013, A Sound Plan, A Secure Future provides \$1 million to form a new integrated policing task force for the Province; a first, Mr. Speaker, in our Province's history. This is the first of its kind in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, there are many advantages of the two police forces working together. They will combine their efforts, their resources. This new force will have access to the whole Province, a free flow to protect the people from every corner of our Province. They will be able to work in the east, the west, the north and the south. They will be able to work in every community where need be. There will be no boundaries, Mr. Speaker, for this new task force.

This combined team, Mr. Speaker, will now be able to work on all related issues together rather than separately. They will combine their expertise and intelligence to combat crime in this Province. Their focus will be, and they will target on crimes together. The task force will investigate organized and serious crime, such as illegal drug activity and child exploitation.

This government is very committed in investing in our families and in our children and youth

because when we do this, Mr. Speaker, we are protecting the core values and we are setting priorities to mirror these needs. This government is committed to ensuring that all communities in our Province are safe for our families and our children. Ensuring the safety for our families and children is a key and very important priority for this government.

This government's commitment, Mr. Speaker, is to ensure that there is a secure environment which will enable our children and our grandchildren to prosper and to achieve all their goals and ambitions and to go on to become the next leaders of our communities. To help ensure that this is the case, Mr. Speaker, the task force we are creating will combine and consolidate resources from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RCMP, and the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, the RNC.

Each police force will bring its unique strengths and skills to this new force. This joint initiative, Mr. Speaker, this new creation between our two police forces in the Province, the RMCP and the RNC, together they will bring more than fifty police resources to their disposal. These resources, Mr. Speaker, will include crime analysis, investigators, computer forensic specialists, and any other specialized members of the RCMP and the RNC that are needed to combat crime in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, they will also have the capability and the capacity to reach out for assistance and extract resources from beyond our Province as well. The task force will be able to draw the expertise they need to effectively do their job from other enforcement and social agencies. They can also reach out to the CFSEU around the world. That is the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Units if needed.

This new task force, Mr. Speaker, will be an intelligent base entity that will serve to protect our people. Together, the RCMP and the RNC will form a major and necessary tool in the Province's fight against child exploitation, illegal drug trafficking, and organized crime.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said, there are many advantages of these two police forces working together. In fact, it is the current trend across the country that police forces consolidate or combine to facilitate their efforts to fight crime. In fact, our police forces made visits to other police detachments across Canada in such places as Toronto and Regina to seek out best practices and to tailor our task force to best fit our Province.

As my hon. colleague, the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island already said, Mr. Speaker, this is not a pilot project. This is not a one-year thing. This is a permanent entity for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is here to stay.

We expect, Mr. Speaker, great things from the experts of this task force. It is a proactive approach. We are protecting all residents, but especially the most vulnerable in our society. Newfoundland and Labrador is evolving and so, too, will crime evolve.

Mr. Speaker, combining our forces in this co-operative approach to community and family safety has proven to be a very successful model in other parts of Canada, particularly as the criminal landscape evolves and pushes beyond community and regional boundaries. The Province's two police services have worked together. In fact, many specialists are working now together, and successfully, I say, on matters and issues affecting our people to assure that our communities remain safe.

Mr. Speaker, this new and innovative combined task force, our new police team, will certainly bring a level of co-operation to an entirely new level here in our Province. I believe this model will be key. It will be a role model for other jurisdictions in the country to take heed to, and certainly learn from.

As we all know, Mr. Speaker, crime knows no boundaries. As this new task force will combine its resources, its knowledge, its innovation, and its determination to deal with the issues, this piece of work clearly spells out our total commitment to combat crime in Newfoundland

and Labrador. This task force will employ experienced police officers who have the skills already. Officers and resources will be pulled out of the existing resources from the RCMP and the RNC to make up this unit. In Newfoundland and Labrador we certainly have the best in our police forces.

They will work, Mr. Speaker, from their own dedicated facilities in order to enhance their ability to share intelligence and expertise to solve serious crime. We know this undertaking in the creation of this task force is huge and important. This undertaking will change the culture of law enforcement and criminal investigation in Newfoundland and Labrador forever, a change for the better.

Mr. Speaker, there have been significant investments in recent years to both the RCMP and the RNC. Just last year, we increased the funding to the RNC for the Internet Child Exploitation Unit. We announced funding for the new RNC headquarters which will open later this year. Also, a new collective agreement with the RNC was signed recently. With the RCMP, we just signed a twenty-year agreement that will see that force continue to work to protect the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. Our history with both police forces is proud. It is a proud history. A history that is second to none in this country.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution comes to the floor of this Legislature today as we celebrate National Police Week. We all know how respected members of our forces are in our communities, the invaluable work that they do to protect our interests. Every day, they go about protecting our communities so that we can continue to live in a free society. National Police Week is also a time and occasion to highlight, celebrate, and to say thank you to the police officers for the work they do to make our Province safer to live and work for our families and our children.

Our most valuable and our most important resource are our children and our grandchildren. Their protection, Mr. Speaker, is a key focus of this government. That is why we have put this

task force in place. With this initiative we are ensuring the protection, the safety, and the well-being of all of our children, our families, and our communities. I have no doubt that this establishment of this joint task force will have a major impact and will play a major role on reducing crime in our Province.

Mr. Speaker, that is our commitment to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, few crimes met with more revulsion in our society than the sexual exploitation of our children or anybody's children. My party will be wholeheartedly endorsing and supporting this private member's resolution.

We would like to speak to areas further that we feel that the Province could go. As I have said on occasion, it is the role of Opposition to criticize, to oppose, to support and when government does something right, maybe to enhance and push it further down the road, or sooner.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative will enhance the apprehension of people who commit offences against children. I think all of us share a common concern, a common point of view, and maybe a common experience when we see some of the ravages of child sex crimes.

I worked in the legal profession for a number of years. Colleagues of mine on the prosecutorial side – one particular individual was a prosecutor who was assigned to prosecute child sex crimes. There are few lines of work that will actually eat the individual, will destroy the prosecutor, more than day after day after day interviewing small children and their parents who have been sexually abused. Having to take these cases to trial and having to go to trial, maybe with a child

testifying from behind a screen, maybe with a child who is too nervous to testify, when you know the offence was committed and you know that the victim will suffer the scars of that offence for a long, long time to come.

People who are abused in various ways never really get over the nature of the abuse. One of the real tragedies about child sex crimes and child exploitation is that it is carried out primarily against little girls but there are also young boys who are sexually exploited. Generally, these offences are carried out by people that they know. These are not strangers. These are not people who snatch them in a shopping centre or who run off with them. These are often family members, friends, and acquaintances, people who gain their confidence and sexually abuse and exploit them.

Mr. Speaker, in many cases, by the time they reach the teenage years, particularly if the sexual abuse has been at home, those victims have no place to go and they hit the streets. When they hit the streets they are invariably drawn into the drug trade, invariably they are exploited by others, invariably they are pimped out and often they suffer short, unhappy, miserable lives.

Mr. Speaker, one of the areas where I wish that our Province would go, in addition to this, is if we were to follow the Manitoba blueprint. Manitoba introduced legislation in 2002 similar to this legislation. One of the guiding principles of Manitoba's sexual exploitation strategy was to ensure the participation and involvement of experiential youth and adults.

Mr. Speaker, this means that people who were victims of abuse themselves were involved in the strategy. I am not going to criticize the proposal that this has to do with apprehension, punishment, and ideally prevention or rehabilitation; but in the case of sexual predators, quite often there will be no rehabilitation. Quite often that person will need to be incarcerated, warehoused, and not permitted back to live among other people, to live among a normal society, because that person, in many cases, will always be a predator

simply waiting for an opportunity to take advantage of somebody else.

Mr. Speaker, one of the areas that I believe that society generally could go is that we could do more to educate our children in the younger years and the earlier years. I know we have an aversion to discuss things like sex and sexual exploitation and good touch, bad touch, and what is right and what is wrong, but many children grow up in homes and whatever home you grow up in, you assume that your home is the way that everybody's home is. In many cases, there are small children who grow up and they are being sexually abused at home. They do not know that everybody else's life is different; many other people's lives are different.

So, Mr. Speaker, at this point with the identification and apprehension, and ideally, conviction of people who were involved in sexual exploitation, if we could certainly maybe go downstream to earlier years and possibly in our schools that we could educate children at a younger age to know what is right and what is wrong, and who is it safe to go to, and who can you talk to so that the children are not so traumatized that they are afraid to speak to somebody. Is there somebody they can speak to? Is there somebody they can discuss this with?

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues in crime and prevention is that sometimes we look to apprehend people and to punish them, but the quickest way to reduce crime is the certainty of apprehension and how quick someone is dealt with.

The Minister of Justice will confirm that. Undoubtedly, he has referred to Ruby on Sentencing many, many times. It is the certainty of getting caught and how quick a person is dealt with. If there is little possibility of getting caught and this thing is going to be postponed and postponed and postponed and maybe it is going to fall off the rails and three or five years after a charge is laid, it takes that long to get something to trial, then there is much less deterrent; but if we are well equipped to identify,

apprehend, charge quickly, get matters on toward trial really quickly and then deal with offenders in a quick rate, it is much more likely that the rate of this type of crime or, in fact, any type of crime would be reduced.

People, when they are out waiting for a trial, are at high risk to offend, and judges can only do so much with the tools that we have available. Restraining orders do not mean much to someone who will be restrained. An amount for bail does not mean much to somebody who is simply waiting to reoffend, someone who is a predator by nature.

Mr. Speaker, there are some people who participate in crimes of opportunity. There are other people who simply look for opportunities. Some people need to be removed and incarcerated, away from society, but most of all the victims, for sure, need to be educated as soon as it is reasonably possible to do so, to identify when bad things are happening and someone to turn to so that the crimes do not continue and the crimes does not get worse.

The people who we see who are involved in various types of sexual exploitation in their teenage years generally did not start out in their teenage years being sexually exploited. Generally, they started out being sexually exploited at a much earlier age. Generally, by somebody that they trusted, somebody they loved, and somebody who they ought to have been protected by, not someone that they needed to be protected from.

Mr. Speaker, we will support this private member's resolution and certainly look forward to moving forward even more so in this particular area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

It is indeed a privilege to get up here today to speak about this motion brought forward by the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island. It is a very important motion and I think it is a motion that we should be able to get full support from this House because, like I said, it is so important and it is a great investment that our government is making here.

To listen to the different members across the way, even as unusual as it is to see the Member for St. Barbe support this government, it was nice to see what he did that time, support this bill, and see how important it is. Also, the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, who yesterday said he was not anti-everything, but I thought he was, today he even got up and said some good things about what we are doing with reference to this bill and money this government is investing.

It is a great opportunity for me, too, Mr. Speaker, to be able to get up here and talk about our police forces in this Province. I wanted to particularly today mention the RNC. I believe most of the members in this House will agree with me when I talk about our RNC officers. I know I am very proud of the force we have here. Like the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, he mainly dealt with the RCMP. In my taking, where I am from in the Northeast Avalon, we deal with the RNC.

The RNC officers who are there today, I know quite a number of them. I had the opportunity to play hockey with most of them. I see what they do in their communities. I see fellows like Eddie Oates, who is an inspector in the RNC right now. I know the time and devotion he does for kids in minor hockey, minor soccer, and different things he will go out and volunteer his time at. There are so many of them, the ones I know, fellows like Robert Bradbury, Tony Walsh, Warren Sullivan, and these fellows, who spend so much time with minor hockey. They are great leaders in our communities. The RNC are a very proud force. Our members of the RNC are great individuals and they give back to their communities as well.

Also today, Mr. Speaker, I look at some of the young members coming in the RNC. I know we

have a former member here in the House, the Minister of Transportation, who is an RNC officer and is well respected as he did a lot of volunteer work as councillor in CBS and a lot of volunteering in Ride for Dad and stuff like that he does. That is part of the RNC motive.

The young people coming in today, it is very interesting because I know my assistant, Barb, her two boys are in the RNC and one just recently got in last year, how difficult it is to get in today. Young people look at the profession and they look at it as a great profession. If there was something you wanted to do, that is a great profession you could have and be very proud to become RNC officers. I look at young people down our way who really want to get into the RNC because of the profession it is.

They look at the leaders who were in there in the past and they look at these fellows as role models. It is so good to see young people. I am not sure how many applications go in a year to try to apply to the RNC, but I know quite a number of them do. The young people have to qualify, they have to show their leadership skills, and they have to show how much they volunteer in their communities. It is not only a written test. It is what you do for your fellow person and how you are in your community, how you are respected in your community.

Mr. Speaker, I look at the overall investment that this government is doing when it comes to the Department of Justice. If you look, we spent this year in our Budget over \$240 million. Again, Justice is a huge department and there is a lot of different ways to invest your money, but in the RNC, just in salaries alone last year, we invested \$41 million. I would say well deserved salaries, too, Mr. Speaker.

As the Member for Port au Port mentioned about different things we are doing with our investments, this year we are going to invest \$46 million in total in the RNC, but it is for their new headquarters down there. I think it was a \$9 million investment that we put into their headquarters. So we are making sure that our RNC officers have the best possible facility and

also they are equipped as well as any force in this country.

Mr. Speaker, our total investment in police protection in the Province is huge: \$128 million. Like I said, I think most members of this House are very proud of the force that we have in the RNC and I know members who deal with the RCMP are very proud of the RMCP also.

My father was an RNC officer. He had many jobs, but he was an RNC officer and he always told a couple of stories about, when he grew up, different things that happened to him while he was an RNC officer. The funniest one he ever told me, he was down to St. Bon's and the Guards were playing at the old stadium. This guy went out and ran around the ice. Somebody told him you are going to have to go out and get him. He said every time he fell down the place went up. He got a standing ovation for buddy who was running away from him.

I am sure that times when he was an RNC officer, which was back in the 1950s and 1960s, how things have changed, how they have changed from what people have to deal with today. Back then, I am sure that it was a fight down in the bar on Water Street was probably the biggest thing that they had to deal with, or a disturbance, serious things, but not what our people have to deal with today. It is so important that we look at how we make sure that we have the best equipment and the best forces in place to combat the crime that is out there today.

Just another little stat about the RNC. This year there are 102 female officers and there are 307 male officers; average-wise, that is one of the highest in all of Canada. I commend the RNC and I commend the leadership of the RNC to make sure that we have more women in policing. It is very important that women do be involved in policing because one time I think it was mainly considered a male-dominated employer; but right now today, with 102 women in the RNC, I think that is just outstanding and I think it is a show of great leadership in the RNC.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at this new force that is being set up, it is a joint force. When I was looking at different things about it, I read about what the two leaders in – and it was really nice to see actually. I think it is a change, it is a shift when you see Chief Johnston and I think it is Commanding Officer, Assistant Commissioner is her title, Tracy Hardy. It is so nice to see these two forces working together. I do not believe it was always like that. I believe there was animosity or they did not work as good together before. I think it is really good.

With what is out there today you cannot be localized. We have to have the broad outlook. To have the RNC and the RCMP working together is huge. Like I said, the co-operation between these two forces makes everything work better. When two of these forces work better, it means our communities are going to be safer. That is the goal of what is happening here.

Mr. Speaker, this joint force that is going to be set up is going to have one inspector. As far as I know and from what I have understood so far, is the inspector say for two years will be from the RNC and then it will rotate to an inspector from the RCMP. Both forces will jointly have their person in charge, but they will do it on a two-year basis. That is what I understand.

There are going to be two constables. They are going to be mainly in charge of the proceeds of crime. They will be in charge of making sure – as the member also said, they were looking at all the monies and everything that was dropped off over on Bell Island. I am sure they will have a look at monies and everything, the proceeds that are coming in.

There are also two civilian analysts, and I guess they will check everything across the country to make sure we have best practices with everybody else. Then the very important part is two computer forensic people. They can go into computers if there is a threat out there that somebody is luring people on the Internet, which from what we see in the news these days happens quite a bit. Then we have two people there to look at that.

The other big thing about this unit, Mr. Speaker, is that this unit will not be housed at the RNC, nor will it be housed at the RCMP down in the White Hills. They will be off site. They are going to be in a separate area so the people will not be looking at this as an RNC thing or an RCMP. It will be a separate site that this place will take – the total investment this year is over \$1 million. It is \$1,038,000, which is a huge investment, and which is a great investment. Mr. Speaker, like I said, co-operation between the two units is great.

Mr. Speaker, we have been doing a lot. When you look at our Province and how things have come and where we have come from in the last number of years, our social – because this organized crime and these predators are out there and they are looking for the most vulnerable people in our society. It is very important that our government makes important investments in the social part of our society.

I look at what we do for the younger people in our society. I think the better we can get them educated, the more social programs we can put in place, the better it is for our children. We have done some great things in the last number of years. This year we are going to invest almost a billion dollars to support our children and families here in the Province.

I look at one of the big investments that we are doing this year, \$840 million just in education alone. When you look at education, Mr. Speaker, just look at what we have done with free books and no fees in the classrooms. That is so huge for children who are on the borderline. Whether I am going to stay in school or not going to stay in school, whether I have a chance to do well or whatever.

We are giving them all the opportunities to do the best they can, and this is so important because it is associated with crime. There is a very thin line that you can go across. You can fall one way or the other, and it is important they get the best that they can do.

Just to give you the drop out rates in 2003, people staying in classes were 85.1, today we

have 92.5. That is huge. That is because of the investments we are making in education. Another thing, just to show you how our children are becoming more educated, in 2003 the honour roll was basically 57 per cent. This year, the honour roll in school and academic is 70 per cent. Our investments in free books and our investments in education are paying off. It is huge.

Then we look at the opportunities they have in post-secondary. Some post-secondary investments we are doing. We have a freeze on tuition, with the lowest rates in all of Canada, huge investments.

Another department that is really important in what we do to help our children is the early detection of things that are happening in families and whatnot is in our Child, Youth and Family Service. This year, that department's investments, we are having \$172 million invested.

Mr. Speaker, we are investing in our young people. We are investing in our children, and it is so important that we do because these investments will pay off in the future. They are going to pay off because they have different opportunities. Opportunities have never been better in this Province than what they are today for our young people.

Investments we are making in education, and education is the key, because if a child sees they have opportunity to have a great future, a great job, then they are going to take that, but if that is not there for them there are other ways. That is when you see organized crime and stuff like this come in, drugs and everything else come in and affect our children. So, it is important that we make these investments.

The other investments we are really making too, Mr. Speaker, and one that I know everyone on this side of the House is very proud of and is recognized right across Canada, is our Poverty Reduction plan. Our Poverty Reduction plan is really paying off. It is paying off because we are supporting so many different individuals.

I recently went with a Parliamentary Secretary for Health down to Stella Burry. We saw the investments that we are making down there, people are working, they are getting jobs and people under Income Support were finding meaningful work. To see the faces and to see how they were so enthused with the money government was investing to make them have the opportunities that we all want to have. It is important investments that we are making. Like I said, our Poverty Reduction plan is recognized right across this country as one of the best in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I only have a short time left. I am just going to get back to talk –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. K. PARSONS: Yes, I could talk all night about this.

When you want to talk about our children and what we are doing to protect our children, you can have it any day at all because as far as I am concerned our children are our most important resource. Out of all the resources we have, there is no better resource in this Province than what we have in our children. Giving our children opportunities is the best we can do for our Province and the best we can do for our children.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, when you look at the investments that government is making, it is so important that we do invest in our children. It is very important, but, Mr. Speaker, this task force is a great opportunity to use our expertise. I think the hon. Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island used proactive. Proactive is so important.

We have to get ahead of it. We have to have a force in place. If they think they can set up business here in Newfoundland they are going to be sadly mistaken, because we are going to have new forces in place to combat anything that they want to put in place, and to be reactive.

This is it. This is what we are doing. We are investing to make sure that people do not affect our children. For organized crime to come here and think they are going to make a fortune on drugs and everything else, we are going to put a force in place that is going to say: No, don't set up in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

First of all, I would like to take a moment to express my condolences to the family of Judge Gordon Seabright and to acknowledge the great service that he provided to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Also, to the family of Ray Guy - Ray Guy, who has in fact gone to *That Far Greater Bay*; that was a wonderful book that he had written - our Ray Guy has gone off to a far greater bay, and I would like to thank him for taking us behind the curtain, for letting us see behind the curtain and to see the wizard there.

I also had the great privilege of attending a memorial for police and peacekeepers today at the Seventh Day Adventist Church. To be able to acknowledge the great sacrifice that our police and our peacekeepers provide to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, sometimes at great peril, at personal peril, often under great stressful conditions, I would like to acknowledge that sacrifice that they do make.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today to speak to the private member's resolution on the Task Force on Child Exploitation and Drugs. Before I get into the meat of that, I do want to make note that I was quite troubled when I received the resolution on a piece of paper that had scribbling on it and that had things crossed out, and that it was sent back and forth, Mr. Speaker, by private e-mails as opposed to the regular government e-

mail system. That has concerns. I am not quite sure why it was done this way, whether it was done in a panic because there was not enough time, or whether it was not planned, but I was very –

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

I would ask the member to speak to the private member's resolution.

The Member for St. John's Centre.

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think that this relates to the private member's resolution in that –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

No, the previous comments do not relate to the private member's resolution. I would ask the member to speak to the resolution.

The Member for St. John's Centre.

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

One of the things is that we know that this is an admirable task force, it is an admirable task force that has been presented to us. It is good to see that our law enforcement agencies are co-operating in a concerted effort to take on the increase in organizations engaged in sex trafficking, in child exploitation, and in drug trafficking.

These types of crimes are on the increase, as we know, and they are very complex. There are victims who are so very severely impacted by this, and we need this kind of working together with the RNC and with the RCMP task force. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we may also need a stronger justice and legal framework to deal with these criminal organizations. Aside from that, we may also need more awareness building and prevention initiatives in our communities. We definitely need more support services to help victims.

I would like to take a look at some of these aspects. One of the things about children who are exploited, they are often children who are quite vulnerable, who may not have the adequate support systems and oftentimes we know that drugs are at the heart of these crimes, in that children can be lured by drugs, children who are apprehended, who are trafficked – and trafficking is not necessarily where somebody is taken and stolen away. There are a number of definitions of human trafficking.

Manitoba has a very interesting definition. They say that human trafficking happens when someone makes a person they have abducted, recruited, transported or hidden, become involved in prostitution or another form of sexual exploitation, provide forced labour or services, or have an organ or tissue removed. Traffickers often control their victims through force, through the threat of force, through fraud, through deception, through intimidation, the abuse of power or a position of trust, or the repeated provision of a controlled substance like alcohol or drugs. Again, often it is the exploitation of some of the most vulnerable people in our society: our youth.

At the crux of this, Mr. Speaker, again is that it is often our most vulnerable youth and our most vulnerable children who are victims of exploitation. What makes them vulnerable? Poverty often goes hand in hand with this. The lack of adequate housing goes hand in hand with this. The lack of adequate education goes hand in hand with this.

When we look at some of our children who are most vulnerable, children who may be running away from an already abusive situation, children who have mental health issues who are self-medicating with street drugs, children who do not have a strong support system or a strong community system, they are the most vulnerable. We see kids who run away, we see kids who do not have adequate and safe housing, and we see kids who are not able to continue in the education system. Then they are at risk, Mr. Speaker, and that is one of the things that is at the crux of this. It is absolutely imperative for

our police services and for this task force to work with community experts.

I know that Assistant Commissioner Tracy Hardy and RNC Police Chief Robert Johnston would say that. They both have an incredible history of working with community groups, working in consultation, working hand in hand, and working in partnerships. This is what we need to see in this task force. At this point, we have not seen that.

We see that the hon. member who introduced the private member's resolution said there are going to be some partnerships with this. I believe the task force came as a result of an extensive community consultation and there was a report written on that community consultation. So, Mr. Speaker, I know that report has not been made public. I think I would like to see that report. I know my colleagues here in the House would like to see that report because that is one of the bases and foundations on which this task force is built.

It is very important to have the community at the table at the inception of this task force. We do not want to see this task force going off on its own without having the appropriate community members and stakeholders at the table to be part of the work of the task force.

One of the issues for children who are pulled into exploitation, for children who are exploited, is the fact if they want to escape there are no co-ordinated efforts. There is no co-ordinated place either within government or within the community to be able to look at the complex issues. Often children who are exploited are children who have severe trauma before they have been exploited and again it makes them very vulnerable; or once they have been exploited, if they want to get out. It is one thing for the police to be able to apprehend the offenders and to free children, but then the services that are needed in order to be able to keep children out of exploitation.

We see there are many children, young folks, who are on the streets because either their families or they themselves, if they have escaped

abusive situations, cannot afford housing. They do not have a safe place to go. They do not have a secure, affordable place to go, so they end up on the streets. They become vulnerable.

That is what we have to look at, Mr. Speaker. We do not have to just look at well there are bad guys out there who take advantage of our children. We have to look at the complex issues that make our children so vulnerable so that they are easier targets and that they are prey for exploitation.

The police and the communities have to work together on this issue. We have to look at preventative services. We have to look at specialized outreach services for people at risk. They have to be people who are trained and skilled. They have to be people who are trained and skilled and know how to work with children who have been traumatized. There is no specific service either within government or in the community that co-ordinates, that looks specifically at this specialized outreach to kids who have been exploited.

We know that Thrive does that, particularly through their Street Reach program and through the services that they offer to youth. They offer alternative educational services. They offer advocacy services, they offer drop-ins, and they also do an outreach. As does Choices. Choices have some incredible programs.

The Community Youth Network, which is throughout the Province, does incredible work, but they themselves are saying there is no locus. Nobody has a specific mandate to work with youth who have been exploited, to look at their educational needs, to look at their psychological needs, their rehabilitation needs and, Mr. Speaker, their housing needs.

If youth who have been exploited do not have a safe, affordable place to live, they cannot access programs. They cannot get back into education. We know that oftentimes youth who are being exploited are kids who have dropped out of school who have been harmed.

We also know, for instance, that the Murphy Centre here in St. John's – and there are some similar services across the Province – provide a fantastic service to children who are at risk. One of the factors of at risk is if you have not been able to complete your education. They have a wait-list of a few years to get into the Murphy Centre.

What we are seeing is that in order to be able to stem some of this child exploitation, yes, we have to go after the offenders and the exploiters. Thank goodness, we are going to have this joint task force. We also have to strengthen and empower our youth, particularly the ones who are at risk, who are vulnerable because that is who gets preyed on.

We know that most people who are at risk, and youth and young people who are at risk have been exploited and they have those education problems. We know as well that their trauma, the trauma that they have experienced in their lives informs their vulnerability. Once they have been exploited there is another layer of trauma. There is no specific trauma program within the Province that deals with the trauma that young people experience when they have been exploited.

I also heard the hon. member talk about the involvement of community groups, but what we have seen in the past while in particular with this Budget, Mr. Speaker, is that community groups are absolutely working with such minimal budgets, with such minimal resources. They are already stretched to the limit.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS ROGERS: They are already stretched to their limits. They work really hard to continue to educate themselves so they can provide the types of services that are needed by our exploited youth, but they cannot keep up with the demand. We know that some of these groups have experienced cutbacks in this Budget. Cutbacks to budgets that were already

at the breaking point, where they were providing the types of services that are needed by so many.

Again, everybody here in this House is acknowledging that this is a growing problem. We see that the drug trade is a growing problem. We see that there are different kinds of drugs that are a growing problem. So to rely specifically on voluntary groups is not enough, on the non-profit groups. We need more resources to help those groups do the work that is important and we know that education is the key.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear that this is not going to be just a pilot program, but that this will be an ongoing program. We know that is important, but again the issue of outreach is important, housing and intervention so that we can help prevent some of this and that we can help the youth who are being exploited.

Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely essential that the non-profit organizations who are working in the area of rehabilitation, who are working in the area of support, must be at the table and they must be at the table now, not down the road.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to take a few moments to speak to this important motion today. It is a very important motion, actually, Mr. Speaker. It is a significant investment we have made in the Province of more than \$1 million to support protecting children and making our communities safe.

As previous speakers have done, I want to take a moment first of all to recognize I, too, attended an event on Monday for National Police Week. They provided an opportunity for us to show our appreciation for all that police and peace officers

do to support us here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Of course, what we are talking about today is certainly an extension of our support.

The other thing I did have the great privilege of doing this morning was attending the International Police and Peace Officer Memorial service here in the city. It was an opportunity to take time to reflect upon and recognize the many police and peace officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty. I want to say here, as well, thanks to my colleagues from Burgeo – La Poile and St. John's Centre from the Opposition parties who also attended that event, along with many, many police and peace officers.

It was a great service, and one of those services, of course, that always has a little bit of class added to it by the participation of children. Today we were fortunate enough to have students there from Bishop Abraham Elementary school who did a tremendous job. I thank them for that. I will take the liberty here of saying on behalf of my colleagues from the House of Assembly in passing along thanks as well. I am sure my two colleagues would feel the same way.

Mr. Speaker, the motion we are talking about today is all about our government's focus on keeping our communities safe and protecting our children and our families. As you would recall, over the last number of Budgets, we have made considerable investment in all aspects of the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador.

On many occasions, you have heard the Premier and the Minister of Finance talk about the economic growth we have seen in this Province over the last number of years. We also recognize with economic growth in the Province comes a responsibility to address social issues. We have invested significantly in many aspects, social aspects, health care for example, education, and a number of key priorities for us, to try and reduce stress on families through eliminating school fees and those sorts of things.

Providing proper justice services, Mr. Speaker, is equally as important. A prime focus, in the

last Budget in particular, for us has always been and continues to be ensuring that we are making investments that provide for safety in our communities. All the time we are encouraging people to stay at home, to get jobs at home, to take advantage of the growing economy, but we also recognize that for young families who want to continue living in Newfoundland and Labrador, or who choose to come back, or who, for example, may be graduating from an educational institution and choose to stay here and live – whether it is in St. John's or rural Newfoundland and Labrador – we recognize that a key priority for those families is the safety and security of their children. No one wants to live in an area where their children and their families are at risk. We continue to make a number of policy changes and investments that support that.

This motion today – and I am pleased to hear, in particular, my colleague for Burgeo – La Poile speak to his support for the motion, an individual who has, obviously, lots of experience in the justice system. This motion is about investing resources to support resources that already exist. It talks about the creation of a new task force.

Many will recall not long ago the Premier and myself had the great opportunity to join with members of the RCMP and RNC – both of which, by the way, are doing exemplary work. I want to thank Chief Johnston and Commanding Officer Hardy of the RCMP for their efforts, not only on this particular initiative here but their efforts, in general, in working with the two police forces to keep people safe in Newfoundland and Labrador. When the occasion arises where someone breaks the law, certainly they take swift action.

We are very appreciative of that and very appreciative of the work that they do, not only in addressing criminals when criminal behaviour occurs but the work they do in trying to be preventative. I think of things like outreach in the school system, for example, where officers go in and they do not only the DARE program, but all kinds of other types of programs to educate our youth, I guess, would be one key

pillar of that, to make youth aware of what is out there. I know my own children – my son is in university now, but my son and my daughter went through it recently, a number of programs.

Probably the third point I think that is equally important, relative to making communities safe, is that the police presence in schools shows our youth, Mr. Speaker, that the police are our friends. The police are our friends; they are not our enemies. They are there to help us and support us.

As I said today in my comments, we invest heavily, through the leadership of the RNC and RCMP, to make sure that we have well-trained and well-qualified police officers. It is always our sincere hope that they never, ever have to use the training we provide them. Because when they are using the training and the expertise that they get through a number of these courses, it means that there is trouble out there. So we train them with hopes that they never have to use it.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, back to the presence in schools, more than anything, we want youth to be aware of what is happening around them and to feel comfortable that they can talk to members of our police force and confide in them because, quick frankly, we need our youth engaged. They are in a great position to be able to assist members of our police forces in preventing crime in many ways.

I thank the RNC and RCMP for what they have been doing in the past to try to keep our communities safe. Of course, the task force that we are talking about today and the initiative around promoting safer communities, what it entails on our part, first of all, is an investment of approximately \$1 million. We will see a number of new resources added to this independent task force. There will be an inspector, a number of constables added, some crime analysts; but all of this, Mr. Speaker, to give you the context, this is going to be a standalone unit. They will have their own facility. They will operate independent of the RCMP and the RNC – physically I mean, in terms of the physical plan. They will have their own physical space.

What is also important for people to understand with this investment and this announcement is these are only additional resources that we are going to be putting into this particular area of focus, but the RNC and RCMP today have an array of resources that they dedicated to the items that we have targeted in this particular task force. I am talking, of course, about organized crime, we are talking about the presence of drugs in our communities, and we are talking about the exploitation of our children.

In addition to the resources that a number of speakers have referenced already, both police forces will be merging the resources that they currently have. I believe it is going to give us a good presence in communities all across Newfoundland and Labrador. I think if we were able to share, people would be astonished at the level of intelligence that is currently going on in these areas at both the RNC and RCMP.

I have had some briefings myself and I have to tell you, some of it was very surprising that the level of detail that they are aware of in our communities and the level of illegal activity that is occurring and the actions that they are pursuing to try to curb that activity and bring people to justice.

The announcement, I believe, is a very positive announcement. I think it is one that is going to have a great impact on communities in the Province. I think it is one that we are going to be able to build upon for many years to come.

I know through recent discussions that both the RNC and RCMP have had individuals now who have attended meetings with other forces across Canada, where similar types of units already exist. So we are not really reinventing the wheel, Mr. Speaker. We are very much trying to take what we have here in the Province right now and we are trying to take what is happening in other provinces, where there are some great things happening around child exploitation and illegal drug activity and organized crime. We are trying to take the best of everything, if you will, and merge it together.

As I have always said a number of times, I think that we could not be in better hands than to have the RCMP and RNC leaders coming together with all of the expertise and experience that they have to pull this together and ensure that we have a cohesive, coherent group with a good, strong vision of what needs to be done throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that people out there are probably anxious to see what this is going to look like. I think it is fair to say that this is not going to be a splashy thing where you are going to see people pop up in communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KING: Quite the contrary, Mr. Speaker. What you are going to see here is see the use of considerable intelligence-based policing. You are going to see a lot of undercover work and you are going to see a lot of collaboration across communities and across the policing districts throughout the Province. The end result, Mr. Speaker, I believe, will be that we are going to be in a better position to impact what happens in schools, to impact what happens in communities and, in the bigger picture, to impact the kind of illegal activity that is infiltrating our Province.

As I said on a number of occasions in this House already, the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador is growing significantly, particularly here on the Northeast Avalon; but also, as the economy continues to grow, we see a changing of the types of people who are living here, more people moving in, more people from different parts of the world and different types of societies. We see the kinds of behaviours and the kinds of crimes being committed changing, Mr. Speaker.

It is a much different landscape today than we would have seen here probably as little time as three or four years ago. Of course, as the landscape changes and the challenges in the communities change so too must our policing service, our focus, and our ability to respond to

the change. This announcement, this task force, the creation of this task force, I believe, is a step in the right direction.

The other thing I just want to mention, Mr. Speaker, that our government has done relative to efforts to protect children. We often hear, when people stand in the House, sometimes people comment about children in particular. Sometimes the comments are not totally informed; they are not based on factual information. Sometimes people have not done an entire amount of research that might be required before making public commentary.

The protection of children has been a key for our government now perhaps as far back as maybe three or four years ago. It was our government that actually created the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, Mr. Speaker. That was a very decisive move to make, because we wanted to ensure that there was a strong focus in the Province on protecting our children, and ensuring that there was a co-ordinated effort. To make sure that we focus on our families, and in cases in communities where families were having issues or children were getting caught in the middle of things that we are able to respond.

We have done that, Mr. Speaker, in any number of ways. I remind people as we are talking about children, responding to some of the comments made by my colleague from the NDP, that children's issues, and particularly the abuse of children in this Province, it is mandatory reporting. By law, you have to report it.

As soon as we become aware of issues – we have resources at the Janeway, for example. We have resources in schools. We have private agencies that can provide counselling services. We have Victim Services, for example, and we have other kinds of specialized outreach services.

Depending on the nature of the challenge presented by individual children, it can be support services through the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services. It can be support services through the Department of Justice, or it can be outreach services, for

example, like provided by the organization called Choices for Youth right here in St. John's. They do some fabulous work in working with the youth of this Province.

One of the comments made earlier is that there is no one in the Province with a mandate to work with youth. I just wanted to make sure people understood that is not totally accurate. In fact, there are a number of organizations that have a strong mandate to work with the youth of this Province.

It is our government that has probably moved focus on youth further in the last three to five years than any other government in the history of our Province. Collectively, our Cabinet and our caucus recognized the importance of supporting our youth, and keeping our children and our families safe.

Mr. Speaker, as my time expires, I just want to say for the record that I will certainly be supporting this motion. I think it is a great investment for the communities of the Province. I thank my colleague for Burgeo – La Poile because I think he did explicitly say he would be supporting the motion.

So I thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this motion as well. It is an easy resolution to support. It is very straightforward and uncomplicated.

Two of the things that concern most neighbourhoods, I would say, Mr. Speaker, are the safety of children and the use of drugs. I can say that when you look at computer luring and computer exploitation of children today, it is becoming a very real issue. There are other forms of child exploitation as well. The coming together of both police forces to create a task force to fight child exploitation in the Province

is something I think that any and every citizen of the Province would applaud.

You look at the price to victims of child exploitation. Once a person becomes a victim of child exploitation that is something they will live with for the rest of their lives. Their families live with that for the rest of their lives. It is something that will have a cost on society and a cost on that particular family. We will probably never truly be able to stamp out child exploitation completely but any money, any resources, and any efforts government can make, and the RNC and the RCMP can make to fight child exploitation, I certainly applaud.

When you look at drugs and the cost to society of the drug issues that are taking place, we have seen a great deal of economic improvement in the City of St. John's, but with that obviously comes other issues, such as the increased use of drugs and the problems created with that. There are problems, Mr. Speaker, to businesses with crime, break-ins, armed robberies, and so on, as a result of individuals trying to come up with the money needed to buy the street drugs or other forms of drugs they are purchasing. You see break and entries in the homes and the cost to neighbourhoods, the fear that is created within neighbourhoods because of drug use and the sale of drugs within neighbourhoods, and properties that are being used for the sale of drugs.

So I support this bill. There is not much more that needs to be said on it. I think it is a good resolution. I think the money that was put forward by the Department of Justice to create the task force was a good investment and I support it fully.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will speak for a few minutes about this resolution before we conclude. I want to note and thank all the members who spoke so eloquently and so sincerely about supporting this

resolution, and that we dispelled the political affiliations and worried more about what was said by the Member for Cape St. Francis: This is about the children. This is about the young people. It is about doing the right thing. It is not about political barriers. It is not about how much we should invest one way or the other. It is about making sure our young people are taken care of and we have the supports there. That is a testament by all the speakers. We appreciate and thank everybody for that.

I would note a number of years ago, nearly twenty-five years ago, I had the privilege of looking and working on a research paper. It was called *The Social and Psychological Correlates of Youth at Risk*. I say this because it relates back to where we are now with the two police forces looking at other parts of the Province.

I had the privilege to go to Ontario and work with a childhood hero of mine, who happened at the time to be the Youth Commissioner for Ontario, which I guess was my equivalent in Newfoundland – and this was Ken Dryden. Ken Dryden, with a legal background, had been tasked for a year to look at the social and psychological correlates of youth at risk and what it meant for an economy, what it meant for their province.

When I look at it now, twenty-five years ago Ontario was where we are now. Very vibrant, bringing in a populous increase, very highly skilled, economy was booming, a lot of jobs, a lot of needs for improving the skilled trades, the education levels were high, and they still wanted to find out what was happening. Part of what was happening at the time was child exploitation, prostitution, use of drugs, addictions, all these issues, and they knew organized crime was becoming a very high factor in that province.

So, I had the privilege of sitting down with him for a number of days and going through his research and the team that he had so that we would be better equipped when we came back here. The correlates are identical to where we are right now. It was looking at the economy, good and bad. When the economy is booming,

you have issues, because you are attracting an element that you do not want because they see a financial benefit. When the economy is bad, people struggle, and as a result, people make some bad choices, or people do not have the resources to be able to move in a positive way.

We look at education. When the economy is booming, sometimes people leave early because they can jump right into the workforce. Unfortunately, that has a negative impact when the economy changes and we need the skilled trades. Also, it is an opportunity then to enhance the skilled trades by getting people into higher-paid positions so they are more confident in what they do and they have the resources to do the things that are positive.

Support services: We are at a point now that you need support services; one, so that people will have the proper resources, and the proper identity, and the proper supports, particularly around young people. In this Province right now, the investments that we have made over the last number of years to support children, to steer them in the right direction, what we have invested in our education system, what we have invested in the Department of Child Youth and Family Services, what we have invested in our youth programs, particularly around mentoring programs like Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Guides and Scouts, our community youth networks who have, as a primary objective, been educating young people about some of the challenges in life particularly around drugs, around prostitution, about wrong choices – we have a lot of positive things there.

One of the big key factors that we were identified from the Ontario study, which, in turn, we identified also, was self-esteem. Kids who are better equipped, kids who are confident about what they do, make better decisions. They stay away from the negative connotations in life and make sure that they also influence their friends to make the right choices, and we need to be able to move things like that.

The programs and services that we have been offering to the young people in this Province, again we talk about the DARE program, we talk

about all the initiatives that go on in the school system. I had the privilege this morning to represent the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services out at the family resource one-year anniversary in Conception Bay South. I saw all the young people and the parents there and the programs and services they were offering to kids from birth to six years of age.

You could see that these kids are going to get the right path and the right supports. You could see the engagement by parents. Some parents themselves who struggle with certain things in their lives, you could tell that, but knew that they wanted their kids to be able to move forward. We, as an Administration, and our society and all the other support people there and the partners that were there wanted to make sure that all those supports were put in place.

Some of the other things about opportunities – and everything I just mentioned is about the opportunities that we are supplying for young people and the people who monitor and provide those resources to the people in our Province here, to make sure those young people are given that. Role models, second to none. You see our URock Awards, how many young people are so good at what they do, and that is why we wanted to move things forward.

Mr. Speaker, I say that so that it outlines the fact that we now have another resource that can deal with that. We can make sure that everything that we put in place coincides and complements the fact that we have a police task force that will identify and prevent, as I said earlier, the bad guys from getting at our most vulnerable, particularly those kids and those who may have some addiction issues.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I once again would like to thank all the speakers here earlier and close my comments by saying this is a good day for policing in our Province, it is a good day for protecting our children, and it is a good day for all parties to be supportive.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Is the House ready for the question?

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This being Wednesday, in accordance with Standing Order 9, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, at 1:30 p.m.