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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.

Today before we start proceedings, I want to acknowledge some guests in our galleries. We have Ms Emma Sharkey, provincial co-ordinator of the Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, together with Debbie and Philip Hibbs of Conception Bay South.

Welcome to our galleries.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have members' statements from the Member for the District of Bellevue; the Member for the District of Harbour Main; the Member for the District of Bay Verte – Springdale; the Member for the District of Bay of Islands; the Member for the District of St. John's North; and the Member for the District of Mount Pearl South.

The hon. the Member for the District of Bellevue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the Town of Come By Chance on winning an award for Municipal Government Carbon Footprint Challenge Contest. Each winner proposed innovative ways to save energy, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce their own operating costs.

These ideas reflect responsible decisions and are in line with government commitment to plan and prepare for climate change events.

The Town of Come By Chance committed to increase the number of recycling bins in

municipal buildings, installing energy efficient lighting, and promoting energy efficient driving habits.

The Town of Come By Chance, along with the Towns of Burin and Wabush received a \$5,000 award for their proposed innovative ways by a municipal government.

Everyone has a part to play in tackling climate change and I would like to congratulate all the communities that took part in this challenge. These winners are setting a great example and I encourage all municipal leaders to adopt these initiatives for their future.

I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating the Town of Come By Chance in taking this initiative and winning this award.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HEDDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure I rise in this hon. House to congratulate the Town of Holyrood on receiving the Torngat Municipal Achievement Award for its exemplary efforts and innovation in economic development at the Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador Annual Convention on November 9, 2013.

At the root of Holyrood's economic development strategies is its recently launched Oceans Holyrood Initiative, OHI. OHI is a regionally-focused economic diversification initiative and its mission is to foster, enable and accelerate an oceans industries community of practice in the Holyrood area of Conception Bay.

Underpinning OHI's early successes is the visual amount of ocean technology development and testing as well as offshore safety and survival training happening in Holyrood harbour

which is being conducted by the Marine Institute of Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join with me in congratulating Mayor Gary Goobie, councillors and staff with the Town of Holyrood on winning this prestigious award.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Baie Verte – Springdale.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the outstanding accomplishments of the Valmont Academy Viking's female softball and soccer teams.

Mr. Speaker, on October 5 and October 12 respectively, they captured the goal medal in both provincial 2A school sports Newfoundland and Labrador championships. To seize the softball title, Valmont out hustled Dunne Memorial by a 9 to 1 score.

In the soccer championship game, they squeezed by Belanger Memorial, posting a 2 to 1 victory. Both teams, which were comprised of mostly the same athletes, are to be commended for their team play, their strong work ethic, and their undying dedication.

In addition, Coach Tanya Warford, assistants Drake Noble and Adam Matthews are to be applauded for the invaluable contributions. Furthermore, congratulations to Brittany Andrews for receiving the most sports minded award in the softball tournament and to Natalie Burt in the soccer tournament.

Please join me in congratulating the Valmont Academy girls' softball and soccer teams for their outstanding achievements and to wish them every success in their quest for three titles in a row.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize a group of athletes from Templeton Academy in Meadows.

On the weekend of November 2-3, the Templeton Tigers volleyball team participated in the Volleyfest tournament held in St. John's, playing in the B Division, Tier 2. Thirty teams from all over the Province competed in the tournament. The Tigers played Roncalli in the semi-finals and in the final game they defeated Gonzaga High in both sets to win the match.

Mr. Speaker, this past weekend the Tigers competed in the Western Regional Tournament held in Piccadilly against three other high school teams, and again they won gold and earned the right to move on to the provincial championships, which will be held in Avondale at the end of November.

Under the direction and guidance of their coach, Jamie Brake, these players exemplified true sportsmanship and are great representatives of Templeton Academy.

Members of the Templeton Tigers team include: Thomas Lovell, Mitchell Park, Patrick Park, Wilfred Bellows, Daniel Lawrence, Andrew Kendell, Cody Otto, Adam Blanchard, and Kyle Blanchard.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in extending congratulations to the Templeton Tigers volleyball team and wish them every success in their upcoming competitions at the provincial tournament.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House today to recognize a resident of St. John's North whose spirit of volunteerism truly surpasses the ordinary.

Mr. Al Dunphy has lived in the Rabbittown neighbourhood for over forty years, and he has been actively involved with the Rabbittown Community Centre for the past decade.

Al helps out where and whenever he can by lending an eager hand. When he is not participating in the Rabbittown Community Centre's programs, Al regularly finds opportunities to assist with them. He frequently pitches in by helping with the preparation, the set-up and take-down of the community centre's special events.

The staff at the Rabbittown Community Centre tell me Al is a tremendous support to them, and they are looking forward to his continued service to the Rabbittown community for many years to come.

This past year, Al Dunphy received the Volunteer of the Year Award from the Rabbittown Community Centre. This was in recognition of his ongoing contributions to the Rabbittown community and the important work of the community centre itself.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Mr. Al Dunphy on being recognized for his exemplary volunteer work.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in this hon. House to recognize an outstanding young man in my district. Daniel Kelloway graduated in 2012 from O'Donel High School with an Honours Late French Immersion Diploma, and thirteen years of perfect attendance.

Daniel has been invited to join Simon Fraser University in January to complete his studies and compete in the NCAA in track and field. He will be receiving an academic scholarship based on his current 3.7 GPA at Memorial, and an athletic scholarship based on his record-setting year.

Daniel broke every provincial sprint record in both the junior and senior divisions, making his seven records in one season the most by a single athlete in a season. He also received the Premier's Athletic Award and a Sports Newfoundland and Labrador Scholarship in 2012.

Daniel was the Atlantic 400-metre champion and is the sixth ranked 400-metre runner in the country. He narrowly missed a bronze medal in the 400-metre sprint at the Canada Summer Games in Sherbrooke, Quebec by 1/1000 of a second. He will be the fastest 400-metre runner at Simon Fraser, and will surely make an impact with his NCAA division school while proudly representing Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would ask all members of this hon. House to join me in offering Daniel our congratulations on his tremendous accomplishments, and wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to recognize today as National Day of Remembrance for Road Crash Victims. Today we pay tribute to the lives of loved ones lost or those seriously injured on our Province's roadways.

National Day of Remembrance for Road Crash Victims also provides an opportunity to raise awareness of road safety, and the true consequences of dangerous driving practices. I urge all hon. members to join me in encouraging Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to reflect upon the impact of unsafe driving habits, and to reflect on ways to make road travel safer for their families and communities.

This government is committed to improving safety in our roadways. We have maintained that commitment with our work in bringing forward various enhancements and updates to the Highway Traffic Act.

Mr. Speaker, this week I was pleased to bring forward amendments to the act to protect enforcement, emergency, and service personnel at roadside. Drivers approaching these workers must slow down and move over to give a wide berth for the safety of those working. This will have a major impact on the risks faced by these individuals.

In addition, tractors and other slow-moving vehicles will be prohibited from travelling on highways where the speed limit is greater than eighty kilometres per hour, reducing the occurrence of potentially dangerous scenarios caused by interrupting the flow of fast-moving traffic.

Mr. Speaker, if we take it upon ourselves to affect positive change and put forward a culture of greater road safety in our Province, we can most certainly make a difference. By taking the time to plan our trips, eliminating distractions, and driving more defensively, we are taking important steps toward saving lives on our roads.

In memory of those lost or seriously injured, I urge all drivers in Newfoundland and Labrador to look at their own habits. Please slow down, buckle up, and watch the road ahead, and never drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The life you save may be your own or a loved one's.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, we also pay tribute today to those who have tragically lost their lives on our highways and our roads. All of us have been affected in one way or another by tragedies that occur on our roads and highways by different kinds of motorized vehicles, including ATVs, snowmobiles, and automobiles. It was great to see legislation that strengthened the Highway Traffic Act aimed at making our highways safer for the travelling public.

Mr. Speaker, I find it somewhat ironic that we are here today honouring the victims of highway tragedies and talking about making our highways safer when only yesterday this government shot down my colleague, the Member for St. John's South, for suggesting that they consider authorizing the use of photo radar to control speeding. Speeding remains one of the leading causes of accidents and everything possible should be done to implement traffic-calming systems, including photo radar.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement today. Road safety is everyone's responsibility, but there are things government must do to help keep people safe on our highways.

Passing move-over legislation the other day, and particularly in this session of the (inaudible) committee, is a good move but there are too many roads in this Province in terrible shape, forcing drivers to navigate everything from

potholes, washouts, eroded shoulders. Yes, we are still dealing with a high number of impaired drivers as well as distracted drivers out there. That says a lot about getting the need for more policing out there.

Other road hazards include changing weather conditions. It is important for drivers to help keep this in mind whenever they venture out, especially on days like today and tomorrow where there is heavy snow in the forecast over on the West Coast.

We also remember those whose lives were lost on our highways this day, and our condolences to their families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today in this hon. House to recognize National Child Day, which takes place annually on November 20. On National Child Day, we commemorate two historic events for children: the adoption of the United Nations' *Declaration on the Rights of the Child* in 1959 and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* in 1989.

Mr. Speaker, earlier today, I had the pleasure of visiting Memorial University's Childcare Centre for story time, as well as participating in a play group hosted by Family and Child Care Connections in St. John's. Family and Child Care Connections is a community-based, non-profit early learning family resource centre and family child care agency that provides programs and services designed to support children from birth to six years of age, their families, and the child care community.

During story time and the play group, Mr. Speaker, I was able to interact with the young children and their parents, as well as early

childhood educators and other staff and volunteers at the centre. The highlight of my visit to mark National Child Day was reading a story to the energetic, but attentive group of children.

The provincial government recognizes that children and youth are truly our most valuable resource; therefore, in *Budget 2013: A Sound Plan, A Secure Future*, our government allocated an investment of \$31.1 million in 2013-2014 for child care here in Newfoundland and Labrador. With this investment we are continuing to focus on the implementation of *Caring For Our Future: Provincial Strategy for Quality, Sufficient and Affordable Child Care in Newfoundland and Labrador*.

With the many initiatives of *Caring For Our Future*, we will continue to see growth in regulated child care services and I am delighted to say we are well on our way. We are very excited about the direction that child care is taking in this Province. Currently, we have 7,787 regulated child care spaces throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, which is almost a 70 per cent increase in the total number of regulated child care spaces in our Province since 2003.

Our government's commitment to ensuring the health and well-being of all children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador remains at the forefront, and I ask all members of this hon. House to join me in marking National Child Day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Certainly, we are also happy as the Official Opposition to recognize National Child Day. We have our blue ribbon on to symbolize it as well.

I would also like to recognize the good work done by the Family and Child Care Connections in St. John's, as well as the play groups and the Family Resource Centre on the Southwest Coast of this Province where I witnessed firsthand the good work they do with children all over the Southwest Coast. I would like to commend Jodie and Krystle for all the great work they do.

We can sit here and talk about the good things this government has done for children because there are a number and it is reflected here as well. There has been a 70 per cent increase in regulated child care spaces, and that certainly is a step in the right direction. I think when government does good work we should recognize them for the good work that they do; however, in recognizing the good work we can also recognize the realities.

The 2012 report on child and family poverty finds that we have the fourth highest rate of child poverty in this country with 16.5 per cent of our children living in poverty, which is certainly above the national average.

I think we should take today to reflect on the good things that we have done, but also recognize the realities that many of our children do not have it as good as they should have. We have to continue working together to make sure that happens.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I, too, am glad to see that the Child Care Capacity Initiative is continuing to help community-based child care centres expand to new communities.

Ultimately, to meet the need of working families, we need to build a publicly administered program of high-quality, centre-based early childhood education. Ultimately, we need to do more to help working parents who are

shouldering a financial burden of \$800 to \$1,000 a month for each child in daycare. Accessible, affordable child care is an investment in our children and an investment in our future.

Congratulations to Family and Child Care Connections and other organizations that have effectively supported families and child care providers across this Province. Thank you to all the dedicated early childhood educators who work with expertise and generosity to provide quality child care for our children. Bravo to them all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Member for The Straits – White Bay North have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: By leave.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Affordable child care is a foundation for a better education and a stronger economy. My constituents of the Straits region are very thankful for the commitment by government to operate a non-profit child care centre in Flower's Cove.

Good work, and let's keep building.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share a recent experience I had in Gander when I had the privilege of attending this year's Provincial Student Leadership Conference.

Attending these annual conferences has been one of the highlights of my tenure as Minister of Education. The energy and enthusiasm displayed by our young people at these events each year is incredible to witness. These students are leaders in their schools; they are role models for their fellow students, and they are the future generation of leaders in our communities, in our Province, and in our country.

I was particularly interested, Mr. Speaker, in hearing their views on bullying, harassment, and intimidation during an interactive session hosted by the Office of Public Engagement. When asked, for example, where the majority of this behaviour takes place, 75 per cent of the approximately 400 participants indicated it takes place online.

Our young people are growing up in a world very different than the one we experienced, Mr. Speaker. The advent of technology and social media has resulted in new, increasingly insidious ways for our children to be hurt and humiliated – sometimes with tragic results – and it has to stop.

Mr. Speaker, we are now finalizing a new Safe and Caring Schools Policy, which I expect to release in the coming weeks. We also plan to introduce legislation designed to strengthen our ability to prevent and respond to incidents of this nature. These actions are the result of recommendations received from an independent consultant, followed by an extensive consultation process involving school board and district personnel, the NLTA, the Federation of School Councils, RNC, RCMP, other community agencies, school administrators, teachers, parents and, of course, students themselves.

There was also an online component to the consultations, which encouraged any member of the public with an interest in this issue to offer their suggestions on what we can do – as a government and as a society – to combat this issue.

Mr. Speaker, a great deal of work has been done by all of our education and community partners, and by the media, to raise awareness of this issue among students, parents, and the public at large.

I commend these efforts, and I invite my colleagues in the House to congratulate Valerie Abbott, Chair of this year's Provincial Student Leadership Conference, and all the organizers and volunteers who reinforced the anti-bullying message and help make this year's conference a resounding success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the advance copy. I, too, commend the efforts of the people at the school level who are trying to advance safe and caring schools.

The biggest obstacle would appear to be the Department of Education and the minister. The Safe and Caring Schools Policy was introduced in 2007, Mr. Speaker; five years later, government hired Goss Gilroy to do a review, and this is the review provided to the government. The review said the role of the Department of Education in the safe and caring schools includes providing policy, guidance, and resources in the area. Yet, it went to say that this plan was not as good as the one before. The issue of safe and caring schools does not seem to have the same prominence as under the previous plan prior to 2007.

Also, the investigator generally found out that people were unaware of the policy, that it clearly was not working whatsoever. The minister sat on this report from August 2012 until November, and a year later he is saying now we are going to have a new one.

Mr. Speaker, if you planted a tree, you would not wait five or six years to see how it was growing. If consulted a specialist and they said

fix the tree, you would fix the tree; you would not say let's plant another one. This is a dismal failure in safe and caring schools, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that the government will go back to the drawing board and get it right, for our children's sake.

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

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

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

The NDP promoted the issue of bullying in a private member's motion in this House in May, 2012, asking government to include anti-bullying measures in the Schools Act, but they did not support it. The fact is bullying, harassment, and intimidation are still prevalent in our schools but there is no legislation to assist teachers, administrators, parents and guardians in addressing the issue.

An anti-bullying policy needs to be backed up with legislation. Other provinces are doing it. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that this government will soon step up and get it done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Does the hon. the Member for St. John's North have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: By leave.

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

MR. KIRBY: Thanks to the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

I would certainly welcome any proposed amendments to the Schools Act to address bullying in schools. In fact, on May 14, 2012 I introduced a private member's motion here in the House of Assembly to enshrine anti-bullying in the Province's Schools Act. It would be great to see that finally done.

When the new legislation does come into force there will still be much more to be done in our schools to ensure they are safe, that there are proper procedures and consequences when bullying actually occurs in schools.

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.

One year ago the Premier stood in this House and said that all of the information we have gathered on the development of the Lower Churchill has been made available to the Opposition Parties, but yesterday outside this House she finally admitted that her government is still withholding information on the Muskrat Falls Project.

I ask the Premier: Before you sanctioned Muskrat Falls, why did you tell the people of this Province that all of the information was available, but based on your comments yesterday that is clearly not true?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to say once again what a wonderful deal, what a wonderful development this is for Newfoundland and Labrador. Because of what we are doing here in Newfoundland and Labrador, first of all for our ratepayers, Mr. Speaker, and then enabling other economic development, we have also created opportunities for Atlantic Canada and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, more information on this project has been released than any other project in our history. I get that the Opposition does not understand that, Mr. Speaker, because they still think that Muskrat Falls falls under the ATIPP legislation, and it does not, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, my question was about the comments that were made by the Premier yesterday outside the House saying that we did not have all the information. She seems to be more concerned about the benefits in Atlantic Canada and beyond than she is about Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: We have asked for, as an example, the power purchase agreement between Nalcor and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro. We have asked how much money is committed to the project contracts. We have asked for the clarification on the size of the transmission line from Labrador into the Island and we have asked for details on scheduling, to name a few, but we do not have this information.

I ask the Premier: What other information do the Opposition Parties and people of this Province still not have on the Muskrat Falls Project?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the question the Leader of the Opposition has asked lies the essence of the disconnect between the government and the Opposition party. He inquires about the power purchase agreement with Hydro, something they have raised in the House any number of times and has been answered in the House of Assembly any number of times. That agreement

is not yet negotiated. When it is completed, it will be made available.

Mr. Speaker, commercially sensitive information has not been released to the public because we need to protect ratepayers. There is sound reasoning for it. It is a practice in this project, but it is a practice in every project in this Province and across the country, and across the world.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What the Premier just said is that commercially sensitive information for the people who are actually paying for the project is kept from them. I just heard the Premier say that.

Mr. Speaker, while the Premier continues to hold back information on the Muskrat Falls Project, there is about \$700 million of taxpayers' money spent on this project. Meanwhile, the Government of Nova Scotia has no investment into this and has assumed no risk.

I ask the Premier: How can you insist that everything is fine with Muskrat Falls when Nova Scotia is placing more conditions and looking for more benefits since you have placed our Province in such a weak negotiating position?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, Mr. Speaker, a demonstration of the misunderstanding of this project from the Opposition party. Mr. Speaker, we have not negotiated an agreement with the Government of Nova Scotia. We have not. Nalcor has negotiated an agreement with Emera.

MR. BALL: I didn't say you did.

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: You just did so. The Leader of the Opposition just talked about our negotiations with Nova Scotia. We are not in negotiations with Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker. Nalcor has an agreement with Emera. Emera is going to form a contractual agreement with the Government of Nova Scotia to sell them power. That is what the UARB hearing is all about. It is not about the contract between Nalcor and Emera.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The final cost numbers of the Maritime Link were due on October 1, but this deadline has been missed and we still do not know how much the line is going to cost. We have a vested interest in this, as you know.

So I ask the Premier: It has been over a year since Nalcor released its DG3 numbers; have you asked for the final numbers on the Maritime Link, and why are they still not available?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in every project that we have engaged in, since we came to government in 2003, we set out timelines, because you have to have something to work towards, to incent the work to get done in a certain period of time; however, the overriding principle has always been to get it right, rather than get it done by an artificial date.

This piece of work is being done. We are well-informed through Nalcor, with their partnership with Emera, how the work is progressing, Mr. Speaker, everything is on track, and this information will be in the public arena by this spring.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Well, getting it done right would mean that you would have your firm partnership, in this case with Emera and with the people of Nova Scotia – and we already know we do not have that.

Mr. Speaker, the C-NLOPB announced this week that over a trillion cubic feet of natural gas has been discovered offshore in September. The Ballicatters reserve is between Hibernia and White Rose, and is the third largest discovery off the Grand Banks.

So I ask the Premier: With such a significant discovery, why didn't you or the Department of Natural Resources make a public announcement on this find?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when we give licences to companies to come in and develop lands or explore lands in our offshore, they have certain rights and privileges. One of those rights is to announce their finds. When they think it is appropriate to do it, given the circumstances of their company, the markets, their development plans and so on, they do so. So we are just following normal practice.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Interestingly enough, the Premier calls it their finds; I thought we had some vested interests out there.

Mr. Speaker, we have significant natural gas reserves offshore, but this government has done

little to further develop the industry. In their 2007 Energy Plan, the government said that natural gas was becoming an increasingly strategic commodity, but they have not followed up with any action.

So I ask the Premier: With this significant discovery, will you now admit that there is enough natural gas offshore to start the development of this industry?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, just a point of clarification, when we put lands up for nomination and companies bid on the lands, then they bid for the resource within the land. So that is when the transaction occurs.

No, it does not still belong to the people of the Province. What we do have a right to do is then negotiate a benefits agreement – a royalty agreement and a benefits agreement. That is what we have done in this Province, to the great benefit of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, we all look forward to the day when we can commercialize gas off our offshore. It is constantly on our radar. In our Energy Plan in 2007 we offered special incentives for a pioneer project on gas. It is on our radar, it is always on our radar, and (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have also known that Great Western Forestry is no longer on the Muskrat Falls job.

This company was awarded a major forestry clearing contract last March.

I ask the Premier: We know that the job is not completed, so why are Great Western no longer involved in this project?

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

MR. DALLEY: Yes, Mr. Speaker, Great Western was awarded a contract for the right-of-way clearing for the transmission line. Nalcor has been unsatisfied with the work of Great Western. As a result of that, they have been removed from the contract.

I think it speaks to the oversight that Nalcor is applying to the project, ensuring that project costs are managed, Mr. Speaker, in the best interests of the project and certainly in the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, Innu partnership companies like Nukem Forestry, for example, have submitted competitive and realistic bids on Muskrat Falls projects, but have been denied in favour of non-Aboriginal companies. Such is the case with the contract just taken from Great Western Forestry Limited.

I ask the minister: Why are you not living up to the terms outlined in the Muskrat Falls agreement which states that Aboriginal-owned companies get first priority?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, there is a process that is laid out. Our government, our leaders, and our Premier were very firm in negotiating the benefits agreements surrounding Muskrat

Falls development. The Innu, the people of Labrador, and the people of the Island would benefit from that.

In this particular case, I am not sure if the member opposite is advocating that Nalcor should allow Great Western to continue to mismanage the project, continue to mismanage the work that they have been committed to. It is good oversight on Nalcor; it is responsible.

The idea of this is to keep the costs down, Mr. Speaker. I think Nalcor has certainly proven that they are going to continue to keep the costs down and go through the ordinary process of awarding contracts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, I remind the minister, the Muskrat Falls agreement gives preference to Aboriginal companies.

Mr. Speaker, Nukum Forestry Limited has received an AAA rating from Nalcor on a previous contract. The contract taken from Great Western Forestry has been re-awarded to another non-Aboriginal company.

I ask the minister: Why are the terms of the Muskrat Falls agreement once again being ignored in the reissuing of this particular project?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite and certainly the people of the Province that Nalcor has a very rigid process, it is extensive, when they look at all opportunities and all contracts that come in through the bidding process. Through that analysis, we fully expect Nalcor to choose a contractor who is in the best interests of the project and the best

interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, if that happens to be an Innu contractor, then absolutely they will be awarded the contract. Above all else, Mr. Speaker, the commitment is to ensure that the project is done right and it is done in the best interest of the people of the Province, and that means keeping the costs down for the project.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier said ratepayers on the Island were subsidizing electricity rates for residents in coastal Labrador. She failed to mention the billions of dollars Labrador contributes to the provincial coffers through the development of its natural resources.

With the benefits of Labrador resources to all the Province, I ask the Premier: Will you admit your comments yesterday were divisive?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Mr. Speaker, no government in our history has shown the respect that should be afforded to Labrador than this government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Mr. Speaker, in the past, absolutely, Labrador has made significant contributions to the economy of this whole Province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in terms of revenue coming to the Treasury of Newfoundland and Labrador, there are not billions of dollars that come into the Treasury on an annual basis from Labrador. That is just not so. In terms of the royalties, mostly from mining, from companies that were

started in this Province forty or fifty years ago, the royalty rate is very low.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, residents of Labrador on diesel power take no comfort from the high rates they continue to pay, especially those who are trying to operate family-owned businesses and paying commercial rates.

I ask the Premier: Will you apologize for your insensitive remarks and live up to your commitment of providing affordable commercial electricity rates for coastal Labrador?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Contrary to the suggestion from the Member for Cartwright – L’Anse au Clair, I am proud of this government’s record in Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: We have made, and will continue to make, Mr. Speaker, significant investments in Labrador in infrastructure, in services. In our isolated communities on the Island of Newfoundland as well as in Labrador, there are challenges in getting energy to them in an economical way. We are dealing with that very specifically in Labrador by subsidization to start with, and that is warranted and justified, Mr. Speaker, and looking to develop alternative power sources to bring costs down.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier stated earlier the overriding factor in projects is to get it right. Let’s talk about the pellet plant in Roddickton.

Mr. Speaker, it is bad enough that the Premier handed over \$10 million in taxpayers’ money to the Roddickton pellet plant without due diligence, but she also gave the owner an additional \$1 million in tax rebates.

I ask the Premier: How can you justify more tax rebates for a company that already took \$10 million of taxpayers’ money and never produced one commercial pellet?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, our government takes economic development very seriously. We saw an opportunity on the Northern Peninsula where we could support that region. Some of the economics changed, Mr. Speaker, but what the member is referring to, the million dollars he keeps referring to, there was an agreement with Holson for a \$10 million agreement.

During that process, Mr. Speaker, it was not clear on a tax base but as a result of that, further receipts were complied with. The funding that was supposed to be provided legitimately within the agreement has been done. There is no extra million dollars gone to anyone, Mr. Speaker.

The member opposite is not clear on his facts but I certainly would ask him, does he support us supporting the economic development in the region?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: I say to the minister, if I am incorrect that means the Auditor General is incorrect and your own officials are incorrect who stated it in the Public Accounts.

Mr. Speaker, this government gives tax rebates to the company for invoices that were not confirmed to be paid. In Public Accounts hearings, government officials admitted they never checked to see if invoices were paid by the company.

I ask the Premier: How could you allow \$11 million in taxpayers' money to be handed over to this company without ensuring all invoices were paid?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, I guess, is referring to the non-political Public Accounts debate. It is interesting that it would show up here on the floor of the House.

Mr. Speaker, that agreement, it was not clear on whether the taxes could be used for reimbursement. Thanks to the Auditor General, who we brought in, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the work is done on behalf of the people of the Province, we have accepted the Auditor General's recommendations. The clarity on the taxes has been clarified, receipts are ongoing, and it has been fully provided and legitimate expenses in the agreement with Holson.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Just to let you know, it is in the Auditor General's report if you would take the time to read it.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the member to direct his comments to the Chair.

MR. JOYCE: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker.

You can ask him to look in the Auditor General's report because that is where it is, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, with \$11 million spent on an idle pellet plant and no due diligence by the Premier or the company, I have one simple question for the Premier. Can you confirm if this same company is now on the short list for the former Abitibi site and resources in Central Newfoundland?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, what I can confirm for the member opposite is that our government is committed to economic development in the Province and we do not pick and choose which area. The people of the Northern Peninsula needed our help and we provided the economic support, Mr. Speaker. That is the role of government.

Mr. Speaker, I will say the economic opportunities are there. We continue to work with Holson. We believe, Mr. Speaker, that there is going to be a way forward with Holson and the people of the Northern Peninsula. I can tell you, the economic development and support we are providing there, we are also going to provide it in the Corner Brook area too, in the member's own district. I wonder if he will stand and challenge that, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for the District of Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Just to let the minister know, there are over 500 jobs in Corner Brook, not five for \$11 million in Roddickton.

I ask the minister a very simple question: Is the same company on the short list for the resources and the Abitibi site in Grand Falls, yes or no?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, the ongoing discussions – I guess the discussions are ongoing around the fibre basket that is available through Central, through an EOI request. That is still confidential information, Mr. Speaker, but I can assure the member opposite that we will do all we can to ensure that it becomes commercially viable. We support the economy in Central. We will support the other integrated saw millers as well, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. DALLEY: Everything is on the table and discussed in this, Mr. Speaker. We are nearing the end stages and I will be glad to report it to the House when the time comes.

Mr. Speaker, again, just to reiterate, our economic support was there for the mill in Grand Falls and we are looking at doing the same in Corner Brook. We did it on the Northern Peninsula. We did it on the South Coast. We did it on Fogo Island. Mr. Speaker, our government has been firm in our economic support for the people of the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for the District of St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, the Premier promised to table documents on CETA, including the fisheries fund during this session of the House. Predictably, in the spirit of her infamous Bill 29, she still has not done so.

I ask the Premier: Will she provide the CETA documents in time to have a meaningful debate on this issue or will she hold on to them until the House closes to avoid debating this landmark giveaway of our resources?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are very delighted in terms of CETA and the negotiations. We are looking forward to the conclusion of those negotiations. We talk again about the fishery and the great package we delivered in regard to the fishery in terms of removal of tariffs, the removal of end-use restrictions, and a \$400 million fund to continue to build the industry.

The Premier has indicated that those documentations will be presented here in the House. Indeed, they will be. That has been a great agreement for Newfoundland and Labrador. I am not really sure why the hon. member does not support it, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier said she was happy to pocket \$280 million from Harper without the feds even coming here for a briefing on the CETA deal. Meanwhile, the feds are paying presenters from our Province to travel to the CETA sessions in Halifax so they can avoid coming here.

I ask the Premier: Why isn't she fighting for our Province so we are treated the same as other Canadians instead of accepting this federal brush off and disrespect?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, during negotiations we had very good discussions with Minister Fast, when I was Minister of IBRD, and collectively our officials. In the next six months, the minister will be in many provinces;

all the provinces he hopes to be. To date, he has visited Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and British Columbia. I spoke to him most recently. He will be coming here over the next six months.

Over the next little while Minister Shea and the Minister of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada will be here to talk about the benefits of CETA and certainly the benefit to the fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Rental rates in many areas of the Province have increased to the point that affordable housing and homelessness affect our most vulnerable. The average cost for a two-bedroom apartment in St. John's is \$800 a month; yet, Income Support only provides a maximum of \$522 for a family, which will not secure a family sized apartment.

I ask the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills: Without taking money from their food allowance, how do you expect families to pay rent with a maximum rental allowance of \$522?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, this government has always been cognizant of the challenges that people have in regard to rental properties right across Newfoundland and Labrador. As a matter of fact, that is why the provincial government doubled the Rent Supplement Program by up to \$8 million. I think we have 1,700 rental supplement units now across the Province. Those are the kinds of things that we are doing.

We are aware of the issue in regard to affordable housing in Newfoundland and Labrador. In light of the economy that we have created over

the last number of years, we will be working with all partners at all levels, the councils, the City of St. John's, whatever councillor it is to certainly address their issues.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

For months the Premier has said she has provided all the information we need to understand the Muskrat Falls Project. Yesterday, she said Opposition Parties here and in Nova Scotia had not been given all the information they needed to understand the project.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: When may we have this information?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, commercially-sensitive information is not released at large – it isn't, and it isn't for a very good reason. We have to protect ratepayers. We follow the proper practices that are not only at work here in Newfoundland and Labrador, but across the country and in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I would be delighted if the members opposite would delve into the information they already have. We would have a much more informed Question Period.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I point out to the Premier that without an outside body, such as the PUB or the commissioner for access to information, we have to take her word for what is commercially-sensitive information. We do not know if all the information they are keeping is commercially sensitive.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier brags about how open and transparent her government is. On the other hand, she spoke yesterday about key information on the Muskrat Falls Project she has kept secret from all of us – information, she implies, would make us change our minds on the project.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Which is it: openness and transparency, or secrecy?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as we have said many, many times – and which has been confirmed by arm’s-length experts such as MHI, such as the federal government, the Bank of Canada, our financiers, other experts we have asked to look at different aspects of the planning of this project – this is a good, sound financial project for Newfoundland and Labrador ratepayers first, for industries in this Province, potential industries in this Province, and for Atlantic Canada and the continent as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to keep certain information confidential because it is sensitive. If it is in the public purview, it could drive the cost of the project up. It is simple, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Yesterday the Premier incorrectly said that all the information has been released on the CETA trade deal but, in fact, the full negotiating text has not been released – we all know that. An EU memo says the fish package includes better access to Canadian fish for the EU processing industry, but the Premier says there will be no impact in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Which is it?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, during the CETA negotiations we invited industry, the FFAW, the processors, all those concerned in regard to the industry moving forward in terms of the opportunities that lay ahead under CETA, in terms of accessing an unprecedented market of half a billion people – unprecedented in terms of us getting access to that.

We brought all those folks around the table and had discussions. The FFAW obviously represents the harvesters, plant workers of Newfoundland and Labrador in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. We went through the process. It is not only us; it is the other Atlantic Provinces and Quebec to look at what are the benefits of having an exemption for the EU. In the final analysis, it was in the best interests of Newfoundland and Labrador to go down the route we did. Industry supports it. The FFAW supports it. The NDP does not.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister said he cut the Family Violence Intervention Court because it only had twenty-six cases last year, but his numbers were based on only half the year. By the end of the fiscal year, there were forty-four cases.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Why did he use inaccurate numbers as a rationale for cutting the court?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The whole debate around violence in the Province, family violence, domestic violence, violence against women, is one that we take very seriously, and I thank the member for her interest in that. I just wish the member would expand her view on the topic to more than the Family Violence Intervention Court.

Back some years ago, our government took the issue serious enough that we brought in the Violence Prevention Initiative that had more than 100 initiatives to combat violence in this Province. I would remind the member that while the Family Violence Intervention Court is a tool to assist – and I have said all along that I respect the outcomes of the court, I respect that those who went through the court benefited from it, and I accept their opinion. Mr. Speaker, there is a far longer period on the other end of the spectrum where we need to raise the awareness of violence in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, an internal review was done on the Family Violence Intervention Court before it was cut. It found that the court was a success, fulfilling its mandate of early intervention and treatment.

Mr. Speaker: Why is the minister refusing to release this report?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, the whole issue of violence in the Province, there is a real spectrum. You take young, who enter the school as school-aged children; and you have the other end of the spectrum where people have admitted to violence, have done terrible things in their homes, and come to the point where they admit it, they plead guilty, and they go through the Family Violence Intervention Court.

I have never said it has not been beneficial. What I have said, though, and our key priority is focusing on this end of the spectrum where we raise awareness and talk to people about why they do not want to get to that end of the spectrum. It is why we invest in resources like the domestic violence co-ordinator with the RNC, who is currently carrying a caseload of more than forty.

I remind members, Mr. Speaker, in this House, it is a very serious issue. Less than 10 per cent today of those who are abused in violent situations come forward, and those are the ones we have to target.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I ask the member to get to a very quick question without preamble.

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Why did he cut the court when it was successful and recidivism rates were 10 per cent compared to 40 per cent without the court?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, we take our advice from groups on a daily basis on where our

investments go in Justice. As I said before, I have never once said that I do not acknowledge that those who went through the system felt the benefits. I also understand that the 90-plus per cent of individuals who are affected by violence in this Province have a right to have resources directed towards them as well.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand today to read a petition from the residents of York Harbour, Lark Harbour, and Route 450 concerning the hazardous road they find themselves into after countless attempts to try to have some repairs done by the Minister of Transportation and Works – the former minister, I should say.

Mr. Speaker, I will read the petition:

WHEREAS we are concerned over the deplorable condition of Route 450; and

WHEREAS many residents of the Town of Lark Harbour and York Harbour travel this road on a daily basis; and

WHEREAS after repeated requests for upgrades and repairs the road has continued to deteriorate; and

WHEREAS there is only one road in and out of these communities and many of our residents are of an aging population with health issues; and

WHEREAS having the road completely give way would pose a whole set of issues; and

WHEREAS we feel the condition of this road presents an accident waiting to happen;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to give serious consideration to making repairs to this road.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I brought the concerns of this road up to this government and to the former minister for over a year. I have numerous letters. I have numerous correspondences about the condition of this road. The current minister is looking at some small measures that can be done now because of the lateness in the year, and I thank him for that, but there are two or three areas, Mr. Speaker, that are very, very dangerous.

Out by Copper Mine Brook there is a dip now which is very much of a safety hazard. The speed has been reduced from eighty down to 30 kilometres per hour. There is a dip in the road where the road gave way, which if someone did not know and were not aware of it – it is definitely an opportunity for a serious accident. There are parts of the road, 450, that had major flooding and damage last March – last March, Mr. Speaker.

I wrote the government and wrote the minister on these here. I received correspondence back saying, yes, it will be fixed. I received correspondence back later: oh, we are hoping to get it fixed. The government at the time – it is a responsibility upon any government to keep their residents safe. One of the ways you keep them safe is to keep the road conditions in a way whereby it is passable and it is safe. They are not asking for any luxuries, absolutely no luxuries. This is just a safety concern.

I urge the government, I call upon the government, it has been brought to their attention, the residents now are very active, the town councils are very active, and I urge the government to do what they can to ensure that these roads are safe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the member he has less than a minute. I do not know if he wants to start.

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

I have a petition here: To the hon. House of Assembly regarding the Southwest Coast and the TCH. I have read this, this is my third time this week, so I can probably skip the preamble and get – I wish I could skip the preamble and get right to the meat of this, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS residents of the Southwest Coast must travel the TCH between Channel-Port aux Basques and Corner Brook for work, medical, educational, and social reasons; and

WHEREAS Marine Atlantic ferries dock at Channel-Port aux Basques at various hours on a daily basis resulting in a high volume of traffic; and

WHEREAS the government initiated a twenty-four hour snow clearing pilot project that excluded the section between Channel-Port aux Basques and Stephenville;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, are calling upon this House to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to include that section.

I have a study here, but do you know what? I have enough petitions here; I can stay here until Christmas talking about this issue. It is the right thing to do. Government has the studies here to show that it should be covered.

I will have a further opportunity at another time to continue entering this petition and tell the minister and the department, make the right call.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

MR. SPEAKER: This being Private Members' Day, I call upon the Member for St. John's Centre to introduce the Motion that is on the Order Paper in her name.

The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the Family Violence Intervention Court provided a comprehensive approach to domestic violence in a court setting that fully understood and dealt with the complex issues of domestic violence; and

WHEREAS domestic violence continues to be one of the most serious issues facing our Province today; and

WHEREAS the cost of the impact of domestic violence is great both economically and in human suffering; and

WHEREAS the Family Violence Intervention Court was welcomed and endorsed by all aspects of the justice system including the police, the courts, prosecutors, defence counsel, Child, Youth and Family Services, as well as victims, offenders, communities agencies and women's groups; and

WHEREAS the recidivism rate for offenders going through the court was 10 per cent compared to 40 per cent for those who did not;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly urge government to consider reinstating the Family Violence Intervention Court.

Seconded by the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to stand today to speak to this private member's motion. I am speaking about a very specific, concrete program. A very specific, concrete program that is based on expertise, that is based on best practices, that is grounded in the culmination of extensive research and expertise. The Province itself took years of consultation, years of research to develop this court, to respond to a very specific group of people.

I am not talking about family violence in general but a very specific tool that was lauded by the community. Both justice and in the non-government organizations lauded it as a successful program. The Family Violence Intervention Court was a progressive initiative that finally understood and dealt with the very complex dynamics of domestic violence and abuse.

It was established in March of 2009 as a pilot project. After years of research and consultation with community, anti-violence groups, and the entire justice community, it was extended by government in 2011 as an initiative to keep families safe. It dealt with offenders, it dealt with victims.

For the purpose of this debate, Mr. Speaker, I will use he because, overwhelming, the offenders were male; overwhelming, in the partnerships, the victims were female. For the purpose of the debate, I may use he and she in those contexts, as well as children.

In 2011 and 2012, the Department of Justice had intended to make this a permanent program as part of their attempt to deal with family violence. It was very successful. Nova Scotia, as a matter of fact, modeled their Family Violence Intervention Court on the Family Violence Intervention Court of our Province, through our Department of Justice.

It was an active court that was concerned with early intervention – and that is key, Mr. Speaker; it was early intervention. It was concerned with

treatments and prevention. It was doing what it was supposed to do, and that was early intervention while providing supports and protection for victims – most of whom were women and children – and treatment for offenders.

The specific thing about this program, Mr. Speaker, is that the offenders had to take responsibility for their crime. They had to acknowledge and take responsibility for their crime. They had to own it. It was cutting edge. It was interdisciplinary and collaborative. Defence lawyers, Crown attorneys, and Victim Services, who all have competing priorities, they were actually working together. This had never happened before in the history of our justice system.

It was five years of hard work; hard work that was paying off, Mr. Speaker. It was cross jurisdictional with all the team having specialized training and expertise. Not only was a team brought together, but the team was given training and they were experts in their field. The Department of Justice was committed to this program because they knew this program was based on evidence, it was based on research, and it was based on best practices.

There was a Victim Services team, there was a half-time position from Child, Youth and Family Services, and there was a bail supervisor. Again, Mr. Speaker, it was so important to keep in mind that these were experts in the field of domestic violence, because we finally had a court that had expertise in this area, in this very complex area.

There was a Crown attorney who was specifically assigned and trained for this particular court. There was a defence lawyer through Legal Aid who was specifically trained and pulled for this particular court. There was a risk assessor – and this was a key position because it was based on the assessments done by the risk assessor whether the offender was eligible to take part in the Family Violence Intervention Court.

There was a judge. A judge who was specifically dedicated, who had other duties, but one day every second week this judge sat over the Family Violence Intervention Court. This judge had a particular expertise and was able to exercise his role with that expertise and confidence.

There was also a court co-ordinator, and this was all about keeping women and children safe. Families who wanted to stay together and who relied on the Department of Justice to fulfill its promise to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, that it was committed to giving the best possible service through Justice to victims of violence in our Province.

It was a court that was great for young couples, because many young couples came to the court. It found that women were more willing to press charges – because often one of the very difficult situations in family violence is that women would call the police, but then they would drop charges because it took so long for the case to get to court. What this court did was it responded immediately, which is so important in dealing with issues of domestic violence.

It found that the women were less likely to drop the charges because they knew that there was immediate action. They were more willing to press charges if they knew that their partner was going to get help and probably not go to jail.

There was an 85 per cent retention rate. Judges love this type of targeted and specialized court because it allowed them to focus on the main issues behind the crimes. This is not just about crime and punishment, it is about prevention, it is about treatment, it is about early intervention.

These Family Violence Intervention Courts are all across the country. They are the best practice to combat family violence. They are a concrete, effective program that is part of the continuum of services in the area of family violence. This court was driven from a victim's perspective, not just the individual victim but the entire family. It was ground-breaking work, social workers and facilitators working together. It had knowledge, information, and expertise.

The goal of the court, as stated in literature from the Department of Justice report, was to prevent and reduce incidents of family violence.

“Through a collaborative approach, access to support services and intervention programs is accelerated. The FVIC focuses on enhancing victim safety as well as emphasizing offender accountability and treatment for moderate risk offenders.”

The majority of the offenders and victims were people who are interested in staying in a relationship, but only because the risks were such that there was a possibility of treatment.

Here is how it worked. Upon an incident, the police would refer the offenders for their first appearance before the family violence intervention judge. That judge sat once every two weeks. The police were trained – and this took quite a while to encourage and train the police – to refer the offenders, for their first appearance, to the Family Violence Intervention Court.

They were allowed to go there as long as the potential sentence that the offender would get would legally be a community disposition. The offender had to agree to a risk assessment and the offender was offered a specialized Legal Aid lawyer. Then the date was set, at least within two weeks – because again, what was so important was that it was a very quick response, that within two weeks they would then go to the Family Violence Intervention Court.

In the meantime, they would meet with the risk assessor, they would meet with a specialized Legal Aid lawyer, they would agree on their statement of facts, and they would enter a plea of guilty. They had to enter a plea of guilty in order to be able to take part in this court because, again, the goal of the court was for the offender to take responsibility for his actions.

Then he had to participate in family violence programming, which was really intense work, where he had to acknowledge, among his peers, his behaviour and he had to take responsibility for it. He had to agree to have all of his information shared among the whole team that

was working on his case. He had to agree to be supervised by the bail supervisor, and that was very important because the bail supervisor was intimately involved in the case. If there was an increasing risk to the victim or the family, the Victim Services person would alert the family.

Consequently, what we had was very close expert supervision on the offender in order to keep the family safe. There was no false hope here; this was expertise that was absolutely focused on the safety of the victims and the potential treatment of the offender.

The Family Violence Intervention Court would keep close track of progress and participation. Upon completion of treatment, only then would the judge take into account sentencing. What we have in the regular court system, Mr. Speaker, is that after the offence, it could take up to a year before the offender goes to court – up to a year. Someone may have hit someone, shoved someone, or threatened someone, and the victim has to wait for a year or perhaps even longer before the offender goes to court. Then the victim is taken to the stand and possibly torn apart and challenged. Who – who – goes through that type of court procedure? Of course, women will then drop the charges because they do not want it and it has been so long.

The research has shown, the research is absolutely solid, that intervention as close to the time of the crime is the most effective, and that is what this court was doing. This is not being done in any other program in the Province. Nowhere else in the area of treatment on the issue of family violence is this kind of work being done. The work that is being done in other programs is absolutely crucial; it is also expert and effective in their areas, but not in terms of what the Family Violence Intervention Court was doing.

So the benefits of those who qualified for this program were that offenders agreed to treatment, it kept people out of jail that could be kept out of jail, and then the offenders could continue to earn for their family. The benefits for the victim, the women and the children: the process was accelerated, they were not waiting one to

two years to go to court, the bail supervisor was keeping close track of the offender, and the victim was informed and she could avail of counselling and programs for herself and her children. Victim Services responded quickly and thoroughly, which is exactly what needs to happen, Mr. Speaker.

The research that has been done in this area is over thirty years old. There are people who have become absolute experts in this area. The Family Violence Intervention Court is a culmination of that research, of that expertise, and of that commitment.

Also, because the offender had to plead guilty, the victim was not a year or so later forced to stand in the courtroom and be pulled apart by a defence lawyer. Mr. Speaker, there are so many aspects of this program, but the important thing is the immediacy, the expertise, the collaborative team approach to providing services for victims, keeping families safe, and keeping offenders in check. This is about victim safety and offender accountability.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to look forward to getting up and standing again, but I want to say that this court was supported by the women's community. It was supported by the judicial community.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member that her time has expired.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is a little unusual to have the Premier speak on Private Members' Day, but I asked for the privilege of doing that today because this is an issue that is not only very important to our government, and to the people

of our Province, but this is an issue that is very important to me personally.

I cannot tell you when I became really aware of some aspects of violence, or people suffering from violence at the hands of people who supposedly loved them, Mr. Speaker. I became somewhat aware of it in the community growing up; but, like many things that are not healthy in our communities, they were not often talked about. Sometimes, in fact, the community became the holders of the secret.

It came home to me in a very personal way when I was at university and one of my friends arrived at my door in her bare feet, without any clothes, in the middle of a snowstorm, just a little dress on. She was escaping from her partner who was abusing her, Mr. Speaker. From that time, I took a very personal interest and started to educate myself around this very, very complex issue that is rampant.

This is not a new issue in Newfoundland and Labrador. This is an issue that has been with us since the earliest days, and been here not only through our 500 years but since the beginning of civilization. It is a terrible blight on our society. It has taken a lot of pain and a lot of sorrow.

For particular members of our community who have either been victims of violence, or somebody they love have been a victim of violence, it has been all of that pain that has finally raised this issue into the public purview – where it should be, Mr. Speaker – under the harsh light of day for all of us in this Province, in this country, to consider all the aspects of what happens within a culture that tolerates violence, and what the responsibility of all of us is in combatting this issue; because a civilized society absolutely has to deal with this issue.

I, like others, have toiled for over thirty years, Mr. Speaker, doing various things to help people who were affected, and families that were affected and are affected, by this. We are all affected by it, Mr. Speaker, in one way or another.

Since 2001, twenty-three of the forty-five murder victims we have had in this Province have been women who have been killed by their ex-partners or their current partner. Mr. Speaker, that has an effect on every man, woman, and child in this Province. This is an extremely important issue. If there is any good to come of it at all, it is because it has triggered a debate recently within this Province that is long overdue.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about victims of violence, they are victims. They do not ask for the abuse. There is no reason in the world that they deserve the abuse. This is a violation of a person and of their human rights. Because of the complex nature of violence, it is not always straightforward what the resolve to the issue is going to be.

How many times have we heard people say: Why doesn't she just walk away? Why doesn't she leave him? I agree with the former speaker; it certainly is an issue that is most prevalent with women. One in two women, Mr. Speaker, in this Province will experience some kind of violence in her life. That is your mother, your sister, your aunt, and your friends. This is an issue that concerns every one of us.

Would it be so simple that they could get up and walk out the door and that would be the end of it? It is not the end of it, unfortunately. It is not the end of it. Most women in these abusive situations are assaulted, or beaten, or tortured in some way thirty-five times before they finally tell somebody – on average, thirty-five times. They suffer in silence because there is so much shame associated with having your partner abuse you.

That has something to do with the rest of us as a society, Mr. Speaker. If we were walking down the street and some stranger walked up and gave us a smack, it would not take us long to call the police and have an intervention. People, particularly women who find themselves in these violent situations, do not feel that is an option for them until they get to a point that they really do not care if they live or die, or believe

that they are going to live or die regardless of what they do.

Mr. Speaker, as a social worker, I had significant experience with this issue and what to do with victims of violence, especially in an isolated part of the Province. How did we get them to the services, the existing services that were operational at the time, to get the care and support they needed?

In my volunteer life I did much of the same, so I have been engaged in this issue for a very, very long time. When I came to government I brought a very particular perspective with me, a perspective that had been informed by these many, many people. Not only the victims of violence but the people who work with them and supported them, often women working in communities without any kind of visible support, Mr. Speaker, only what they could cobble together themselves.

Mr. Speaker, it is a very, very complex problem that requires a whole spectrum of interventions. When we came to government in 2003, the Violence Prevention Initiative was one important step that we took, and over 100 initiatives there to address the issues of violence. What we have done in our anti-bullying campaign and what that looks like – you know, Mr. Speaker, we still have a lot of work to do not only with our children but with our adults in this area.

How do we educate our young people and sensitize our young people to the fact that you do not tolerate control? Because that is how it starts, Mr. Speaker. How do you identify that and disentangle yourself from that as soon as you are able to identify it, so you do not get drawn down deeper into these destructive relationships?

We have tried to create an awareness program, not only within our schools but in terms of educating our public. The Respect Women Campaign arose out of that. We need to respect women, Mr. Speaker, and we need to teach that to our children from the earliest days.

Mr. Speaker, when we negotiate IBAs, when we negotiate agreements with resource development companies in this Province, we have a gender and diversity agreement always now attached to the benefits that need to come to the people of the Province. We do not do that, Mr. Speaker, just because it is a nice thing to do.

A significant number of women, particularly, who are caught in abusive situations and do not feel they can get away from them is because of the economics they face living on their own, Mr. Speaker. We need to raise our children – we raise our boys to know that they need to stand on their own two feet, provide for themselves, and provide for their families. We need to do the same thing for our girls, Mr. Speaker. We absolutely have to do that for our girls.

We make sure that whatever economic engine is driving the economy here in our Province that it is inclusive of girls and other marginalized people, Mr. Speaker. It is extremely important. It is an important tool in escaping from violence to be able to look after yourself and look after your family.

Mr. Speaker, we have invested in shelters, in status of women's councils. We funded international women's groups. All of these people advocate on behalf of women, particularly, and children, and our resources that victims of violence can go to for help and support and direction, Mr. Speaker.

We funded shelters. We have built new shelters. We have worked with our police forces to try and make our laws more effective, to make their response more effective, Mr. Speaker. We continue to make these kinds of investments because they are important. It is not enough to do one thing.

There is a full spectrum of tools and resources we need to bring to this issue, but more than anything else, Mr. Speaker, I would argue, that we need to have this public discussion. Everybody in the Province needs to engage in this discussion about violence, violence particularly against women, violence against

children, and our responsibility in eliminating it, Mr. Speaker.

There has to be zero tolerance for violence against women, violence against anybody, Mr. Speaker, but in this issue absolute zero tolerance. Everybody in our Province needs to adopt it. That needs to become intrinsic to their thinking.

When we look at a full spectrum of resources, the toolkits that we have to counter this blight on our society, Mr. Speaker, there is a balance you are trying to achieve all the time. Mr. Speaker, we have to make decisions, and sometimes they are not always where you want to be, but sometimes it is more important to weigh your investment on an end of the scale that is about public awareness, that is about educating people about what is available to them, sensitizing them to the dangers they need to be aware of, so they can identify that they are in situations they need to remove themselves from.

Mr. Speaker, we have to educate our people across the Province to the issues that are real and to the fact that we all have a right to live in dignity and without fear of persecution. For a significant number of people who live in this Province, that is not the case.

We need to continue to invest, Mr. Speaker. We need to try to continue to understand what it is we need to do. Sometimes we will do pilots to see if that is where at this time a significant investment needs to be made. While we may see very good work come out of that, it might not be, at this time in our development, where we would get the most reward from our investment, the better outcome from our investment. It might get moved somewhere along the spectrum.

I heard the member opposite talk about the fact that we have all these wonderfully trained people within the system, Mr. Speaker. We have not lost those people. They are still working within the system, working with the victims of violence, and working with families. It is important that we do that.

Mr. Speaker, everybody needs to realize that none of us are safe and secure from violence in today's world. We worry about things that might happen to us because of strangers. We need to worry about what could happen to us from people we know and who are intimate to us.

We are going to continue to invest. We are going to continue to bring awareness to this issue, Mr. Speaker. As a government, we are going to continue to invest in these many, many initiatives until we do everything we can to erase this blight from our society.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am very happy, very pleased, to speak to the motion today. It would be wonderful if we did not have to have a motion like this on the floor of the House, but we all know what the situation is when it comes to violence in families and that most of the violence that happens is violence with intimate partners. As my colleague from St. John's Centre said, where the majority of those who are assaulted are women, I am going to refer to the assaults as assaults on women by men because that is the majority.

In Canada, one out of every four women suffers partner and sexual violence. In this Province, it is one out of three. So we are talking about one-third of women suffer family and sexual violence, and the majority of those suffer it in the intimacy of their home, with a partner.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say I am quite disturbed. Everything that the Premier has said was correct and everything that she said points to the fact that we should still have the Family Violence Intervention Court.

When I look at the fact that a choice was made to close a program that was designed to stop offenders from offending, how we could say that that is not as important as doing education at the other end of the spectrum, that the Premier and the minister spoke about – he spoke about it in Question Period today and the Premier has spoken about it here in debate. To say that it is not as important to stop re-offenders as it is to do education and prevention at the beginning, both of them deal with stopping violence. This program costs a measly \$500,000. I say measly because we have a budget now of billions – a measly \$500,000.

I want to speak to part of the resolution, the last WHEREAS, which is extremely important. “WHEREAS the recidivism rate for offenders going through the court was 10 percent compared to 40 percent for those who did not”.

For those who may not fully get it, that means that the reoffenders, those who abuse, who reoffended after going through this program, only 10 per cent reoffended; whereas, offenders going through the normal court system, not the Family Violence Intervention Court, 40 per cent of them – 40 per cent – reoffend. How the government could look at this court and to look at that fact and to stand here today and rationalize that it was okay to close this court, I cannot believe it. Everything that was seen in the evaluation and the report that was done, this court was succeeding.

No, it had not eradicated violence. It had not stopped sexual violence. It had not stopped violence in the home yet, but for 90 per cent of the offenders who went through the program in its short life, they had not reoffended. So there was violence that was being stopped. The re-offenses were not happening at the same rate.

I cannot tell you how shocked I am by the Premier standing, saying what she said here today, and still justifying the closure. One of the things she said is: Would it be that women could get up, walk out the door, and that would be the end of it? It will not be the end of it. Well, that is what the Family Violence Intervention Court was about. It was about trying to put an end to it

so that when the woman walked out the door, when she went to a safe place, and when she made sure that charges were laid against the offender, by going through the Family Violence Intervention Court, she had a 90 per cent chance of that person not reoffending.

How can we say that closing the court was justified? I am in shock. I was in shock at the time it happened. I am more in shock today, standing here and listening to what I just listened to. Everything the Premier said was right. I know it, too. I have worked with women all my life as well. We all know it. We all look around as we all know we have it in our own families, whether it was an aunt or maybe it was a grandmother. I doubt there is a family in this Province who cannot somewhere in its history find it.

We are mystified by it. We do not understand how it happens, but we know it happens. We can find it everywhere, yet we stand here today and try to justify the closure of a court and of a program that, to use the government’s language here today, at the other end of the spectrum was also putting an end to violence for people who were in violence.

It is like saying in our health care system we have to do prevention – and we do have to do prevention, we have to make sure that we try to have healthier people, and we have to have preventive health measures; but if somebody goes to a doctor and the doctor says you have cancer, we are not going to treat it because we are concentrating on preventive health, well, we have a big problem there.

That is exactly what the government is saying. We have a serious problem. One in three women in this Province can expect to experience violence in their home, yet we are saying: Well, if it happens to you, too bad, try to take care of it. There are things there to help you. There are safe houses and there are programs, but our focus right now in on prevention. It cannot be one or the other.

The thing is that while violence happens in all walks of life – it is not confined to one group of

people making a certain amount of money. As a matter of fact, a recent study tells us that the great majority of women in Canada, 70 per cent of the women who are victims of intimate partner violence are working women and women with university or college degrees. That is really interesting. One-third of all Canadians who reported having experienced sexual assault had household incomes of \$100,000 or more.

This is not something that happens only to people at the lower end of the income scale. It happens to women who have education, who have college and university degrees, you have heard it; however, the Family Violence Intervention Court, in particular, I think, would have helped people who were at the end of the lower end of the economic scale, who do not have the resources to go out and get help.

This Family Violence Intervention Court was there for women who really could not see a way maybe for years and years and years. Imagine having this court and being able to point to it, being able to educate women to the fact that if you dare to speak out, if you can get the courage to walk out of the house, if you can get the courage to break away, there is this wonderful tool that is there to be used to help you so that you can have a sense of you will not be going through it again. That is what this tool was all about.

How can this government face the women of this Province and say: we are really trying, we are really educating, and we are really doing programs to show what violence is? We are really going to try to get people to start recognizing what violence is, but this tool, which would have given you some sense of security, this tool which could have helped you feel: well, if I do break loose maybe there is something that can make me feel I do not have to fear for my life for the rest of my life because of this person – because that is what it is about.

These women fear for their lives. They fear for the lives of their children. They are terrified. They need to know that if they speak out, if they try to break loose, there is going to be help there so that they can stop fearing the person who has

been assaulting them. That is what the court was all about. That is why that rate is so important, and it is so important that it is there in the resolution.

I am going to repeat it again because it is so important. Ninety per cent of the men who went through the program up to the point that it ended did not reoffend. For men who went through the regular court system, it was 60 per cent who did not reoffend. In other words, 10 per cent recidivism rate opposed to 40 per cent – 40 per cent reoffenders for those who went through the regular system.

I do not know what to say to this government except do what is being asked. Put this program back in the system. Do what you have heard the women's community ask. They were shocked when this came out. Do what your own prosecutors have said. Do what lawyers have said. Put it back in.

For the sake of \$500,000 a year, put the program back in so that it will strengthen what you are doing at the other end of your resource spectrum, as you call it. So that you are not making a choice between trying to stop it at one end and not helping at the other, when the women are actually in the violent situation. We have to do both. We cannot do one or the other. None of it makes sense to me. None of it makes sense.

It feels like total unreality standing here and hearing a Premier who could speak with all of the authority that she called upon herself today as a woman who has worked with women, and who knows how hard it is for them to get out of violent situations, say what she said. It is hard to leave, and it is not going to end. You are not going to walk out the door and it is all going to be over. That is what the Premier said. If she knows that, then why – as leader of that government and leader of the government in this House – isn't she showing the leadership and saying because she knows all that, the Family Violence Intervention Court should go back in?

I am so shocked by what has happened here today, I really am. I do not question the

Premier's experience or anything like that. That is not what I am doing. I am saying, Premier, because you know all that, because you have had the experience that you have claimed here today, then in the name of every woman in this Province who has suffered violence or who has lost her life, put the Family Violence Intervention Court back in.

The Minister of Finance is there, I say it to him. The Minister of Justice is there, I say it to him. This is not acceptable; it is a blight on us. After our program came in, provinces actually followed us. Some already had one, others followed. It is recognized as an extremely important tool in the fight against violence.

I recognize everything that the government is doing, but this is a tool they should not have let go, just like they should not let go of the other tools either. Of everything that this government wanted to make cutbacks in the last Budget – there are others I disagree with too, but not with the passion that I disagree with about this one. This is not acceptable.

I ask the government be humble, admit you have made a mistake. You did it with other things. You did it with other things when you made cuts inside the Department of Justice. You rose up pretty fast when there was a voice of protest there over the cuts.

I think it has to happen with the Family Violence Intervention Court, too. Admit a mistake has been made. Put the court back into place so that women know that if they try to get out of the situation, if they enter into the justice system, if the person who has abused them is charged – well it goes through the system first before they even go into getting sentenced – that they have a sense of security they are being protected because they have come forward, that there is a tool there that is recognized as a very special tool. I plead with this government to be humble, admit the error, and put it back in.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: I rise in this hon. House today to speak about domestic violence and the measures we are taking –

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, your mike is not on.

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly appreciate the privilege and honour to rise in this hon. House today to speak about domestic violence and the measures we are taking to address this most serious issue, which has touched each and every one of us in some way or another. The hon. members opposite have raised some great points here today, but they have been focusing on a single initiative, the Family Violence Intervention Court pilot project.

Mr. Speaker, we all recognize the value of this pilot, and we are not saying that we will never see these types of initiatives again. What we are saying is that we want our initiatives to benefit each and every part of Newfoundland and Labrador, each and every Newfoundlander and Labradorian. As a member from a rural area, I would like to see programs and services that benefit my constituents as well as constituents all across the Island.

This program has been available only to the St. John's region. Last year, Mr. Speaker, just twenty-one people completed that program at a cost of \$530,000. In looking forward, we certainly want to ensure that we can reach every person who can benefit from more awareness, prevention, and intervention of domestic violence.

Mr. Speaker, we take this issue very seriously and it is a key priority for our government. Reducing and, please God, one day eliminating family violence in any form begins with prevention. Law enforcement and the provision

of appropriate supports to those affected by family violence are crucial as well, but the fact remains that society as a whole must be part of the solution.

Research conducted by the World Health Organization has clearly told us that prevention is a key factor to reducing violence generally. We, as a government, are one of the few provinces in Canada who have taken this advice very seriously. We developed a six-year plan to take action against violence. For the last six years, we have been spending \$1.6 million each and every year in this initiative, Mr. Speaker, and we are going to continue to be there in the future.

Mr. Speaker, the impacts of family violence are devastating, and each and every one of us has a role to play to end violent behaviours. As was discussed earlier in this House today, statistics show that a mere 10 per cent – just 10 per cent – of those who are abused actually come forward and admit it. To this end, awareness is vital.

As a government, in this regard we are investing heavily. Over \$2 million has been allocated on four anti-violence campaigns: Respect Women; Outrage NL, targeted at youth violence; child abuse reporting; and preventing violence against older persons. We have all seen these campaigns, and they touch us to the core. I certainly recall the first time seeing them; they brought tears to my eyes, and I am sure they did to many people.

I reiterate we all have a vital role to play. The Department of Child, Youth and Family Services has developed and implemented the child protection act, which places a legal requirement on each and every citizen to report abuse of children. We also have a duty, Mr. Speaker, to be ever vigilant about the abuse of any person, man, woman, child, adult, or senior.

I just said how only 10 per cent of abused persons will report it, so let us make sure that we all have a keener eye. If someone starts becoming withdrawn or if someone shows up with mysterious bruises, ask the questions, provide your support, and contact the

appropriate authorities. Excuses like I fell changing a light bulb are not to be ignored. Dig deeper, probe harder, and let them know there are ways to escape.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned it is not one or the other, and it is not one or the other. We have initiatives targeted at awareness, at prevention, and at intervention. Certainly if time permits I would be glad to discuss some of those.

Mr. Speaker, stakeholders and communities need to be involved as well, and I am talking communities all across Newfoundland and Labrador. As part of our measures to reduce domestic violence we have spent over \$1 million on violence prevention training for front-line workers and community organizations throughout the entire Province. In fact, over 1,000 people have been trained, and we will continue this most important work. There is \$500,000, Mr. Speaker, for enhanced violence prevention initiatives with the Department of Education, for example, to support the Safe and Caring Schools Policy, including the development of My Gay-Straight Alliance and the training of educators to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students.

There is \$300,000, Mr. Speaker, for annual Violence Prevention Initiative stakeholders' conferences, which have addressed issues such as: community capacity building, youth violence, violence against women, violence against children, and homophobia and heterosexualism. Hundreds of stakeholders come together at these events to give government advice on what priorities we should pursue in the upcoming year. In particular, I am very pleased to see as a member representing an Aboriginal community we also have targeted workshops specifically for Aboriginal women, certainly one of the groups that has been identified as being at higher risk, as well as persons with disabilities and seniors.

The Department of Justice has revised the Students Taking Responsibility in Violence Education, otherwise known as the STRIVE Program, delivered by the RNC and a new

program was launched in 2008 targeted towards Grade 8 students. That is very early intervention, Mr. Speaker. We do not want our sons and daughters growing up in the type of world and subjected to the type of violence that we have seen, and this is where we have to start.

The Department of Justice has also implemented the Family Violence Protection Act and training has been offered to police, court staff, other justice staff, and community partners. Victims may obtain Emergency Protection Orders, which make emergency help available to adult victims of family violence and their children. Mr. Speaker, this is particularly important because women no longer have to leave their homes, pack up their children, and leave everything behind. This allows the law to remove the offender from the home and that certainly is boding well for our women and children.

The Department of Advanced Education and Skills provides emergency support for victims of violence, for those to leave a violent situation, and it includes transportation to shelter and assistance in finding and paying for emergency accommodations. Mr. Speaker, it is very important to note this program is available to any person in Newfoundland and Labrador, not just people who qualify for assistance. If your partner is earning \$100,000 or \$200,000 a year, you can still avail of this program because it is there to address victims of violence regardless of your income. Certainly people need to be aware that these programs are out there, and supports and help are out there for you to avail of.

The Women's Policy Office, Mr. Speaker, has also been playing a vital role in targeting violence, particularly violence against women. They receive annual funding to have ten regional co-ordinating committees against violence and these are front line service providers who are out in the community. They are speaking to schools. They are offering sessions at the mall, at seniors' homes, at hospitals, to the police force.

They have undertaken initiatives like the Silent Witness program, which I was very pleased to participate in in my region. We have had some

devastation tragedies. We know all too well the pain of family and domestic violence. These types of initiatives are increasing awareness and taking great strides in ensuring that not only the victims themselves, but other people who witness the abuse are encouraged and now have the strength and courage to come forward.

The Purple Ribbon Campaign; we are wearing purple ribbons here in the House today. I am sure many of you driving around the Province have seen these purple magnets on cars. In my region alone, almost everyone has them and it is certainly great to see. Every day we are raising awareness and every day we are ensuring that more people know this will not be tolerated. As the Premier said earlier, zero tolerance is what we have set as a goal for ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, it is such a difficult thing to talk about because it does affect so many people. For all of us who know people who have been victims of abuse, it is such a difficult time. I, for one, strongly support prevention and awareness because that is going to ensure the adults of the future will no longer condone this type of behaviour. None of us in this Province will condone this type of behaviour.

To this end, Mr. Speaker, I would like to propose an amendment to today's private member's motion. I propose the amendment, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Conservation, as follows:

In the fifth recital, by deleting the word "court" and by adding instead the words "pilot court program", and by adding immediately after the word "not" the phrase "partake of the pilot court program".

By adding immediately after the fifth recital the following:

AND WHEREAS government is committed to being proactive in identifying ways to provide programming and services that address root causes of family violence;

AND WHEREAS family violence is a complex societal issue, and finding solutions requires

active participation by the public, community, police and social agencies of government including Health and Community Services, Education, Child, Youth and Family Services, Justice, and the Women's Policy Office;

Finally, by amending the resolution paragraph by deleting the words "to consider" and by adding instead the following phrase "to explore all avenues for addressing family violence with a focus on preventive measures when considering".

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker will take some time to consider the amendment as put forward by the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune and will come back with a decision as to whether or not the amendment is in order.

The House now stands in recess.

Recess

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

We have considered the motion as put forward by the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune. The motion is in order.

I now go back to the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune to continue with her speech.

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am certainly very pleased that this amendment is in order today.

When I started my speech, I spoke a little bit about how, if time permitted, I would discuss some intervention initiatives. Mr. Speaker, there is intervention all across the spectrum. Our spectrum is complete. We are providing services from one end of the spectrum to the other. At the intervention end, Mr. Speaker, that includes the RNC, the toll-free crisis line, the social workers that we have in place and the housing supports that we have in place.

For example, Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing have a Victims of Family Violence Policy where victims are always given priority when applying for housing. These are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the types of supports that are out there.

We, as a government, are certainly very much committed to continuing to evaluate these services and continuing to improve the services that are offered. I, for one, am extremely proud to be a part of this government, a government led by our first female Premier, and I certainly applaud her for the outstanding efforts she has undertaken in terms of advancing women's issues in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I have never been prouder to be a part of this government and never been prouder to stand here in the House and be part of a critical debate. I am certainly very pleased that this government and this Premier place such significant emphasis on violence prevention for every citizen of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to the debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am very happy to stand here in my place today and speak to this very critical private member's resolution that was put forward, and as the only male who has stood and spoke to this very important private member's resolution that was introduced by the NDP.

It is a very serious matter and one that I can indicate, right off the top, that I was happy to support the PMR that was put forward by the Third Party. It is something I have asked questions on in this House of Assembly not only in this session, but the session before. It was a bad decision back in the spring of 2013, and it is still a bad decision now to shut this down.

I have seen the amendment here. I think all it has done is really watered down what the initial motion was trying to do, which was urge government to consider reinstating the Family Violence Intervention Court. It is worded in such a way that I will support this as well. It is hard not to support the different steps that are being taken to address violence in this Province when it comes to not only women but men, children, and seniors. Anything we can do to address this has to be done. I think it has watered it down significantly and taken away from what we are really supposed to be talking about here, which is specifically the Family Violence Intervention Court.

It was good step that was taken. I have the press release here, April 6, 2009 talking about the Family Violence Intervention Court pilot project based on the principles of therapeutic jurisprudence. It was brought forward by our current Minister of Finance who was the Minister of Justice at that time. It was a great idea at that time; it was a great step forward. We have to try new steps to combat old issues. Anything we can do in that way is a positive step.

I am going to apologize, Mr. Speaker, I have a bunch of notes made; I had some that I brought in. What I have done is I have sat and listened to all speakers. I have listened to their points of view, I have listened to the points that they have made, and I am going to try to respond in order to them. I have been making my notes. I wanted this debate not just to be based on what I brought in here, but based on the points I have taken from all the different speakers to this so far.

I notice one of the points that I have to bring up is the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune said that we as the Opposition are only concentrating on one point. That is true; we are concentrating on one point of a greater initiative. I do not think at any point anybody in Opposition has or will say that we do not commend government for their efforts to curb this horrendous situation. I do not think that is the case at all. The Violence Prevention Initiative, which was announced a few years

back, commends government for doing that. I think we need to do more of it.

I was disappointed because one of the terms that I heard both the Premier say and I heard the member say – and I am sure anybody who speaks to it on the government side is going to say – is awareness. Awareness is key; I have heard it on numerous occasions. They are absolutely correct when they say that.

It is disappointing when I say that I tried to find out what the review on the Violence Prevention Initiative said – they did a review of it. We asked for it; we were turned down. We were not allowed to see how it turned out. We tried to do an ATIPP and we were shut down. So again, it is hard to have awareness when it is only one side. We are not getting the opportunity to look at the results of the work that you are doing. I think it is good on its face, but I cannot see the results.

The second part – and I am going to speak about this, and I have spoken about it in the House before – we keep hearing awareness is key. I am not going to disagree with that. I think awareness is key – not just in this debate but when it comes to any issue that we debate in this House, awareness is key. It is not that long ago that the issue arose about an exploitation report that was commissioned by this government that was a significant piece of work that was done to curb sexual exploitation and, again, put under lock and key.

Now, one of the things that we will talk about here, and it has been brought up here before, is when we talk about violence, and again, the need when we are talking about offenders is about future generations – and the Premier said it, this is not just a problem here today, it was not just a problem here yesterday, it was a problem for years before, and she is right.

Research shows that children who witness violence are more likely to grow up to become victims or abusers, and suffer more mental health issues than children from non-violent homes. That is a point that I am going to refer to now and a little bit later, because I think it has

some merit. At the end of the day, this was not done because the Family Violence Intervention Court was not a success. This decision was not made because it was the right thing to do. It was a dollars-and-cents decision, and not a priority with the Budget.

So, if we are not looking at this Family Violence Intervention Court as a priority, that is an issue. This was done because of fiscal mismanagement. We had a tough Budget last year; we all know about it. Justice was particularly hard hit. I recognize that the trouble that the minister and the department must have had to go to. I do not go through it. I do not think these decisions are made lightly and I certainly do not think that they are made willy-nilly and you just do this. I know that the time goes into this. When we make a decision like this based on budgetary reasoning, we have to realize the cost down the road that this is going to result. We are making decisions now that could have a larger financial impact down the road by making them.

I think that was the wrong decision. Again, to echo the words of speakers previous, we know when mistakes happen that it is okay to correct them. There were mistakes made when it came to some of the Justice cuts. They were acknowledged very shortly thereafter when we announced reviews of them, very quickly, and that was done on public reaction to this and the fact that in that case it was attorneys who came out. Legal aid and Crown prosecutors came out and said: Look, this is going to have a huge impact on the system.

The mistake was made, the mistake was acknowledged, and we have a review that was commissioned, which was the right step to take in light of that. I am pretty sure that come November 30, when I am expecting the legal aid review is going to be passed in, we will be able to look it over and see the results of it. The government has hired very qualified people to do these. I do not doubt that for a second – very qualified people – but the step is: Are we going to listen to what they say? That is the trick here; that is the key.

When you come back to the Family Violence Intervention Court that was created, it was a pilot project and it is like any pilot project. You do it to see how it works and make a decision from there. That pilot was announced April 6, 2009 and it went until the spring of 2013, so I would assume there was some success seen. Now, I do not need to stand here and recount the numbers that were put there earlier. The numbers spoke for themselves. There was success and when you talk about lowering the rate of recidivism that is huge.

We have a system that is based on people going into court. I know the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services, someone who has served in the RNC for many years and is very familiar with the court system, knows what it is about. You get people who get in the system, they offend, they reoffend, and they continue to reoffend. It is a huge burden. They are trapped in a cycle; they do not know how to get out of it. The fact that this could have such a huge impact of reducing that rate is fantastic.

I think the biggest problem with the Family Violence Intervention Court is that we did not give it enough time to flourish. It is like anything. You start the system and it takes time to create that awareness. It takes time to make people aware of what it is and what it is all about. People are wary of new systems, but in this case the fact is you did not get in here unless there was the admission of guilt. Then we work through that system and try to work through people finding out the root causes and why this was happening. If we could take someone who made that mistake, has acknowledged they made the mistake, and tried to fix that, and help this person reintegrate into society we were on the right path.

I am not downgrading anything government has done on the other initiatives. I am not at all. They are all steps in the right direction. This was a good move. It was a good step. It was a good step when the minister announced it. The fact that I have not heard government say one single, solitary, negative word about it says it was a success. The speeches I have heard from members opposite have been: We are doing all

these other things, therefore we do not need to continue doing this. I agree, let us continue to do all of these other things and let us continue to invest in this because investing in it is not only the right thing to do.

Again, when we talk about it, at the end of the day a lot of the decisions that get made in this House are based on finance because there is only so much money to go around. We recognize that. Certainly I recognize that; I know members on the other side do, too. If we take steps now that have a certain cost, the rate of return down the road I think is going to be tremendous. Health care is a primary example of that, and I think this is one, too. I think this is one, too.

You talk about reoffending. If we take someone who makes a mistake and is willing to acknowledge it – again, I could get into I did do a little bit of this before I came in here. You get people in the system and one of the things is that a lot of times the initial part – and I will speak to the Member for St. John's Centre, who made a comment about defence lawyers going after the victims. All I will say to that is, that is a fundamental right of the system as well. A defence lawyer has to have that right. That is our right in that system; you are innocent until proven guilty. This court was based on after you admitted you committed an offence. You were guilty and you want to work to fix it.

We talk about the principles of sentencing: denunciation, deterrence, separation from society, rehabilitation, reparations, and responsibility. We have gotten past the age-old concept that if somebody does something wrong, we toss them in the clink and punish them. Punishment is only one part. At the end of the day, there is no value to it if they come out and they continue to do the same things – there is no value – and the fact is we do not have a prison that can handle that anyway.

I was happy when the minister announced that we are going to have a new penitentiary. I think that is some time off. To keep putting people in and out the revolving door is not good. It has no value for anybody especially the victims and

especially the children. If we can have a system where we bring people in and we have the social workers involved, we have the victims able to contribute, and we have the offenders who are acknowledging the wrongdoing and trying to change this, that is a step in the right direction.

Rehabilitation is where we need to be. Is it going to fix every problem? No. It is like the Premier said, this has been here since time immemorial and it is going to continue, but we have to find ways to reduce it and this court was a step in the right direction. The decision to cut it was not based on what was right and wrong; it was based on what we could afford.

As a member of the Official Opposition, we question government on the choices they make and the cost of those choices. We have questioned government on the sanctioning of Muskrat Falls and the party that was had. That had a cost. I think it was a waste of money. That money could have been better spent elsewhere. This is one of those places.

There were questions in this House today about a pellet plant, about millions of dollars. At the end of the day when the decisions are made and when there is no return on the money, you have to look at things like this that would have had the return. It would have had the rate of return.

Mr. Speaker, I have to come back. I have an article here where the executive director, a lady named Linda Ross, who is very well spoken and speaks out on all of these issues, has spoken about, "unfortunately most victims continue to suffer in silence." I think I heard the statistic 10 per cent is the amount of people who speak out. That means 90 per cent are not saying a word.

Yet we have a report that was done that talked to workers in the sex trade and talked to victims. That report is kept under lock and key, but there were components of it that we were wise enough to send out to children in the educational system, because we have to get to children when they are young. We need to change what we are doing. We need to increase the awareness.

Mr. Speaker, I only have a little bit of time left. In conclusion, I just want to say I am glad the motion was made. I am happy to support the motion. I am going to support the amendment, but I think the original motion that was made was the right one that should have been voted on here today. I think everybody in this House would have had no choice but to stand and support it. I do believe that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly a pleasure to be able to speak in this hon. House about such a significant issue that we deal with in society day in, day out. Mr. Speaker, family violence or domestic violence is one of the most complex social issues we have ever encountered. It is very difficult to deal with. It is one, as the Premier had said earlier today, where the communities were the holders of the secrets.

Violence in relationships, Mr. Speaker, is not something new. To some people it is new because it is starting to be talked about, which needs to happen because without awareness we will never be able to deal with the issues.

Many times women go through abusive relationships or find themselves in abusive relationships and they feel they have no way to get out. Mr. Speaker, having worked in corrections prior to being an MHA, there were a couple of things that always rang true when you talk to a woman. One was it was not that she was afraid to stay; she was more afraid to leave. She could not leave because she felt it would get worse and it would not stop. That is the fear and the terrorism that many women live under.

We brought up the report. It was brought up again by the Member for Burgeo – La Poile about sexual exploitation and why we did not release that report. We did not want to further

victimize any people who may have been able to be identified or for people who feel that somebody they know gave information, whether they did or whether they did not, that they become victimized again.

As a parole officer, I came across probably the most serious case of family violence we have ever seen in this Province, with the exception of when there was actual death. Mr. Speaker, I would love to be able to share with the House, with the hon. members, and with the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador what the police and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing did to ensure the safety of this woman and her child, but if I told that tactic that was used to ensure her safety, that tactic could never be used again. Every abusive male would go into the home and would check to see if that was in place, and it would no longer ever be effective.

That is why it is important sometimes that when there are security issues that we protect people. I could say it here today, and anyone who has that set up – maybe it was the only time it was ever set up in this Province, I do not know, but if I let it out it will no longer work for any family that is in harm's way, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what I have not heard in this debate from the other side, and particularly from the Third Party, this debate is not just about the family violence court in St. John's. If we talk about the family violence court in St. John's, we have to talk about violence and what it means to society and in our communities. We cannot isolate one piece of this violence. What I have not heard is that this should be right across Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, Aboriginal women are abused or are more at risk than other women in our communities. We only had the family violence court in St. John's. We need to make sure we look after, we protect, and we provide preventative measures for every woman in Newfoundland and Labrador. When we look at the statistics that have been brought in, one statistic we have talked about has been the forty-one people, men or families, who went through the family violence court in 2010.

What we are not talking about, Mr. Speaker, in 2010 alone, in Newfoundland and Labrador, there were reports of women being victimized through violent offences – this is the number of offences that were reported to the police in 2010 alone in Newfoundland and Labrador, 3,180. That is the number of women who reported being victims of violence in Newfoundland and Labrador. If we try to isolate our debate down to one narrow section of what is going on in this Province, we are losing sight of the big picture. Mr. Speaker, in order for us to be able to deal with violence and the attitudes and what that means in our society, we need to deal with the front end of prevention.

When we talk about attitudinal change and awareness – and I am going to get into that a bit as well, Mr. Speaker – we can compare to what has happened when there has been some other significant campaigns to change behaviour. Two, I will mention, and people here will be very familiar with these campaigns and how it has changed awareness, it has changed attitude, and it has changed behaviour.

One, Mr. Speaker, is on drinking and driving. We can bring in the heaviest sentences we want for drinking and driving but there is only one true way to not have any further victims, and that is if people do not drink before they get behind the wheel. One time people would laugh and joke about drinking and driving and they got home, or they did not have much damage. Mr. Speaker, it is through campaigns and awareness that people no longer see that as funny or socially acceptable behaviour. It is completely inappropriate.

Mr. Speaker, the other behaviour – and even in more recent years we have seen this, we have had the debate here in the House of Assembly – has been on smoking. When we formed government in 2003 it was acceptable to smoke in restaurants and bars, and there was a big debate over it. We do not hear that today, Mr. Speaker. We understand it is harmful behaviour, and once you raise awareness and you change attitudes, behaviour changes. People no longer feel, or will express it is their God-given right to light up a cigarette in your presence if you are in

a public place, whether it is a bar or a store or a restaurant or whatever.

When we look at violence we have to apply a very similar lens. That if we want to have behavioural change we have to raise awareness, we have to change attitudes, and that will then in turn change behaviour. Mr. Speaker, what I am talking about is nothing different than the model of behavioural change.

Once you begin to raise awareness, and we have seen it in some of our campaigns we have had in the media regarding Respect Women. Once you raise the awareness, attitudes begin to change. Once attitudes change, if your attitudinal change does not match your behaviour, you go through what is called cognitive dissonance. I guess that is a social work term, Mr. Speaker. That means a person's attitudes and a person's behaviour have to match. What you think and what you do have to match. By raising awareness and looking at prevention, that is exactly what we are hoping to accomplish.

When we evaluated the attitudinal change, we released a survey in 2012. The information showed us that based on the survey we did on attitudes – was that based on our campaigns there was a 58 per cent increase in awareness. To start with, we are looking at behavioural change, a 58 per cent increase in awareness starts that process. Based on our results as well, Mr. Speaker, 62 per cent felt there was a positive change in their attitude and 37 per cent felt there was a positive change in their behaviour. That is the kind of information that shows us what we are doing really works.

When we look at statistics that tell us in 2010 alone there were 3,180 reports of violence against women in this Province, it tells us that our work is not done. We are moving in the right direction but there is significant work that needs to be done.

The other thing we need to look at is the fact that family violence court is not early intervention. We know, research will tell us that a woman will possibly be assaulted or abused in the relationship between thirty and thirty-five times

before she makes her first report to the police. If we have 3,180 female victims, we also know that is probably indicative of these people being abused, or assaulted, or victims of violence more than once, Mr. Speaker.

We also look at it as the impact on children. If we look at the statistics that there is an assault or abusive behaviour thirty to thirty-five times before the police were called for the first time, the children have witnessed that abuse and that violence for that length of time before it gets reported to the police. Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure children are protected. Men who witness violence as boys in the family home are more at risk to being abusers in the future.

We cannot ignore the fact that as government we have to raise awareness. We have our Violence Prevention Initiative, Mr. Speaker, and we do that work through our community partners. We have regional co-ordinating committees that are spread out across Newfoundland and Labrador. We fund them at \$80,000 each, \$100,000 in Labrador, \$820,000 a year. They do initiatives that suit their local community and they can help extend this message that violence is absolutely inappropriate and there is zero tolerance. They are able to work within their local communities. They are able to work with their schools. They are made up of people who work in the schools, our social workers at Child, Youth and Family Services or AES, people from our women's centres. They work together and they understand their community, and they then have initiatives that help them deliver the message about prevention in their local areas. Mr. Speaker, they play a very valuable role in what we do.

I cannot talk enough about the fact that if we truly want to help people, we have to change our behaviour. We have to make sure that we do not accept violence – not the fact that we are not the violent person but when we see the violent act or we understand it, that we help people. Mr. Speaker, for too long violence has been a secret in many families and in many communities.

When we talk about being able to bring it to light and then we look at some of the statistics

that show us about violent crime in our communities and the increase in the reports, people would tend to look at that and say: Well, if violent crime is on the rise, that means your campaign has not been successful.

What that means, Mr. Speaker, is that we know only 10 per cent is being reported in the first place. So, the more we get reported, the more it shows us that people are becoming aware, understanding there are resources, and being able to report that abuse or that assault, Mr. Speaker. That is also very important. An increase in reports does not necessarily mean the campaign is not successful. It probably means it has been successful in that it is bringing awareness and people are able to make these reports.

Mr. Speaker, again when we look at the statistics and we look at what is going on in Newfoundland and Labrador, we cannot think that family violence or domestic violence is isolated in St. John's only. It is a matter of fact, unfortunately, the last time I visited the funeral home in Stephenville, it was a woman who had been murdered, and that was only a few short weeks ago, Mr. Speaker. It is something that is shocking. It shocks a community and people can hardly believe that it is going on, but it is. They can hardly believe it because many times it is very secretive.

This government has been instrumental in our Violence Prevention Initiative from day one, to ensure that we put the resources to help bring awareness. Again, awareness is the first step in behavioural change, and that is exactly what we want is behavioural change.

This debate, as I said, Mr. Speaker, cannot be about one minute part of the whole cycle of violence and what we need to deal with. If we are prepared to debate the issues with regard to violence, we have to open up our debate and we have to have a true debate and understand the risk factors and what it takes to make change.

Mr. Speaker, to have a lasting change on behaviour is going to take many, many years and many campaigns, but the Government of

Newfoundland and Labrador cannot lose sight of that priority. For the first time in our history we have a female Premier in Newfoundland and Labrador and somebody who is a feminist, somebody who puts that feminist lens on everything we do in this government. The people who have the honour and the privilege to sit in Cabinet and in caucus see that lens every time we discuss legislation or we discuss policies.

Mr. Speaker, we are at a time in our history where we understand that we need to understand violence. We need to make changes in behaviour. We know it is going to take the long term; but if we lose out on the fact that prevention is the key to long-term attitudinal change and behavioural change, we will lose sight of how we need to make necessary changes in this Province.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that violence is not something that is in St. John's only; it is across this Province. As I said, one of the most horrendous crimes is murder. Sometimes domestic violence and assaults go to that level and we are all shocked; but we should not be shocked because we know it is out there, it is lurking, and sometimes it is a secret.

We are prepared and committed to ensure that we address these issues. The Violence Prevention Initiative, Mr. Speaker, is something we have had for a number of years, and we are committed to continuing.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre, to close debate on her private member's motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I am very happy to stand to conclude this debate.

Mr. Speaker, we have raised awareness. We have raised awareness for over thirty years. Thirty-three years ago, I was part of a committee that started the first transition house in Newfoundland and Labrador. Thirty-two years ago, I started the first protocol as a social worker for the identification and treatment of battered women coming into the hospital and the Health Sciences Centre.

I have done films on violence against women. We have raised that awareness and we must continue to raise that awareness, but raising awareness is not enough. Raising dialogue is not enough. The Family Violence Intervention Court was a concrete tool that was successful, that successfully made it possible for families to stay together, if that was what they wanted, in a program that made it safe for them, that gave particular concrete treatment by experts, Mr. Speaker.

This program did not just come out of the air. This pilot program took years to develop and it was based on research and based on expertise. This government instituted that program. They brought that in. My motion specifically was talking about a concrete tool, just as there were concrete things that were readdressed in the Justice budget and then implemented again because of the cutbacks.

I believe probably what happened here is that the cutbacks were so hasty when they had to be made and the Family Violence Intervention Court – okay, this is \$526,000; maybe we cut that because we have to cut. Who knows, Mr. Speaker? We cannot get a straight answer as to why it was cut.

It was successful. It was doing what it was supposed to do. The police liked it. The judiciary liked it. The legal community liked it and the women's community. The co-ordinating committee on violence that the Premier was speaking about and the member for Stephenville was speaking about liked it. They supported it. Everybody wanted it to continue.

Why? Why was it cut? Nobody can give us a good reason. For the Member for Fortune Bay –

Cape La Hune to stand up and say there were twenty-one people going through the court is absolutely ridiculous. We know there were over forty in the last year, and that was not just offenders; it was their family as well, the women and children as well.

This was an effective program. We all know that. Everybody in the women's community knows that. Everybody in the antiviolence community knows that. Every transition house worker in this Province knows that. We all know that, and there has been no good reason as to why it was cut. The budget was 0.2 per cent of the Justice budget – not 1 per cent, but 0.2 per cent of the budget.

The Provincial Court of Newfoundland and Labrador in its annual report of 2011-2012 when referring to the Family Violence Intervention Court said, "The goal of the Court is to prevent and reduce incidents of family violence.

Through a collaborative approach, access to support services and intervention programs is accelerated." That is what it was meant to do; that is what it was doing.

It also said that the Family Violence Intervention Court "focuses on enhancing victim safety as well as emphasizing offender accountability and programming... The St. John's Provincial Court welcomes the opportunity to continue this important initiative."

Yes, Mr. Speaker, this court was based in St. John's. This is where it was piloted. We know the expertise and the success of this court could also be taken to other parts of the Province where we know it is needed, whether it be on a circuit, whether some of the experts who work with the court would be able to reach out, or whether there would be training of other Crown prosecutors and other legal aid lawyers to do similar things in other parts of the Province. There was no reason why that could not happen.

Mr. Speaker, how foolish to say, well it only serves St. John's and there are women across the Province who are experiencing violence, it was not serving a large enough population. Well

then, let's make sure it does serve a larger population.

On October 25, 2013, the Minister of Justice – and I would have loved to have heard from the Minister of Justice today. I would have loved to have heard why he could justify closing the Family Violence Intervention Court. I was really looking forward to hearing from him today because maybe somebody could have given some kind of half reasonable reason for closing the court, when it was so successful and so supportive; when it was doing exactly what it was supposed to do.

It was initiated by this government to serve the women and children and the men of this Province, effectively with expertise, with absolute expertise, but the Minister of Justice said on October 25, 2013 on CBC Radio in regard to the closing of the Family Violence Intervention Court: The decision to cut was not based on any belief that the program was not effective for the individuals; and, yes, it was very successful for the people who went through the system, no question, and that we may want to revisit the Family Violence Intervention Court.

Mr. Speaker, I do hope this government wants to revisit the closure of that court. I do hope this Minister of Justice wants to revisit the closure of the court because we know the court worked and because we know it can offer services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, not just in St. John's.

What a waste of government money after the years of research, the years of consultation, all the time, all the energy, to develop a court that was so responsive to the complex issue of family violence. What a waste of money to stop it when it was just getting its legs. Finally, police were referring people in more numbers, and it would have increased. We would have seen an increased usage. Every year we saw an increased usage. What a waste of money, of expertise, of time and energy to nip it like that for no good reason; 0.2 per cent of the entire Justice budget. What is that about? I cannot

figure it out, Mr. Speaker. It makes no sense to me.

The alternative, offenders reoffend, someone gets killed. What would have happened for the 138 offenders who went through the court? If they had not gone through the Family Violence Intervention Court, where would they be today? Well, their court cases would have taken at least a year to a year and a half. It would have involved much more money for our Province because they would have had to have longer periods in court, because there are postponements, because they are pleading not guilty. These are people who plead guilty and did their treatment. They took responsibility.

The Member for Stephenville was saying it is very important that people change their behaviour, that they take responsibility for their behaviour, because that is the way behaviour changes. Well, this court was about offenders saying: I take responsibility for my behaviour, I acknowledge what I have done, I plead guilty, and I am willing to get help. That is what it was about.

The treatment was not namby-pamby sitting around and talking about feelings. It was very rigorous, hard work – again, based on years of research, on expertise. That is what we had, and that is what this government let go of. I do not understand.

I do not understand how they could have let go of such an effective program and to stand up and say how important prevention is. Well this is about prevention. It is about stopping reoffending. It is so clear, and I would love to see the internal review. I do not know why this government will not release the internal review. The evaluation was good; Victim Services and the bail supervisory did exit interviews with victims and offenders.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that justice be done, we all know that, and it is important that the government at this point do the right thing, and the right thing is to reinstate that court. I do not know why, I cannot also figure out why they would amend the motion we had before the

House. Why would they want to water it down? I do not understand that.

This was about a clear, specific program, and we know this government has done very good initiatives in their violence prevention program. We know that, and we know awareness is important, but you cannot turn on a TV, you cannot turn on a radio, you cannot open a newspaper without hearing information about violence against women, and we know that. We know that, and that is a good thing, but that is not enough.

By doing that kind of awareness program we are promising women and children in this Province that we are going to help. Raising dialogue is not enough. We have raised the dialogue and we have to come back with absolute concrete programs that not only help but that also saves lives in some situations, and that make it possible for families to stay together in some situations. It is not just about raising dialogue.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is irresponsible for anybody to talk about twenty-one cases in the last year of the court. We know that is not true. We know there were more. Behind each number is not just an offender, there is a woman and her children as well. It is about families.

When the Budget came down last year the Premier said she was willing, or the Minister of Finance at the time said he was willing to listen to any compelling argument in the face of any cuts. I cannot think of any more compelling arguments than what we have heard today about the Family Violence Intervention Court.

It is clear the court worked. It is clear the court was effective. It is clear the court was responding to the needs of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and in particular to the needs of some of the most vulnerable people in the Province. It worked, 0.2 per cent of the Justice budget.

It is our responsibility – if we do raise dialogue, if we do raise awareness, we are giving people hope and we are saying that we are willing to back that up. That is not what happened with

the cancellation of the Family Violence Intervention Court. It is a violation of trust. To have closed that court is a violation of trust. Women trusted this government and this Department of Justice to provide programming that would make it safe for them and perhaps their families could stay together.

That is the hope that this government raised in the hearts not only of the particular women, but also the hopes of the women's community, the people who work in anti-violence programs, the people who work in the co-ordinating committees against violence, the people who work in transition houses. That is what this government offered, and then they took it away.

We can continue to raise dialogue, we can continue to raise awareness, and that is important, but without the services to back that up, we are offering nothing. Many of us know that to be true. Many of us know that. We know how difficult this is and we had something that worked. It is my hope that in conjunction with the police, with the judiciary, with the justice community, with the women and men who work in antiviolence all over the Province, that this government will see fit to reinstate the Family Violence Intervention Court and to do the right thing.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have had the opportunity to speak to this. Again, it is a mystery to me as to why the government would want to water down this particular motion; it was about a very clear, concrete program. I thought that we could work on this together.

I look forward to this government doing the right thing by reinstating the Family Violence Intervention Court and honouring its promise and its commitment in the areas of violence, family violence, and honouring its commitment to the women and children and the men of this Province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): There has been an amendment put forward by the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, so the House will first vote on the amendment.

All those in favour of the amendment?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

On motion, amendment carried.

MR. SPEAKER: We will now vote on the motion, as amended.

All those in favour of the motion, as amended?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

MR. SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Please summon the members.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: Are the whips ready?

All those in favour of the motion, as amended, please rise.

CLERK: Mr. King, Ms Shea, Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Davis, Mr. Crummell, Mr. French, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Jackman, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Verge, Mr. Littlejohn, Mr. Hedderson, Mr. Dalley, Mr. Kent, Mr. Felix Collins, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Cross, Mr. Forsey, Mr. Pollard, Mr. Brazil, Mr. Lane, Mr. Cornect, Mr. Peach, Ms Perry, Mr. Little, Mr. Russell, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Edmunds, Ms Michael, Mr. Murphy, Ms Rogers, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Mitchelmore.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The vote is unanimous in favour of the motion,
as amended.

This being Wednesday and it is now 5:00
o'clock, this House stands adjourned until
tomorrow, Thursday, at 1:30 p.m.