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Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will have members' statements from the Member for the District of Lake Melville; the Member for the District of Bellevue; the Member for the District of Humber Valley; the Member for the District of Conception Bay East – Bell Island; the Member for the District of Placentia – St. Mary's; and the Member for the District of St. Barbe.

The hon. the Member for the District of Lake Melville.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize the passing of Eliza Edmunds, my grandmother.

Eliza Edmunds (nee Broomfield) passed peacefully away on September 16, 2013 surrounded by her family after a long battle with Alzheimer's. Born in Big Bay, Labrador, her and my grandfather moved to Happy Valley as one of the three founding families of our community, moving to seek a better life for them and their families.

She was a great influence on my family and the community as a whole for her work within the church community. She was famous for her laugh, her hospitality, her cooking, her musical abilities, and her traditional Inuit clothing.

For anyone who met Eliza can confirm that she was the most wonderful and selfless person you could ever meet, a truly beautiful and strong Labrador woman who embraced her Inuit heritage, and her faith in God as she raised her family and became the most caring mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother anyone could ask for.

I ask all hon. members of this House to join me in recognizing the passing of Eliza Edmunds, a true woman of Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On September 14 and 15, 2013, the New Harbour Youth and Recreation Committee was very instrumental in bringing the community spirit alive with the first New Harbour Days.

There were many events that took place, but the highlight during the celebrations was Violet Newhook. Violet had owned and operated the local takeout in New Harbour for thirty-plus years, and it was commonly known as Violet's Takeout.

Violet retired in 1996; however, at the age of eighty-three years, Violet decided to come out of retirement and volunteer her time to the New Harbour Youth and Recreation Committee during the New Harbour Days celebrations. On that day, Violet's Takeout came back to life and was very much alive, bringing back many memories for everyone.

It was good to see Violet working in uniform, putting the fries in a brown paper bag and serving people as she had done years ago, and I might add with a great big smile and a thank you. Violet said it brought back great childhood and teenage memories for everyone.

I ask all members to join me in thanking Violet Newhook for volunteering her time to a great cause and helping out with a great fundraiser for New Harbour Youth and Recreation.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand today to recognize a sports team in my district who recently made their community and school extremely proud by winning a gold medal in the Tier 1 division at the Provincial Volley Fest Tournament held in St. John's. I speak of St. Michael's High School Girls' Volleyball Team of Bell Island.

While Bell Island teams historically have been renowned for success in sports such as hockey, soccer, and track, the recent surge of success in the sport of volleyball by local teams is a testament to the support of the community and the leadership of the coaching staff who commit countless hours to develop the athletic skills of our young ladies.

I would like to acknowledge Coach Eric Hiscock, an inductee to the Provincial Volleyball Hall of Fame, and Coach Kathy Mitchell for their continuous support. Also, the administration of St. Michael's High must be recognized for outstanding encouragement of the girls' team.

Team members include Breanna Bickford, Tara Bourque, Kayla Ford, Sarah Madden, Morgan Mitchell, Ashley Neary, Sandra Parsons, Vanessa Penny, and Chelsea Tremblett.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members here to join me in congratulating the St. Michael's High Girls' Volleyball Team on their success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Humber Valley.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate Mr. Claude Jones of Jackson's Arm on his recent retirement as Mayor. Claude has spent twenty-five years serving the people of Jackson's Arm, first as a councillor elected in 1980. Claude then went on to be elected as both Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Claude's retirement from the Mayor's bench at age seventy-seven is a testament to his dedication to the people of Jackson's Arm. He was elected Mayor of the town thirteen years ago, and also served in many roles as a volunteer with the town. Claude also served on the White Bay South Development Association Board and the White Bay Waste Management Committee. His dedication to his residents was clear in his role as Chair of the Jackson's Arm Hospital Foundation.

Mr. Speaker, Claude Jones has been a steady hand and a strong voice for the people of Jackson's Arm. During his years on council, Claude has represented the needs of rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I am honoured to know such a committed and dedicated man, and feel privileged to call him a friend.

I ask all members of this House to rise with me in honouring Claude Jones for his dedication to Jackson's Arm and his unwavering commitment to his friends and colleagues in this community. As he moves forward in this next chapter of this life, may he enjoy his well-deserved retirement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Placentia – St. Mary's.

MR. F. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, on November 16, I had the pleasure of attending the Placentia Fire Brigade's Annual Dinner and Dance, an event which I have attended regularly for the past forty years.

It was a pleasure and a privilege to bring greetings and participate in the granting of service awards to several firefighters, including

a thirty-year service award to Val Careen and a forty-year service award to Chief Wayne Power. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I did not get the forty-year service award.

I was pleased to see several honorary firefighters and spouses of deceased firefighters in attendance and recognized for their service. It was also encouraging, Mr. Speaker, to see that the Brigade has a good core of relatively young but well trained firefighters. I also want to recognize the firettes who also offer so much support to the brigade.

Mr. Speaker, Placentia Fire Brigade has a long legacy of outstanding service to the Placentia region and have every reason to be proud of its accomplishments.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all colleagues in joining me in thanking the Placentia Fire Brigade for its tremendous service to the area.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, the Gros Morne Fall Festival and Craft Fair has grown from a one-day craft fair seven years ago to a full fall festival in 2013, thanks to a group of dedicated volunteers, the Cow Head Conservation and Heritage Committee.

This year's first annual event extended over four days and was a great weekend of craft, culture and music. Workshops took place on moose tufting, basket weaving, fly tying, painting and fiddle. The craft fair was a full day, and included demonstrations and a kiddie's corner. Local music was provided by many musicians, including Daniel Payne.

The weekend featured fine dining, a kitchen party, and nightly entertainment showcasing the traditions of the Province in an exciting new way.

Events such as the Gros Morne Fall Festival and Craft Fair are economic generators extending

our tourism to the shoulder season, supporting community development and forging partnerships.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members in the House to join me in congratulating the partners, and especially the Cow Head Conservation and Heritage Committee on this successful event.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to highlight Mineral Resources Review, the annual international conference and trade show that took place from October 31 to November 2 here in St. John's.

Events such as Mineral Resources Review and the Women in Mining forum continue to grow with the industry. A record 800 delegates attended the conference and trade show, which is hailed as the main venue for networking and business development among all sectors of the Province's mining industry. Five years since the inception of the Women in Mining forum, the session has grown from fifty to close to 500 participants.

Throughout the week, I had the privilege to speak with industry leaders and meet with representatives from Mining Industry NL and the Newfoundland and Labrador Prospectors Association. We discussed the industry's long-term outlook and how we can work together to capitalize on the momentum currently being felt throughout all regions of the Province to ensure future growth and success.

I wanted to thank the conference organizers, staff with my department's mines branch and the

local branch of the Canadian Institute of Mining, Metallurgy and Petroleum. Through their hard work, this year's conference featured a comprehensive program that included a special session dedicated to Voisey's Bay in recognition of the twenty year anniversary of its discovery.

Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador is an internationally-renowned exploration destination with significant mineral potential and diverse geology. The industry is an economic powerhouse with mineral shipments of \$3.9 billion in 2013 and employment at a record high of more than 11,500 individuals.

Canadian and overseas investors recognize that this is an exciting time to be doing business in Newfoundland and Labrador. An estimated \$10 billion of investment in the mining industry may be realized over the next decade with tremendous development expected in Labrador where the industry is booming.

Mr. Speaker, mineral development is transforming the face of Newfoundland and Labrador and we are on the cusp of a whole new era for the Province's mining industry. It is time to seize the opportunity to ensure a strong, sustainable resource future in the best interest of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

I had the privilege actually of attending the Mineral Resources Review conference. It was a great conference and I look forward to going back again next year. It is a great opportunity for networking in the Province, I will say.

Mr. Speaker, speaking of the mining industry, the minister did point out about the \$3.9 billion

in mineral shipments in 2013. That is certainly good, and overall it is a significant impact on the finances of our Province. One concern is that over the next ten years, over the next decade with the anticipated \$10 billion in investments in the mining industry, particularly in Lab West, one of the things that have been glaringly absent right now is the availability of a transmission line that leads from Muskrat Falls into Lab West.

I ask the minister, I look forward to the discussion in the next few days because as we all know, it was a significant part of the Muskrat Falls Project, yet we have not seen any power lines or any transmission going into Lab West. Initially, what we are seeing, however, is a 25 per cent increase application to the PUB for residents of Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. There is no doubt that there are good things going on in terms of the growth of mining in the Province, and especially in Labrador. Congratulations to all those who are involved.

I caution the minister on a few points, Mr. Speaker. With more mining development it is really important that we make sure we are doing comprehensive environmental assessments for the major developments. We want to make sure that our environment and our communities are a priority, and we really do not want another Sandy Pond happening because of mining.

As well, in the face of increased international ownership and involvement we want to make sure that we have our labour standards paid attention to because a lot of international companies come from countries where they do

not have the same labour standards. So I encourage this government and the minister to look at anti-scab legislation to protect our workers.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

AN HON. MEMBER: 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. I welcome mining exploration and development. It can certainly change an economy. I would encourage the minister to look at further commercialization activities with the marble mine in Roddickton and potential copper and other valuable minerals in Goose Cove and Croque on the Great Northern Peninsula. There is certainly lots of opportunity.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise today in this hon. House to speak about the important work we are doing to improve municipal infrastructure across Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: The Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs has made tremendous investments in the last few years to improve infrastructure in our communities. Since 2008, we have invested over \$650 million in municipal

capital works projects which has resulted in improved municipal infrastructure across the Province. When federal and municipal contributions are included the total investment is in excess of \$1 billion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, since April 1 of this year the department has approved over 112 new municipal infrastructure projects under its Municipal Capital Works and Multi-Year Capital Works Programs with a provincial contribution of approximately \$31.3 million. Including all projects at various stages of development, there are currently more than 500 projects underway.

These projects will provide our municipalities with the opportunity to secure, develop, and improve infrastructure for residents and support the long-term sustainability of growth and development of communities throughout the Province. We recognize there is an increased demand for infrastructure and we have been making progress in addressing infrastructure needs through our Municipal Capital Works Program.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2013 included the second year of a two-year Municipal Capital Works Program. This funding has allowed us to continue to fund projects all over Newfoundland and Labrador. Projects such as: new potable water dispensing units in Wabana and Pacquet, road improvements in Centreville-Wareham-Trinity, and upgrade work for the community centre in Grand bank, just to name a few.

In addition, Budget 2013 included funding for a one-time \$25 million capital works program for our seven largest municipalities, allocated using a base plus per capita methodology. The department is currently reviewing plans for future municipal capital works funding to inform the upcoming Budget process.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with municipalities and the federal government to address key infrastructure priorities, and make

our communities better places for children and families.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement, but once again thank God for polling periods because once again we get another statement here. That is about the third or fourth one that we heard during the polling period.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt there has been money spent in the Province and a fair number –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: I always admitted that, Mr. Speaker, and I always acknowledge that; but when you have 160 boil orders in the Province, I would not be up bragging too much. When you put in infrastructure for communities to have water and sewer but you do not give them the fiscal arrangement, which you promised in 2008 so they can use their water system, it is nothing to brag about, Mr. Speaker.

Here we look at the \$25 million for the larger municipalities, but they forget that they had to give up the MOGs to get that. The City of Corner, up to two months, did not have a project that fit under this, Mr. Speaker.

So it is easy to stand up and say it but when you actually look at the facts – when I look at Lark Harbour who were committed Phase II of the water and never got it. Look at Humber Arm South looking for money. Look at the Town of Irishtown-Summerside. It is great news; but let's not get up and say everything is done, because it is not done. It is easy to get up and make statements during polling periods, but let's look at the reality. There are still 160 with boil orders across the Province who cannot have safe drinking water in this Province, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advanced copy of his statement. Regardless, municipalities are struggling to keep basic services and infrastructure in place. Municipalities need staff to maintain the infrastructure and need sustainable funds to pay staff fair wages.

Government needs a new fiscal arrangement with municipalities. Government should divert a percentage of the provincial gasoline tax to municipalities. This could be done quickly. It is a sustainable revenue source that is steadily growing.

After ten years in power, in March of this year, there were still more than 160 communities under boil water advisories –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS ROGERS: – and more than 150 with potentially harmful levels of trihalomethane in their drinking water. Mr. Speaker, when will this be fixed?

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

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thanks to the minister for an advance copy of his statement. These are good investments, but I would also encourage the government to continue to invest in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing retrofits in our communities and neighbourhoods.

For a long time very little was done and there are many units that need work. Improvements to these dwellings in our communities are investments in the dwellings themselves, but they are also investments in public assets that increase the value of private homes in all of our neighbourhoods and communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the World Trade Organization upheld a 2010 ruling to ban seal products from this Province going to Europe. The minister revealed that the government did not pressure the federal government to include the European ban on seal products in the CETA talks as their federal counterparts were addressing this already with the WTO.

I ask the Premier: Was the European ban on seal products not important enough to address with CETA? Is that why it was dropped from the discussions in 2012?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, our record in terms of the sealing industry is unprecedented since coming into power and the importance that we have placed on the industry and supporting it. It is true – work with the harvesters. The industry itself is the most humane in the world in terms of what we have done in terms of working with the industry.

Our investment in a company like Carino in terms of giving that capital to allow them to

operate, we see the growth of the industry from approximately 60,000 harvested a few years ago to 90,000 last year. We continue to work with Carino, and continue to work with the industry.

In regard to CETA, it was an issue that was before the protocol of the WTO. It was in place. The federal government, we encourage them to go back and appeal that. We believe it is a humane hunt, as does many in the industry believe it. We are going to continue to fight for the sealing industry in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The question was more about the CETA negotiations at this point. We had an opportunity there.

I ask the minister: Why was it that he did not include the seal ban in the CETA negotiations?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, this issue, as I said, is important to Newfoundland and Labrador. There were numerous issues, as you can imagine, in terms of an international trade agreement between Canada and twenty-six states of the EU; ten provinces, three territories in terms of a whole range of issues in terms of getting access to that market, in terms of promoting free trade.

As I said, we are very pleased with what we have achieved through CETA. It is unprecedented in terms of the fishing industry we talked about here in the Province. Outside of that, we have always supported the sealing industry. We are going to continue to support it.

We believe the ban is not accurate, it is incorrect. We encourage the federal government to go forward in appealing it. They are doing that now. We will continue to support the industry, and we are going to continue to grow our fishing industry based on CETA.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the Minister of Natural Resources again refused to release details of a multi-million dollar contract that Nalcor awarded without a Request for Proposal. The minister said that releasing this would be commercially sensitive and influence the bidding into future processes.

I ask the minister: If that is true, why is it that Nalcor has already released 150 contracts, the amounts of those 150 contracts that they have awarded since June?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the member opposite acknowledging the fact that what Nalcor can reveal and show to the people of the Province they are more than willing to do so. That takes away that secrecy argument they are always pushing at us, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is what can be shown to the people of the Province, what can be made public, Mr. Speaker, it absolutely will be, but there are situations where there is information that is commercially sensitive and until it is not commercially sensitive it will not be released.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: I ask the minister. There cannot be any commercially sensitive information here. This is a forestry contract about brush clearing at the Muskrat Falls Project. What is it about this project that could be commercially sensitive that cannot be released? We have released 150 contracts, the amounts.

I ask the minister: Why is it so commercially sensitive that this cannot be released?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, just to reiterate what I said yesterday, and I thought I was clear. In this particular case, it is deemed to be commercially sensitive, Mr. Speaker, because it does impact in terms of brush clearing and the right of way clearing for the transmission line. There is other work that is going to be involved, working with other contractors as well in the very same nature, very same type of work. So, as a result of that, in releasing prices now it could possibly have an impact on bids, Mr. Speaker, and on prices and working with contractors.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, that will have an impact on the cost of the project. Nalcor and our government are firmly committed to make sure that this project is the least cost option for the people of the Province to ensure that we have a power supply into the future, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister knows that most of those quotes and most of those tenders are only good for sixty days. What happened in this case is there was an extension on that.

Mr. Speaker, government has signed a new contract to lease the former *Hamilton Sound*

until the end of March at \$5,787 a day. We have asked the government to table this contract. They have refused to do that.

I ask the minister: Will you now table that contract so the people of Newfoundland and Labrador can see the details?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have no problem at all tabling that contract. That is the first time you asked to have the contract tabled. They did ask for the information that was in the contract and I would not release that information at the time when the Member for St. John's South had requested it, because it was not finalized.

Mr. Speaker, I would not release information that is in a contract that is not finalized, for sensitive reasons, but I have no problem at all tabling that contract.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I hope the contract has some details; that is what we are looking for here, Mr. Speaker. We have also asked for a copy of the financial analysis that has been done on the *Hamilton Sound* before it was sold.

Yesterday, the minister said that they analyze every movement. So, I ask the Premier: Will you release the details of the financial analysis that was completed on the *Hamilton Sound*?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I said in the House yesterday, we have a strategy in place to replace all of the ferries in the Province right now. As those vessels are being replaced, other vessels will come out of service. That is exactly what happened with the *Hamilton Sound*. There were two ferries that went into service and the *Hamilton Sound* at the time came out.

Mr. Speaker, I find it a little bit confusing as to what the Opposition Party want. At one point last week or the week before when we announced the \$51 million contract of a new ferry coming in, the next day the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair was standing up complaining about that. Then, they are telling us that we were not putting in any service for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and their companies. Now they are telling us that we are giving them business and we should not be.

What do you want: service or no service?

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.

Well, what we are looking for is typically if you are going to take a piece of equipment out of service, you would do an analysis on the value of it.

Will you table here in this House the analysis on that vessel that was taken out of the system?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when we sold the *Hamilton Sound* we sold it to a company, and it was up to them what they decided to do with it. They decided to sell it to another company. That particular company that bought it, the Norcon Marine Services, decided that they own their own shipyard and saw an opportunity not only to retain their employees, but at a cost price they could do repairs to a ship that they could put back in service.

So, while you hear of a price of \$1.2 million that was paid out to do repairs to the *Hamilton Sound*, in actual fact the cost was about \$2 million that was spent on the *Hamilton Sound*. That was at a shipyard owner's own cost, so he could retain his employees and take an opportunity that he has seen fit to do.

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.

Well, I ask the minister one more time: Did your strategy include a financial analysis of the value of that vessel, yes or no?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I told the Opposition yesterday, we have a strategy in place for replacement of some of the marine vessels in our system right now, and we feel our strategy is working.

At the time we sold the *Hamilton Sound* it did not fit into our feasibility study, nor does it today – we think we made the right decision. Another company saw an opportunity to make a profit on that, and more power to them if they can do it.

We, as a government, will continue, Mr. Speaker, to deal with Newfoundland and Labrador companies such as Norcon, bringing economy into the Province and using their services to give a reliable service to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I would like to see a copy of this strategy. A year ago it did not fit in, so why does it fit into your strategy now?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, obviously the member of the Opposition is not listening, because what I said is that our strategy did work a year ago, and two years ago, and it is still working today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaking of strategies, residents along the South Coast of Newfoundland have been promised new ferries by this government. So on January 11, 2011, government stated that a design contract was awarded to Fleetway Inc. for six new ferries that would service the South Coast of the Province.

So I ask the minister: What is the status of this design contract with Fleetway, and when can we expect delivery of those vessels?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we are in a process right now of hoping to replace – or have a strategy put together to replace the ferry system in Newfoundland and Labrador. We realize it is an aging fleet, and we will one by one replace those ferries.

We are not going to put the government back into a deficit as it was in before and end up with a deficit of another \$11 billion. We will take it one at a time and as we see fit, then we will replace the ferries.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, my question to the minister was what is the status of the design contract? So will the minister please give us an update on that design contract?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are still looking at the design contract that we have. If and when we see that that is the design that we will go with, then we will have no problem releasing that design contract.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Health said it is costing \$40 million to put a PET scanner in the Health Sciences Centre. The \$40 million she quoted not only

covers the cost of the PET scanner and the cyclotron, but also the renovations required to install the unit. Given the Corner Brook hospital is still in the design stage, it would be not near that cost to install a PET scanner.

I ask the minister: What is the real cost of a PET scanner for the Corner Brook hospital?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have been really clear on the cost of a PET scanner and that cost has come to us from very good authority. It is \$40 million. We do need a cyclotron because we do need to be able to produce the isotopes that are required.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to taking advice with regard to PET scanners, my source of advice is the World Health Organization. I am not going to take it from across the hall there. I am going to take it from the WHO, the World Health Organization.

Mr. Speaker, what they are telling us is that we need two PET scanners for every million population. In Newfoundland and Labrador, we are going to have a PET scanner. We have a 500,000 population. We are meeting all of the standards set.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: The minister just stated that you need a new cyclotron in Corner Brook for the isotopes. I ask you a question –

MR. SPEAKER: Please direct your comments to the Chair.

MR. JOYCE: I ask the Speaker to ask the minister: Where are the isotopes coming from that are used here now?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we do not have a PET scanner right now so we do not need the isotopes. He is referring, I am assuming, to isotopes for nuclear medicine, which are different all together.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Just for the minister, Mr. Speaker, they are being shipped from Chalk River. If you can ship them from Chalk River to Newfoundland, you can bring them from St. John's to Corner Brook. That number is inflated so the people of Corner Brook and Western Newfoundland cannot have those services.

Mr. Speaker, the PET scanner can be used to diagnose neurological disorders, cardiovascular disease, infection, and many other conditions and diseases. The use of PET scanners for the detection and treatment of disease is rapidly growing.

I ask the minister: Many smaller hospitals in Canada are putting in PET scanners, why is your government refusing to put a PET scanner in the new regional hospital for Corner Brook?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, once again I have to correct the misinformation over there. When we are talking about isotopes for nuclear medicine, we are

talking about something completely different when we are talking about a PET scanner. The only part he has right is that the isotopes we use for nuclear medicine we are getting from Chalk River.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of isotopes for PET scanners, they are made and used within a particular period of time. Transporting them across the Province is not something that is recommended. Therefore, it is not something that we are prepared to do because we are not going to endanger the people of the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: I ask the minister: How many PET scanners are in Quebec? How many cyclotrons are there in Quebec where there is shipment on a daily basis of these isotopes? On a daily basis they are shipping from PET scanner from the isotopes, I ask the minister.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Mr. Speaker, I do not speak for the Province of Quebec. What I will talk about is the information that the member opposite has given us before. He told us there are twelve PET scanners in Quebec. Mr. Speaker, if that is the case then they are short four. They really need sixteen in order to accommodate the population of Quebec at 8 million, if you go by the WHO recommendations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, it was reported in the news yesterday –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, it was reported in the news yesterday that the Fisheries Minister stated, I as fisheries critic did not seek information with CETA. The facts are, I wrote letters, I asked in this House, and I issued press releases.

I ask the minister: How many times and how many ways must the same questions be asked, or is the real problem that the department changes ministers so often nobody knows what is going on?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, my reference yesterday was to the fact that there is significant information available in regard to CETA. It has been released by the federal government. I think there are four particular documents on the Web site. I have them here. I will certainly present them in the House for the hon. member if he needs the information.

One is a Technical Summary of Final Negotiated Outcomes; one is the opening new markets; the other is an overview of Opening New Markets in Europe; How CETA Will Benefit Canada's Key Economic Sectors. They deal with fisheries, and all industries in Canada are to be affected by the CETA agreement.

I reference the hon. member, I am not aware of him calling me asking for a briefing on the technical requirements of CETA related to the fisheries in Newfoundland and Labrador. I am pleased to give him the information and give him a briefing. Make the call, and we will do what we can for him, Mr. Speaker, to inform him.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, on January 29, 2013 I wrote the former Minister of Fisheries on the challenges facing the sealing industry, specifically how the industry figures in the CETA negotiations. He did not respond.

I ask the current minister: Will he respond to my eight-point letter on the sealing industry that I sent to his predecessor ten months ago?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will certainly endeavour to seek out the letter and provide what information I can to the hon. member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, twice now I have asked when the new poverty reduction action plan will be released. Either the minister responsible is unwilling or unable to answer the question.

I ask the minister: Which is it? Do you just not know enough to get into the specifics, or do you think it is okay to be unaccountable to the people living in poverty in this Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, in regard to the Poverty Reduction Strategy that is exactly what it is; it is all about action. We have invested about \$148 million on poverty reduction in this Province, annually, over the last four or five years or so, each and every year.

We invest in various things. As a matter of fact, in my hand here I have a list of items that are probably about thirteen or fourteen pages long in regard to those initiatives right across government departments, Justice, Health, Advanced Education and Skills, and various other departments in exactly that.

Certainly, we will keep investing in poverty in this Province. As a matter of fact, it has been hailed across this country as being the best strategy that has been developed to date.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, we have been waiting two years. I am just asking: When will the plan be released?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I will table the plan and the updates when we have done the proper evaluations.

We will continue to invest in school fees, free textbooks, drug cards, social services benefits, and on and on and on. We will keep doing that. We do not need an actual plan because this government has been very cognizant of the most vulnerable people in this Province and we have invested heavily, I say to the hon. members.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the government's own consultant, John Noseworthy, reflected concerns expressed by AES staff that the maximum rental rates for

Income Support do not jive with today's rental market. Noseworthy also recommended government consider implementing a rental rate structure based on regional market rates, citing St. John's and Piccadilly as examples of two communities with very different housing costs.

I ask the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills: Will you consider implementing a regional rental rate structure as your own consultant recommended?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member clearly knows, or at least he should know, that due to the economy that this government has created over the last number of years, rental rates have certainly increased in the City of St. John's and Corner Brook and the growth areas of this Province.

I will tell you what we have done. We have invested heavily in affordable housing in this Province. We have invested right through Newfoundland and Labrador Housing in the rental supplements and a suite of programs that we have within Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, as well as Advanced Education and Skills.

We will continue to do that, I say to the hon. member. We will do whatever we can as a government to alleviate the added burden to our most vulnerable people in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The government did not put any additional money into the Rental Supplement Program this year and for people who are not living in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing,

Newfoundland and Labrador Housing does not help somebody who is renting privately.

Mr. Speaker, constituents who are on Income Support in my district are struggling to maintain shelter, given the restrictive rental rates under the Income Support Program. The maximum rate of \$522 per month will not secure an apartment in many areas of the Province.

I ask the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills: Do you intend to increase the rental rate under Income Support to help the most vulnerable keep a roof over their heads?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, when I reflect, and certainly in my past life, poverty was always an issue in regard to affordable housing or whatever it may be; it was always a concern of mine in the pharmacy profession.

We have invested heavily in regard to our most vulnerable people, people on Income Support. We are seeing less people on Income Support now than we ever did in our Province. People are moving into meaningful work and meaningful careers, coming off Income Support because of the opportunities that we are creating.

Certainly, my officials and I will be working diligently in regard to alleviating any other hardships that a person would have, as a vulnerable person in this Province, as we have –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The 2011-2012 Annual Report of the Department of Advanced Education and Skills described the Poverty Reduction Strategy activities and said the strategy was moving into a next phase, but this year's report says nothing

about the next phase and only mentions the strategy in passing.

I ask the Premier: What is government's plan for the Poverty Reduction Strategy, if indeed there is one?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, the Poverty Reduction Strategy plan has been the hallmark of this government. When we took government in 2003, one of the –

MS SHEA: We had the highest rate of poverty in Canada.

MR. O'BRIEN: Absolutely, we had one of the highest rates of poverty in Canada. Now we are seeing people move into meaningful jobs. We are seeing people who are able to take advantage of the opportunities that have been created in this Province, Mr. Speaker, and we continue to invest \$148 million annually, each and every year for the last number of years, across a suite of departments. All was cognizant and all was addressing the issues in regard to poverty in this Province. We will continue to action that and we will continue to improve on to it as we move forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In Estimates we were told that out of seven positions in the Poverty Reduction office, the director and two policy positions were vacant, and a client services officer position was eliminated.

I ask the minister: What is the current status of staffing in the Poverty Reduction Strategy division?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, poverty is not about the number of staff who are in a particular office in AES. This is about investing in the most vulnerable people of our Province and getting the money to the people who need it the most. That is what this is all about. This is all about affordable housing. It is about addressing the issues these people face.

It is giving them opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and we create the opportunity. We move them into skilled labour. We give them opportunity to go back to school. We give them opportunity to have meaningful lives. That is what the Poverty Reduction Strategy is all about.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

So they do not need a plan, and now they do not need staff to do anything because there is no plan.

I am asking the minister to tell this House, Mr. Speaker, how many staff are currently working in the division of Poverty Reduction Strategy?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: I am sorry to tell the hon. member, but she does not understand exactly how the Poverty Reduction Strategy works. It works across all departments by a lot of staff, I say to the hon. member, who are doing some

great, great work on behalf of those vulnerable people, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to invest in the vulnerable people of this Province. We will continue to see the impact we are seeing right across this land, as one of the best poverty reduction strategies ever implemented in Canada.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Since the minister will not tell the public how many, we will just have to go further to find out that information.

Yesterday the minister stated we have fewer people on Income Support and more people working. He said it again today, but we still have 35,000 people on Income Support, 26,000 going to food banks, and 24 per cent of children in poverty compared to 18 per cent in Canada. Our unemployment is twice the national average and there are fifteen people for every job compared to six for every job in Canada.

I ask the minister: With these realities, why is this department downsizing the Poverty Reduction Strategy?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: This is all about getting the investment to the people who need it the most, Mr. Speaker. I commend the people in my department, Advanced Education and Skills, as well as Justice, and Health, who are delivering that strategy and delivering the programs that help the most vulnerable of our Province. That is exactly what this government has been doing right from the get-go in 2004 when we implemented that strategy.

We will continue to do that, I say to the hon. member, because it is not about people – listen, they deliver it well in regard to the public service that is here in this building and across Newfoundland and Labrador. We will continue to invest in the people who need it the most.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Lucy is a sixty-six-year-old homeless woman who has been couch surfing for two years. She has worked all her life and is on a very limited pension. She applied to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing two years in a row. She has a doctor's note urging housing to help her. They keep saying there is nothing available. Lucy is not the only senior in this situation.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: What is he going to do today for seniors like Lucy who cannot afford basic shelter?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing have invested heavily right across this Province. As a matter of fact, we have over 1,700 units in St. John's alone. They have invested heavily in regard to the maintenance of those units as well.

If the hon. member has a particular case, I have not seen it yet. She has not forwarded it to me, as I know of it. If she wants me to have a look at that case in particular, I will have a look at it, absolutely, and see can we find a solution.

I would say here, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing is always seeking solutions for people who are vulnerable, people who need the

service, and they do a great job in doing so, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: That is two years for Lucy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Sarah's husband died five months ago. She lost his pension, hers is small, and now she cannot afford the rent. Housing says they have nothing to offer her. She has to move by January and has nowhere to go.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: What is he going to do today to help Sarah and others like her?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, what we are going to do is continue to invest. We are going to continue to invest in regard to affordable housing, rental supplements.

As a matter of fact, something that is usually forgotten is we invested in new residences for Memorial University that freed up about 500 rooms in the City of St. John's for affordable housing. That took those people out of that category, freed up those rentals, gave us more housing available, and that is what we will continue to do.

We will continue to invest and we will continue to address the issue. Hopefully, in time, as we grow with our economy, we will be able to bring it down as low as possible, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. KING: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I move pursuant to Standing Order 11 that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, Tuesday, November 26, 2013.

I further move Motion 3, pursuant to Standing Order 11 that the House not adjourn 10:00 p.m. today, Tuesday, November 26, 2013.

MR. SPEAKER: Could we defer that to Orders of the Day? This is Notices of Motion.

MR. KING: I am sorry.

MR. SPEAKER: The notice was given yesterday on those, if you would.

Are there any further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: I read the wrong one, sorry.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice under Standing Order 11, I shall move the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 28, 2013.

Further, I give notice under Standing Order 11 that I shall move the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m., Thursday, November 28, 2013.

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

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the offshore of the West Coast of the Island of Newfoundland is recognized as a region containing potentially billions of barrels of oil; and

WHEREAS hydraulic fracturing could be an accepted and effective method of petroleum discovery and exploration, and it is compatible with the protection of the natural environment and water sources when executed within the context of a comprehensive regulatory framework; and

WHEREAS the petroleum exploration sector needs the certainty and confidence of a stable regulatory regime; and

WHEREAS with that regulatory regime oil discovery and industry development could provide unprecedented economic opportunity and bring people home to a currently economically challenged area; and

WHEREAS the undersigned support properly regulated exploration and development of the oil and gas resource in the Province;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to introduce a regulatory framework immediately under which hydraulic fracturing could proceed safely, and move this industry forward in Western Newfoundland.

Mr. Speaker, this region of the Province all up and down the West Coast of the Province has been shown to have potentially unprecedented

oil reserves. These oil reserves stretch in the north in my district from Bellburns all the way to the south down to Cape St. George. Recently, a company started to proceed. They wanted to do horizontal drilling from onshore to offshore and this would require hydraulic fracturing.

Hydraulic fracturing, Mr. Speaker, has been used for approximately sixty years without significant incidents in this country. Over the years the process has been improved, regulated, and upgraded. This government has backed away from dealing with this issue. This is an issue that requires courage on the part of the government, courage and insight. Other jurisdictions have proceeded forward. We have an opportunity here, but it requires leadership from government to introduce the regulatory regime so this could proceed safely.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS government has a responsibility to ensure that Internet access is broadly available so people have the right to be able to access the Internet in order to exercise and enjoy their rights to freedom of expression and opinion and other fundamental human rights; and

WHEREAS Bide Arm was bypassed under the Broadband for Rural and Northern Development initiative, which saw high-speed Internet added to thirty-six communities on the Great Northern Peninsula in 2004; and

WHEREAS nearly a decade later, Bide Arm still remains without broadband services, despite being amalgamated with the Town of Roddickton; and

WHEREAS residents rely on Internet services for education, business, communication, and social activity; and

WHEREAS wireless and wired technologies exist to provide broadband service to rural communities to replace slower dial-up services;

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge the government to assist providers to ensure Bide Arm is in receipt of broadband Internet service in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, it would be very interesting to know, of the close to 200 communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador that do not have access to broadband Internet, how many of them are municipalities? I have two in my district: the Town of Goose Cove and the Town of Roddickton-Bide Arm.

Bide Arm was a municipality before it amalgamated. Now the other part of the town, Roddickton, has the high-speed Internet and Bide Arm does not. It is creating such a difficulty when you are trying to provide equitable services to people when it comes to education, when it comes to business opportunity, and when it comes to communication and social activities to really look at the development that needs to happen.

There is a significant opportunity to use varying technologies. The Town of Roddickton is only about eight kilometres away so, even in very archaic form, copper wire would be able to reach eight kilometres. There are technologies that can exist. We have more advanced technologies. We could be using wireless as a form. There are various backhauls through the fibre lines that are there.

I had some very good conversations with the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development and their officials. I look forward to working with the minister, as I have with the past minister, to see if we can find a solution to

providing broadband Internet to the town that includes Bide Arm at this point.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREAS residents of the Southwest Coast must travel the Trans-Canada Highway 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 extremely high volumes of commercial and residential travellers using this section of the TCH; and

WHEREAS the world-renowned Wreckhouse area is situate along this section of the TCH; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador initiated a twenty-four-hour snow clearing pilot project in 2008 that excluded the section of the Trans-Canada Highway from Channel-Port aux Basques to Stephenville.

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to include the section of the TCH from Channel-Port aux Basques to Stephenville in the twenty-four-hour snow clearing project.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to stand here again in this House, for the sixth day running, and put this petition on the table. Some might

question why I do that, and the reason is I take my orders from the people of Burgeo – La Poile.

One of the major concerns that they have is that they are not getting proper snow clearing after 9:00 at night on this section of the roadway. It is very dangerous. I have made it known. There is no reason that this is not done. I have heard from so many people on it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. A. PARSONS: That is the beauty of petitions is that you can continue doing it. It is a known, tried and tested parliamentary format for putting this in, and I am going to continue doing so.

I have sent a request off to the minister's staff to sit down and discuss this issue. I know that the minister has been very accommodating with any other requests that I have made. I know he is going to make sure that it is done so we can discuss this and make sure that the right thing will get done. Until that time, I will continue putting in these petitions on behalf of the people of Burgeo – La Poile.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREAS the residents of the Pynn's Brook area are facing dangers in turning their vehicles safely off the Trans-Canada Highway Route 1 into their own driveways; and

WHEREAS it is common practice among TCH Route 1 to impose speed reductions for traffic travelling through communities such as Badger,

Deer Lake, Bishop's Falls, Gander, Clarenville and Whitbourne; and

WHEREAS highway traffic accidents along the stretch of TCH Route 1 through Pynn's Brook have caused deaths and injuries;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reduce the maximum speed limit on TCH Route 1 through the Pynn's Brook area from the present 100 kilometres an hour to sixty kilometres an hour.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to be able to stand today and present this petition on behalf of dozens of people from the Pynn's Brook community, people who have faced what happens because of the dangers of having to turn off the Trans-Canada Highway. As the petition points out, they have had both deaths and injuries because of the fact that cars are zooming by at a minimum of 100 kilometres an hour as they are trying to go in and out of their community.

In the House this past couple of days we have passed legislation – some we have passed and some we are still discussing – with regard to safety on the highways. The government is showing itself to be concerned about safety on the highways; the move-over law, for example, for emergency vehicles and other vehicles that are described in that piece of legislation; the discussions that are ongoing right now, we are still discussing the legislation with regard to speed limits in school zones, with regard to slow-moving traffic, et cetera, to make our highways safer.

I find it very difficult to understand why government, both the Department of Justice and the Department of Transportation and Works, would not look at this petition and realize it makes all the sense in the world to do for Pynn's Brook what has been done for other communities. To make sure that they can feel

safe, that they know they are not going to have other members of their community maimed or killed, or anybody else maimed or killed because of the traffic going through their community.

Mr. Speaker, I just ask the ministers involved to look at this petition with justice and with concern. A very simple thing, it will not cost any money except for putting up a new speed limit sign. I really beg them on behalf of the people to pay attention to this petition.

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS 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 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, community 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; and

WHEREAS the budget for the court was only 0.2 per cent of the entire budget of the Department of Justice;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reinstate the Family Violence Intervention Court.

Mr. Speaker, I was not sure whether or not I should be up here doing the Family Violence Intervention Court petition or a petition that has also been handed to me repeatedly about Bill 29, because repeatedly I have asked the minister –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Repeatedly, I have asked the Minister of Justice to table the review of the Family Violence Intervention Court and that was refused, saying that – we have also asked, Mr. Speaker, for the review of the Family Violence Intervention Court. We have tried to get access to it through ATIPP and we have been told it is a Cabinet document and therefore protected as Cabinet secrecy.

Mr. Speaker, no one has given us a viable reason as to why the Family Violence Intervention Court was cut. A program that was so vital, so crucial, as part of working against family violence; supporting women and children, victims of family violence. The review that was done, we know that review was positive; that the court was totally supported by all stakeholders who were involved in the justice system around family violence.

We have repeatedly asked for that, and I ask the minister again: Will he table that review? Because there is no justifiable reason for having cut that program; a program that was working well, that was fulfilling its mandate as was reported in the review of the Family Violence Intervention Court.

Mr. Speaker, again, I am not sure whether I should be presenting a petition on Bill 29 or on the Family Violence Intervention Court, because they are intersecting at this point. I think that it

is crucial, Mr. Speaker. If this government says it is committed to family violence, they have to show why they closed this court.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, to the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS most communities in the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair do not have cellphone coverage; and

WHEREAS residents of Coastal Labrador require cell coverage to ensure safety and communication abilities; and

WHEREAS the opening of the Trans-Labrador Highway has increased our dependency on mobile communication;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to work with the appropriate agencies to provide cellphone coverage along the Trans-Labrador Highway and to all communities in Coastal Labrador.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke to this petition yesterday. I will continue to speak to it until I see some progress and some action, and at least until we see an interim plan. As I said yesterday, I did speak with department officials. There seems to be a plan in place for 2016. We are still only into 2013.

We need an interim plan. We cannot wait. There are twenty communities in my district, and there are three that have some patchy cell service. We have had private groups come in and say the cost would not be big to put a tower

into the region. That could go a long way in serving the district.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate the harsh winter conditions that we live with in our remote communities. What cell coverage would do for the safety of so many residents, especially our youth, Mr. Speaker, who are travelling on buses, and at night, for school and sporting events, things like that. With our snow plows going off the road at 9 o'clock at night, we are talking eight, nine hours, lives could be lost. Hopefully, that is not the case, Mr. Speaker. Medical emergencies happening in storms and things like that. Yes, we do have satellite phones.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Transportation has satellite phones that you can pick up in each community to help with this in the event of not having cellphones; however, every time I went to pick up a phone last year, because I am travelling a lot on the road myself, no phone was available. I did address this at Combined Councils and talked about how simple it is to make sure that one store in every community has a stock of satellite phones. There are people on the road every single day – transportation workers who could ensure that there are, but this problem still exists as well. So we not only do not have cell coverage, but the backup plan that is in place clearly is not working either.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

WHEREAS autism spectrum disorder has been estimated to occur in as many as one in eighty-eight children; and

WHEREAS individualized and intensive early interventions are important for improving outcomes for children with autism; and

WHEREAS long wait lists are forcing many parents to wait up to two years before their children receive needed pediatric assessments and diagnostic services; and

WHEREAS the Intensive Applied Behavioural Analysis Program is not available for children after Grade 3 while research supports the use of Applied Behavioural Analysis throughout the lifespan; and

WHEREAS a coordinated multi-agency approach among key government departments and agencies is needed to ensure that individuals with autism spectrum disorder are provided with services that will promote independent living; and

WHEREAS a comprehensive Province-wide strategy for autism spectrum disorder will decrease the lifetime costs of treating and providing services for persons with autism;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to develop a comprehensive Province-wide strategy for autism spectrum disorder in consultation with parents, advocates, educators, health care providers, and experts in the autism community.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is a petition that people all around the Province have signed today. We have people from Carbonear, Bristol's Hope, Harbour Grace, Victoria, all around the Province. There are people from the West Coast on this one as well, and Paradise. It is an issue that affects families all across Newfoundland and Labrador.

Members will recall that yesterday I gave notice of a motion with respect to a comprehensive strategy for autism spectrum disorder. This is something that families and experts in the field, advocates for individuals with autism spectrum disorder, have been asking for for a number of years now. Several Ministers of Health and

Community Services ago, I would suggest, this issue started to come to a head.

We do have ABA now up until the end of Grade 3. I certainly recognize that is really a latter day thing for Newfoundland and Labrador, but there is lots of evidence to suggest that is useful later in life. I think the key here is to bring together all of the expertise among government agencies, departments, everything from schools to health care providers, government departments and so on, to bring this strategy –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member that his time has expired.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I move Motion 2, pursuant to Standing Order 11, that the House not adjourn 5:30 p.m. today, Tuesday, November 26, 2013.

Further, I move Motion 3, pursuant Standing Order 11, that the House not adjourn 10:00 p.m. today, Tuesday, November 26, 2013.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that this House do not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, November 26, and it has been further moved and seconded that this House do not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 26.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that Bill 10, An Act To Amend The Pharmaceutical Services Act, be now read a third time.

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

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion that Bill 10 be now read a third time?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Pharmaceutical Services Act. (Bill 10)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Pharmaceutical Services Act", read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 10)

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

MR. KING: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador, to ask leave to introduce a bill entitled An Act To Amend The Insurance Adjusters, Agents And Brokers Act, Bill 21, and that the said bill be now read the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Minister of Service NL shall have

leave to introduce a bill, An Act To Amend The Insurance Adjusters, Agents And Brokers Act, Bill 21, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the minister shall have leave to introduce Bill 21 and that the said bill be now read a first time?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Insurance Adjusters, Agents And Brokers Act", carried. (Bill 21)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Insurance Adjusters, Agents And Brokers Act. (Bill 21)

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

When shall the bill be read a second time?

MR. KING: On tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: On tomorrow.

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

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

MR. KING: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 4, second reading of a bill, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2, Bill 13.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 13, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2, be now read a second time.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Oh, it is continuing from yesterday.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is the second time now when we were getting towards the end of the day that I think I accidentally tried to close the Legislature instead of ending the debate. I apologize to the members if anybody was as confused as I was. We certainly managed to conclude the debate on time. That is good. It is always good to find ways to co-operate.

I will just have a few more words to say about Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act No. 2. One of the things that are accomplished here in the legislation is to limit the number of occupants in a vehicle to the number of seat belts in a vehicle. That is logical; there is no question about that.

I was a bit surprised to hear from the minister's officials in Transportation and Works that there was a technicality at present that permits four people to travel in the back of a vehicle, if you will, where there are only three seat belts in the vehicle. That will not be a problem any longer because this will limit the number of passengers to the number of seat belts that are actually in a vehicle.

It seems like it was not a whole long time ago that seat belt usage was not really the norm in the Province. I think it is important to bring this change in to ensure that there are not any loopholes, that people do remain safe.

There was a great tragedy in our Province just recently where a young man lost his life in a vehicle accident and he was not wearing a seat belt at the time. His family has been out there publicly, quite courageously I think, cautioning people in the Province around seat belt usage.

I hope people will heed their call to make sure that whenever you get in a vehicle you put that seat belt on and remain safe. I think this is an important issue, and I think recent events shine a light on just how important and vital this change can be. That was one thing.

Another thing I just wanted to comment on is the issue of people riding on parts of a vehicle not intended for seating, for example, riding in the back of pickup trucks. I know the Member for Cape St. Francis gave us sort of humorous anecdotes from his life when people would customarily ride in the back of a vehicle. It could be a dozen people jump in the back and go up to the store, the bank, or what have you.

We certainly do not see a whole lot of that any more, but I was a bit – I grew up on a small farm and when we were doing things like making hay or hauling kelp for fertilizer, or we were doing various things around, trying to deal with livestock and those sorts of things, when you are slaughtering large numbers of animals, there are often times where there was reason to ride in the back of a pickup truck, and to have a number of people there.

If you were just more or less trying to keep animals, like I said, that have been slaughtered, or vegetables, or hay, or equipment, there was certainly cause to ride in the back of a truck, if not only just to secure what it is you are carrying there. Sometimes, it is really not practical in agriculture to be strapping everything down tightly, because you are not driving a long distance.

The way it was for my family's farm, and it still is, the place where my father hauls his kelp from, and the place where he hauls his hay from, and the place where he hauls a lot of his vegetables from, all require him to travel over a short portion of road between the communities of Taylor's Bay and Lord's Cove in order to transport whatever it is he happens to be transporting.

This extends to other things as well – not only agriculture, there are still lots of people out there who transport turf, peat, wood, and so on. I am

just wondering if there are any exemptions to this, maybe only with respect to agricultural vehicles that are used in agriculture situations, whether the minister or his officials have thought much about the implications here for those who are working in agricultural industries, or, as in the case of my family, working in farming on a relatively small scale. Like I said, sometimes having to travel in the back of not only a pickup truck, but other sort of farm vehicles and so on.

So I think it is something that is worth considering. Beyond that, I do not have any other concerns about this bill on the whole. As I have said earlier, I am happy to support this because I think these are really positive changes.

It really goes to show that as the Province changes, as vehicles change, as the nature of our use of vehicles change over time, it is important for us to be in here in the fall sitting of the Legislature to have an opportunity on the legislative calendar to bring in these sorts of things and deal with it, outside of all of the machinations that go on in the House of Assembly after Christmas, in the spring sitting, where we are very occupied with dealing with issues related to the Budget and any associated legislation that sort of falls out of major changes that government decides to proceed with.

I think it is a really good lesson in why we are here and why we need to be here to do this sort of work in the fall.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): I recognize the hon. the Member for St. John's – or for Bonavista North.

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thought my population just went up.

It certainly is indeed great to stand today, no matter which district one might be from, to talk about this bill, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act No. 2. Again, it is one of these bills where most people who speak are speaking to

support it, but each of us brings a distinct point of view to this as well.

When we were talking to the officials at the department, they talked about this amendment as closing gaps or harmonizing and clarifying certain sections of this bill. Believe it or not, there are probably 215 provisions in the act in total, and they are always needing to be revised.

There are particularly six sections referred to by most of the members when we talk about this, and most of us have talked about them in the same order. We talk about the school zones, the slow-moving vehicles – that is from sections 110 and 111 – the ambulance and fire trucks, emergency vehicles at the stop signs, in section 123. There are two sections here from section 178, subsections on seatbelts and riding in non-passenger parts of vehicles; and section 170(1), the threshold for insurance. There is quite a gamut of ideas or information that can be addressed in looking at this.

In the old act, we understand that they did have some provisions made for doubling of the fines for speeding in school zones, but the act was vague in what they referred to as these zones. Even with some of the thoughts that we might have in the last couple of days, when you are referring to a school zone the old section referred to buildings and grounds around the school buildings and referred to times between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. in the old act. The new time reflects the wider use of school hours and the fact that it is now from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

We all realize there are even times outside of these hours that school is probably in session in some way. I know two of the high schools in my district, Pearson Academy and Phoenix Academy – I know because I spoke to their administrators – gym practices in the morning start at 6:30. The gym is usually booked for school teams, right up to 9:00 at night. By extending it the amount of time we did, it takes into account some of the extensions of the hours that may exist.

The other thing is you might even have a very, very small community. I know Heritage Academy in Greenspond is a very small school, one of the smallest populations of any school in the Island probably, or even in Labrador. They would need more than two signs to designate the school zone because there are two roads that pass the school, one behind and one in front. You cannot just look at a couple of signs.

In different situations there may need to be more signage around, or there might be a lane coming down by the side of the school where you have to recognize the school zone. Even when we are trying to clarify and tighten this language up, we still know that there are times when it might not fit all situations.

The section that deals with slow-moving vehicles is section 111. Most of the ideas that have been talked about –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A couple of comments are all I would really like to add here and these are comments from the officials. Most of our hon. members when they spoke, they spoke about antique motor vehicles receiving an exemption for the slow-moving act.

One thing is most people who have the antique cars, they are for show. They are not on the street in the busiest of times and they are mostly for Sunday drives. It is a recognition in the act that these vehicles cannot maintain eighty kilometres an hour. They are allowed on the highway in the lane, not driving on the shoulder but driving in the lane, unless they are really obstructing traffic. At that point I understand any of our enforcement officers can approach them and either ask them to move off the road or to ask them to speed up. If they cannot speed up then they can receive a fine or they will be recognized – but it is an odd sense.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROSS: The other peculiarity about the antique cars is that they also fit in with the seat belt legislation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I would ask all members for their co-operation, please, as the Member for Bonavista North continues with his speaking time.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista North.

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The other peculiarity about the antique vehicles is that many of them do not have seatbelts at all. If we had to strictly go by saying you can only carry your passengers where you have seatbelts, then some of these vehicles have to receive an exemption for that part of the act as well. That has been omitted or no one else has referred to that. So, I am just looking at my notes.

If I jump right quickly ahead again I will go to section 178(5), riding in a non-passenger section. The hon. Member for Cape St. Francis referred to it yesterday about carrying a full ball team in his Chevette. I never, ever thought I would get the time to mention my uncle Eldon's name here, but when we were kids we would travel to the swimming hole on Sunday afternoon in the back of the dump truck. It was the only dump truck in the town and he would take about twenty to thirty of us in the back of his dump truck. Believe it or not, the small kids, Mr. Speaker, would get on the shoulders of some of the others who were standing up in the dump just to see out over. It was really, really safe at that point.

We talk about the good old days, but there are times that there can be exemptions and exceptions. When we look at that today, the only exception to people riding in a non-seat belted section of a vehicle, or a portion of a vehicle that is not designed to carry passengers is on private property. The officials at the

department, the questions asked a few days ago when we were there, it was said that if they are on farm, you are off the regular highway – the highway is anything that is officiated by the police and recognized as a driveable section, but if you are on a farm and going across the back road of a farm, you can still actually carry people in the back of your pickup. Again, it is on private land and it is not on regulated highway.

Again, safety is still an issue there. It certainly suggests that they not do that, but they still have that ability on private property on a farm.

The other section that was referred to is when you have your emergency vehicles approaching a stop sign or a red light. There was no comment or no reference to that in any legislation before. In fact, the official said the legislation was quiet on that effect, meaning if there is nothing written then you just go by your good common sense approach.

Right now, it shall be written in there and the wording says: a driver of an emergency vehicle shall not proceed past a red light or a stop sign unless the vehicle yields the intersection to someone who is already in it, or someone who did not see them coming, or a pedestrian. At that point, then they proceed.

Now, that is a new thing. Apparently, Eastern Health was requiring all of their drivers to do this all along. Now it is uniform across the Province when it is put into this legislation.

I intended to stand just to bring up the things that – the perspective that I would have brought to this from my thoughts at the briefings. I do not want to take up much more time of the Legislature on this because all of these points have been handled.

I would say at this point, most of the loose ends that can be tied up, are tied up here, Mr. Speaker, and this is a good piece of legislation that we will all support, I would hope.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am happy to stand and speak to Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act No 2.

I specifically want to spend a few minutes speaking about clause 3, "The Act is amended by adding immediately after section 110.1 the following:

"110.2 (1) Except where a lower maximum speed limit is prescribed by this Act, a person shall not drive a vehicle at a speed greater than 50 kilometres an hour in a school zone.

"(2) In this section, 'school zone' means the portion or length of highway between the two posted signs indicating a school zone.

"(3) Subsection (1) only applies between the hours of 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. on days when school is regularly held."

Mr. Speaker, I know this is about increasing safety. As we have evolved as a car and automobile culture we have had to amend our laws. We have had to amend our regulations to update them to the increasing use of vehicles, the increasing traffic on our roadways all over the Province, and this is a good thing. It is important to amend our regulations and our laws to accommodate the demographics and the modes of transportation in our communities.

I am concerned, and I would think that it would make sense to have our school zones in effect twenty-four seven, and why not? This is about safety. It is about the safety of our children. It simply means reducing speeds through communities where there is a school on a roadway. Simply reducing speed for a very short period of time. Why would we not do that?

One of the reasons I would push for this, Mr. Speaker, is that in schools we have extracurricular activities. Perhaps not as many extracurricular activities as we did have years ago, with that in and of itself is a shame, but we have drama, we have sports. We have all kinds of extracurricular in schools, and it would make sense that a school zone be designated as a school zone to cover all possibilities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS ROGERS: The other thing is that we see an increasingly mixed use of schools, that other groups use schools. Hopefully, we will see that increasing as well in a number of communities, Mr. Speaker, where the schools are used by groups that are not specifically students or teachers.

We know that people know how they are to act when they come to a stop sign. People know what the laws and regulations are when they come to a yield sign. Why would we not extend that same kind of conditioning and automatic response to a school zone?

I am thinking not even of the road traffic, Mr. Speaker, because in road traffic drivers have to become used to new regulations and legislation in terms of directions on how to use a zone, the roads where there are speed zones, where there are slower areas, but also then for the people in the schools, whether it be students or parents, so that students and parents, and anybody who uses a school knows that automatically drivers have to slow down in those zones.

It is a win-win situation, Mr. Speaker. Nobody loses on this. By making our school zones in effect twenty-four seven, everybody is safer. Then again, not only are we conditioning drivers, but we are also conditioning people who are using the schools, again, students and teachers. Students have an expectation. Parents or drivers coming out of the schools have an expectation that the school zone is a slower speed zone.

The other thing, is this in effect just during the school year? What about the summer? In summer we know that schools are used for community activities. In the summer we also know that schools are used for summer school. So why complicate it?

One would think that simplifying it and making it automatically a school zone twenty-four seven imprints on people that they slow down at all times entering a school zone and throughout the school zone. There is no negative by-effect of doing this. I believe it would be safer to have a school zone as a constant.

Again, it is about the safety of our children. It is about the safety of people who use the school zone. Then it takes the ambiguity out there. There is no need to have ambiguity around this. All it is, is a very short piece of road that is designated at the school zone. We set the parameters and people have expectations that they would approach a school zone, no matter what time of year it is, no matter what time of day or evening it is, that one has to slow down for that particular piece of road.

I would think, Mr. Speaker, in fact, what this would do is it would enhance safety for the drivers. It would enhance safety for students. It would enhance safety for those who are coming in and out of schools, for everybody who is using a school.

I would like to highly recommend the minister look at this, because what we are doing – let's take the guess work out of it. Let's make it across board. There are no losers if we do this. The school zone then would be imprinted on people's driving habits the same way that a yield sign would be or a stop sign would be. It would be constant and it would take the guess work out of it, thereby increasing the safety for everyone concerned. I see no valid reason why not to do this, only the pluses of increasing safety for all concerned.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak on Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act No. 2.

I am going to take a few minutes of my time this afternoon to mention just a few matters in regard to this particular bill. First of all, I would like to respond and mention a matter that was brought up by the hon. member opposite a few moments ago regarding her suggestion that school zones be twenty-four hours a day instead of what has been proposed in the legislation as applying between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

I appreciate her suggestion, but I would point out to her that in most all, probably all school zones there are posted speed signs that go along with school zone signs. Quite frequently you will see that. You will see school zone signs, the blue sign indicating a school zone, and you will see a speed sign.

A speed sign is in effect twenty-four hours a day. A school zone sign is being recommended from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. They are the normal hours; 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. is the normal hours during which school is sitting, when school is in place, in session. That is the normal hours for when that would take place.

The problem with expanding that beyond those normal school hours is a similar problem as we have seen, as a government, in construction zones. It is a frustration. I have heard it many, many times from people in the Province when a construction zone is set up, a work zone on a highway, either a Transportation and Works highway or a municipal roadway throughout the Province, and it is set up after hours when there is no action taking place and no activity, no work taking place in that construction, or there is no danger that exists.

Now, there are times when a construction zone is erected and left up overnight to identify, maybe there has been a crosscut in the road and there is a portion of gravel there, or the asphalt has been cut or is creating a danger, or some other aspect of that construction zone after hours

could create a danger or concern for motorists, and they still have to reduce their speed in that construction zone and function as if people were working there.

There are also times when construction zone signs have been left up. When the workers leave, there is no obstruction; there is no issue in the area. That is not allowed under the Highway Traffic Act. That is not permitted. In those types of circumstances, a construction company is required to take them down. For the very reason that when those types of circumstances happen and a person drives through a construction zone where they see the signage up and the warning signs and there is no construction, and they go through it and there is no construction, and the next day they go through it and there is no construction, and the next day they come through and they say, ah, there is no construction, I am just going to keep driving normally because those signs should not be up there, then it creates a danger, because that may be the very time that construction is happening.

So, under the act it requires construction zones to be properly marked and posted on a highway when construction is taking place, or when some work on the road after hours is still a danger to the motoring public; but if none of that exists, for the signs to be removed.

I would suggest to the member opposite that school zones should be treated a similar way. If you expect to see, or could see, or could be a time when children are coming to or leaving the school between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., that is when the school zone should be in effect, during the times that the children are coming and going from the school, and that is the whole intent of it. Other than that, there is the opportunity, as in my colleague, the Minister of Service NL, believes that if not all, pretty much most all of the schools in the Province have both a school zone sign and a speed sign – the speed sign is in effect twenty-four hours a day anyway.

Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to just mention on reference to slow-moving vehicles, and it is under the section for slow-moving vehicles. It

indicates that the act is amended by adding immediately after Section 111 the following, and then it refers to a person shall not operate a slow-moving vehicle on a highway with a speed limit of greater than eighty kilometres an hour, and it goes on to say that it does not apply to a bicycle, snow clearing equipment and so on. Also, that the minister may issue permits to people for agricultural purposes and farming and those types of things as well.

What is important on this particular section is that we see from time to time on our highways, ninety kilometre zones, 100 kilometre zones, vehicles that are not designed or able to reach the speed of eighty kilometres an hour and sustain the speed of eighty kilometres an hour and operate in a safe manner under those speeds.

That is what this is getting at here. That is what this legislation is getting at here, quite commonly seen on the Outer Ring Road. I drive across the Outer Ring Road every day, most every day, back and forth to work. I use the Outer Ring Road early mornings. Quite often 6:30, 7:00, 7:30 in the morning, you will see a piece of slow-moving heavy equipment travelling on the Outer Ring Road and you will see the same thing in the evening. It is a traffic hazard, Mr. Speaker. I say it is a traffic hazard; it is a serious hazard.

I have seen times when collisions have occurred with slow-moving vehicles like that on highway speeds, and we have to assure the safety of the public, assure the safety of the operator of such vehicles, and also of other vehicles that are trying to manoeuvre around these slow-moving vehicles in a highway situation.

I go back to what it says, it is amended immediately after section 111 – and it would be important to just take a second to look at section 111, because 111 is still going to exist in the Highway Traffic Act. What section 111 says now is, “A driver shall not drive a vehicle at such a slow rate of speed as to impede or block the normal reasonable movement of traffic then existing on a highway, except where it is necessary to do so for safe operation...”.

When a person does that, that particular section goes on to say that a traffic officer can order a person to speed up or take your vehicle off the road. It actually says under paragraph (2) "A traffic officer may order a driver referred to in subsection (1) to increase his or her rate of speed, pull into the curb to allow other vehicles to pass or remove the vehicle from the highway."

Then if a person fails to abide by the orders of a traffic officer, then a charge could be laid. That currently exists in the Highway Traffic Act. This is in addition to that.

I know that members opposite yesterday raised a point regarding concern about antique vehicles or other slow-moving vehicles such as an antique vehicle, because an antique vehicle is one of the exceptions here. In a case where that antique vehicle is causing a disruption on traffic, the police still have the option under section 111 to order that vehicle off the highway or off the roadway.

I just wanted to highlight for the members opposite who raised those concerns yesterday that still does exist in the Highway Traffic Act.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation – and I heard members opposite earlier say that they believed that everyone would be supporting this; I hope they certainly do. There are a number of other pieces involved with this, one other that I want to mention before I finish up my time this afternoon. It is a good piece of legislation, and that is the one regarding increasing the reportable accident damage threshold to \$2,000.

Under the current legislation, under the current Highway Traffic Act, persons are required to report accidents where there is damage. What this section is doing is increasing that liability or increasing that responsibility to report accidents when there is a damage of \$2,000 or greater. That does a couple of things. One is there are a lot of accidents or collisions that occur now where you may have \$1,200, \$1,300, \$1,400, \$1,500 damage; it can be a very minor collision. Under that circumstance the person is required to report that to the police. It is a very time-

consuming process for police officers throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. It is also time consuming for the people involved.

When there is a collision of a lesser amount, \$800 or \$900, \$950 of total value, people have the right to sort that out between themselves without reporting it to the police and without reporting it to their insurance company. What we are doing here is we are raising that threshold to \$2,000. The damage now is greater so a fewer number of those minor accidents will now be reported to the police.

It is going to reduce the burden on police services in taking reports of minor collisions. It is going to reduce the burden on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who find themselves in circumstances where they have had a minor collision, no injuries, and a small amount of damage. It also decreases their responsibility as far as their insurance responsibilities go.

Mr. Speaker, I think this again is a good piece of legislation for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I have received favourable responses on it. I have received some inquiries from people after the debate yesterday and I was quite pleased to respond to some of those. It is a good piece of legislation to make our highways safer and also good for the people who use our highways and the motoring public, the people of the Province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I agree a lot with the member opposite, to the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services in his statement, especially around the school zones. It is a great opportunity to speak to the

amendments in the Highway Traffic Act because they are all about enhancing the safety mechanisms.

I will try not to go back and repeat what other members said, but just to raise a few additional points or concerns that I have based on these amendments. One in particular with the Schools Act amendment, which I think is great to see, you are changing the hours now for reducing speed from 7:00 a.m. down previously from 8:00 a.m. in recognizing that students can be arriving at school before the 8:00 a.m. hour. That is really positive to see that expanded.

One thing I would like to know from the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador, how are people going to be informed about this particular change? When drivers' licences are renewed or when plates are renewed? Will there be may be something sent out in the mail highlighting this particular change so the general population knows that they would indeed have to slow down an hour earlier?

That is a good way to inform them and not necessarily have to increase costs because these mail outs will be happening anyway on a periodic basis, beyond what we are doing when it comes to how the media, public, and the advisories that are put out there. That could be a cost-effective way of getting these changes out there to the general public.

When it comes to looking at prohibiting slow-moving vehicles from being driven on a highway at a speed limit that would be greater than eighty kilometres an hour, my district in particular has Route 430, which is the Viking Trail. It is the primary highway going up the Great Northern Peninsula. In many cases, sometimes a slow-moving vehicle may have to drive on that main highway just because there is no alternative. There is no secondary route they could go to get to their destination.

In it, it does state a notwithstanding clause, "...the minister or a person authorized by him or her may issue a special permit..." I would hope, and I believe it was mentioned in the briefing,

there would be a mail out for commercial operators or those who would be operating this type of heavy equipment, a backhoe or whatnot, who potentially could be using the highway would get a letter or something directly in the mail. That would be important for people to be aware of this amendment and this change, that there is an option in cases where they would have to be driving on the particular highway. It does not limit them, but there may be a process of which they have to use it.

Maybe in some situations there is an exception. Maybe the minister could further explain that. If, indeed, that is the only option for something like Route 430, that those users would not have to have a special permit because there is no other alternative to get to their particular destination. I would like to have that clarified because this may increase red tape. If there is a fee associated with it, it could slow down progress of getting work done by a particular construction company, or of that nature if they are doing a particular job.

There is a limited window of opportunity to get work done, especially in rural communities. I would not want this legislation to hinder rural economic development and construction and things like that which would be happening. I do not think that is the intent of this legislation, but I do want to put my concerns into the debate here on Bill 13.

Also, one of the other points that was raised in the briefing was around limiting the number of occupants in a vehicle to the number of seatbelts. I think it is important to recognize the safety of wearing seatbelts to the occupants. I was a little surprised that the current legislation did not have that built into it. I did acknowledge and did make the point that there may be some situations or circumstances, given the lack of public transportation that exists in many of our rural communities, for an ability where there may be a situation where someone could not drive and they may need to have additional members in a vehicle.

I think it is important to acknowledge, when you make legislation, that this is meant to be the

overall rule. There may be an exception that would happen, but it would be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and upon the discretion of an enforcement officer as to how strongly they want to enforce the legislation that is there. As we see in many cases when people are maybe doing higher than the prescribed maximum limit, in some situations officers do issue warning tickets and things like that. There may be a period of which a warning or whatnot, depending on the situation, would be issued. It is important to have legislation that does protect and enhance safety of lives of people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I am also pleased to see the threshold for reportable accident damage increased to \$2,000, given that in many cases accidents – even those that have no injuries can significantly have over \$2,000 of damage. Previously, it was at \$1,000. In most cases you are going to be well over \$1,000. If it is a fender bender, you likely can fall under that. It can reduce the resources that are needed when it comes to dealing with other more relevant and pressing issues when it comes to our traffic enforcement and how those resources are being utilized.

One of the things that is not in this particular amendment to the Highway Traffic Act, but it is kind of alluded to, is looking at slow-moving traffic. I think it is something for the government to maybe consider is to also look at – we have highway maximums. What about minimum travelling speeds?

Slow drivers are likely among the most dangerous on our roads. They should be treated as well as speeders because in many cases slow drivers cause people to overtake. It can, in many cases, cause people to make very poor decisions and put lives at risk. We have maximum speeds. In other jurisdictions they also have minimum speeds. That might be a road we would want to go down and to look at and pursue as we debate and develop legislation in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I thank the minister for putting this forward, and it is something that I can support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

If the Minister of Service NL speaks now he will close the debate.

The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

These amendments to the Highway Traffic Act are very important pieces of legislation. It is great to hear the commentary that has happened over the last couple of day. I would like to thank all of the speakers on both sides of the House. I think we are all unanimous that this is a good piece of legislation.

There were a few questions that were asked. I am going to get into that in a few minutes, not in too much detail because we will go into Committee shortly; that is my understanding. I just want to say it is a solid piece of legislation. I would like to thank my staff at Service NL who helped draft this legislation, for putting this together.

A couple of questions, Mr. Speaker, and I have my notes here in front of me. The school zone questions, it came up a couple of times from members opposite. There seems to be some confusion there. I would like to make a few clarifications. Again, it might come up in Committee but I would like to call it out here now.

We are including a more specific definition of a school zone. It will clearly define it as a portion of highway between the posted signs that indicate a school zone. Before, in the old act, it was not clearly defined. That is the first thing we have done is clearly define in the act exactly what a school zone is.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, a new subsection states that expect were a lower speed limit is prescribed – you have to keep that in mind –

except where a lower speed limit is prescribed, a person shall not travel at more than fifty kilometres an hour in a school zone.

I have heard some commentary on the other side that perhaps – and we talk about the hours of operation as well, Mr. Speaker - that this subsection shall only apply between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on days when school is in session.

There is a reality to what is happening here, Mr. Speaker. Basically, what we are doing here now is putting what pretty much already exists and is happening out there in practice on our roadways, in our municipalities, in legislation, in black and white legislation.

The maximum is normally fifty kilometres an hour that is happening right now. That is posted in school zones, on our roadways, and throughout the Province. In many municipalities actually the posted speeds are lower than fifty kilometres an hour and there are many of examples of that, certainly in my district, in the City of St. John's, in St. John's West.

Again, in putting together this legislation, we looked at what is happening outside in other rural areas. I have yet to find an example – I had my officials looking into it as of yesterday – that we do not have signs that are posted in rural areas with the maximum speed limits.

This is just again to put it in legislation, to make sure that we are following our own legislation, Mr. Speaker, and that municipalities are following legislation as well when they do post the speed limits.

Again, these speed limits that are in place in school zones that are posted there are in effect twenty-four seven, 365 days a year. To say that we should make this legislation 365 days a year, Mr. Speaker, we are there. Truly, we are there. There are not many areas that we do not see this happening and we have yet to find them, to be honest with you.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to talk about the antique cars and the new slow-driving legislation. I just

want to give a definition of what is in our regulations of what an antique vehicle really is. An antique vehicle means a motor vehicle twenty-five years or older, maintained as nearly as possible with original components, certified by the Newfoundland Antique and Classic Car Club and owned as a collector's item and operated solely for the use in exhibitions, club activities, parades and other similar functions and used for occasional family pleasure, but in no event used for general transportation or business purposes.

Mr. Speaker, we also know that a lot of antique cars do drive at regular speeds and there are no issues around them, but this references certainly the antique cars that are often slower moving, they drive infrequently, and I think a few of the members over here had mentioned that they are only used in good weather, in spring and summer, they are much valued by the owners, and they take them out on a nice sunny day for a bit of motoring, as they used to say back in days gone by.

It is important to note as well that in section 111, which still exists in the act that we have made some amendments to but still exist, and this applies to antique cars and other vehicles, it must be noted as well, "(1) A driver shall not drive a vehicle at such a slow rate of speed as to impede or block the normal and reasonable movement of traffic then existing on a highway, except where it is necessary to do so for safe operation or to comply with this Part.

"(2) A traffic officer may order a driver referred to in subsection (1) to increase his or her rate of speed, pull into the curb to allow other vehicles to pass or remove the vehicle from the highway.

"(3) A person who fails to comply with an order given under subsection (2) is guilty of an offence."

So, that exists in legislation right now. In practical purposes most people who are on our roadways, on our highways, and on our streets, if they are in an antique vehicle that is moving slowly, and I have witnessed it, they will pull over and let faster moving traffic by. Most of

these people are very responsible car owners. They understand the rules of the road. They love the vehicle that they are in, and they certainly do not want to be a hindrance to the free flow of traffic. Those are my experiences. We feel that this is common-sense legislation, a common-sense amendment, and a common-sense application.

Mr. Speaker, I just quickly want to touch about questions around enforcement. In Newfoundland and Labrador we have highway enforcement officers, we have weigh scale inspectors, we have RNC officers, we have RCMP officers, and we have municipal police. We have more enforcement officers in our Province today than any time in our history. We have I think it is almost 200 – 160 more RNC officers alone in our communities and in our Province versus just a few short years ago.

Just for a little example I have a few stats to throw out there. In the Northeast Avalon in 2012 there were 18,000 hazardous moving violations that were given out just in 2012. Last year there were 440 cellphone violations. This year alone there are 700 so far, and we still have another month to go, Mr. Speaker. To say that enforcement is not out there, it is not happening, or anybody to allude to that fact, enforcement is there, there are people out there. Our enforcement officers are out here doing their work and doing their jobs.

Mr. Speaker, to support these enforcement officers we have two key supports to help them in their efforts to make our roadways safer, and that is legislation and education. We have come a long ways with regard to legislation, but we will continue to review our legislation in other jurisdictions as well as our own legislation on an going basis. This is exactly what this exercise was here today, Mr. Speaker, and the new amendments, the amendments that we brought forward last week.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to call out that it is truly education about safe driving practices that will have the most impact over the mid to long term, and certainly even in the short term, to make our roadways safer. We will have a three-month

period after proclamation to do an awareness campaign. I know the Member for The Straits – White Bay North had mentioned that perhaps we should have a communication within our driver's licence renewal.

Mr. Speaker, we have had discussions about that and we have talked about that. We are not quite there yet. Over a twelve-month period, renewals are happening on an ongoing basis and you could literally be twelve months away from informing somebody: Do you realize there is new legislation? Well, we do not know if that is the most effective thing to do when you send mail-outs with driver renewal applications. We are debating that internally and we will come to some kind of position on that in the near future.

We are confident that the campaign we put in place will inform the general public exactly what is happening with the new legislation to make sure, as best possible, that they are fully informed of what the new rules of the road are. Mr. Speaker, most of this legislation we put in in the last two weeks is common-sense legislation. Most people are doing these things now and that is the important thing. Our culture of safety certainly has to change, and this is part of what we are trying to do here is change it through this legislation.

I think the Leader of the Third Party had mentioned in her discussion and debate here earlier that common sense is not as common as we would like it to be. We all well recognize that, and again that is where legislation and education play critical roles in supporting what our enforcement people do on our roadways to make our highways and roadways safer.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to say that we need to be vigilant in teaching our young drivers safe driving practices. We need to be vigilant in correcting the bad driving of our friends, family, and co-workers. Do not be afraid to be a backseat driver. I think being a backseat driver saves lives. I think I have been in situations where I have been sitting next to somebody in a car and say: Hey, watch out. Slow down; you are getting too close to that driver ahead of you.

We are the ones that can effect change the most. It is the people of the Province themselves being sensible, understanding what safety means, knowing that bad driving practices impact people's lives and can end lives, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation will contribute towards this goal, enforcement will contribute towards this goal, and we need to strive to make our roadways a safer place for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I certainly look forward to the Committee, when we go to Committee, and answering any questions that the members opposite may have about this. I look forward to seeing this legislation being enacted.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Is it the pleasure of the House that the said bill be now read a second time?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2. (Bill 13)

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

When shall this bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole House?

MR. KING: Today.

MR. SPEAKER: Today.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2", read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 13).

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

MR. KING: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador, that Bill 13, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2, be now referred to Committee of the Whole.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 13.

Is it the pleasure of the House that we now resolve into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 13?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Littlejohn): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 13, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2". (Bill 13)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 9 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 9 inclusive carry?

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

I thank the minister for giving the explanations that he gave when he spoke, and they were very helpful, but I still would like to come back to an issue I raised during second reading and ask the minister if any more thought has been given to what I raised. That was the whole issue of enforcement of the new legislation.

My concern came from the fact that we are aware of how many new rules we have brought in the Province with regard to safety on the highway, such as not using cellphones while operating a motor vehicle are not being followed by people. That rule in particular, and we do not seem to have the capability to enforce that rule. I am sure the officers in both the RNC and the RCMP who deal with traffic do their best; I know they do. I see them pull people over many, many times.

My concern is we do not have adequate resources to enforce what we have now. Are there any discussions going on inside of Service NL, the Department of Justice, and any other department that needs to be involved with regard to enforcement? There is no sense having these rules on paper if we cannot enforce the rules. I would like to know from the minister: Is this discussion happening, and will more resources be put on the roads to help with enforcement?

We have already had issues raised in this House with regard to some rural communities in particular being concerned about lack of enforcement when it comes to speeding within their communities, when it comes to the use of vehicles on the roads that should not be on the

road, such as quads and that kind of thing, and they do not have adequate coverage by the RNC or the RCMP. Now we are adding new rules, which I believe in. I believe we should be adding them, but what is the discussion that is going on with regard to lack of enforcement?

So often we hear of people being arrested for different infractions of traffic regulations and we hear they owe thousands of dollars in penalties, in fines. Those people, obviously, are not being monitored. People who are regularly breaking the law and not paying their fines are not being monitored. How are we now going to monitor what is happening with the new regulations? I would like to hear the minister speak a bit to that issue which I raised, because it is a major concern.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am pleased to rise to speak in Committee to this bill. While it is my colleague who is providing the lead on here, the member opposite, I think, has ventured away from the bill itself into commentary around aspects of my particular department. So, I think it is incumbent upon me to address some of those issues.

The member talked about a lack of investment in policing in the Province. I want to respond by reminding people that we have invested in excess of \$900 million in policing in this Province over the last, approximately eight years. We put approximately 140 new police officers on the streets in Newfoundland and Labrador over that period of time.

The reason we have done that, Mr. Chair, is because we recognize the challenges that police forces were facing in the Province, particularly with respect to highway monitoring and highway traffic. We will continue to resource our police departments as they identify where they have challenges with respect to enforcing the highway regulations.

I can say, for example, that on the Northeast Avalon last year, in 2012, there were approximately 440 violations in vehicles for the use of cellular telephones. This year, with an increased focus from government and from the police forces, there were 700 charges laid. It is quite the contrary to the view that might be put out there relative to our ability to enforce the Highway Traffic Act. In fact, the investment this government has made, coupled with the efforts of both police forces in the Province, has seen a very deliberate and very focused attempt at ensuring our highways are safe.

We recognize, as the member said, there are continuous challenges. There are challenges in all aspects of highway safety and monitoring the Highway Traffic Act. I want to reassure people who are listening to this debate that this government will not walk away from our obligation and our responsibility to support policing in the Province.

I have said it on any number of occasions here in this House, that both the Chief of the RNC and the Assistant Commissioner of the RCMP have been told directly by me – I have said it in this House – that if it comes to a point where they believe a challenge in resources is causing them not to be able to do their job, then I have asked them to come directly to me and we will respond accordingly.

The member referenced policing challenges in a number of rural communities. A number of those were raised on the floor of this House without having been brought to my attention. I want to say that upfront, because the first question I answered on it I was not even aware of it.

What we have to understand is that there are policing challenges all throughout the Province. We are in a changing dynamic. We have more mobile workers, more people moving here and planting roots but moving away for work. There are different populations, different dynamics in our population. The Province is completely different than it was ten years ago and that brings a completely new set of challenges. Not only challenges with respect to enforcing the

highway traffic laws but challenges with respect to policing in communities.

We all recognize that and we all understand that. The answer is not always to throw money at a particular problem. Without quoting, I can paraphrase, that has been the answer by the two Chiefs of the RNC and the RCMP that the answer is not always about throwing money at a problem. It is about sitting down and looking at what possible solutions are. That is what we are all about.

The issue that one member from the New Democratic Party raised on the floor of this House last week, I believe it was in Victoria, I stand to be corrected. Our officials are engaged in that. As soon as that was raised to us by the town, which was after it was raised in the House I might add, but as soon as that was raised we engaged officials immediately. I have been assured, and I can only speak on the advice I am given by the Assistant Commissioner, but I have been assured that there is not a resourcing issue there. There is a different challenge that is being faced in Victoria than simply a policing resource.

I said then, as I have said a few moments ago, that if we are talking about communities that are not safe, or highways that are not safe, simply because it is a resource issue, then I expect the assistant commissioner or the chief of the RNC to speak to me and we will do what we can to respond and support them.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 9 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 9 carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I move, seconded by the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador, that the Committee rise and report Bill 13, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 13.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, Mr. Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Port de Grave.

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 13 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 13 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. KING: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow?

MR. KING: Today.

MR. SPEAKER: Today.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MR. KING: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My Minister of Health has me flustered here this evening. I am sorry.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to call from the Order Paper, Order 9, second reading of a bill, An Act To Repeal The Health Care Association Act, Bill 26.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice, that Bill 26, An Act To Repeal The Health Care Association Act, be read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 26, An Act To Repeal The Health Care Association Act, be now read the second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Repeal The Health Care Association Act". (Bill 26)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I apologize if I flustered the hon. House Leader there. I have been out doing a couple of other chores this afternoon as well related to the business of the House of Assembly.

I rise before the hon. House today, however, to introduce Bill 26, a bill entitled, the Health Care Association Act Repeal Act. The bill will repeal the Health Care Association Act which provides the legal authority for the operation of the

Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association.

As a government we have an obligation to ensure that our legislation reflects the current organizational structure of our health care system. We have an obligation to spend taxpayers' dollars wisely and to maximize efficiencies, especially when it comes to administrative expenses. Mr. Speaker, it is in that spirit that we bring Bill 26 before the House. Bill 26 will repeal the Health Care Association Act which was itself a continuation of the old Hospital and Nursing Home Association Act.

Bill 26 is a very short and a very concise bill. Section 2 repeals the act. Section 3.(1) defines the word association for the purposes of this bill as the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association. Section 3.(2) transfers ownership of anything that has been owned by the association to the Crown. Finally, in section 3.(3) the Crown assumes responsibility for the obligations and liabilities of the association.

The Health Care Association Act Repeal Act will be subject to proclamation and will come into force at a later date. Mr. Speaker, the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association was previously named the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Care Association. It was once also known as the Newfoundland Hospital and Nursing Home Association. When it was originally created in 1966, it was called the Newfoundland Hospital Association.

The name changes of the association reflect our evolving health care system and the consolidation and reorganization of health boards to better serve people throughout the Province. At one time, our Province had over fifty individual health boards. A central association was required to represent and support these boards. Labour relations, group purchasing, pastoral care, physician recruitment and project management are examples of services the association provided to its member boards.

Through consolidation and reorganization, the number of boards was reduced from fourteen to four in 2005. Today, however, the people of the Province benefit from a more efficient health board system and we have just four regional health authorities also known as RHAs and they are Labrador-Grenfell, Western Health, Central Health, and Eastern Health.

Following a review of the role of the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association and consultation with regional health authority CEOs, it was determined that the association services could be carried out more effectively and more efficiently elsewhere within the health care system and government. The functions assigned to the association are now being carried out by the Department of Health and Community Service, the Human Resources Secretariat, and the RHAs.

A working group made up of representatives from government and the RHAs directed the reassignment of the association's functions as follows: the provincial RHA secretariat role was assigned on a rotating basis amongst the RHAs, with Western Health currently taking the lead; collective bargaining was assigned to the Human Resources Secretariat; labour relations is now being led by Eastern Health; and recruitment initiatives including bursaries and physician recruitment incentives are now being led and administered by the Department of Health and Community Services, but of course, we know that within our RHAs we also have physician recruitment people who are assigned to those tasks as well.

The reassignment of these association functions will have no direct impact on clients or patients or resident services within the health care system. The Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association has ceased operations. Some remaining obligations are being addressed including the lease of office space, which is currently being used by Eastern Health until the contract expires, and a financial audit.

This bill aligns with other measures our government is taking to continually improve

RHA performance and effectiveness. The association's budget was \$1.5 million annually; the reassignment of the association's functions means the health care system can now redirect approximately \$1.5 million annually to high priority areas.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador get the maximum value for every health care dollar. This bill is another step towards modernizing our health care system, to align our resources with the health needs of the people of the Province. Once all the outstanding obligations have been finalized, the Act to Repeal the Health Care Association Act will be proclaimed.

In closing, I want to acknowledge the contributions of the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association and its predecessor organizations to building our health care system

I ask, Mr. Speaker, that all hon. members of this House join me in supporting this bill to repeal the Health Care Association Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am happy to stand here and speak to Bill 26, which is the repeal of the Health Care Association Act. Again, a thank you to the staff who took the time to brief us on this yesterday – it was, I believe.

I use the terminology of the staff who gave the briefing, this is a cleanup statute. This is just another piece of legislation that has been brought forward this session to clean up what is there. It goes into what my friend the Member for St. Barbe calls the apostrophes and commas session of the House of Assembly because really it has been a cleanup session here. There has not been anything substantive brought, a lot of nice

fluffy stuff, to clean up this and we are going to repeal this health care association.

MR. O'BRIEN: (Inaudible).

MR. A. PARSONS: I am glad to stand and talk to it, I am very happy to do that. I invite the Member for Gander, by all means get up and have a say, and while you are at it tell us about that poverty strategy.

MR. LANE: (Inaudible).

MR. A. PARSONS: I hear the Member for Mount Pearl South again, I was interested to hear his comments on CETA the other day, but he did not take the opportunity to stand up and tell me about his intense negotiations on that file. You will have plenty of opportunity to stand up again and speak to the intense negotiations you personally participated in when it comes to CETA. I look forward to that.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to come back to this, I am trying but – I thought it was the apostrophes and commas but I guess I am getting a bit of a rise out of the crowd here.

What is this piece of legislation? This legislation has been in place since 1966. The purpose when it started was to create a secretariat to look over the different health boards that existed. There were about fifty, as the minister said, going back half a century and now we are consolidated down into four. So really there is not much purpose to have a coordinating body for four authorities, even though they are very large. My understanding is they are going to manage this themselves and they will distribute that authority between the four different boards.

I understand we will have a savings of about \$1.5 million annually, probably a bit less than that. I think there were about ten salaries or so that were involved. I am not sure, and I will ask the minister this in Committee. I am not sure how many cuts there were or how many positions were lost and how many were reassigned to a different health authority. So I

will ask that. I give the minister a heads-up and she can have the opportunity to speak to that.

The association handled things like bursaries for staff, which is now handled by Health and Community Services; it handled physician recruitment, which is handled by Health and Community Services; labour relations, which are now done through Eastern Health; and collective bargaining, which is now done under the HR Secretariat of the Executive Council.

Again, you just have to look at the act that is being repealed when I talked about the objectives of this association. It was very well-meaning stuff, “(a) to study, consider, discuss, accumulate and distribute to members information and advice regarding (i) construction, equipment for and administration of hospitals...”. That is a topic I would really like to get in, the great work they did when it comes to the construction of hospitals. That is a topic I will leave to another day. I know the other side can get a bit sensitive about that.

Nursing homes, and also to study and consider, “(ii) care of the sick, injured and infirm, (iii) co-ordination of the work of the medical staff, (iv) education and training of nurses...”, to look at all the different legislation that affects this, and it goes on. It had very broad powers, it served a great role, but it found itself redundant with the consolidation of the RHAs into four.

I did take the opportunity to listen to the briefing, obviously, that the department provided us. One of the things they talked about is that there is a final audit going on. It is not done. What I have been told is that it will conclude in spring or summer of 2014. Now, personally, I would have thought we could have left this until then, the actual repeal of this statute. Even though it is more of a clean up, I do not think it was actually costing us, or having any effect to leave it there, at least until we have the final audit completed, which is not done.

Also, if we are going to dissolve a corporation, we have to deal with the assets and liabilities that fall under that corporation. I have asked for a list and they did not have it there. I do not

think it was a case that they did not want to provide it; they just did not have it there. One of the things I asked about was real property. I understand there was no real property involved, that everything was leasehold. If I am wrong on that, the minister can –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. A. PARSONS: Oh, there is a little. Okay, so the minister will clarify. So maybe there was.

This is why I would like to see a full list of assets and liabilities of the Health Care Association so we can see what they had accumulated over the number of years that they were in existence. So, I would like to see that. This act itself is very simple in nature, or this bill that is brought in.

We are getting rid of this act; I understand the purpose of that. I just think we could have left it until we had a full look at what this association held and what the audit is going to tell us, which we will not see until the next session of the House, if we are lucky. It might be two sessions, because if it does not get done until summer 2014, we have to wait until the next fall session to see that. Hopefully, it is normal. It does not have any unusual issues to deal with, but we should be prepared for that.

There is not a whole lot else to this. It is rather simple. When you look at the bill itself it is another one-pager, which goes back to my earlier submission that there is a lot of clean up going on. There was one thick piece of legislation we dealt with, which was the anomalies and errors, but I think that was because of all the other acts that we had to clean up terminology for. It has been a good session that way, sort of rejuvenation in many ways to try to refurbish the image in the light of everything else that is going on.

It is very simple. The only one that has – we talk about title to all real and personal property. Obligations and liabilities will go to the Crown. The Crown is going to assume assets and liabilities. We will wait to see what that says. I

may have more questions as we proceed into the Committee stage of this piece of legislation.

One thing I would want to say, though, before I close on this, is that one of the issues or objectives of the association was the coordination and distribution of information on education and training opportunities for nurses, professional development. That is one of the big complaints we hear these days from health care staff is the cut or the lack of professional development, because this is something that is obviously important for people of any nature. It does not matter if you are a health care professional. It does not matter if you are a teacher, a doctor, a lawyer, or a legislator. You need professional development.

If you want to stick with the trends that are going, not only in this jurisdiction but outside worldwide, we need to know what is going on and what the best practices are. The lack of professional development, which this association used to deal with, I hope we are going to see this get highlighted and brought to the forefront because it is something we need to do for our health care professionals to make sure they get that professional development which they deserve and need.

In closing, I am sure I will have questions for the minister in Committee, but that will conclude my points to this, and I look forward to speaking to all the rest of the substantive bills that this government brings forward in the next days and weeks.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. COLLINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister said earlier we have an obligation as government to ensure that our legislation reflects the current up-to-date organizational structure. That is what we see here today in making sure that does line up.

Mr. Speaker, I would say this is a perfect example of what Russell Wangersky referred to in the paper today as "...devising legislation to improve the way government works." Of course we are talking specifically with regard to health care and the Department of Health and Community Services. I know my friend from Burgeo – La Poile would take specific joy in that because I think he was mentioned in that article.

What we have here is very important legislation. Again, while it may be mundane and there may be quite a bit of legal terminology and whatnot, it is very important. It is with this in mind that we bring Bill 26 before the House. Like the bill we discussed yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the Pharmaceutical Services Act, Bill 26 is short and a very specific bill. It is very concise.

What we have here is section 2 repeals the act. Subsection 3(1) defines the words association for the purposes of the bill as the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association. Subsection 3(2) transfers ownership of anything that has been owned by the association to the Crown. Finally, in subsection 3(3) the Crown assumes responsibility for the obligations and liabilities of the association. That would be for things such as salary continuance and whatnot.

Mr. Speaker, the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association has played an important role in the past, but due to changes in the health board structure over time the association's services are no longer needed. At one point our Province had over fifty individual health boards. I believe that was in the late 1960s or early 1970s where those numbers had come from. The number was reduced to fourteen and then further was reduced to four as we see now. That was done back in 2005.

At the time, the association served an important role representing and supporting these boards while we had a great number of them at one time. Today, however, we benefit from a more efficient health board system and we have just four regional health authorities, as we all know here today. Representation and support of the association is no longer required.

The association ceased its operations in late April 2013. Since that time there has been a very smooth transition, a transition that most of us – I would hazard to guess all of us would not even have seen that transition because it was done so seamlessly. The duties were assumed by the Human Resources Secretariat, Health and Community Services, and the regional health authorities. Whatever work needed to be done and was being done by that health board now is being delegated to other branches. Again, there was a seamless transition.

A working group made up of representatives from government and the RHAs directed the reassignment of functions from the association to the Department of Health and Community Services, Human Resources Secretariat, and RHAs, as I said. There will be no direct impact on client, patient, and resident services within the health care system. A very smooth transition, I will echo once again, because any time you have change in government, of course, there is always a period of transition. For this here there have been no speed bumps. It has been done. All of the duties that were performed previously are currently being done by other arms of the department.

The closure of the association allows government to redirect approximately \$1.5 million in annual funding budgeted for the operation of the association into health services provided to the people of the Province. Mr. Speaker, instead of unneeded administrative costs, this is being put right into vital services and equipment. That certainly has a positive impact on people.

Again, instead of spending it on unneeded positions in administrative roles, and obviously administration roles can play an important part, but of course if it is something that is not needed at the time it is not being spent very wisely. So if we can redirect those funds into vital services where you are looking at services to people, whether it is equipment or specific services offered through a hospital, obviously that is money well spent. That is what we are trying to do here today.

The proclamation of the Health Care Association Act Repeal Act is being delayed to allow time to address some remaining obligations of the association, such as lease for office space. This is something that will just progress, as I would suspect, very seamlessly. It does have to be staggered somewhat in order to get all of these ends closed off.

We are grateful to the association for its service over many years. Our government acknowledges the contributions of the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association and its predecessor organizations to our health care system, as well as the individuals who provided many years of dedicated public service. I think that is something that wants to be recognized as well.

Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to belabour this, but while it may seem mundane and it seems, I think, commas and apostrophes or whatever it was said across the way is housekeeping to a certain degree, it is a necessary piece of work that finds efficiencies while at the same time maximizing the use of every dollar. When we talk about a health care system that is 40 per cent of our budget, over \$3 billion, every dollar you can save, redirect, and make sure is spent in the best possible way I think is very important. Again, while this may seem somewhat of a boring piece of legislation, that we are just going through the motions, it is very important, so it is important that we recognize that.

With that I will take my seat, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the opportunity to talk to it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

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

I am pleased to stand and speak to Bill 26, which deals with the repealing of the Health Care Association Act. Before going into that I want

to thank the minister for the involvement of her staff in briefing us on this bill. It was important to have that briefing because the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association is one of those entities that is there doing work, yet we do not even know about it. I have to say that until this bill came to my hand I did not know that the association had existed. I guess if you are not involved in the health care system, and probably not even that, if you were not involved in the administration in health care systems you may not have know that it existed.

I do note that I have here in my hand from the Web site of the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association a document which was dated in April. It was an advisory that was on their Web site that “the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association ceased operations effective April 26, 2013.” So not only did I not know they existed, neither did I know that they had ceased their operations. It is one of these curious things. In this document that is on the Web site, which still does exist, we have an outline of where the different bits of work the association did are now going to be carried out.

The minister did do some referring to that, Mr. Speaker, and the points she made are in this document, but I think I will mention them again because we were given this information yesterday and I still did not realize when we were given it that it actually meant that the association was no longer there. We were told that different operations were going on in different parts of the health care system under the various health authorities.

For example, labour relations for all of the regional authorities are being handled and have been for a while by the Eastern Health Authority, for example, by the director of employee relations with the Eastern Health Authority. We know that human resource issues for residential boards you go to the health authority in the district. This document does give the names and the contact information of the people that you can go to. Then there are certain responsibilities that come directly under Health and Community Services as the minister

has told us. There is a spreading out of the different responsibilities of the association to the authorities.

I have a number of questions. One of the ones that I have, and the minister can probably explain this, I understand that yes, the authorities are going to change responsibilities, the co-ordination or sort of looking at the whole system, they are going to take turns administratively in doing that. I am sure they are quite capable of doing that, but it seems to me that they need to be accountable somewhere. Where are they are going to be accountable?

The four authorities, as they make this system work, I am hoping that it would be to the Minister of Health and Community Services; but it seems to me that there has to be somebody to whom the four authorities are going to be accountable for as they carry out the work that used to be done by the association. I think that is going to be very important.

The minister has said that we now have a more efficient system with the four regional authorities. I have to say that, again, I would put a question to the minister: What is the basis for her making that statement? These authorities have been in place now for eight years, and I am not aware of any overall evaluation that has been done to make the statement that it is more efficient than it was before. It very well may be, but has there been an objective external review of our new system to determine that? I am not aware that there has been. So I would like to know: What is the basis for the minister making her statement?

If we are being told, which I think we are, that it is going to be more efficient not having this association, then I am asking the question: How are we going to determine that it has become more efficient? Again, I am not saying it is not, but how are we going to determine in an ongoing way that it is more efficient and that communication is working well, communication is working smoothly? Because we have had, over the years, problems with communication systems inside of our health care system.

When we had the Cameron inquiry, one of the big issues there that came out in the investigations that were done by the Cameron inquiry was that communications were a problem inside of the system. I know that there has not been real co-ordination, or effective, as it could be, co-ordination of the four authorities since they have been in place for the last eight years in terms of communication systems.

So I ask with each authority taking on various pieces of work of the associations, who is going to be monitoring to make sure that is being done effectively? Is it just going to be left in the hands of the four authorities, or is there going to be some kind of communication with the minister and with the department that would help in determining whether or not things are working well and working smoothly?

It is interesting that I did not know, and maybe many of us did not know, that this association operated, but I find there are some interesting things in the act that is being repealed. One of the things in that act is that the association would advocate on “matters which may be a factor in public health and welfare or in another undertaking of a member; (b) to provide, on behalf of members, liaison with and representation to the government or a government department that may be required”. That is a very interesting responsibility or an object that was one which belonged to the association.

The others are very interesting, too. Another object is “(a) to study, consider, discuss, accumulate and distribute to members information and advice regarding (i)” – it is very practical – “construction, equipment for and administration of hospitals” et cetera, “(ii) care of the sick, injured and infirm, (iii) co-ordination of the work of the medical staff, (iv) education and training of nurses and other personnel”, and other objects such as the one I have just mentioned.

Now, I understand that a lot of the work is being farmed out, but it would seem to me that this one object in particular is one that is not going to be picked up. It is interesting that back in 2008 the

CEO of the association wrote a letter to the Health Minister supporting the bringing back of midwives into our health care system.

Obviously, the association there was playing the role that I just read out. It was advocating and it was acting as a liaison between people in the public who were concerned about midwifery and the lack of midwifery in our health care system. They were advocating and they were representing to government a concern from the public, a concern from people who were in the health care system. It seems to me that if they did that in 2008, that is only five years ago, there may be other things of that nature they have done that I do not even know about that I think was very important.

They played an advocacy role, a support role, and a role of guidance. Why is that needed less now than it was needed before? I would like to have that explained to me. Why is it needed less now than before?

The other thing that I am concerned about is even though they have taken on these roles – and I guess they have taken them on over a period of time. I am presuming it did not just happen overnight. It is assumed that every one of the health boards has the same capability. If there are pieces of work that are going to be shared out by the boards, I then have to ask: Will all the boards have the same capability to do what another board is doing? That is a real concern of mine.

The boards are already under a tremendous amount of stress. The minister may disagree with me on this, but I am looking at the reality of what the authorities have had to go through to cut positions without layoffs. Nine hundred and sixty-one full-time equivalent positions had to be eliminated. A lot of those positions were positions in administration.

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): I remind the hon. member that I want you to come back to the bill, please. That feels operational in nature, hon. member.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am talking about the act to repeal the health care association. I am questioning why we are repealing an association that was doing a role I do not think is going to be done again. I am also asking what the capability is of the health care authorities to take on the roles that now are being put on their shoulders.

We have fewer people in administration in the authorities. I would like an explanation from the minister how she does not see this as an extra burden on the authorities. I also want to have an explanation from the minister, how she sees how each of the authorities are going to equally be able to take on the co-ordination role that they are going to share together. It is not clear to me in what has been presented how that is going to happen.

We have a downloading of more responsibilities onto the regional health authorities at a time when they have fewer people to do administrative work. I ask the minister to give us some answers to that question and I look forward to, not so much in second reading, I know she will speak again but I will look forward to hearing more from her and asking more when we go into Committee with regard to the details of that.

I also wonder why, I guess I am taking a different position than the House Leader for the Opposition. I wonder why, if everything ended in April, 2013, this bill was not before us in the spring? It is not a big issue but I just ask that question. It certainly was not a hard bill to put together. It is just a bill saying that the old act no longer exists. That did not take much; it did not take any money, et cetera.

Since everything ceased, since all operations ceased in April, why this bill was not before us before, I do not know. Is it a matter of something happening quickly? Was the repealing of the board a decision that was made because of the budget that came down? A sudden decision was made to save \$1.5 million a year by getting rid of the association.

I would be interested in knowing the process that was gone through, because the minister does

make reference to things being more efficient. She makes reference to this piece of work that is now happening which is getting rid of the association, which has happened. It is going to be better for the system, yet I do not know what evaluation was done to come to that. Was this another sudden decision made because of the cuts that were caused by the Budget for 2013?

Mr. Speaker, I will leave it at that. These are the main points I want to make. I hope the minister will give thought to some of the issues I have raised, and if I do not get answers from her in second reading then I will raise points again in the Committee.

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, I speak on Bill 26, a bill entitled, An Act To Repeal The Health Care Association Act.

Bill 26 will ensure that our legislation reflects the current organizational structure of our health care system. Coming from health care myself, I worked in the health care sector for twenty-six years, and I always paid close attention to the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Care Boards and members on the boards and so forth. I understand the importance of the particular boards. This government has an obligation to spend taxpayers' dollars wisely and to maximize efficiencies, especially when it comes to the administration expenses.

At one time our Province had over fifty individual health care boards, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. A central association was required to represent and support these boards. Labour relations, group purchasing, pastoral care, physician recruitment, and project management are examples of services the association provided to its members of the boards. Through consolidation and

reorganization, the number of boards was actually reduced from fourteen to four in 2005.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health and Community Services, Human Resources Secretariat, and the regional health care authorities carry out services more effectively and efficiently. There are actually presently four regional health care authorities as we speak: the Labrador-Grenfell, the Western, Central, and Eastern health care.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador get the maximum value for every health care dollar. This bill is another step towards modernizing our health care system to align our resources with the health care needs of the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. There will be no direct impact on client, patient, resident services within the health care system. The closure of the association allows government to redirect approximately \$1.5 million in annual funding budgeted for the operation of the association into health care services provided to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We are very grateful to the association for its services over many years. Our government acknowledges that our association did some great work throughout the years and contributed to the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association. This was very important, Mr. Speaker. Like I said, presently we have four regional health care authorities that are very important to the future of health care in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is a major change from the day when we had fifty individual health care boards and the number was reduced. It certainly helped the health care system in Newfoundland and Labrador.

This particular bill, Mr. Speaker, Bill 26, I definitely will support this bill. I stand on my feet today on this side of the House to say with all confidence that this bill is very important to the future of the health care system in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly a privilege for me to stand and speak to Bill 26, An Act to Repeal the Health Care Association Act. Now, Mr. Speaker, the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association is probably not an organization that is well known to the general public, but it is certainly an organization that is well known to people who are interested in health policy and health education policy in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As the Member for Terra Nova pointed out, the organization was called the Newfoundland Hospital Association and used to have up to fifty different boards and members. That is, of course, because of the history of religious institutions and the involvement of the clergy in the founding of our health institutions in the Province, much like the origins of our education system. Religious institutions had a really strong role to play in the development of health care. Of course, everything was really done on a denominational basis so everything was divided up very much in that way.

It is all very interesting. I remember when I was a graduate student at Memorial University back in the mid-1990s and our professor had the good insight to invite this fellow by the name of John Peddle into our class to discuss the role of the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association, the NLHBA, with our class and to talk about the important role they played in a variety of areas from information technology, professional development, providing other services, and doing advocacy. Of course, an important role of the organization was collective bargaining.

Like I said, anybody who has been paying a lot of attention to health policy and developments in

health care in Newfoundland and Labrador will certainly remember a lot of really high-profile news stories that involved Mr. Peddle as he was out advocating for and defending the Health Boards Association and their work. Like I said, I remember, in particular, one story involving nurses in Central Newfoundland and there being a dispute over the nature of their work when they were involved in contract negotiations.

Mr. Peddle was always front and centre when trying to do that work on behalf of the association and on behalf of the health boards. They really tried to pool their resources into one, rather than what is being done now, which I guess our health boards have been consolidated to a point that they feel that they can do all of these things in-house.

John Peddle was just one person, and I think it is important for us to pay tribute to all the people who had a role in this organization over all the years that it existed. It certainly was quite a long time from around the mid-1960s up until present that they did important work in health care, health care policy, and a variety of other areas in the Province.

The only other thing I will say is that, of course, there are certainly obligations that remain aside from this. Again, the minister was generous enough to provide her officials who briefed us on this particular piece of legislation. There is a whole process of winding up that needs to go through, whereby the assets of the organization need to be properly transferred, divested. These are, when it boils right down to it, public assets; government being up here, the boards being there, and the Health Boards Association being an agent of the boards which are working directly for the government who works for the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador.

There is a whole role there in the winding up and the dealing with the assets of the organization, but also personnel. Because, as I said, aside from John Peddle, there are certainly lots of people working –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: – for the Health Boards Association with whom there are, no doubt, certain contractual obligations, whether that is their pensions, their salary, their severance, their vacation. Lots of people who work for the public service certainly know and members here who have worked in the public service know that a lot of times you do not take a whole lot of vacation, you bank your vacation that you hope to take at a certain point in time, and there is often issues like that to be dealt with.

Again, I want to commend the good work of the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association. I think that it certainly played an important role in the past, but I hope that the boards will be able to do the same work that the NLHBA has been doing over the years and I wish them all the best with that.

Certainly, there are always lots to be done. Whether it is collective bargaining or professional development or what have you, there is always a lot to be done on the administrative end of things to make sure that we have as smooth operations as possible within the health care system.

I will leave it at that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is an honour to stand and to speak to An Act to Repeal the Health Care Association Act.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I will make an adjustment; there are multiple chairs today and multiple people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure indeed to speak to the House for An Act to Repeal the Health Care Association Act. It gives me a pleasure to talk about it. This is obviously an indication that we have a responsibility to spend the taxpayers' money wisely. This is one situation again where we are improving how we spend that money and, in the same case, improving how we offer health care.

I want to acknowledge, as my colleague for St. John's North outlined, we are very respectful of the work that had been done by the association over the years. The benefits that it would loan to the health boards over the years, particularly when there were over fifty health boards going back in some of the small minute parts of our Province, and the beneficial information and services that it put out to those people.

Since the transition – and going back a number of years I had the privilege of working for the Department of Health for a number of years and then some other line departments that worked directly with the association. What I found is they had the ability to go out and work with the boards, help transition some of the supports they needed but also bring in other partners.

Two of the organizations that I was partly responsible for were the Community Youth Networks and the Family Resource Centres. When we were just getting initiated in the late 1990s and early 2000s, we needed to find a way to get out to the health boards and better expose them to our services and better utilize the assets that they had to make this work. The association was a great testament to being able to bring those resources in, help co-ordinate that, and open the doors for us to be able to offer those services. We managed to do that in collaboration with their staff and some of the services they were able to offer.

As we move forward in the early 2000s, there was a really close working relationship. In 2005, when the structure of the boards went from fourteen down to four, then there became a better working relationship or more enhanced working relationship with the direct boards.

Particularly at the vice-president level and the CEO level, when it came to administration, staffing, collaboration around training and these types of things, about doing research on particular needs in some of the communities that we had. I do want to acknowledge the valued work up to that point.

In 2005, you could note that the structure of the health boards were inclusive to being able to handle a lot of the original responsibilities of the association. Thus, the association had to change its format and its responsibilities a little bit as the health boards took on more and more of that same role.

As we moved forward, I found it very beneficial in working with the health boards. While we were less and less attached with the association, there still was somewhat of a working relationship as that transition moved forward. I know the association at times would try to find other entities that they could attach to and find a way to continue to improve the services and monitor what was happening within the health profession and, no doubt, they did a great job to achieve that.

As we moved forward in some of the partnerships that we developed, we found that the health boards themselves were better equipped. They had vast experience when it came to staffing. They had more responsibilities. They actually had locations that we could partner with and, as a result, the connection with us became so invaluable that the association was more just as a technical support mechanism.

In the last seven or eight years of the association's existence and the existence of the two agencies, the Family Resource Centres and the CYNs, it became less and less of an attachment there. So you could see the adjustment, the movement away from their connection directly in the field again with enhancing some of the health things; but they still kept their association with their responsibilities and, no doubt, that was very valuable to the health boards themselves.

As we transition into it now we see, as we move our health care forward, this is a piece of legislation while it may not be a major piece, it is part of a major piece, and the major piece that we have here is the quality of health care. This is another avenue of how we clean up and mainstream our health care system and the policies that we have to make sure that they best fit the people in this Province.

This piece of legislation does that. It cleans up what we have. It puts it under one neat umbrella. It gives the responsibilities to the health boards so all are consistent with what the message is that we are getting out to the people of this Province and how we address the health needs in those particular areas.

Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to be able to speak on this. No doubt, it will mainstream what we are doing. It is a good investment in how we take the money we are saving and put back into the health care system.

Mr. Speaker, I support this piece of legislation and I thank you for the opportunity.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for an opportunity to speak to An Act to Repeal the Health Care Association Act.

A number of other colleagues have explained the role of the health care association and the reason for looking at repealing the act, as well as the briefing which we had by the minister's staff. That was really positive to hear the details and the process that would follow to clue up, I guess, the entity itself and the reasoning behind it.

I do have some concern when we look at the fact of not having a compiled list of real and personal property that could have been distributed to us, and the minister has stated that can be provided,

which would be good to know as to what are the actual tangible assets that are there.

When it comes to looking at transferring obligations, like the liabilities, I would like to know what level of liability the Province will be taking on, just for clarity. I am aware based on the briefing that there is an ongoing audit that is looking at assets and liabilities, and that will take some time to clue up. If it can be stated in the House by the minister if there is currently any type of litigation, justice-related matters that are currently underway pertaining to this, could fall out, or that could have the taxpayer of the Province on the hook based on repealing this association, or if there are some concerns where the taxpayer could be out of pocket, because whenever an action is taken we always have to look at risk and how that matter is taken.

It was noted that the leasing arrangement was taken over by Eastern Health so the actual space and that cost should be absorbed by Eastern Health and not the Department of Health and Community Services. Maybe when the minister gets to close debate on this particular act she could clarify if Eastern Health is currently paying the lease for that space or if it is indeed the Department of Health and Community Services that will be taking up that cost as well, just to provide clarity on the matter. It was an obligation previously of the Health Care Association. Eastern Health has been able to occupy the space, but I would like some clarity as to if Eastern Health is actually paying that leasehold arrangement for the short term now while the Health Care Association will be obligated or if it is the Department of Health and Community Services.

Beyond that, Mr. Speaker, I am satisfied with the information that has been provided. When the audit is done I would appreciate if the minister would be able to provide my office with details of the audit or to table it in the House of Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: If the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services speaks now she will close the debate.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I want to thank all who participated in this debate this afternoon with regard to this particular bill, Mr. Speaker, Bill 26, which is An Act to Repeal the Health Care Association Act. Again, what I will try to do in the closing is respond to some of the questions that were asked as opposed to simply doing a summary. I think the questions asked were pertinent, so I will pay some attention to those.

We started with the Member for Burgeo – La Poile and he asked some questions around the number of positions that were affected through the Health Boards Association itself. Mr. Speaker, there were ten positions at the association. Eight of those were terminated. One of them was vacant at the time. In terms of the terminations, of course, I point out those were done with proper notice and in compliance with our provincial human resource policy.

One employee accepted employment with our Human Resources Secretariat. We will be taking her knowledge from the Health Boards Association to the Human Resources Secretariat. That is very valuable knowledge and we are happy that employee will be with us.

There were questions asked as well about property, real property and personal property. While there was no real property, in terms of personal property the information I can provide to the House is that there was some property in terms of IT-related equipment, as you would expect. There was office furniture as well, filing cabinets and miscellaneous office equipment one would expect to find in any office. Mr. Speaker, all of that has been added now to the

government asset management system, so that has all been transferred over.

Any documents that might have been there were transferred to the organizations that would be taking the lead role in each of those particular functions. Some of the documents were put in storage, Mr. Speaker, as they would have been anyway when they were with the health associations. Others might have been destroyed, but again, that would have been a normal occurrence through the Health Boards Association.

There was a question asked as to when the financial audit would be completed. There was an initial audit, which has been done. The overall financial audit will be completed in the winter of 2014, Mr. Speaker. I believe it was the Member for Straits – White Bay North who asked for information around whether that could be seen, and of course once that is completed, absolutely, we can see to that.

There were questions around obligations and liabilities, and of course they will be transferred to the Crown. Any obligations and any liabilities would be transferred to the Crown at dissolution. The only liabilities we have to report would have to do with salary and salary-related liabilities, Mr. Speaker. The lease has been assumed by Eastern Health in answer to the question from The Straits – White Bay North, and then just the routine bills. In terms of liabilities, those are the only things we have to report on.

The Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi had some questions around accountability, again, a pertinent question, Mr. Speaker, around accountability and one we are always happy to answer. RHAs essentially in all of their duties are accountable to the people of the Province through the minister, so they will still be accountable to the Minister of Health and Community Services in terms of any of the functions they assume. So regular evaluation, as is done with our RHAs and various divisions, departments, and so on, will still continue. I hope that answers that part of the question.

With regard to efficiency, the member opposite asked how I could say that now things will become more efficient. I think it is important to understand exactly what has happened here in terms of the winding down and the roles of the Health Boards Association. Essentially, Mr. Speaker, what we have been seeing through the association had been sort of a gradual movement in any case toward more of an administrative role. Many of their roles through the forty-seven years of existence really had either been morphed into functions that were being carried out by regional health boards or had been turned over to other agencies.

For example, around procurement, those sorts of functions had already been turned over, when we talk about group purchasing to the regional health authorities. Coordination of pastoral care as well had already been turned over to the regional health authorities, Mr. Speaker. Many of the functions had, so that in the end we were looking at more of an administrative function that was being carried out by the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to diminish in any way the work of the Health Boards Association because particularly when they were formed back in 1966, with as many health boards as we had and with as many regional health authorities as we had back then, there certainly was a larger role for them to play. Over the years those functions have been assumed more and more by our regional health authorities and are being carried out there.

So there is less duplication, I would say, from what I have been able to discern in talking to the CEOs. That is where this concept originated incidentally. The CEOs brought forth this information and they were able to see that because many of the services had already been dropped by the Newfoundland and Labrador health boards they were able to assume the roles.

The RHAs, Mr. Speaker, became much more knowledgeable, Eastern Health particularly around dispute resolution and around anything to do with labour relations, because they had already undertaken their own labour relations

division within Eastern Health. It just made sense that they were able to assume that role. They had a lot of experience in that role. It was a matter of, how can we do this more efficiently, more effectively?

I think we can see through our success stories in what the regional health authorities have already been doing, that this in fact can happen. Some downsizing space and personnel had already occurred. It just became more and more apparent in recent years that the role had diminished because the health boards were able to take over those roles. Recent efforts to make operational improvements and find efficiency and effective ways of being able to deal with some of the health system decision making also helped us in making that decision, Mr. Speaker.

There was a question around, what about the advocacy role as well that the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi raised. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that in terms of an advocacy role we have many, many groups out there. She made particular reference to the midwife issue. I have oftentimes met with those particular groups, advocacy groups in the arena of that particular concern and they continue to bring forward their issues to us.

I am not concerned at all that there will not be anybody out there advocating for needs from that perspective because there is representation made to us on a regular basis, Mr. Speaker. We invite them in, in fact, on many occasions, many of these groups. I know you made reference to just one but there are several others, Mr. Speaker, and we invite them in. We partner with them. The RHAs do an exceptionally good job of partnering with many of the groups that are out there.

We had a question as well, I think around the roles – I think I have addressed that, though, when I talked about the efficiency in itself.

Why didn't the bill come before the House earlier? – was a question as well that was asked with regard to the timing of this particular bill. I think actually the Member for St. John's North answered that when he was speaking in his

remarks. Essentially, it takes a little bit of time, Mr. Speaker. There is some work that has to be done in the process of winding up any organization. There is considerable work that takes place within departments and within the RHAs, so we had to ensure that the roles were efficiently transferred.

There is some workforce adjustment that has to take place as well; salary continuance, things of that nature that we were looking at with particular employees. The initial audit as well was something that was underway back in the spring. Of course, we still have the financial audit to be completed, the overall audit. It just seemed it was a more pertinent time to wait until now to bring it before the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I am hoping I have answered all of the questions that people have asked. If not, I am certainly willing to address them in Committee. I look for the support of all members of the House in repealing this particular bill, the Health Care Association Act, Repeal Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the said bill be now read a second time?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Repeal The Health Care Association Act. (Bill 26)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has now been read the second time.

When shall this bill be referred to the Committee of the Whole House?

MR. KING: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, “An Act To Repeal The Health Care Association Act”, read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 26)

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 26, An Act To Repeal The Health Care Association Act.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider the said bill, Bill 26.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Verge): Order, please!

The Committee of the Whole will be considering Bill 26.

A bill, “An Act To Repeal The Health Care Association Act”. (Bill 26)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

I just have a question for the minister. When I spoke earlier I put a number of questions forward. You did respond to them and I appreciate that.

My question is in your response you said there were ten positions at the health association and that eight were terminated, seven of which were filled, there was one vacant position. That was two carried over elsewhere. If I have these figures wrong you can correct me. That is what I thought I heard.

Where I am going with this is: Are you confident that the work these eight positions did is going to be completed elsewhere in a satisfactory manner?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, perhaps I was not clear. There were ten positions: eight were terminated in compliance with the regular processes that would be put in place, one position was vacant, and one person was hired or transferred over to HRS, the Human Resources Secretariat. So that accounts for the ten positions.

Mr. Chair, I am very confident that the work that was previously being done by the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association can be done throughout our RHAs.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the minister for answering many of my questions, but I still have a – it is more than a curiosity because I am really interested in the process and how long the process took with regard to all of the responsibilities having moved over. For example, on April 26, when the association ceased operations, how long had all

of the different activities been going on with the health authorities?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

When this was first contemplated, there was a committee put in place right away to deal with ensuring that all of the regional health authorities that would be involved, and all four of them are in various capacities, would in fact be apprised of what their duties were. Remember that the CEO sat on the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association, so they were always very much part of what was happening here.

The working group that had representatives from government and from the RHAs was chaired by the Deputy Minister of Health and Community Services and the CEO of Western Health. They led the actual dissolution of the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association. The committee worked on the delegation of those functions to the other organizations, the records, asset management, the communications, the termination of employees and so on, so that by April 26 everything had been put in place.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you.

Could the minister tell us when it started? It ended by April 26, but when had it started?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I do not have that information with me in the House today, but I will certainly look to having that information sought out and be sure to provide it to you. Obviously it was some time previous to that, some time in the winter of 2013, but I cannot recall the exact time and date

we would have done that, but I will certainly research that for you.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 to 4 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 to 4 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried

On motion, clauses 2 through 4 carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Repeal The Health Care Association Act.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

Motion, the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 26, An Act To Repeal The Health Care Association Act.

CHAIR: The motion is that Committee rise and report Bill 26.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, Mr. Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Lewisporte and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

MR. VERGE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 26 carried without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 26 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. KING: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read the third time?

MR. KING: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Conservation, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Ways and Means to consider a resolution and Bill 24 respecting the Loan and Guarantee Act, 1957.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House go to Committee of the Whole.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Verge): Order, please!

We are considering Bill 24 and the related resolution in Committee of Ways and Means.

A bill, “An Act To Amend The Loan And Guarantee Act, 1957.” (Bill 24)

Resolution

“That it is expedient to bring in a measure further to amend The Loan and Guarantee Act, 1957, to provide for the advance of loans to and the guarantee of the repayment of bonds or debentures issued by or loans advanced to certain corporations.”

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is An Act to Amend the Loan and Guarantee Act, 1957 and it is to amend the act to add the Newfoundland and Labrador Immigrant Investor Fund Limited. This act that we are about to debate has seven words in it. It is seven words long, Mr. Chair, and the explanation is half a page. So you have to go back and try to figure out what it is the government is trying to do with this.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Immigrant Investor Fund Limited is a company that was established by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador back in 2005 or so, and this was to hold money that came from the federal government. It came from Citizenship and Immigration Canada and it holds investors’ money.

The investors, during that period, if they wanted to come to Canada, they were to provide Citizenship and Immigration Canada with

\$400,000. Then, these monies were distributed among all of the provinces. The arrangement with the provinces is that the federal government, through CIC, would advance money to the provinces. The only cost was a fee, at that time, which was 7 per cent.

Looking at the review from the Auditor General in 2010, the fee was 7 per cent at the end of the transaction. For example, if you were to take \$1 million, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador would have \$1 million which would invest it or hold it in the Newfoundland and Labrador Immigrant Investor Fund. At the end of the five years, it had to be paid back with a 7 per cent commission. So \$1 million would be paid back with \$1,700,000.

The purpose of the funds being given to the Province was so the Province could invest these funds. This is straight from the Auditor General’s report. Under the agreement, the Province must use the funds to improve and strengthen the local economy and support business and employment opportunities. Five years later, the money had to be repaid. This kept on going, on an annual basis.

In the first few years, the government was able to invest that at a rate that was higher than the 7 per cent commission. This is not a cumulative 7 per cent; this is 7 per cent at that time which was 1.4 per cent per year. In order to break even the government had to get 1.4 per cent per year on the investment.

When interest rates were higher, the government did not lose any money. It came to the attention of the Auditor General when interest rates fell the yield on the money that we were holding in this Crown corporation was 0.45 per cent. Of course, 7 per cent divided by 5 years is 1.4, so we were losing approximately 1 per cent per year.

Had it been on \$1 million, it would not have been so bad; but this was on an amount, in March, of \$147 million. So the Auditor General said, “As at 30 November 2009” – and there is an update from them – “the Corporation had not met its objective to improve the Provincial

economy as no investments were made from the Fund to support local business, facilitate capital projects or create employment.”

Mr. Chair, this is akin to somebody receiving a block of cash, the owner going away for five years, and saying when I come back: What have you done with the money? It seems that the government just buried it in the ground, waited for five years, and in fact ended up with a shortfall. As of December 2009, there was a \$4.6 million surplus, which was the interest amount, but the government had to pay back more than that. It seems to be a very unfortunate oversight to be sitting on \$100 million, \$130 million, \$140 million, or \$150 million that we had free access to.

The Auditor General pointed out that there are different ways that it could be paid back. One thing that was really noteworthy is that although government could not use these funds for core agencies, for the running of government, it was possible that it could be invested in non-core agencies. The Auditor General, the former Auditor General who is no longer the current AG, said the non-core agencies would include Memorial University, College of the North Atlantic, and the regional health authorities.

Mr. Chair, the issue I have with that is it means we were sitting on more than \$100 million that these non-core agencies, very important public institutions in our Province, could have had access to and could have reduced their cost of operations. The government simply could have said: Reimburse us for the commission, you can have the money, and refund the money to us at the end of five years. This would have lowered their cost of borrowing, it would have lowered their overhead, and clearly government would have been made whole; we would have lost absolutely nothing and we would have generated an economic advantage for our Province.

By contrast, the Government of British Columbia did go ahead and did invest in various government agencies. One example of something that the Government of British Columbia invested in, and British Columbia had more and they are a bigger province, was the

University of Victoria, Technology Enterprise Facility. They loaned \$5 million to UVic to purchase the facility. This generated ninety full-time jobs and accommodated major research projects just with the use of this money.

The health care centre and school projects also benefited: \$39 million for a complex care project which saw the creation of ninety-four residential beds, fifty assisted living units, and created 250 full-time jobs; and \$29 million for replacement of a secondary school with an 825-student capacity, which created 186 full-time jobs.

Mr. Chair, this was an absolute lost opportunity, a failed opportunity. It is really unfortunate that we did not use these funds to improve the financial strength and the well-being of our Province. What we are being asked today in this very tiny bill – the bill says An Act to Amend the Loan and Guarantee Act. This simply means we are going to add Newfoundland and Labrador Immigrant Investor Fund Limited to the schedule of the Loan and Guarantee Act in the amount of \$61 million so we can invest this money so we do not lose any more money than we have already lost.

I think the real fault and the real failure is that government would seek to do this with these funds and not put them to better use. Surely we have institutions in our Province that would like to carry capital works, in fact are carrying capital works, are borrowing money in the financial markets, and would do very well with \$5 million, \$10 million, \$30 million, or \$100 million. That is how much money we are speaking of. If they could have this money for 1 per cent a year instead of paying a financial institution a much higher amount, this would be a real benefit for these Province-wide institutions that do so much to advance our well-being in this Province.

The bill itself, I suppose we seem to have to go along with it because government has this money from the feds and they do not know what to do with it. They have to pay back a small commission. They need permission to invest it in a bond so they do not lose even more money. It is like having so much money you do not

know what to do with it. It is a real failure of government that we need to do this.

I am sure we will have other commentary on this particular bill. Those are my comments, Mr. Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Loan and Guarantee Act, 1957.

I had the opportunity to speak last time this bill came before the House, talking about investment and investment opportunity. It is a large sum of money that is there. It is a consistent fund of over \$200 million that is there that is planned in a multitude of every five years.

We know that this much money is coming in and it can be planned for that in five years this much money needs to be repaid to the federal government. So it allows for government to really look at doing multi-year planning, as a focus of government should be looking at multi-year budgeting. So when you are looking at multi-year budgeting and multi-year planning, you are able to get things done in a more effective, more efficient manner.

We look at the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, for example. They have been moving forward in a progressive way that looks at changing its fiscal framework as to how it deals with municipalities. With that, as it is tied to the census, which is every five years, now when municipalities get their MOGs they know they have an increase or that they are at the consistent amount they have. They are being red circled, basically. So they can consistently plan now based on this revenue stream that is coming forward.

That is very progressive. That is a way to allow you to plan out for the longer term, up to five years. As with many capital projects that come

forward through the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, you do multi-year planning and capital works come over a period of time. Sometimes it gets announced and in the following year it is in that budget. You can actually work within that framework.

That is something that the Immigrant Investor Fund we have – which is a large pot of money right now that is sitting in the bank. It is basically sitting in our bank and it is earning the basic, the absolute minimum amount of interest because it is invested in strip bonds, which over time will lose money. That is not a good way of doing business with taxpayer money because it will end up being a liability if we do not plan appropriately. This is a fund that allows you, for example, to take a portion of it.

We look at how universities take money when it comes to looking at issuing bursaries or scholarships for a lifetime. There is a set amount in it, it earns that interest, they pay out a certain amount to it, and they do not touch the base amount. So I am sure within the Department of Finance the expertise does exist to look at the current amount of money that is in that fund to say, well, we keep a baseline amount there and we invest in investments with that, but the rest of it we put out there and look at taking a little bit of risk and paying out, because constantly there will be revenue coming in and allow you to do the multi-year planning.

We have to look at diversifying our economy. The Minister of Finance delivered his Budget back in March of this year, which is a month earlier than it was last year, yet the financial update is not coming any earlier when it comes to the mid-year review despite the Budget being delivered a month earlier. I issued a press release on that matter, asking: Why are we not being updated? If we are not getting timelines and mid-year updates in a timely fashion, how are we going to be able to plan in a multi-year budgeting moving forward and looking at making the appropriate investments?

When the Minister of Finance has announced a budgetary shortfall of over \$500 million, we need to really look at diversifying our economy

beyond looking at the commodity markets of oil and gas, and also looking at how mining, for example, can also have a high risk associated with it because it is a commodity-based market. That is significant. What we need to look at is using some of this fund to put into commercial activities other than oil, gas, and mining, but some of it could certainly go towards mining, gas, and oil in terms of that development and that diversification because it does bring revenue into the Province.

What we should be looking at is like how the Minister of Fisheries talks about the success of aquaculture, how the investment of \$23 million into infrastructure and into research in biosecurity has been able to lever upwards of \$400 million into the provincial economy. This is diversifying and adding revenue to our Budget.

We could be doing the same thing when it comes to looking at the forest sector; forestry, for example, on the Northern Peninsula when we look at the potential of development and diversification. When it comes to looking at making sure that we have the research capabilities, to have demonstration projects set up, to look at expanding into new markets, whether that is in pellets or whether it is looking at fingerboard joining and all sorts of things. What are the opportunities with the products that we have? We should be making more investment.

We currently do have organizations and entities within government, like RDC that are doing that. We are also using general revenues to pay for these things. If we are using general revenues to pay for business investment and to pay for research and development, well, that is not money that can be used for health care, for education, and for other infrastructure investments that need to be made in Newfoundland and Labrador for the taxpayers.

We need to look at what we can do with a fund that is consistent and constantly having revenue multiple years. It is going to be there. It is an opportunity which this government has not capitalized on. They have not made a single

investment, a single loan from this. There are opportunities to use this fund to really tap into commercialized activities to generate additional revenue for the provincial Treasury, whether it be in the forest sector, whether it be in the fishery.

We have four shrimp plants on the Great Northern Peninsula. Four shrimp plants in very close vicinity to each other and they put a lot of waste basically into landfills or back into the ocean. They are dumping value of a resource when it comes to shrimp shells. Yet, the Minister of Fisheries sees value in that because he issued money to a company to look at extracting resource from that. These are opportunities.

Why are we dumping all of these shrimp shells on the Great Northern Peninsula when we could be looking at capitalizing on that biodegradable material, using a digester, for example, to actually create opportunity, create energy, and make sure that there is product there? This is an opportunity. It is commercial activity that can generate revenue and pay for itself; an opportunity to actually look at making our fishery even better because we can then sell our fishery as being zero waste. Zero waste that we are not dumping. We are actually using all the material and we can sell that.

That is one of the problems we have with the seal hunt, is that in many cases when we harvest seals we are not using 100 per cent of the product but we could be and we need to be. Those are initiatives we need to move forward on. We need to use funds that we have to do multi-year planning, whether it be for municipalities, whether it be for diversification of our natural resources, whether it come to the fishery, or forestry. This is an opportunity. I do not understand why the Minister of Finance will not explain to this House why this fund is not being used.

Other resources that come forward, that come out of general revenues then could be meeting some of the other needs, some of the other obligations, because we have finite resources. Let's put money in the Immigrant Investor Fund

into commercial activities that is going to generate real value for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that will be paid back. Because if not, if we are not investing in things that are going to have productive revenue streams at the end of the day, then government is just putting money out the door, taxpayers' dollars that is not generating any revenue. That is a real problem, because that is not getting best value for our tax dollars.

If government continues to use general revenues as it states to be putting out there and if it does not feel confident the investments that it is making is not going to generate revenue and business then it is creating a lot of problems. People will question the confidence of business decision making through departments. There has to be an ability to make sure the infrastructure investments and the decisions that government is making are sound so that we can move forward and we can have productive use of such a fund like this bill that we are talking about here today.

I would love to see the Minister of Finance get up on his feet and tell us how this fund is actually going to be used because this would be a great opportunity, an excellent opportunity for the people of the Province to be able to use that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. MARSHALL: Mr. Chair, thank you for giving me the opportunity to say a few words in response to the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

Mr. Chair, he mentioned a couple of press releases he has put out recently. He has put out one about our mid-year update and he put out one about the fibre in Central Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Chair, he is talking about using money that we have to pay back in five years to invest in risky investments, when we have \$1 billion in cash to put into risky investments.

He wants to increase our debt when we are trying to reduce our debt. I think that is an indication of the difference between the philosophies that the hon. member puts forward. He does not care about paying it back. When he talks about it, I yell across the room: What about we have to pay it back? We have to pay it back in five years. They are risky investments. If you lend money to a risky investment, it takes them time to build up their business. They are not in a position to pay it back in five years.

What we do is we take money from cash flow, our own money, and we put it into business and attraction programs. We put it in other programs and we lend it to people, to risky investments. If they do not make it, if they cannot make it then we do not have to go and borrow again from a bank at high rates of interest to pay back the money we would have gotten from the federal government. We use our own money, and that is wiser. They would be putting the Province deeper into debt.

Mr. Chair, a classic example, of course, is the wood pellet plant in Roddickton. I think the hon. member, and I think the hon. Member for Burgeo as well was talking about using this money to go into risky investments. We are not banks. Banks do not want risk. Sometimes we have to step in and we take the risk. We do it for the right reasons.

What happened, the Premier was Minister of Natural Resources, and the Premier brought in – at the time as the Minister of Natural Resources, she brought in a forest industry modernization program. They identified certain sawmills throughout the Province that would need money and need investments to help them modernize so that they could compete in a competitive global economy.

Money was given to a number of different sawmills that were identified: one in Hampden, Burtons Cove Logging, which is doing very well – in Hampden, in White Bay; another one is in Central Newfoundland, Cottles Lumber; another one is Sexton Lumber in Summerford. These have gotten bigger, they have gotten modernized, and government helped.

The actuaries were hired to look at all these sawmills. There was one up in Roddickton and it was risky. Yet, this government stood with the people of Roddickton. This government said we know it is risky but the Roddickton economy was not doing well. The Great Northern Peninsula is having a rough time, what else was there? We took a chance and we invested the money.

Mr. Chair, it has not worked so far, but that does not mean it is not going to work. I know the hon. Member for St. Barbe and the hon. Member for Bay of Islands continually criticizes government for that investment because the business is not operating.

This government did an EOI for the fibre in Central. There were fourteen people who applied for that fibre. A committee of civil servants narrowed that committee down to five. The five were all visited. One of the proposals was not going to put anything back into Central. It was going to take the fibre, but it was not going to put anything back. There was no value going back into Central. They were not going to do anything to help Roddickton. They were not prepared to help Roddickton. Roddickton would stand on its own.

The unsuccessful person criticized the government and criticized me for saying, no, that was not good enough. You cannot take the fibre out of Central and not put anything back. The forestry industry is interconnected; maybe you can do something to help Roddickton.

The hon. member issues a press release, criticizes the government, and criticizes me for not helping that guy out. At the same time we were working with somebody else who has a proposal – it may not work, but it is a proposal to put value back into Central and to work to see if they can do something to help Roddickton survive. The hon. member puts out press release number one and criticizes us for not backing a proposal that would hurt the people of Roddickton. Maybe the hon. member should think a little carefully before he issues a press release.

Mr. Chair, the next press release he issued was to criticize us for delaying the mid-year update, like we would deliberately delay the mid-year update. I do not know why we would do that. We are anxious to get the information out as quickly as possible. The information is prepared by our officials and when it is available, we take it for approval by the government and then, the first opportunity, we release it.

For the benefit of the hon. member, and for the benefit of some other people in this House, you may like to know what happens when the six months is up, because it is a six-month update. So the six months goes by and we are now going to get actually information, because we spend so much time in this House talking about forecasts and estimates and projections – I mean, the Budget is a projection of what is going to happen over the next twelve months. It is not real numbers; it is a projection.

At mid-year, six months later, the information comes in, but the information does not come in before the six months is up. The information comes in, in some cases, two months after the six months is up. On the revenue side, for example, it is not until late October – now the six months is up at the end of September. It is not until late October before the Province receives data updates, revisions to the federal estimates for health and social transfers, and for corporate and personal income tax.

Remember, the federal government collects, under an administration agreement, our personal income tax, our corporate income tax, our HST. We need information from them – we get it in late October.

Updated offshore revenue forecast, the oil price, the production, the exchange rate, is based on information received in mid-October from Natural Resources, Energy Outlook. Mr. Chair, updated actual oil revenue, production, price, and exchange rates, as of the end of September, are received in November. There is a two-month lag before we get the information from the oil companies as to what prices they actually sold, how much they sold, and what the exchange rate was on the day they sold.

Mr. Chair, economic forecast indicators are then sent to the Fiscal Policy Division of the Department of Finance in mid to late October to assist with the revenue projections. When the revenue projections are determined, it is then merged with our net expense projections to enable the debt projections to be finalized, at which time there is a presentation and variance analysis produced in mid to late October.

Now, Mr. Chair, that is the revenue side. On the expense side, we have mid-year projections are received from the departments by October 23. We have mid-year projections received from the entities – there are a whole bunch of entities out there that send the information into government by October 30. There is a review and analysis of departmental information by the Budgeting Division, finalized on November 5. There is a review and analysis of entity information by the Budgeting Division, finalized on November 8. Then the Budgeting Division works with departments and entities to finalize their projections and the Budgeting Division uses the cash numbers to determine the accrual impact and reduce the Province's net expenses. So it takes some time, after the six months are up.

Mr. Chair, the hon. member can certainly criticize us for our numbers or our projections, but to say we deliberately are delaying the numbers is uncalled for and untrue. Now the hon. member should know what happens.

The Leader of the Opposition put out a release and said we did not meet our deadline. In other words, he wanted the information out before the six months were up. Well, the mid-year report is six months of actual information, which runs from April 1 to the end of September. Then there is a projection for the remaining six months.

So the information is not released obviously before September 30. The information has to be received. As I said, there is a lag when we get information from the oil companies. There is a lag until we get estimates from the federal government, which collects their taxes. That is why the mid-year update is always released sometime between November 15 and early

December. If we had it earlier, we would be happy to release it earlier.

Now, the part I do not like is the fact that the actual numbers of 2012-2013 come after the mid-year update for 2013-2014. Mr. Chair, with that, we have to start talking about actual numbers so people can see how the Province did.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move that the Committee rise, report the resolution and progress on Bill 24, and ask leave to sit again.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report progress.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, Mr. Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for the District of Lewisporte.

MR. VERGE: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Ways and Means have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have made progress and ask leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of Committee of Supply reports progress and asks leave to sit again.

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

MR. KING: On tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: On tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted.
Committee ordered to sit again on tomorrow.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that this House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Tomorrow being Wednesday, this House stands adjourned until 2:00 p.m.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 2:00 p.m.