



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLVII

THIRD SESSION

Number 16

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

Wednesday

09 April 2014

The House met at 2:00 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 Bonavista North; the Member for the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair; the Member for the District of Lake Melville; the Member for the District of Torngat Mountains; the Member for the District of Bellevue; and the Member for the District of Humber West.

The hon. the Member for the District of Bonavista North.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSS: "All the world's a stage", Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure I stand on my stage today and applaud the dramatic performance of students from Pearson Academy, who recently earned the award for best production in the Central Regional High School Drama Festival.

You have heard many a compliment through my statements of the tremendous athletic prowess of Pearson Academy students, from Deadman's Bay to Greenspond region of Bonavista North; but they have truly taken to a new stage, quite literally, Mr. Speaker.

In recent years, theatre has become a positive outlet for students to display their talents. Unable to personally name the entire cast, I need to recognize Kirk Blackwood, Best Male Performer; Kyla Stratton, Best Female Performer; Blake Stratton, Kimberley Oram and Riley Gill for Exemplary Supporting Roles; and their Theatre Arts teacher, Craig Loder, is an exceptional motivator, coach, and a friend to all his students

Our collective hope is that the students take positive memories from school experiences, recognizing the devotion of staff members and

parents alike to make for a diverse and positive school life.

Mr. Speaker, hon. colleagues, support me please in extending congratulations and best wishes for a very special red carpet experience at the provincial competition in May. As they say in the biz, "Break a leg!"

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the thirty years of outstanding service and dedication of the Eagle River Credit Union.

Napoleon Hill once said, "Whatever the mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve". The same can be said for the people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair when thirty years ago the Bank of Montreal decided to close and leave town, leaving the people of the district without a financial institution.

The people of the Labrador Straits rose to the challenge. Having the support of the Labrador Fishermen's Union Shrimp Company and the people of the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, Eagle River Credit Union was born.

Starting with one branch and two employees the Eagle River Credit Union has flourished to seven branches and fifty employees, with growth and assets of just over \$102 million. This was made possible by the competent staff, the valued members, and the dedicated board of directors. Their reputation and customer service continues to contribute to their success year after year, bringing economic sustainability to the district.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in commemorating the Eagle River Credit Union on thirty years of service.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize the Ike Rich Players from Mealy Mountain Collegiate on winning the Labrador Regional High School Drama Festival.

The Ike Rich Players won the competition through hard work and dedication, Mr. Speaker. They had been working together and practicing the play for over a month. The week of the festival, drama students were expected to practice every single day of the week until the big showcase of their play.

The group performed Don Zolidius' play *Crushed*, and did it in fine form, receiving several accolades from the festival. Specifically, Emily Harris was recognized as the best overall actor of the festival.

The Ike Rich Players' cast for the festival included Jamie Felsberg, Heidi Applin, Rachel Goudie, Louna Fezoui, Emily Harris, Becca Pike, Connor Crocker, Noah Taite, Bradley Baker, Mitchell Eddy, and Quinten Taylor. They will now go on to compete in the upcoming Provincial High School Drama Festival at the LSPU Hall in St. John's this coming May.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this hon. House to join me in recognizing the Ike Rich Players from Mealy Mountain Collegiate on winning the Labrador Regional High School Drama Festival.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to acknowledge the passing of a true son of Labrador, Mr. Ted Andersen, affectionately known as Uncle Ted.

Uncle Ted was dedicated to his community of Makkovik, the communities of the North Coast, and the people of Labrador. He was the cofounder of the Combined Councils of Labrador, served on the Makkovik community council for more than twenty years, and was actively involved in the Labrador Inuit Association.

Uncle Ted followed the political world very closely and was very astute in the politics of his day. His first words to me as a rookie politician were, "They'll elect you, but remember, you are at the mercy of the very people you represent."

As a successful entrepreneur and fisherman, he believed that hard work and perseverance would always prevail. He always told me to stand up for what you believe in.

His family tried on many occasions to get Uncle Ted closer to them in his final years. We can now take comfort in knowing that Uncle Ted has gone home.

I ask all hon. members to join me in expressing condolences to his family. Have a rest, my friend; you have earned it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PEACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House to recognize the Community Five Lions Club of Dildo. I had the great privilege of attending their annual forty-fifth Lions Charter Night on March 29, 2014. This club has been very active and still stands strong today with twenty-eight members.

Mr. Speaker, the highlight of the night was the honouring of a charter member. With forty-five years of being a Lion member with the club, Mr. Cyril Russell of Blaketown is a gentleman of great stature.

I would like to also take this opportunity to recognize four other long-time members. Mr.

Walter Reid has been a member for forty-two years, Lemuel Reid who has served for thirty-two years, Barry Peckham with thirty-two years, and Rayfield Reid has been a member for thirty years.

One would say that the survival of this club is attributed to the long-time dedication of such individuals who gave up so many of their valuable hours to be a true Lion member.

I ask all members of this hon. House to join me and say thank you to the above mentioned long-time members of the Community Five Lions Club and to congratulate Mr. Cyril Russell on being a charter member for forty-five years with the club.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, I stand in this hon. House to congratulate a trio of budding swimmers from the Corner Brook Rapids Swim Club on their impressive achievements in competition recently held at the Canada Games Aquatic Centre in Saint John, New Brunswick.

Megan Colbourne, Heidi Perry, and Caleigh Edwards had personal best times in all of their events while combining to smash a total of eight rapids records in the process.

The team of three finished tenth, out of thirty-one teams that participated in the female category, up against some of the elite young athletes in Atlantic Canada.

Colbourne's impressive weekend included nailing down an age group National Time for her first place finish in the 1,500 meter freestyle. Edwards set a new rapids record in the 200 metre freestyle, and Perry was impressive setting new records in fifty, 100 and 400 metre events.

Honourable members, please join me in congratulating Megan Colbourne, Heidi Perry

and Caleigh Edwards on their achievements in the pool and wish them much more athletic achievements as they continue their swimming pursuits.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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 inform all members of a new Municipal Council Handbook, available through Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs to assist municipal administrators and elected officials in the handling of day-to-day operations.

The Municipal Council Handbook was officially launched last week, at the forty-second Professional Municipal Administrators Convention in Gander. A training session and overview was provided to delegates and hard copies were available at the event for municipal administrators. I am also pleased to note that we will be distributing copies for elected officials at the Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador Symposium which takes place next month in Gander.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank officials with the Professional Municipal Administrators and Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador for partnering with the department to bring this handbook to fruition.

The Municipal Council Handbook was funded through the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs and developed in partnership with the Professional Municipal Administrators and Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador. This guide book

is designed for use by municipal administrators and elected officials as a resource to assist them in providing efficient and effective services to residents. I am happy to report that the handbook was well-received by all during the convention last week.

Mr. Speaker, this new handbook can be used as a quick reference guide to assist mayors, councillors, and municipal administrators in the handling of day-to-day operations in their municipalities. It contains information on areas such as council budgeting and financial administration, council communications and civic engagement, and council's role as a policymaker, regulator and planner. An electronic copy of this handbook is also available on the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs' Web site.

The department is continuously looking at ways to provide assistance to municipalities to ensure that they have the information they need to operate efficiently and in accordance with legislation.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with our stakeholders to ensure that residents of Newfoundland and Labrador are represented by strong councils which will support sustainable and vibrant communities.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement. I agree that anything we can do to help out the municipalities, councils, and administrators is a great thing. I heard people who already availed of this service. It is a great handbook, it will help councillors. It will help a lot of people who administer their towns, town clerks, and other people. Anything we can do, Mr. Speaker, to help out our volunteers, the town councils, to make our towns run smoother

is better for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the government and all the people who helped out to bring this book forward. It is going to make a difference to a lot of towns for their quick use. I did speak to somebody and what they said to me is they would rather have a fiscal framework than a municipal handbook.

Once again, we see all this gloss coming up, which is good. This handbook is great, I have to admit. What they are saying is great, we have a handbook, but we need the finances so we can run our towns. I urge the minister, I urge the government, that there is some way we start the fiscal framework to ensure that what they committed six years ago is going to be filled this year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement as well. A big thank you as well, to the professional administrators who helped to make up this manual for Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, in their assistance in making this book. It is a great aid, especially when you are talking about the volunteers who are running a lot of the smaller communities out there.

I would also like to add, one of the administrators I was talking to pretty much echoed the same sentiments as the Member for Bay of Islands as well. They did not see a chapter in the book called how to get more money out of a minister. Hopefully in the next little while we will see that chapter coming up sooner rather than later.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform this hon. House that the deadline for nominations for the 2014 Environmental Awards is May 1. This annual awards program is an opportunity to recognize environmental achievements in our Province and raise awareness of the individuals, groups, and businesses who take action to protect and sustain our environment.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment and Conservation partners annually with the Multi-Materials Stewardship Board and the Newfoundland and Labrador Women's Institutes to recognize environmental achievement in the following categories: Individual; Community Group or Organization; Youth, Youth Group or School; Municipality or Regional Waste Management Committee; and, Business or Industry Leader.

It is important to recognize our Province's environmental leaders in this manner. Each category winner will receive a \$1,000 honorarium from the Multi-Materials Stewardship Board and a trophy to be presented during an Environment Week ceremony, which will take place this June.

Mr. Speaker, a healthy and sustainable environment yields healthy people, a stronger economy, more vibrant communities, and a legacy for which we can be proud. Our commitment to our ecosystem will ensure we meet the social, physical, cultural, and economic needs of present and future generations.

Recognizing these types of achievements continues to raise awareness of the tireless work being done by those dedicated to making a difference and protecting our environment. We all need to take responsibility for the protection of the environment.

Further information about the Environment Awards and the criteria is available on our Web site for the Department of Environment and Conservation. Nomination forms can be accessed easily and printed from that site.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a good program. I am familiar with the program and those who receive awards deserve to be recognized. In fact, everyone who is nominated for one of those awards deserves recognition because they lead by example.

I want to talk a little bit, Mr. Speaker, about the Energy Plan government released a few years ago. They promised a detailed plan for efficiency and conservation in 2008. That is over six years ago. It did not happen – it did not happen.

Government promised to introduce targeted programs to help home owners reduce energy consumption. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? It did not happen. They promised retrofit rebates. It did not happen. They promised to switch to more energy-efficient lights and net metering. Guess what? It did not happen.

Our Province is lagging well behind other provinces, provinces as close as Nova Scotia, in developing these types of programs. Mr. Speaker, wouldn't it be nice if the provincial government led by example?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The member's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement here today in the House. This is a very good project. I have to commend government for this. I am looking forward to hearing about some of the groups, for example, in my area that will be participating.

I can think of a schoolyard – that is where environmental protection really starts, I think, and it is integral to our young people. I can think of Rennie's River school down there that literally changed a parking lot into a playground, and I can think of other groups that are worthy of receiving rewards.

I encourage all residents of this Province to look at groups such as the salmonid association of Newfoundland and Labrador; the Sandy Pond Alliance should also be included in that; the Rennie's River foundation; and the Johnson Family Foundation. This list is endless when it comes to the contribution that these groups are making to (inaudible) in this Province.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FRENCH: Mr. Speaker, East Coast Music Week is a five-day, non-stop musical celebration showcasing and recognizing the best of east coast artists and music. It is promoted as a premiere music event for the music industry in Canada, as well as the conference of choice for artist and industry professionals. The event is hosted on an annual basis throughout the Atlantic provinces, and alternates within five regions – Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, mainland Nova Scotia, and, of course, Newfoundland and Labrador.

This past weekend, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to attend a number of musical showcases and other industry-centred events at

East Coast Music Week in Prince Edward Island, culminating in the awards show on Sunday evening. A number of performers from our Province were nominated for awards, including Amelia Curran, Matthew Hornell, Tonya Kennedy, Ennis, The Rolling Kings, and Lady Cove Women's Choir, to name a few, and I offer my sincerest congratulations to everyone who was nominated.

Some of the highlights of the awards show included Jenn Grant for Song of the year, and Dave Gunning for Solo Recording and Songwriter of the Year. Our provincial winners were Duane Andrews and Craig Young who won in the category of Traditional Instrumental Recording; Clark Winslow Ross who was awarded Classical Composition of the Year; and choral director Kellie Walsh who received the Stompin' Tom Award.

Along with the dynamic array of musical showcases, seminars and industry-centred gatherings, East Coast Music Week offers opportunities for musicians to be discovered and secure career opportunities. Over the past several years, the awards have resulted in more than a million dollars in local, regional, and international contract opportunities for artists.

Mr. Speaker, East Coast Music Week is not only a musical celebration which fosters and promotes the careers of east coast artists, it also provides a significant economic benefit to the host province. Depending on the event location, the week historically generates between \$3 million and \$4 million in direct and indirect economic benefits to the host province. It engages upwards of 500 volunteers in a number of key operational roles for the host jurisdiction. I am absolutely delighted, Mr. Speaker, that Newfoundland and Labrador will be the host province in 2015 for this exciting week in the music industry, and our government will proudly support this event.

Mr. Speaker, we are certainly looking forward to hosting the East Coast Music Week in April of 2015, and building on the momentum this event has created since its inception.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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 the advance copy.

I must commend the minister, this is the first ministerial statement that I received in the number of years I have been in the House that actually recognizes the volunteers and not trying to promote government agenda. I commend the minister for that because, Mr. Speaker, these volunteers – I congratulate all the winners, I congratulate all the hard work and all the volunteers that makes this award.

I had the privilege of attending this past, in the East Coast Music Award Week. Mr. Speaker, it is a great showcase of our talent for all Atlantic Canada. It is great for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It is a great opportunity, as the minister stated, to get some contracts.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate again the organizers and the 500 volunteers who are going to be working on this next year. I congratulate the minister once again for helping promote the arts in the Province, as we had in Estimates this year. I welcome all people to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador because when they come once they will want to come again.

I just want to congratulate the minister for promoting all the volunteers, promoting the event, as it should be. I thank the organizers, and I thank the minister and the government for the work they gave and they do give our artists in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Congratulations to all the nominees from Newfoundland and Labrador, and bravo to all award winners: Duane Andrews, Craig Young, Clark Winslow Ross, and Kellie Walsh. You all make us so proud.

Our singer songwriters and musicians are jewels in our crown. Through their music they carry us through tough times, through celebrations. They are there when we marry, they help us bury our dead. They make music for our films and music we can tap our feet to or even dance. Sometimes we even sing along. They soothe our souls and help our hearts and minds soar. Thank you to all those brave and determined enough to make music.

It is crucial that we ensure our musicians have the support they need in order to be able to exceed because we all benefit. It is a solid investment. We all look forward to East Coast Music Week on our shores next year, and bravo to all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

After almost two years without a contract, talks with government and the teachers have broken off. We know the teachers have made a formal request for government to appoint a conciliation officer.

I ask the Premier: When will the conciliation process begin?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I am thumbing through my mail because I have not received a formal request, unless it is in this bunch. If it is in this bunch of mail, I can tell you that it will be signed off this afternoon and it will start immediately.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Sometime yesterday afternoon, I think, just after 3:00 o'clock, I say to the minister.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Finance tried to brush off the fact that talks have broken down with the teachers. She said it is just the next step in the bargaining process.

I ask the Premier: Why is your government acting like it is a normal process, it is normal for teachers to be without a contract for almost two years?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have been elected by the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure that we look after their best interests, and one of the things we do is we negotiate contracts with our valued employees. When we do that, we negotiate. We try to arrive at a collective agreement that is fair and reasonable; fair and reasonable to our public employees and fair and reasonable to the taxpayers, and we do that. We have experienced negotiators who negotiate on our behalf and we ask them to negotiate at the table because that is where a deal can be gotten, not in the media.

Mr. Speaker, these negotiators and this government have negotiated collective agreements with NAPE, the RNC, with CUPE, with health professionals, with correction officers, with workers, health and corporate safety, and also with the dentists, and that process will continue.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that the teachers are saying is they do not really feel that this is a fair and a meaningful process. They have openly said in public and stated on many occasions that they really do not feel that government negotiators have a mandate to be at the table.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House the Premier finally admitted that patient numbers justify a radiation unit at Western Memorial, in Western Newfoundland. We have said as the Official Opposition that there are enough patients in Western Newfoundland to make the radiation unit viable, but the Minister of Health has said time and time again that the numbers do not justify a radiation unit.

I ask the Premier: Why is your Minister of Health ignoring the fact that the numbers justify a radiation unit in Corner Brook, or ignoring the fact?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

In 2012-2013 of the patients who received radiation treatment in the Province I think there were 172 who came from the West Coast of the Province. As I think the hon. member probably knows the 20 per cent – it would be complex and if the radiation treatment were offered in the new hospital in Corner Brook, 20 per cent would

still have to go to St. John's or Halifax for complex treatments or for brachytherapy.

We know that there are certain professionals who indicate that the numbers are low. We also know that there are also psychosocial benefits. It is important that people be as close to home as possible and for people to be able to go home at night and go home to their own beds, and we know that is an important factor that has to be reviewed as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We also know that there are many people, especially in palliative situations, who do not get treatment. As a matter of fact that number in some provinces in our country right now is as high as 20 per cent from the numbers that we have.

Mr. Speaker, our office made an ATIPP, or an access to information request, for all documents that were used to justify the decision not to place a radiation unit in the new hospital. That was received on March 7 and it was 141 pages long. Three weeks later in Budget 2014, government announced \$500,000 to review radiation therapy for the Western Region.

I ask the Premier: What happened in those three weeks for you to change your mind?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, obviously we have professionals who have indicated – and this was in the Stantec report – that the numbers in Western Newfoundland were very low. We have also heard the concerns of the people of the West Coast. We have collectively reflected and after further discussion – we also heard from experts working in cancer care and other areas. We see value in exploring

what they are doing in other jurisdictions, in exploring radiation therapy programs outside of the provincial care program.

As I said yesterday, we know there are areas that have one machine. We are looking at whether that model could work or whether there would need to be a backup machine. We are concerned about safety because if you do not have the right professionals, the care may not be safe. We have to make sure it is.

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.

Quite clearly yesterday the Premier stated that the numbers do justify. That is exactly what we have been seeing as we have been reviewing this situation across the country.

The safety is not an issue, I say to the Premier. We are seeing this happen in Ontario, in Nova Scotia, and as a matter of fact in other places in the world.

We have been asking for improved health services for the Western Region of our Province for years. We have said and now the Premier agrees, the numbers justify a radiation unit. The Minister of Health, however, has disagreed and now the Premier is stating the opposite yesterday, the numbers do justify it.

I ask the Premier: When did you determine that your government's initial analysis was wrong?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is trying to put words in my mouth. I said we had numbers, we had low numbers, and we have looked at those numbers and we are now in the process of exploring

additional information. There is nothing wrong in doing that. You can get information from one source; you can get other information from other sources.

The Minister of Health and her department are going through a process now to help us get additional information other than what was provided by Stantec, information coming out of Cape Breton and information coming out of Prince Edward Island. We look forward to seeing that information because what we want to do is ensure that if radiation therapy can be offered in the new hospital in Western Newfoundland, we are sure it has to offer the highest-quality care, it has to be done safely, and we have to be able to get the right people.

That is what we are looking at. When we get that information that will inform the decision this government is going to make.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government has made a significant decision on behalf of the people of Western Newfoundland and Labrador. The information you relied on prior to March 7 was clearly wrong.

I ask the Premier: Why did you ignore the current information that is available in the country – easily available in the country – before you made the decision on March 7?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, the information that was provided to me by the minister and by the Department of Health was information provided by Stantec. You have a copy of that. The hon. Member for Bay of Islands 'ATIPPed' that and got a copy. As a matter of fact, the Minister of Health was out

and readily shared that information with the people of Western Newfoundland.

What we have done is we have looked at those numbers and we said that is one person, that is one company, and we are exploring others. To me, that is a wise decision. We are looking at other areas. We looked at Sudbury. We looked at Peterborough. We are now looking at Cape Breton and PEI. We are looking at: Can we get medical physicists? Can we get the radiation oncologists? Can we offer one machine or do we have to have a backup machine? We are exploring that and that information will, again, inform our decision.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Information that was readily available, one phone call and the Opposition set up a call with leaders in Ontario who are actually delivering this service right now.

Why didn't government actually make the simple call to Ontario to get the information that was readily available?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, we obviously have to rely on experts, health professionals, to help guide us in making our decisions. What we have asked them to do is to provide us with the evidence, and that is what they have been doing. As they gather the evidence, they present it to us. We will make the policy decision. We will make the decision, and when we have this additional information we will be very happy to do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: I will just let the Premier know, if he is not aware, that Stantec Report, I had to apply under the Freedom of Information because your Department of Health would not release it. Just for the record.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was pleased that the Premier stood and talked about the different radiation models that are being looked at for our Province. What he said was very different from the Minister of Health, who has said there would be no radiation unit in the new Corner Brook hospital.

I ask the Minister of Health: Can you explain to the people of the Province why you think there should not be a radiation unit in the new hospital?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member just indicated he had to ATIPP it. The information was given out by the minister and her officials when they were there announcing what the plan would be and what the timelines would be for building a new health care campus and a new hospital in Corner Brook over the next few years. So, you did not have to ATIPP the information. It was released by the minister.

Mr. Speaker, a decision like this is a serious decision, and we have to ensure that we gather all possible information. It is very simple, the information came from Stantec. The number there is 172; 20 per cent will have to go somewhere else because it is complex and because of brachytherapy. We are now exploring other areas in Atlantic Canada, two machines. We looked at the model across the country. In St. John's it is –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I say to the Premier again, I will show you the ATIPP request that I had to put in when I received the information sixty days later. I will show it to you.

Also, Mr. Speaker, in the past two months the Minister of Health has written several letters to communities, organizations on the West Coast saying that the addition of radiation therapy in the new hospital was not recommended. For example, she wrote the Town of Burgeo on February 17 and the Gateway Status of Women on February 27, just to name two. Yesterday, the Premier said a radiation unit was justified.

I ask the minister: Will you now admit that you did not provide the proper due diligence before you made such a huge decision affecting so many people in the Province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, once again the information was given out by the minister in the deck that you have had for some time.

Mr. Speaker, the information that was provided to the minister was provided by the company that is doing the master program and the functional program for the West Coast hospital. That particular group did not recommend radiation therapy because of the low numbers.

So we looked at that, and we wanted to consult with others as well. We wanted to see what other people have to do. The officials of the Department of Health are gathering that evidence, because they want to make sure that they offer and provide to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador the best health services that are possible.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier, will you provide details of – if you are saying that you have the information, your department is collecting it: Can you explain what the \$500,000 will be used for? Is there a consulting firm hired? Because you mentioned yesterday that officials are gathering the information. Can you explain what the \$500,000 – and are you now admitting that the Stantec report was inaccurate, or is it just that you are not following the recommendations of the Stantec report?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, the Stantec report provided information, provided facts. It provided the number of people in Newfoundland and Labrador who were seeing a radiation oncologist, and those from the West Coast. It provided the number of people from Newfoundland and Labrador who were getting radiation therapy, including those from the West Coast.

The information that Stantec provided, 172 – they are the numbers from 2012-2013. It was for one year. We decided to look for more information to be thorough and to look elsewhere. The information provided by the minister, provided by the Department of Health is accurate. They are providing evidence, and from the evidence we will make the decision.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on Monday it was Bay d'Espoir, today it is Baie Verte. The original tender for roadwork in Baie Verte called for 12.5 kilometres of work to be completed by September 30 of this year. Government later released an addendum limiting the amount of roadwork to \$2.2 million this year. That is roughly four kilometres, 30 per cent of the original tender.

I ask the minister: Will you tell the people of Baie Verte why you reduced the amount of roadwork that was supposed to be completed this year?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what we have done this year, through the Heavy Civil Association and consultation with them, they came to us and asked us could we stop 'piecemealing', doing a kilometre here, a kilometre there? So the department, working with the Heavy Civil Association, decided that we would get together and we would put large projects together.

The information that the member across the House is giving out is misinformation. He accused me the other day of political posturing. If someone is politically posturing, it is him trying to give misleading information to the people in Baie Verte and the other day in Bay d'Espoir. What we have done is put larger projects together and we have put out tenders for large projects. We can guarantee to keep the work, and I will comment on this after his next question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, the tender documents do not lie. The proof is in the pavement or the lack thereof. There was supposed to be 12.5 kilometres clearly outlined in the original tender document, Mr. Speaker. That was reduced to \$2.2 million, which will only complete 30 per cent of the work.

I ask the minister: Why are you continuing to play politics with provincial roadwork in this Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker.

I will pick up where I left off on the last question. What we have done is put these projects together. Through the Heavy Civil Association, we are guaranteeing that work can be done. These large tenders – and I will use Bay d’Espoir as an example. There is a maximum there, so in two seasons the work has to be completed, thirty-three kilometres that have to be completed in two years – the guarantees and commitments from this government that the work will be done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday in Estimates when I asked whether the minister responsible for violence prevention tried to save the family violence court by offering to cost share, she simply replied: It was a Justice initiative.

I ask the minister: Why won’t you work with the Minister of Justice to protect women and children in our Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, it seems somewhat as if the member does not understand the Budget process. As the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and the Women’s Policy Office, we just cannot take money from one budget head and assign it to a project in another department. I just cannot take money, say, from

the Violence Prevention Initiative and not give it to the Regional Coordinating Committees and transfer it to another department.

Mr. Speaker, there is a process that you follow and this government has supported the Violence Prevention Initiative for many years. We are about to release the second phase of that initiative. Mr. Speaker, we are firmly committed to advancing the issues of women in this Province and we are committed to the prevention of violence.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, I think we would all benefit if departments could work together more.

Yesterday, in Estimates I asked the minister responsible for violence prevention whether programs for offenders were being funded by the Violence Prevention Initiative. The minister again responded that this was a Justice issue.

I ask the minister: Can you confirm that you are not willing to help fund violence prevention programs to help women and children in the Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, the Violence Prevention Initiative works with many community groups throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, and they certainly put forward the projects or the initiatives that they feel are most appropriate for their communities.

Historically, violence treatment programs are typically offered in settings that would be more appropriate to the Justice setting. Oftentimes they are cost shared or provided by the Correctional Service of Canada, as opposed to the provincial government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with our community groups, our Regional Coordinating Committees, and we will give the people who have the expertise from their local areas to be able to determine their priorities and work within that fund to ensure that they meet the priorities of their local communities. We will not dictate to them what they have to do for these committees.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, the number of Occupational Health and Safety inspectors in our Province cannot keep up with the demand. Even the minister told the media: There are just a total of twenty-two inspectors to keep tabs on every single industry in the Province, including the fishery.

I ask the minister: When will you admit there is a critical shortage of Occupational Health and Safety Officers and what are you going to do to address it?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am just going to put a few facts out here, Mr. Speaker, to refute what the hon. member said on the opposite side. Certainly, the Occupational Health and Safety branch of government at Service NL has a very strong record in safety in our workplaces, Mr. Speaker. We are a leader in the country.

So let's look at some facts here. We have the third highest workplace inspection rates in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: That includes Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta. We have the

lowest incidence rates in our history: 1.6 per cent for 100 employees, 50 per cent lower than ten years ago, Mr. Speaker. When we look at the fish harvesting sector, the incidence rates are 2.2 percent, the lowest since 2008.

We are doing good work. The work is getting done. The inspections are getting done, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I say to the minister, he should tell that to all the injured workers and their families trying to survive on workers' comp.

Mr. Speaker, in the past three years this government carried out just thirty-eight safety inspections on commercial fishing vessels that are over forty feet long. That works out to just over twelve a year.

Given that injury rates in the fishery are almost double the provincial average for workers, I ask the minister: Why have you not committed to providing dock-side safety inspections for all fishing vessels over forty feet long?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, we do recognize that there are significant challenges when it comes to inspecting fish harvesters, but we are doing the good work around the prevention piece. We have twenty-two inspectors out there who are doing their jobs day in, day out. We have added two new inspectors in the Budget this year. We know that the rates are going to go up in terms of our inspections rates. Certainly in the fishing sector, the harvesting sector, we are going to be out there on the ground at dockside monitoring the situation as best we can.

Fundamentally, Mr. Speaker, we will know that occupational health and safety is everybody's responsibility. We have labour, we have industry, we have employers, we have employees, and we have government. It is everybody's responsibility, Mr. Speaker. We are working together to educate, to train, to make sure our workplaces are as safe as they possibly can be.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace for a quick question.

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This morning, Mr. Speaker, I stood shoulder to shoulder with our fishers protesting against the shrimp quota cuts. We have always said the solution is for more provincial say –

MR. SPEAKER: I ask the member to get to his question quickly, please.

MR. SLADE: – in the management of our fisheries. It seems this government is finally agreeing.

I ask the minister: After the federal Tories promised joint fisheries management in 2006, why has it taken you eight years to finally warm up to the idea?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture for a quick response.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, I was down this morning to the demonstration, too, and stood shoulder to shoulder along with the Member for Lewisporte, the Minister of Justice, and the Members for Placentia – St. Mary's, Bonavista South, and Bonavista North.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, we have stood shoulder to shoulder to this issue since 2004 in LIFO. We have been quite clear that we did not think it was efficient for the industry, it had to change. We said it needs to change. We have supported the industry; we certainly continue to support it.

I do not know where the hon. member is. Last week I did a member's statement. The Leader of the NDP supported it. This member stood up, he did not support what we said about LIFO.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

The loss of 900 metric tons to the inshore shrimp harvesters is going to have far-reaching and devastating implications to our already struggling rural economy, a major concern of the protesters I spoke to this morning at DFO.

I ask the Premier: Will he stand up for the 2,200 plant workers and more than 250 small boat enterprises affected and get on the phone to the Prime Minister to get this decision reversed, Mr. Speaker?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will bring the hon. member up to date in terms of our reference over the past number of years in terms of dealing with this issue last in, first out and how devastating it is and will be in terms of these proposed cuts. That is why we demanded the federal government have these cuts changed. They are

devastating to rural Newfoundland and Labrador, to our coastal communities.

Since 2010, we have lobbied. We continuously lobby the former minister. Certainly I, as the Minister of DFA, have been in touch with various ministers in Ottawa and said quite clearly, this is not good for the inshore fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We met with industry. We met with the shrimp inshore fleet. We were down this morning, and over the past number of months. We have lobbied to have this changed. It must be changed. We believe there are great opportunities in the fisheries. That is why we believe joint management, the inventory of science, the \$400 million fund we built, and all we have built with the industry, we can move it forward, but the federal government needs to be there to work with us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

DFO's last in, first out so-called policy does not exist on paper and it is not mentioned in any federal legislation.

I ask the Premier: Will he get on the phone and explain clearly to the Prime Minister the disastrous ramifications last in, first out has to the inshore fishers and plant workers and this Province's economy?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the last in, first out policy, we need to go back and look at it in 1996 when the inshore fleet got access to this resource on a temporary basis. Then in 2007, the federal government decided to give permanent licence to these licence holders. At that point in time, these individuals, these 240 harvesters and enterprises became stakeholders in this fishery.

That is our point today in regard to LIFO. They have invested. We have invested through the Fisheries Loan Guarantee Program a couple of years ago. We made tremendous investment. We opened it up to allow them to get access to capital to drive the industry, to rationalize.

We have done a number of programs. There is FTNOP driving technology in terms of the fishing industry. Again we are investing \$120 million in the fishery with CETA when that is signed. Our contribution to the fishery has been second to none of any government in this Province. We are proud of it, and we believe in the fishery.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government's CETA deal with the EU includes a \$400 million fund to help protect Newfoundland and Labrador fish plant workers affected by government's abandoning its policy of minimum processing requirements.

I ask the Premier: Will any of this money be available to help harvesters and plant workers who may get hurt by this unfair federal government practice that is happening?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, we negotiated \$400 million with the federal government for CETA. When they came to the table first, they were very limited in what they wanted to spend the money on but we negotiated. We said we want a program for technology utilization, for research and science, which they backed out on.

We continue to build on the \$13 million and the \$5 million I announced yesterday at the Marine Institute. We can build our industry based on the opportunities we have in free trade and other opportunities around the world, whether that is the EU, South Korea, or trade deals that have recently been established or will be signed in the coming years.

In regard to that fund, we have funds now in regard to wage adjustment for workers, but we are not letting the federal government off the hook. If they want to come and do rationalization in regard to this, they can come and we will sit with them, but we have decided how that \$400 million will be used. We are not letting them off the hook now and say we are going to use that. If they want to come with more money, bring it on. We are willing to talk.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Women's Policy Office is who government turns to for direction on policy and program decisions affecting women. Their primary focus is violence prevention and addressing the needs of women who are victims of violence.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Did he consult the Women's Policy Office before closing the Family Violence Intervention Court?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, the Women's Policy Office has individuals who are able to provide a gender analysis to all the policies of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and they do their job very effectively. Any time there is a decision that may or may not even affect women, we ask for their opinion on that particular policy or policy move of government to ensure we do not miss that piece of work, Mr. Speaker.

As has been said by my colleague, the Minister of Justice, sometimes decisions are made for budgetary reasons and not necessarily because we disagree with the particular policy.

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Why did he not consult these experts that are part of the Executive Council?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, this government has said that the Family Violence Court was an initiative that was brought in by this government and discontinued for budgetary reasons. At no point did this government say we disagreed with that particular policy, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Did he consult with the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women before closing the Family Violence Intervention Court?

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

MS SHEA: Again, Mr. Speaker, unless the member does not understand what I am saying, the Family Violence Intervention Court was a

budgetary decision as opposed to a reversal of policy for this particular government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, did the minister consult with his Justice Minister's Committee on Violence Against Women who helped plan the Family Violence Intervention Court before closing the court?

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

MS SHEA: Again, Mr. Speaker, this government looked at the Family Violence Court from a policy perspective and agreed with that policy. The decision to eliminate it or not continue it was a budgetary decision, Mr. Speaker, not because this government disagrees with the concept of a Family Violence Intervention Court.

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.

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.

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

WHEREAS there is no cellphone service in the Town of Trout River, which is an enclave community in Gros Morne National Park; and

WHEREAS visitors to Gros Morne National Park, more than 100,000 annually, expect to communicate by cellphone when they visit the park; and

WHEREAS cellphone service has become a very important aspect of everyday living for residents; and

WHEREAS cellphone service is an essential safety tool for visitors and residents; and

WHEREAS cellphone service is essential for business development;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to partner with the private sector to extend cellphone coverage throughout Gros Morne National Park and the enclave community of Trout River.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, Trout River is a thriving community, a very traditional community; but it is a thriving community, as has been evidenced by awards having been won by students at Jakeman All Grade school in Trout River. Last year they won the Indigo award. I think it was in the order of \$30,000 worth of books for the library.

Yesterday I did a member's statement for a Grade 2 student who was a Province-wide winner. So clearly, the townspeople and the school are doing well, but it seems eminently unfair and short sighted that this government – not that it does not take any money, but it refuses to partner with the private sector in order

to extend cellphone coverage to the Town of Trout River. The Town of Trout River should be as entitled to have cellphone coverage as any other similarly situated town. Clearly, many visitors go there every single year through Gros Morne National Park.

Without any doubt, the private sector partner, if there were a partnership to go forward, would generate significant revenue from cellphone usage with people who are travelling in Gros Morne National Park in the area of Trout River.

So, Mr. Speaker, once again I call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to partner with the private sector and extend cellphone coverage to Trout River.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREAS the US Centers for Disease Control now estimates that autism spectrum disorder affects one in sixty-eight children, which represents a 30 per cent increase from the estimate two years ago; and

WHEREAS early diagnosis of ASD is essential because there is a critical developmental period when early intervention is vital for future success of children with ASD; and

WHEREAS there are approximately 380 children on a two-year wait-list for an ASD diagnosis, which in this Province can only be made by a developmental pediatrician, and there is only one available at the Janeway Children's Hospital; and

WHEREAS although Budget 2014 announced that another developmental pediatrician will be recruited, more must be done to reduce the wait-list for a diagnosis so that children can get the early treatment they need; and

WHEREAS in other provinces an ASD diagnosis can be made by specialists certified and trained in ADOS;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to allow other specialists trained and certified with ADOS to make the autism spectrum disorder diagnosis.

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

I am very happy once again, Mr. Speaker, to present this petition which hundreds of people around the Province have signed. I understand from people concerned that more people are signing this petition. Any time they are put in my hand, I will be very happy and honoured to stand and present on behalf of the families, the friends, and the supporters of children with autism spectrum disorder.

We have a pressing issue here in the Province. One of the concerns of the signers of the petition is that once again we have a Budget and a year ahead of us which is not meeting the needs of the children in this Province who have ASD. Once again the government made a piecemeal decision instead of making a policy decision with regard to the need for timely diagnosis of children ending the wait-list that we have.

The government did once again a piecemeal thing by putting in place in the Budget one more developmental pediatrician. They did not deal with the policy issue that needs to be dealt with, that we could have a broader group of people who are trained in the Province and qualified to do the diagnosis.

There should not be a wait-list, Mr. Speaker. We no longer have a wait-list for treatment because of a Supreme Court decision that after a

diagnosis is made, treatment has to happen within thirty days. We wish the same for a diagnosis.

Thank you very much, 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 have a petition 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 Burgeo, Ramea, Grey River, and François of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador must use Route 480 on a regular basis for work, medical, educational, and social reasons; and

WHEREAS Route 480 is in deplorable condition, such that the shoulders of the road continuously wash away and there are huge potholes on the road; and

WHEREAS the condition of Route 480 poses a safety hazard to residents and visitors to Burgeo, Ramea, Grey River, and François; and

WHEREAS the Department of Transportation and Works is responsible for the maintenance and repairs in the Province; and

WHEREAS the local division of the Department of Transportation and Works does make periodic repairs to this route but these repairs are only temporary patchwork and this road needs to be resurfaced;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House to urge the government to support the users of Route 480 in their request to have Route 480 resurfaced.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I enter this petition again today because the Burgeo road is always in a bad state of repair. We have seen that over the years. It is acknowledged by employees of the Department of Transportation and Works. There is simply not enough done to maintain it. It is in an especially horrible condition, given the time of year and given the winter we had.

What I am asking here today is that steps are going to be taken to make sure this road is put into a shape where people can drive back and forth without constantly damaging their vehicles. Now, it is bad enough they cannot drive along this road; God forbid, if something happens, they will not be able to call anyone because there is no cellphone service. That is a different petition. I will put that in tomorrow.

The problem is I am getting lots of e-mails from people who are showing me pictures of their vehicles that are damaged. Their tires are gone, they are beating up their vehicles, they are driving over a road, and they are wondering: Why doesn't this road get resurfaced and get treated when it should?

I will give the minister credit. I brought to his attention last year, after he took the department over, a piece of the road that had washed away and was just left there. Nothing was done for months and months. It was not in the right place, we will say. The minister, I will give him credit, when I brought it to his attention, made sure it was done.

That is why I am entering this petition on behalf of my constituents. I am putting it to the government's attention. Hopefully they will get the right thing done again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the Member for St. John's North he only has about half a minute to do this. This is Private Members' Day.

Go ahead and proceed.

MR. KIRBY: I will stand another time, Mr. Speaker. Thanks for the warning.

Orders of the Day**Private Members' Day**

MR. SPEAKER: This being Wednesday, Private Members' Day, and we are close to 3:00 o'clock, I will call upon the Member for Terra Nova to introduce the motion that is on the Order Paper in his name.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. COLLINS: I move, seconded by the Member for Port de Grave:

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the government's decision to introduce full-day Kindergarten.

I will continue. Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand today and speak on something I know is very important and worthwhile to me personally and to a number of folks in this House. I will start off by talking about the Budget in general. Of course, this has been a Budget that has been touted by a number of groups and individuals throughout the Province. It is a Budget that has been coined an education Budget. I think that is so very true, if you look at the investments that were made in this past Budget. It would be hard to disagree with that statement.

This Budget has seen a huge investment, if I may start with post-secondary education. You only have to look to a couple of initiatives, whether it is the continued tuition freeze which has been on the go now for a number of years. A commitment that our government stands strong on, saving huge amounts of money for students and for parents and whatnot. It is wonderful.

The other part, of course, is something new we have begun to implement, and we will be implementing. It is from loans to grants. We had a launch actually at a number of post-secondary institutions last week I believe. The reaction was overwhelming. I did not have the opportunity to attend one of the functions myself but I was following along on social media.

I know my colleague here from Corner Brook was there, as well as the Minister of Natural Resources, and others. The reaction was overwhelming. It is not often a government announces something that totally crosses over party lines. You park politics because it is good for everyone. It is good for society.

That was one of these decisions, because I noted a number of individuals who were tied to other parties that were big advocates as well of this. They said it is time for this, it is great. We are so happy the government is taking the initiative to introduce it.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that this is an education Budget for sure. Like I said, those two pieces alone speak to the type of focus we put on post-secondary education, and that is very well needed.

Now, obviously just as important as post-secondary, Mr. Speaker, is the beginning years, the early years. Of course, that sets the foundation and after that the rest is history. We invested large and we invested big time in that.

The true side of any Budget is when you see the Opposition parties, Mr. Speaker, falling over one another to take credit for the Budget that we presented. It was an amazing sight to see. I equate it to almost – I do not know if you have ever been sitting in the parking lot of a McDonald's and you threw a French fry outside the window. The gulls would just come, they would be fighting over that French fry. That is what it was like, Mr. Speaker.

The day of the Budget, the Opposition parties were falling over themselves to take credit. That, Mr. Speaker, speaks volumes. I think it is something we are all very proud of. I am so glad that everybody in this House was so appreciative of the great Budget that our Finance Minister tabled.

Early childhood education and full-day Kindergarten, as I had said, Mr. Speaker, is something that is very close to my heart. Not only as someone who is a trained educator, but someone who is – and probably more

importantly, obviously, as a parent of young children. I have two young children myself. One being three years old and the other about four months old. So both of my children will avail of full-day Kindergarten. I have not let my wife know, but I am going to try for some more kids as well. I am hoping that there is going to be quite a few kids going through.

You look around this House, and I am not the only one. I am one of the younger members of the House of Assembly, but I look across the way and I see the Member for St. John's North has a young son. The Member for Burgeo – La Poile has a young son as well. The Member for Mount Pearl North who has a farm load of kids. Actually, his wife I believe is pregnant with their third one now, and you are just getting started. It is great to see that growth in the House of Assembly.

So not only are we talking about our constituents, Mr. Speaker, we are talking about members who sit here in the House of Assembly. There are a number of others. The Minister of Finance herself has young children, and many people continue to have more children. This is something that affects all of us, not only me personally, but many of the folks who sit around the House of Assembly.

Like I said, my oldest child which is now three will be, I guess, in the first class, if this is going to be implemented in a couple of year. She will be in the first class of full-day Kindergarten. That is something that is so important, both on an educational level and academically speaking, which, of course, we have to keep first and foremost at the forefront. That is the most important part, but also there is a socio-economic fact to it as well. That is something I want to touch on in a little bit.

I would like to discuss first, I guess, our first phase; the early childhood learning and how that has paved the way to where we are today, where we are looking at implementing full-day Kindergarten. Because you cannot take one in isolation, they are very much connected. That is something our Minister of Education has been talking about for quite some time. It is

something we started a while back and it has been hugely successful. Again, as a young parent, I have seen these things first-hand. I will talk about that in a moment.

Early childhood learning invests in the long-term Early Childhood Learning Strategy. Learning from the Start it was entitled. It began in 2011, with a primary focus on zero to three initiatives.

Budget 2014 provided \$4.8 million over three years to continue and to enhance the commitment of zero to three initiatives; while initiatives for children aged four and six are under development right now. Of course, the full-day Kindergarten is part of that.

The first three years of Learning from the Start has been a tremendous success. For example, parent resource kits for children aged two, four, six, twelve and eighteen months are now being distributed Province-wide, and kits for children aged twenty-four and thirty-six months are being developed.

I want to refer to these parent resource kits because, again, Mr. Speaker, it is fun to stand in the House and talk about things we are not overly familiar with, but this is something I have seen first-hand. I remember when my wife came home from getting – I was not there at the time, but when my wife came home from getting –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. S. COLLINS: Well, I will tell you the reason why. I do not like going to the doctor when my children have to get needles because I hate needles myself. So I stayed home and my wife went to the clinic.

AN HON. MEMBER: Wimp.

MR. S. COLLINS: I am a wimp when it comes to that, definitely.

She came home and she had this kit with her, and it came in a nice bag. It was a parent resource kit. It had a bunch of different materials. It had books. It had instructional type

things with regard to activities that would be very beneficial to children that age. It came with some sort of – I will say a blanket/toy – a sensory item in there as well. I was thinking this is fantastic. This is something that she is going to get again when she goes in for her other checks. Obviously, the parent resource kits develop as your child develops, and the material that is in there is focused to that particular age group.

If I can talk about these parent resource kits for just one moment. I would like to remember back, the former Opposition critic for Education mocked these kits, I believe. He was talking about how foolish it is to provide toys and these types of things for kids. I cannot speak to that member's childhood but it must have been deprived. That is all I can attribute it to.

I want to be part of a government that looks – again, we just do not put these items in the parent resource kits haphazardly. These have been developed. I want to talk about that for a short time because it has been a great success. I and my wife have greatly appreciated it, as others in this House as well.

This partnership, as I said, has been developed between the division of Early Childhood Learning, the Department of Education, and child health clinics offered through the RHAs. Parent resource kits have been developed and include a variety of learning materials, Mr. Speaker, materials that have been selected or developed through an interdepartmental committee. Again, these are not put in there haphazardly. These are all being developed by people who know; people obviously who have quite a bit of experience in the field.

There is representation from departments on the ministerial council, as well as the regional health authorities. Again, all professionals. Resources provided in these kits are complimentary to those already provided by public health nurses and will support the existing work of public health nurses through the provision of take home resources, key messaging on child development topics, and early learning materials that will help extend learning at home.

By the time children reach Kindergarten age, Mr. Speaker, parents and caregivers will have been provided with a range of early learning resources and developmentally appropriate materials to extend their children's learning and development through everyday activities that they do with their children at key intervals during the early years. As I said, they focus on different intervals, whether it is two months, four or six.

Language and literacy development through play base learning is a priority focus in all parent resource kits – again, play base learning. We are not talking about teaching adults. We are talking about teaching very young infants. So obviously it has to be tailored towards them. These are very tailored, very specific, and developed by professionals.

For example, eighteen to twenty items, including children's books, play items, CDs with music – which I might add, actually a number of local artists are included on those CDs as well – and nursery rhymes along with age developmentally appropriate information, resources, tip sheets and activity guides will be provided focusing on all areas of the child's development.

I speak for myself, and I am sure others as well, when you become a parent for the first time everyone does not know how to be a parent the first day, as soon as you have that child home. So it is great to be able to have these resources that have been provided by people who know. It is able to give you some kind of an instructional, so you can help your child's development. I think as parents we are all very hopeful that we can play a part in our child's development.

Distribution of resource kits began March, 2012, in twenty pilot sites throughout the Province. Resource kits are now available in all child health clinics located throughout the Province.

Mr. Speaker, if I can talk with regard to the time of implementation because that is something else we have heard: Why can we not do it tomorrow? I have researched quite a bit on this; I have looked at different jurisdictions in Canada. I know in Ontario I am pretty sure it

took four years for implementation from the time they announced it to the time they implemented it.

It is a huge piece of work and obviously any time that you are dealing with a child's education, you want to make sure it is done right. You do not want to just throw something out and then try to fix the bugs after the fact. When this full-day Kindergarten is implemented, it is going to be implemented right and we are going to do exactly what needs to be done. It is going to be through hard work and it is going to be done through consultation.

Why 2016 and why not this coming September? First, as I have stated, we wanted phase one of our Early Childhood Learning Strategy, Learning from the Start, to begin at the beginning with a primary focus on birth to age three – the critical years of brain development. I have heard the minister himself, who is a former educator, speak to the importance of zero to three. We needed to have that in place. We need to have that program implemented and working, which it is with great success. We need to do that before we could move on to begin to implement full-day Kindergarten.

Secondly, of course, Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that we have been challenged with a major population shift in recent years. In some areas of the Province, particularly just outside St. John's, it has been a challenge for government and the construction industry to build the new schools and extensions fast enough to accommodate current enrolments, let alone full-day Kindergarten programming.

We are all very familiar – I know the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair is very familiar with the investment we have made in education with schools going up everywhere it seems. Not only are we building new schools, we are renovating existing ones – a huge amount of money. It is important we recognize that there are limitations, and there are challenges with regard to construction.

With the first three-year phase of Learning from the Start up and running, we knew we wanted to

make a universal full-day Kindergarten program part of the second three-year phase. There is a lot of work to do to determine a school by school plan, work that requires significant investments in many areas. It is something that we cannot just do overnight. It is a big piece of work, but it is something that we are going to move towards and with implementation in 2016.

That begins with infrastructure as I had said. We are already in the process of building new schools and/or extensions in St. John's, Paradise, CBS, Portugal Cove-St. Phillips, Torbay, and Gander, which will help alleviate enrolment pressures in these communities. It is an unprecedented investment in schools and infrastructure, and something so very important. We will now embark on an intensive process to build, extend, redevelop, and renovate existing school infrastructure, where necessary, to accommodate full-day Kindergarten programming in schools which do not currently have the appropriate space.

Let us talk about costs in my last couple of moments of my first – I will get another opportunity, but let us talk about costs. At a cost of \$30.6 million – almost \$31 million, funding is allocated for infrastructure which are extensions, redevelopments, renovations, modular classrooms, where necessary, as well as furnishing and other required teaching and learning resources. Those resources include books, CDs, and all those types of things.

This is how it breaks down: \$1.5 million in 2014-2015 for primary instruction planning, the very early stages; next we have \$12.6 million in 2015-2016 for modulars and infrastructure upgrades; then \$16.5 million in 2016-2017 – which is the first year of implementation – and that is for modulars, infrastructure upgrades, furniture and equipment, and something else that is very important, teacher allocations – about 140 units. With those teacher allocations, of course, comes student assistant support – that is all included in that as well. So that is a huge piece as well.

The cost after is going to be expected to be about \$13 million annually. So there is a huge

cost on it, but actually I do have in my notes with regard to return on investment, and it is something I think we can point to. We are spending a lot of money, it is very important, it is very necessary money to be spent, but on the back end we have a return on investment, which is oh so crucial as well.

Mr. Speaker, we know we have about seventy to seventy-five public schools which offer Kindergarten in the Province that will require some minor renovations or significant infrastructure improvements or additions. This first year will be about firming up plans for individual schools, especially those in areas where student enrolment has been unpredictable. As we have learned, Kindergarten enrolment can be a moving target. Sometimes over a summer holiday you can have ten kids enrolled; other places, you can have fifteen come out of the system that you expected would be there. So it is a moving target all the time. It is not as easy as we would hope it would be.

Something I want to touch on in the last moments of my first time speaking here, something that was raised by the critic as well, is with regard to cap spaces. Something that we are all very proud of in this House is the caps, the ratios, that we have in this Province, which are the best in the country. The best in the entire country, which is something we should be very proud of. Those same caps of twenty students-one teacher are going to be extended to the full-day Kindergarten program. So that is very important, very important.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. COLLINS: Again, if we are going to do a program we have to do it right. We are not doing this just overnight. We are not going to put something in that we have to fix the bugs then after. The same process that we use from Grade 1 to Grade 9, the cap, that is the same thing that is going to be used for the Kindergarten students as well. So that is something very important. It is nothing that we have to worry about at this point. It is something that will be done, and we have had the minister speak to that.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I only have a couple of moments left; I will take my seat. I do look forward to having another opportunity to get up and talking about not only my own personal experience with this and my hopes and whatnot, but also to hear what the Opposition has to say as well.

Thank you so much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased this afternoon to be able to stand and speak to the full-day Kindergarten. I had to smile at the resolution, Mr. Speaker, I could not help it: "BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House supports the Government's decision to introduce full day Kindergarten."

Mr. Speaker, who in this House is not going to support the full-day Kindergarten, when the Opposition members on this side have been lobbying and advocating for full-day Kindergarten for some time? I find the timing of it has lined up really, really nicely. It was back on February 13 that our Liberal candidate, who is running today in Virginia Waters, first raised full-day Kindergarten at a board of trade luncheon. In that luncheon, Cathy Bennett encouraged all parents everywhere to advocate for full-day Kindergarten. I look forward to what that individual can do once she is here in the House of Assembly, given what she is already doing right now and she is not even here yet.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, Nelson Mandela once said – and we all know Nelson Mandela, that famous South African revolutionary. He taught us much. There are many, many quotes and things we can say about Nelson Mandela, but one of my favourite quotes by Nelson Mandela is, "Education is the most

powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

Mr. Speaker, as a career and employment counsellor for two-and-a-half decades, I have spent most of my adult life working in an area helping unemployed people become employed, channeling many through the channels and helping guide them to get a better education. In my community, for fourteen years I served as a community representative on our school council. Now, as a mom who has a daughter enrolling in university, education is very important to me on a personal level.

The current minister will know that I, along with my community and everybody in that community, lobbied very, very hard for a new school in our community. The school the children were learning in, in that coastal community, Mr. Speaker, was full of mould. It was not an environment that was conducive to learning. We were writing letters for fourteen years. The previous minister did not even answer the letter. We got real serious about it. No, we are not getting a new school, but we are getting new classrooms. I look forward to the day, and I hope they are going to be able to accommodate the full-day Kindergarten.

It was April 26, 2013 when I met with the Minister of Education face to face and I said to him at that time, I believe the Minister of Education has the most important job in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, no matter who sits in that seat. Mr. Speaker, where would we be in oil and gas? Where would we be in health care, when you look at the Health Sciences, without education? It is extremely important that we give our children that important first start.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, we are just catching up with the rest of Canada. I believe it is estimated that about 80 per cent of Kindergartens in our country are already into full-day Kindergarten – about 80 per cent – so these people are seeing the benefits they have experienced from full-day Kindergarten.

Mr. Speaker, everybody was pleased when government announced in Budget 2014 that they intend to introduce full-day Kindergarten because it is something that many of us have been after them to implement for quite some time.

On a little look in Hansard, Mr. Speaker, I saw that our Leader, Mr. Ball, on March 13 he was asking the minister: When are you going to implement full-day Kindergarten? That is just one year ago, and the minister said: I am not going to commit today. I am really happy that he has had a change of heart because a lot of things have been changing on the other side really fast with the beep, beep, beep, the backup and the flip-flop –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MS DEMPSTER: No, you did not change my school; that is good, because you clearly understood that more than half of the kids in the school were sick from sitting and learning in a mouldy environment. You give credit where credit is due. I was very pleased that Charlottetown got the outcome that they had hoped, and I hope that the minister will sit with the Member for Mount Pearl and come to some resolution because I know they have a lot of issues certainly right now that is concerning in their school.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at a background into early childhood education we see that universal early learning proponents say that the early learning can close the achievement gap between children from immigrant and low-income families and their more advantaged peers, providing payoffs to society many years down the road.

Just imagine, it is a win-win; low-income families, immigrants – it is not just those sometimes we refer to as born with a silver spoon in their mouth and they get the best of everything and they get the private schools. We see that universal early learning can close that achievement gap between the low incomes, between the immigrants.

Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, we look at something and we might think that we cannot afford to implement but when you see the payoffs, the research, the work that have already been done showing the benefits of full-day Kindergarten, I say, Mr. Speaker, that we cannot not afford to implement.

Mr. Speaker, I looked into some work that Dr. David Philpott, a well-known professor at MUN, did. He talked about Newfoundland and Labrador's model of early childhood education being consistently rated as the poorest in the country, and that it had ranked last among the ten provinces in early childhood education. That, Mr. Speaker, is just a snapshot of provincial early learning services here in our Province. I am personally really delighted to see that we are now going to invest in full-day Kindergarten.

We know that some places around the Province already are into full-day Kindergarten. My colleague here for Torngat, I know there are a number of communities on the North Coast that they are into their second year at least, and it is getting rave reviews, the full-day Kindergarten, from what I understand.

So I think it is wonderful, Mr. Speaker, that after being pressured for years – pressured for years – that government came forth with a 2016 initiative in their election promises Budget. So right now, Mr. Speaker, I guess it is recommendation by them because the electorate of Newfoundland and Labrador is going to decide before 2015 who the government of the day is. So while we see that this is a \$30.6 million initiative over three years, we know that only \$1.5 million of this Budget have been allocated toward the planning of full-day Kindergarten. We are happy with the recommendation and who knows, maybe we will be sitting on that side and we will be the people who will get to carry out this full-day Kindergarten.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of things; the cap size of twenty is very, very important. I sat in Estimates with my colleague the other day and he raised this issue. It is very important that the

cap size of twenty remain in place. We hope that does not mean twenty students to a teacher. We hope it does not mean forty little Kindergartens in a class and two teachers and just a divider between.

Mr. Speaker, anybody with children under four years old will benefit from this. There are many gone before who did not have the educational enhancement, but we are very pleased to see it now coming on stream.

When we look at the 140 teachers that will be needed, Mr. Speaker, that speaks volumes to enhancing the economy. We have been struggling. I have been doing some research on the Population Growth Strategy and the Board of Trade has been speaking out; I read about it a number of times in the paper. If we want to grow our economy and we want to help pay down the debt, we need more people working in our Province. We need more people paying taxes. When we see that 140 teachers will be needed, this is another positive thing with the implementation of full-day Kindergarten.

We do see that government says they will need to renovate seventy-five schools. Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that in the spirit of openness and transparency, government will share with us the list of the schools that need to be renovated and the extent of the work that needs to be done.

Mr. Speaker, I want to digress for a moment and say on a side note, that it is really concerning that new schools are going up and classroom size is not big enough. If we are talking about money and what we can afford and about spending wisely, we have to try to nip this problem. I know in Port Hope Simpson, a beautiful school, but every time I go into the school they say the classrooms are not big enough. Clearly there is a problem here.

Full-day Kindergarten research: From the research I have done, it shows that it is a game changer for children. We were talking about yesterday how bright our children are and talking about youth sitting on municipal councils now. Just imagine where we are going to be. It is really an exciting time, I think. I just wonder

why we waited so long before the announcement and why it is still a couple of years off. As I said earlier sometimes it is not about can you afford; it is about can you afford not to wait.

I want to quote an economist James Heckman who suggested that early intervention can improve school readiness for disadvantaged children – early intervention school readiness for disadvantaged, so we have the immigrant, the low income, we have the disadvantaged; we have many from all walks of life. Why would anyone disagree?

Yet, the Member for Terra Nova – I saw a tweet that he sent out last night saying he was getting ready for the PMR today and he hoped that he would have the support of the House. That is just foolishness, Mr. Speaker, for someone to get on like that. Why would we not support this wonderful initiative that we have been lobbying for? We are actually applauding this full-day Kindergarten. We are pleased that the government has finally acted on this important initiative.

I looked into some of the reaction from some of the prominent groups, Mr. Speaker, and their reaction has been very, very strong. I already quoted the MUN professor connected with the Jimmy Pratt Foundation who said it is a huge sigh of relief; John Dinn who said that has been our message since I have taken office. Everything I have looked at has supported the full-day Kindergarten initiative.

Mr. Speaker, I want to mention back in 2012 the Liberals passed a resolution at its 2012 AGM on full-day Kindergarten. It is certainly something that has been on our radar for some time. Numerous times members on this side and my colleague who will be speaking shortly to the motion have been lobbying for full-day Kindergarten, have done the research, and have seen the benefits.

Mr. Speaker, we know the cost. We have 50,000 children in the Province under the age of ten and only 8,000 regulated child care spaces. Then we wonder why all our young people are choosing to go west and have their families, Mr.

Speaker. Now with full-day Kindergarten, that is another plus that is going to help with that situation. The burden will be less. Many times when you have had one of the parents who are very skilled and knowledgeable staying home to care for the child, now the child will be in full-day Kindergarten and you will have a second person in that home who will be able to go out and work and pay taxes and contribute and help to continue to grow the economy.

Mr. Speaker, before I sit down, I want to mention again the candidate in Virginia Waters. It was the minister who said he was not persuaded by her arguments when she talked about the economic benefits, but I am really happy that there has been a change of heart in the Budget with the big heart – I am glad there has been a change of heart. I really look forward and I think it is an exciting time for full-day Kindergarten to be implemented.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Justice.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am indeed very pleased and honoured to have a chance to speak to this motion here in the House of Assembly today as well. As many of our colleagues have said already, it is a very important motion, and one that deserves an opportunity to be debated here and deserves an opportunity for people to share their views on how they feel about full-day Kindergarten.

As a small bit of history, I have always been an advocate for extending learning experiences for all of us, whether it is extending from Grade 1 back to birth, between birth and the age of five, or whether it is to extend lifelong learning opportunities, as I have had an opportunity to be a part of both in my previous life and in my political life.

As a number of members have referenced, pulling in their past experience, I have had more than two decades as well connected with education in this Province. My very first job was teaching Kindergarten, so I understand exactly what we are talking about when we talk about children in Kindergarten. I held a variety of jobs in the education system, Mr. Speaker, starting out, as I said, on the South Coast of Newfoundland where teaching Kindergarten was part of my responsibility. I worked through a number of positions, including school administrative positions up to my last job, before getting elected in politics, which was the Chief Executive Officer of Eastern School District.

I am very proud of a number of things that we did during my tenure in the public system, including making attempts wherever we could to open up schools, particularly in communities where the schools were considered to be community schools, where they were the heart of the community. Where they often served not only as educational institutions, but they served as community centres, community rec centres and local hockey leagues, and darts, and all kinds of activities occurred.

One of the things that I pushed hard for in my career while I was in education – when I was in, I should say, in a position to influence some of these decisions – was to open up schools to provide earlier learning opportunities before students entered school.

I remember fondly over the years having to deal with Family Resource Centres and Brighter Futures, in particular. These were organizations that worked with families and worked with children prior to them becoming full-time attendance at school. I worked with them to bring them into a learning environment, and provide opportunities for them to gain further development and further exposure, in particular, to the formalized school setting, to the classroom setting, formalized exposure to the rules and regulations and the structures of a learning environment, and to help further assist in the adjustment from simply being a little toddler and a two or a three year old at home, with all the freedoms and flexibilities that go

with that – and as we recognize, there is tremendous learning that goes with that. There is an adjustment period, Mr. Speaker, that goes with moving students from that kind of an environment into a school environment where it is far more structured and far more detailed.

I had an opportunity during my career to play a role in opening up the schools, particularly with the Eastern School District. I started on the Burin Peninsula with the Burin Peninsula School Board. When I finished my teaching career with the Eastern District, we would have pretty much taken all schools east of Port Blandford, I think was the actual artificial cut-off at that point in time – so all schools east of that. We experienced, in my opinion, some great successes there, and we really opened the doors to provide opportunities in communities that really had not existed before.

Since my time in political life, I have had, of course, like many members in this House, an opportunity to try and influence policy and to advocate for policy and advocate for change. I was very lucky in some respects – some would say, perhaps unlucky, but I consider it very lucky that the first Cabinet position I ever held was the Minister of Education. As I said, it was a great opportunity because it put me in a field that I had spent my entire professional career being associated with and being exposed to.

I have to say that I have smiled lots over the last year, in particular, but since the Budget in particular I have smiled lots as I listened to some of the commentary, particularly on Twitter while we were sitting here doing the Budget, some of the commentary that was happening just outside this door here in the foyer of Confederation Building; and I smiled as I listened to my colleague a few moments who, like a lot of people would, I am sure, was offering up some credit because the Virginia Waters Liberal candidate first started talking about this way back in February 2013. I understand that.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. KING: I am sorry. You asked what the name was. It is the person Danny Breen is going to beat tonight. Sorry, I forgot to mention that.

She also mentioned that even the Leader of the Opposition – and I have heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about this on many occasions. I have, indeed, and I have heard the member who I think is going to follow me talk about it lots. The Leader of the Opposition actually started talking about this way back in March 2013. We have had a lot of advocates.

I listened to the Leader of the NDP, who has referenced on any number of occasions that it has been part of their policy platform for quite some time. I am not sure how far back, but perhaps the Member for St. John's North might enlighten us a little bit on that.

I smile, Mr. Speaker. The reason I smile is because I was the Minister of Education who had the good pleasure to announce on March 29 – and I am even prepared to table this if they would like. On March 29, 2010, I was the Minister of Education who announced that this government is moving forward with full-day Kindergarten. That is 2010.

For those who are listening at home and want to do the math, that would be four years ago that this government went on record, and I can speak to it because I was the minister. I will give you a timeline, Mr. Speaker, to help people understand I am not just giving rhetoric that cannot be substantiated with any particular dates or any particular information. I can give you some dates.

On March 29, I, as the Minister of Education, announced that this government was adopting a policy, and the policy was called Learning from the Start. I have it here for viewers at home. Here it is. The policy had three phases to it: there was birth to three years of age; there was a program for four year olds; and then there was full-day Kindergarten. That was on March 29, 2010.

When I introduced that on behalf of my colleagues on this side of this on March 29,

2010, we also said to the public, though, that we want to hear what you have to say. Then we set out on consultations, and there are a whole pile of press releases. I will table these as well if people are very eager to see them, but there are a whole pile of them here.

We went across Newfoundland and Labrador. We went into Grand Falls-Windsor, Gander, Stephenville, Port aux Basques, Clarenville, St. Lawrence, Corner Brook - and Stephenville was very interesting. It was in Stephenville that a person by the name of Bernice Hackett, who was an NDP candidate, stood up in one consultation and strongly opposed any move toward full-day Kindergarten in this Province.

AN HON. MEMBER: What?

MR. KING: An NDP candidate, yes. I just thought I would add that in there, Mr. Speaker, but I do not want to get sidetracked. Members opposite tend to want to sidetrack us when we are laying out facts that tend to refute and tend to take away from any credit that they are all trying to claim.

By the way, I do acknowledge and thank them for saluting us, because the Budget contains many good things, Kindergarten is one of them. As the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair said, who would not support this? I look forward to the day that we vote on the Budget which would demonstrate whether you support full-day Kindergarten or not, I say to the member.

We moved on with consultations. We went all across Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. St. Anthony, Port Hope Simpson, Labrador City, Old Perlican, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Hopedale, Carbonear, even Mount Pearl, Mr. Speaker. We went all over Newfoundland and Labrador and we did consultations. We concluded those on October 12, 2010.

Subsequence to that, on April 19, during the Budget process, Mr. Speaker, I was still the Minister of Education, and I had the opportunity again to announce formally that we were

adopting full-day Kindergarten as a policy statement for this government. I also announced in that Budget an amount of money to move that initiative forward. That document was firmed up, with the support of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, as I said a few moments ago for those at home, was called Learning from the Start. Here it is, if anybody wants to see it. It outlines three components.

The first component was focused on children from birth to three. The focus was to provide parental support. It was recognized very clearly in the consultations, in what we heard from parents and members of the public, that there were a lot of parents struggling out there in trying to understand what they could do with their children from the time they were born until they got to about three years of age; trying to understand what they could do, what kinds of activities they could engage in, whether they should be reading to their children, how much they should be reading to their children, what kinds of material they should be reading to their children, all sorts of things.

So, from birth to three we set out as component one. We developed resource kits, an information and awareness campaign. We engaged the public health nurses and other health officials across the Province to become engaged with parents and with families in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The second component we committed to was what we call enhanced learning opportunities for four-year-olds. That included changing and refining an initiative that our government also implemented several years ago called KinderStart. I had the pleasure of being a part of that when I was still in the K-12 system.

Under this new framework we enhanced KinderStart and provided more opportunities for children to come into school. For the benefit of those paying attention through the television to this debate, KinderStart was the first real formalized opportunity for students to come into the classroom setting and to work with the Kindergarten teacher to give them an opportunity to become acquainted with the

school setting, to become acquainted with the rules and the expectations.

For any of us who had children – and perhaps most in the House, I am not sure if everyone has, but for any of us or have been around children, we all understand that children from a very young age as they start to grow older, it is important to help teach them about rules and expectations. KinderStart provided a wonderful opportunity for us to formalize it and to provide more opportunity for students to come into the school setting and to get experience, to get access to these kinds of experience that we believed and members of the public believed, based on the consultation and feedback we received, that would significantly and further enhance students opportunities to succeed in school.

The third component, Mr. Speaker, which I am so proud that my colleague from the Burin Peninsula, the Member for Burin – Placentia West, has also himself been a lifelong educator, a part of politics and also, for the record, worked with me when we were with the old Burin Peninsula school board. One of the focuses of his assignment at that time was around literacy and early learning. He had tremendous experience at that.

For me it is a real pleasure because the minister and I worked closely together, as all of our colleagues here know. It was a pleasure that I had the opportunity to announce the document as the Minister of Education and to announce our government's commitment to full-day Kindergarten back, as I said a few moments ago – I will double check that – on March 29, 2010. Then to see that my colleague for Burin – Placentia West had the great opportunity in this year's Budget to announce that we have secured funding to move forward with full implementation of that third piece or third prong of the policy announcement that our government has been following. It was a great day.

There is a significant investment put on the table here for this Budget. It is disappointing when the member opposite refers to this as some kind of an election Budget. Other than the fact that

we have known for three-and-a-half years there is an election next year, money that is put in the Budget is not an empty promise, it is budgeted.

Members opposite have an opportunity to talk to us in Estimates, to talk to us in the House of Assembly in Question Period any time they want. The fact of the matter is once it goes into the Budget it is a commitment to the people of the Province. We are moving forward with that. We are moving forward with it because we are committed to families in Newfoundland and Labrador, we are committed to children in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, as we have said on any number of occasions, that our government, from 2003, the day we got elected, we have always been focused on the realization that the better educated a population we have in Newfoundland and Labrador, the more successful the population will be and the greater the opportunity for people in this Province to take advantage of all of the opportunities that exist here. I am not going to deviate on that or digress, because we all know the number of jobs that are coming up.

We all know the state of the economy. We all know the opportunities that exist for the future, but those opportunities only exist if we ensure that we have a population who has the education, the training, and the background necessary to help them grab a hold of those opportunities, whichever ones they choose. We have been saying this, as I said, since 2010. In the document we announced as our policy, we believe that the full-day Kindergarten is the final prong of our early learning approach to supporting children before they become regular attendants at the regular K-12 setting.

This is a great motion. I thank my colleague from Terra Nova for bringing this motion forward, who also has a young family. I know it means a lot to him personally to be able to do that, and I congratulate him for it.

This is a great opportunity to have the debate, and I am pleased to be a part of it. As I said before, I just wanted to make sure we set the

record straight. I am not looking for, by the way, any kudos for me personally, but I think it is important for people to recognize that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador that was elected in 2003, is the government that introduced that policy. It was not somebody from Virginia Waters or some other district a year ago.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

I first have to say that I am absolutely delighted, as someone who has been an advocate for public education in this Province for over twenty years now, I am delighted to speak to this motion and to support this initiative.

It is really interesting that the minister talks about credit and all of that, because there is certainly lots of that going around. There is a saying: many hands make quick work. I am not sure this is quick work, but there have been many hands working at this for a long time.

We can go back as far as 1968, the Royal Commission on Education and Youth led by Dr. Phil Warren. One of the major recommendations of the Royal Commission on Education and Youth was the implementation of Kindergarten. Unfortunately, it was really silent on whether it be a half or a full day, and we ended up with a half day, but there has been debate under PC governments and under Liberal governments, education for self-reliance. All sorts of documents have been produced, task forces on education and youth. All sorts of documents have been produced talking about the state of the education system and the direction we need to go in.

I want to put that out there because there has been a lot of work done in this area. Members

ought not to forget, but the last time we had a Liberal government in Newfoundland and Labrador there were a series of pilots for full-day Kindergarten that were carried out. I have been in touch with a number of those people and interviewed some of the teachers who were involved in that.

Something happened in 1992 that really threw a monkey wrench into that. Of course, anybody who is from a rural community and has been involved in the fishery knows that the cod moratorium caused some serious problems in the Province and threw off a lot of the planning that was going on toward full-day Kindergarten. We have had full-day Kindergarten in other quarters.

In Churchill Falls, there is full-day Kindergarten program that has been run by the company there for years. Nalcor is the operator of it now. École des Grands-Vents has a full-day Kindergarten here in the Francophone school in the City of St. John's. Whitbourne Elementary, there is a full-day Kindergarten program.

This all did not start in 2010. I am not here to claim any credit myself. There are lots of people – I am glad my colleague from Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair pointed out Dr. Philpott. Before I was elected and before I took my leave from Memorial University of Newfoundland, my office, the wall right next to me, behind that wall was Dr. David Philpott. We talked for years about the need for full-day Kindergarten and how that was going to happen. He has been involved with Kathy LeGrow, with the Jimmy Pratt Foundation. They have been advocating this for a long time.

So there are certainly lots of people who can claim some credit for what has gone on. I have always said, since the Budget at least, that one of the turning points was when Cathy Bennett, a successful businessperson – who the Member for Grand Bank, the Minister of Justice, kindly pointed out is seeking the seat in Virginia Waters for the Liberal Party – that the turning point was when she rallied the St. John's business community behind the idea just about a year ago.

I want to commend the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Humber Valley, who, in addition to, I guess, myself and the Member for St. Barbe, had been asking questions of government since the 2011 election here in the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: I have been asking the Minister of Education, I have been asking the Premier questions here in Question Period about when we are going to have a full-day Kindergarten program. I would like to commend the Leader of the Official Opposition for his leadership in that area and my colleague, the Member for St. Barbe, as well, for being Johnny-on-the-spot and asking questions about this.

Of course, this is a promise for 2016. As somebody said, this is just a promise. A lot has to be done. There is only \$1.5 million that is going to be spent out of that \$30 million and change figure that gets tossed around over the next year. There is certainly a lot that will need to be done after that.

The Member for Terra Nova is saying he hopes people will support it. Of course we are going to support it. A similar question could be: Do we love our children? Do we love our kids? Of course we love our kids. You could say: Do we want our children to have the best education possible? I think it is the same thing. Of course we do. You could say: Do we want our students to catch up with the rest of Canada and have an education system that is just as good as the education system they have in Ontario, British Columbia, or other provinces in Canada?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: Of course we do, Mr. Speaker – of course we do.

There is a certain amount of irony in this, too, here, Mr. Speaker, and I have to point this out. I am glad I have the Minister of Justice on my side. He is clearly on my side. I am glad I have the Member for Terra Nova on my side. He is clearly on my side. Some of the other members

over there, I am not so sure they support a full-day Kindergarten program, and I will give you a couple of examples.

Back on October 6 of last year, Mr. Speaker, not very long ago – just October of last year – the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Member for Mount Pearl North, tweeted through social media and more or less gave an endorsement to a column that was written called “Full-day Kindergarten is no magic bullet,” which was published in *The Globe and Mail* last October. This was published by a person who everybody will know because she is no friend to Newfoundland and Labrador, one Margaret Wenthe. There is no end of ink that has been written in *The Globe and Mail* that has been negative and nasty about Newfoundland and Labrador by that columnist.

In this column, which was endorsed or at least circulated by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, she talks about how the money could be used in a better way than wasting money on full-day Kindergarten in the Province of Ontario. That is what the implication is. She questions the benefits of full-day Kindergarten.

It is interesting because there was a letter in *The Globe and Mail* in the past couple of weeks and the person said, “Cherry-picking to create a negative impression regarding positive research results is not helpful to the public discourse about something as important as early childhood education.” That is what Margaret Wenthe does in the column that was circulated last October by the Member for Mount Pearl North, the Minister of Municipal Affairs. She cherry-picks research to somehow malign full-day Kindergarten as something that is positive.

Another instance where a member opposite was not exactly rallying around full-day Kindergarten and the idea of implementing that –

MR. KENT: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs on a point of order.

MR. KENT: Quickly, Mr. Speaker, reading of an article is not an endorsement. The member opposite knows full well. I would elaborate but I do not want to interrupt the member’s time.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

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

MR. KIRBY: There was no retweet either, Mr. Speaker. The person who went and got this column just tweeted it themselves. It originated with the minister, I say, it was not retweeted, just to correct that.

Going back to last February, when the former President of the St. John’s Board of Trade, Cathy Bennett, went and rallied the St. John’s business community behind the idea of full-day Kindergarten, she made a number of arguments, some of them I have made before. She focused on the economics of it and so on.

There was an article that appeared on the CBC, it was on the news. I have to go back to it because I thought it was interesting in light of all of the accolades – and I know the Member for Grand Bank, the Minister of Justice, was talking about the Minister of Education and how it is so great that he is leading it now. I guess he is behind it now because last February – so just over a year ago, that is not a long time in politics – the Minister of Education was, according to the CBC, cool to the idea.

AN HON. MEMBER: Who?

MR. KIRBY: The Minister of Education was cool to the idea of full-day Kindergarten. He said he was not persuaded by the argument made by Cathy Bennett when she rallied the St. John’s business community behind the idea of full-day Kindergarten last February.

He was cool to the idea and he was not persuaded by the arguments made by Ms Cathy

Bennett, no, not at all. He said that Ms Bennett's "...assertion that full-day Kindergarten can lure young families to the Province or prevent them from moving away is flawed." The Minister of Education a year ago said that was flawed when Ms Bennett made that argument.

I think I heard the Minister of Finance say something completely contradictory to that here in the House of Assembly since we came back. In fact, I think the Minister of Finance said something that completely contradicted what the minister said just over a year ago. To continue, he said, "Nowhere along the way can I ever think that we'll base initiatives that we're going to put on education as being economic."

I do not really understand what the minister is trying to say there, a rough idea. He says, "If we're going to implement some system or programs within the school system, it's got to be based on research." Of course it has to be based on research, Mr. Speaker. One of the problems that we have in education in Newfoundland and Labrador is that all the research on education is often rejected by this government. It is lampooned by this government, it is made fun of, and it is contradicted, especially if it originates outside of here.

I wanted to point at that because I am glad the Minister of Justice is squarely standing shoulder to shoulder with us over here on full-day Kindergarten and we have the Member for Terra Nova on the other shoulder. Beyond that, I think all the other members will find out today because the Minister of Education has been cool to the idea in the past, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs has been circulating materials, I say, full arguments, against full-day Kindergarten, so we will see how everybody stands at the end of the day.

Everybody over there knows where I stand. My constituents know where I stand on this issue. The people who watch the proceedings in the House of Assembly regularly, who have been watching it since I came in here in 2011 know where I stand. I have been very clear about

where I stand on this issue. There is no ambiguity involved at all.

I also was surprised to see the Minister of Justice waving around his child care strategy document because just before the last election, just conveniently before the last election in September 2011, the government circulated this document called a Literature Review around Developing a Provincial Early Childhood Learning Strategy. I am really surprised that the Minister of Education could be cool to the idea and the Minister of Municipal Affairs circulating Marg Wente's cherry-picking column about it because there is a section starting on page 37 in here that basically covers all of the benefits of full-day Kindergarten. There is one sentence in here. I do not know who wrote this document, but I have to hand it to them, they are a very good writer and in one sentence – and you do not have to read any fine print either – it encapsulates what it is about full-day Kindergarten that makes it so attractive and such a great thing for our kids.

About the research on full-day Kindergarten they say, "The overall findings have been strongly supportive of full-day Kindergarten in particular as it benefits children with respect to: their social-emotional development; academic development, in particular their early language and literacy development; transition to grade 1; narrowing the gap of achievement for children from families with lower incomes; and better integration of Kindergarten students into the school community".

More or less in one sentence, the author of this document is able to sum up all of the benefits, thereabouts, for full-day Kindergarten. If members of the opposite side read their own document I cannot see how they would argue against it, how they would be cool to it, and how they would be circulating a mainland newspaper's version of an alternate universe when it comes to full-day Kindergarten.

I also wanted to correct one thing, because I did listen intently when the members were speaking on the other side. I know the Member for Terra Nova said something to the effect of, well, why

have they delayed – why has this government been in power for over a decade now and this is the first we are hearing this election promise for 2016 around full-day Kindergarten? He says: The reason why, is that have been working on their zero-to-three policy. He says: Now the zero-to-three policy is in place, and it is working. I have to question that. I have to question whether that is working or not. Because we have seen one document after another that puts us, if not last, near last in all of the indicators when it comes to early learning and care in this country, in Canada, showing other provinces way, way, way further ahead than us, well more advanced than us in the area of early learning and care.

I am a bit concerned to hear the Member for Terra Nova saying: Well, that is all done and it is working. It is not done and it is not working. There are significant problems that exist. Because of the problems that we have in the system now, it is going to make it a little more difficult even to implement this program of full-day Kindergarten. Just one example, very quickly, is the lack of integration between early childhood education curriculum and what will be a full-day Kindergarten curriculum.

So, those are the types of problems we have.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: I could go on for a lot longer, but I will sit down, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I have to say, and I said on several occasions about the special moments in the House of Assembly. I have been in this House of Assembly since 2003. There are some special moments. With our announcement of full-day Kindergarten, it is one

of the days that I feel there is a special moment in the House for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Member for St. John's North spoke about where he stands. I was committed that I was not going to say anything about it, but I cannot resist this one. We are not quite sure, Mr. Speaker, where he stands, sometimes. He stands in a different spot now than he did a year ago, but I will leave that where it is.

The Member for Grand Bank mentioned my past history. For twenty-seven years, Mr. Speaker, I was in education and my last role before I became into government, I was a program specialist responsible for language arts. I recognized then – the research indicated then and the research now continues to indicate the best place that you can invest for children is in those early years.

Mr. Speaker, I was interested in a comment that was made in the paper recently about this year's Budget. I think it speaks to the Finance Minister; I think they referred to it as a maternal budget. If I was sitting in her chair and being a young parent, I would take that as a compliment. It is what we have said time and time again, and my staff will recognize this when I say it is about the children. This is all about the children. It is about investing in those children at the earliest of years, and we have done a tremendous job of that. I am so, so proud of it.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a couple of comments before I get in to speak about the area of full-day Kindergarten. I was in an area of the Province probably about six or seven months ago and a retired teacher – I guess the teacher had frequented the schools and her comment to me was: I cannot believe how good it is in education now. What she spoke about was our investments in education.

There is no way in the world the Member for St. John's North, or any of the other Liberal caucus or any of the NDP caucus can dampen my spirits with this announcement. They cannot dampen my spirits with this announcement and they cannot dampen my spirits when it comes to our

investment in education from that zero on up to six that we have developed in the framework.

Before I get into that, I just want to take a look at this. Look at two investments that we have made in education. These investments came as a result of parents and school councils making representation to us and they were specific to the elimination of school fees and the introduction of no charge for textbooks. I want to just highlight this. In 2006, we announced we were no longer going to charge standard fees for the students in our Province and we have invested \$56 million in that. Mr. Speaker, let me just reference this. I just had it here in my hand. Just think of it, in 2006 we announced no further fees. In 2007, we said we were going to eliminate textbook charges and cost to parents. So since then, since 2007, we have invested \$21 million for that.

Now, to make this point, here is what I want. I certainly hope the people of the Province and the people in this House of Assembly remember the days when we charged textbook costs and we charged fees. The impact of \$21 million may not cut it, but listen to this: the Level III math textbook now costs \$75.55. The Level I English language arts book costs \$62.50. I am assuming the Level III language arts book would cost much the same thing.

Just think of a parent having to prepare for September, having to purchase one of those language arts books and one of those math resources books. Mr. Speaker, that is \$130 or \$140 just for two books. Now they have to purchase textbooks for every course. So for one child that could be \$500 or \$600 for textbooks. Put on top of the fees and we could have, getting a student ready for school, in the area of \$700 or \$800. Just imagine a parent with three children. The \$21 may not set the tone, but I can tell you when you labour that cost onto a parent, then it certainly makes a difference.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say, in our debates around the Cabinet table and our discussions in the caucus room, the support we have gotten around this early initiative has been tremendous. We can all stand up here, the politicising that we

are doing and whatnot, but I am telling you the folks on this side, and I think the folks on the other side, wanted full-day Kindergarten, but full-day Kindergarten as a stand-alone, I do not think, was the answer.

I will credit Minister King who mentioned that in March 2010, the document was drawn up. I will tell you another thing, and I know some of these folks are watching and I want to recognize their efforts, because these people are not the ones with the political interests. These are the ones who work at and staff the Department of Education who have researched and know the merits of having this early initiative.

I can remember one member opposite one year when I did an interview about the early childhood kits. He poked a little bit of fun at me one day. That is part of it and I accept that as it is, but to the people who developed these kits, they are very serious about it. Included in those kits are activities that parents and children can do together.

I am certain there are people out there who would say: These advertisements you have on TV about the power of play, do you need it? Well, we do need it because research shows us now that we did not actually realize, I do not think, how much was happening when the play was underway.

Now, I just want to speak to that. The Member for Terra Nova explained the kits for months two, four, and six are developed and out there. The twelve and eighteen months have been piloted; they are ready to be distributed. Now we have the months for twenty-four and thirty-six out being piloted, and they will be developed and put out there.

Mr. Speaker, just think of it. With this investment this year, that is \$9.1 million and the investments into the early childhood education. The Minister of Finance and I met probably about a year ago with the McCain Foundation and the Pratt Foundation. The thing they encouraged us to do was to move with this. We spoke to them about our plan, that our plan was

that zero to three and then the next step. Well, the next step is this Kindergarten.

I have to say the Member for St. John's North mentioned the office next to him and Dr. Philpott. I was very pleased to hear his comment after this announcement was that he breathed a sigh of relief. I was very pleased to hear that. I would hope the McCain Foundation and the Pratt Foundation would see this is an investment they touted and it is one we have committed to. If we move into the full-day Kindergarten, it is \$30.6 million.

The Member for St. John's North said: Is it a promise? I think he is questioning if we are committed to doing this. Mr. Speaker, I tell you, I am not about to stand on my feet as minister with my colleague the Minister of Finance to announce full-day Kindergarten and think that we are going to withdraw on it. That statement to me is a question of my integrity; it simply is that. In this I can guarantee you that I and our government are continuing and committed to it.

What we have done, Mr. Speaker, is \$1.5 million this year and that is primarily for planning of the infrastructure. Next year, \$12.6 million and that \$12.6 million is specific to infrastructure. We know there are challenges, especially in the urban areas; there is no doubt about it. The shifting populations within the urban areas are such that we may have to adapt and be creative. I do not know, but one thing about it is we know we are going to have to put something like twenty-two or twenty-five modulars in. We know there are some areas where there is going to have to be some minor modifications and there will be some areas where there will have to be some more major modifications. That is what that \$12.6 million is. In the final year, the year of implementation, there is \$16.5 million. That will be to complete some of the infrastructure, but there is \$13 million in there for the teaching units. There are going to be about 140 teaching units.

Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you, too, on both accounts, the zero-to-three initiative and the implementation of full-day Kindergarten, I have gotten numerous comments. I have gotten

Facebook messages on it. I have gotten e-mails on it. I had an e-mail come just the other day. I do not know if I still have it or not, but it was from a parent who had gone to their first session and received their monthly kit. Their comment was: I simply love it. Those three words, I simply love it, speak volumes to me – it speaks volumes to me.

Likewise, from full-day Kindergarten I have had some comments. I have to tell you, I suppose for their own reasons, I have had some comments from some teachers and prospective teachers who look at the 140 or so units as being very positive and their opportunity to get some work. I have also had multiple comments from parents, young parents, such as the Member for Terra Nova and the Minister of Finance, who recognize what this means for their children and future children who will enter into full-day Kindergarten.

Mr. Speaker, I would love to have an hour to get up there; I cannot believe there are just a couple of minutes left. I just want to speak to what we have seen as the benefits. Before I get there, I just have to take exception. Sometimes I wonder if some of the members opposite think and try to portray to the public that our system is – if you listen to some of the comments, you would have to think that they think our education system is about the worst in the bloody world, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that.

The Member for St. John's North wishing that we had an education system as good as the rest of Canada. I would hope that the teachers that he visits, he would speak to them about that and tell them that they, as teachers, and our system is not as good as the rest of Canada. If there is one thing that depresses me in this House, it is commentary like that.

I have been in the company of our youth. I am going to tell you, the students who graduate from our system I would put them on par with anybody in the rest of Canada, and I would put them on par with any in the rest of the world, Mr. Speaker. I would put them on par with any anywhere in this world. We can speak to some that we see in our immediate range, and I can

speak to some who I met with last night – the student councils that I have met as I travelled across the Province, Mr. Speaker.

We now are giving our students a greater opportunity from the start, with initiatives that we have put in from zero to three, the Kinderstart for the four year olds, and now moving into full-day Kindergarten, Mr. Speaker. It is good, and we are the government that announced and implemented it.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before I recognize the Member for St. John's North on a point of order, I wanted to remind all members that when they are speaking in debate it is unparliamentary to refer to any member by their name. We should either refer to members by their district or to ministers by the portfolio that they hold – just a reminder.

The Member for St. John's North, on a point of order.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I apologize if I offended the minister in any way with respect to his integrity. I was not questioning his integrity or his government's integrity about the promise (inaudible) –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

MR. KIRBY: This government promised whistle-blower legislation and we have not seen that.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

I am very pleased this afternoon to stand and speak to this private member's motion. As the government knows and I am sure they must, obviously I am going to support this resolution. When you consider that in 2003, the call for full-day Kindergarten and the promise of full-day Kindergarten was in the platform of the NDP of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The discussions in our party went on before 2003. Obviously, I am delighted that this government has finally caught up with something that is almost a self-evident truth. I am really bemused by the way in which research is being talked about and the way in which everybody over there is trying to prove why this was so needed and so wonderful. We all know it. That is why back in 2003 we as a party said this should be in place.

This is not news. The need for full-day Kindergarten is not news. The need for an early childhood education strategy, plan, and program is not news. The connection between play and learning is not news.

I remembered today – it is very interesting the memory came to me about ten minutes ago, when I was a teacher in my twenties –and people can do the math on that one; I will leave it to those who know when I was born. When I was a teacher in my late twenties, I remember attending a workshop here in St. John's. It was down at the old Hotel Newfoundland. The resource people came from the UK. The whole workshop was about how we use play in the learning process. The interesting thing about that workshop was that it just was not talking about really young children, the workshop was based on we should use play as a learning tool throughout the whole of the learning process, throughout the whole of the educational system.

I can remember – I do not know, a lot of you would not remember the old Newfoundland hotel. It had a wonderful circular staircase going

up on either side of the foyer with a wide marble bannister all around. I can remember they had us teachers in that workshop – it was very experiential – using play as a learning mechanism. I can remember us acting out being animals and crawling around the whole balustrade of the stairs as we were doing this experiential workshop.

Now, we are not talking five years ago or ten years, or even twenty years ago; this notion is something that has been around for decades. This government is finally catching up with the fact that full-day Kindergarten is going help children learn more, learn better, and be better prepared as they go into Grade 1. What they are missing is that is true from the moment the child is born, and it is true for us until we die. Therefore, they are so far behind in what they are doing.

I am delighted that they are finally waking up and putting the full-day Kindergarten in place. I am not delighted with the fact that they did not see that, in actual fact, they could have put it in place in many schools in the Province before 2016.

I totally agree with the Minister of Education. We have wonderful people in the Department of Education, people with knowledge, people with experience, and people who are probably embarrassed that they know so much and they have been waiting for a government to make a decision to do this. We know that work has been going on in that department for years. The work has been done on what it would mean to put an all-day Kindergarten in place. We have some examples already happening.

The schools that were ready to have it put in place this September, it should have happened. This September we could have had so many more schools with all-day Kindergarten and think about what that would mean. That would mean more jobs for teachers as well because with every extension of the day, you are going to have to have more teaching positions. So we would have more people hired in the educational system.

There are schools out there that are ready; the minister has told us that. The minister said that only seventy-five schools need upgrades and fifty are minor, about 100 schools are ready. He also said the other day in responding – I think it was to a question from me or it may have been in Estimates actually; we had the discussion in Estimates. He made the point that the place where most of the work has to be done is with the schools, mainly in the St. John's area, not only, and Mount Pearl; because, number one, the older schools, and number two, the large numbers, et cetera, and that is quite understandable.

Why keep the other schools waiting? Why keep the schools that are not in that situation waiting? Why not make it happen? We would have more teachers hired and more parents really happy and more children really happy because it started a year earlier for them, when I know we have the knowledge, when I know we could have done it, yet we did not.

I really get disturbed with the government when it does not admit, number one, how slow they have been to act and, number two, that they are still doing things in a piecemeal way. Government can talk about what they are doing with regard to early childhood learning but that, too, is piecemeal. They are talking about a tool and talking about that as if it were a program, and it is not a program; it is a tool that is being used.

What we need is a real plan for early childhood education that starts from the minute a child is born and goes right on. That would include, which someday, maybe someday, if they ever get back in government after the next election, they might wake up and say: Oh yes, child care, imagine, that is a great idea!

What I am saying is, in the places that are far ahead of us when it comes to early childhood education – and there are statistics that prove it, not only statistics but studies that show how far behind we are. The places that are considered ahead of us are the places where the early childhood education program starts when a child is six months, through a child care program that

is administered and regulated by government, a public child care program.

That child care program eases the children into preschool, which is something we are not talking about at all. We have some preschool in the Province, but not a program. It eases them into preschool and then into your junior Kindergarten, your all-day Kindergarten, and on.

Where they have a program like that, children are much better prepared when they go into Kindergarten, children are much better prepared when they go into Grade 1, and they are much better prepared when it comes to equity because children then are on a much more equal footing with each other. This is what is so important. Children are on a much more equal footing because they have had access equally because of a public program. They have had access at the same time to the same opportunities and to the same learning opportunities. Play is a learning opportunity.

All the opportunities are there for all the kids, and so it does not matter what your economic status is because everybody has access to an early childhood education system. Then children are on a much more equal footing as they continue on through the school system. You are going to get more kids coming out and graduating at the other end.

That is why it has been said that our system is so far down in this country when it comes to evaluation of what we are doing here in Newfoundland and Labrador. This government acts as if – they take one little idea, they put the little idea in place: okay, aren't we wonderful, isn't that going to work?

I was really shocked when I heard the Minister of Justice say that the full-day Kindergarten is the final prong of their early childhood education plan. Well, that really shocked me. We have so far to go still and this is the final prong of their plan. I would say if that is the final prong of their plan that is going to be the thing that is going to undo their continuing as a government, because that shows very, very narrow thinking.

The parents out there in this Province know what is going on in other parts of the country. They do not need this government to try to tell them what is going on, they know. Lots of parents know because they have been elsewhere and they have come back. I know young couples who came back and left again because they could not get here in their own Province the type of education that their children were getting elsewhere. They could not get an understanding of early childhood education, a program that happens in other places, they could not get it here.

I know of couples who have come back home, hoping to raise their children here, and have left again because they could not get the quality early childhood education. That is not making things up. That is not being political. That is not trying to gain political points. That is an absolute reality. That is a fact. When I talk about early childhood education, I talk about it because I believe in it, because we must have it.

It is not just a program here and a program there. The full-day Kindergarten, I am delighted. I am very, very happy that we have it. I am going to vote, of course, for the resolution – naturally. It is motherhood. Like I said, they are talking as if this is a brand new revelation. This is something that has been understood about learning for decades and decades. They are acting as if they have invented something new.

AN HON. MEMBER: It is about time.

MS MICHAEL: It is about time, as my colleague behind me has said. It is about time.

Even now, we are doing it in a way that is sort of haphazard. We could have started this in this September in schools that were ready. As I have said earlier, it would have employed more people, and believe me we need more people employed. We still have the highest unemployment rate in Canada. We seem to forget those kinds of things, but I suppose I am wrong too for saying that, when we know that is a fact.

We have to make sure the education of our children, the learning process of our children is something that we are responsible for from the moment they are born. That is why an early childhood education program would be something that includes child care, would be something that is under the Department of Education, because all of it is learning.

If we want to get into stats and studies, et cetera, it is proven that children who have been able to get child care prior to going into Kindergarten, whether it a half day or a full day, are much further ahead than children who have not. Therefore, we have a real inequality in our Province because we have so many children who, because of economic circumstances in many cases, are not in child care. They do not have any structured learning going on. When they go into Kindergarten, they are sitting in the same class, sitting in the same room with children who have been in child care maybe for three years and have been learning through a wonderful play process, and who are just so far ahead of these children.

Our children are on an unequal footing. Whereas in a Province like Quebec, they have proven that seeing child care as part of the early childhood education, that putting a full child care program in place that is as important as the rest of the educational system has meant an improvement when it comes to the retention of children in the high school years. It has been good for the economy because more people have been employed, and it has been good for the people who work in child care because of the fact that it is now a public system and part of the educational system. They are better trained and they are earning better salaries.

When we talk about the all-day Kindergarten, we cannot talk about it in isolation.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MS MICHAEL: You are talking about it in isolation, I say to the other side, Mr. Speaker. They are talking about it in isolation.

It is just tiring. Don't they understand that people are watching them? They do not even understand how stupid they look when they do what they are doing. Don't they understand that people know the difference? That people know what happens in other parts of the country, that people know that this is good but it is only a small piece of the pie? They do not even look at how they look to other people.

I am glad that finally, for the sake of the people in the Department of Education who have done so much work over the years – I really am happy for their sake – a lot of their work is going to start to come to fruition. I also hope, Mr. Speaker, they can look for much more to happen than just the all-day Kindergarten, and that they can say to the minister, no, this is not the last prong and they will get listened to.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice on a point of order.

MR. KING: I would ask that the member retract her statement where she suggested members on this side of the House are stupid. I think that would be unparliamentary language.

MR. SPEAKER: The Speaker will undertake to review the tapes and see exactly what was said.

MS MICHAEL: I revoke the statement, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party was not recognized when she made her statement, if you would like to stand and make the statement.

MS MICHAEL: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will remove the statement that has been referred to by the Government House Leader.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a great pleasure for me to speak to this private member's motion today. I think *The Telegram* probably captured best how I felt about full-day Kindergarten in the picture that was in the paper with the smile. The smile was because we were giving a standing ovation on this side of the House for full-day Kindergarten. We really thought we were going to get the Member for St. John's North to get up and stand up. I think we were really close. That is why I had such a smile on my face.

Truthfully, there was a lot to smile about that day in Budget 2014. One of the things I have certainly heard most about since the Budget coming down was full-day Kindergarten. There are a lot of other wonderful things in the Budget. We heard a lot about loans to grants. One other in particular I have heard quite a lot about is MTAP, the Medical Transportation Assistance Program.

I cannot tell you how many times I have heard about full-day Kindergarten. Certainly, being in Virginia Waters over the last couple of weeks and knocking on doors there, it is a big issue in that area. It is just unfortunate, I would say, that the Member for St. John's North did not stand up that day because I know he has been advocating for it.

It is really interesting to watch both parties here today try to take credit for full-day Kindergarten.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MS JOHNSON: He is cheering there now, so better late than never, I say, Mr. Speaker.

It is interesting to see both parties trying to take credit for full-day Kindergarten, Mr. Speaker. You hear the Leader of the NDP trying to take credit. Who should take credit for full-day Kindergarten? I tell you who should take credit for full-day Kindergarten: this government, this

minister, this Premier, this Cabinet, and this caucus.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: We saw that full-day Kindergarten was the next step in that continuum around the learning strategy.

Mr. Speaker, what I was really surprised to hear the Leader of the NDP say, and she talked about equity, which I certainly agree equity is important, but in the same breath she talked about we should implement full-day Kindergarten in schools this September that are ready. Now, I do not know where the Liberals stand on this. I am sensing they stand where we stand in that we feel an equitable place to be would be to bring full-day Kindergarten in when the schools are ready for all children. To hear the Leader of the NDP talk about equity, but then in the same breath say send some Kindergarten students to school this September, those schools that are ready, and let the other ones wait. Like I said, I do not know about the Liberals, but I can tell you where we stand as a government: we believe in equity and we believe in bringing this in for all children, all at the same time.

Then I also heard the Liberals trying to take credit for full-day Kindergarten. I heard them talk about Cathy Bennett as President of the Board of Trade. Myself and Premier Dunderdale, back a few months after she became Premier in 2010, so it would have been early 2011, had Cathy Bennett in for a meeting at the time. I was present and we talked about full-day Kindergarten. We gave our commitment that full-day Kindergarten is something we are committed to. We talked about the continuum of learning and how we need to do things around child care and do the early learning strategy first, Mr. Speaker. We explained our continuum and we explained our strategy.

I heard the Member for St. John's North say that we were against full-day Kindergarten. Not once did we ever say we were against full-day Kindergarten. We have been supportive of full-

day Kindergarten from day one. It was the proudest day for me, being in this House of Assembly in nearly eleven years now, when we brought in full-day Kindergarten.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, if we are going to be on the topic of the Opposition party trying to take credit for this and trying to give credit to Cathy Bennett when she was Board of Trade, it is interesting what they leave out about Cathy Bennett and being Board of Trade President. You talk about full-day Kindergarten and trying to take credit; I did not hear any mention at all about Board of Trade wanting defined contribution pensions – nothing at all there. It is one thing to raise issues they think are favourable around full-day Kindergarten, but it is very well known the Board of Trade has been out publicly talking about pensions being defined contribution. He left that piece out.

Mr. Speaker, we have always had a plan. We hear the Leader of the NDP talking about this as piecemeal. This has been very well thought out from day one. Our early learning strategy dealing with children, Learning from the Start, from ages zero to three – and I know the Member for Terra Nova talked about it, but it is important to highlight it again. These parent resource kits for children of various ages – two, four, six months old, twelve months old, and eighteen months old – have been distributed Province-wide. The feedback I get from a lot of my peers is that these are such great kits to have and there is a lot of information there.

There is no book that comes when you have a child. There are a lot of members in this House who have had children and have had them recently for the first time, and I know members opposite as well. We wish there was a book that would come when you have a child, but the reality is it is learning as you go. It is quite the experience and it is one that has been the most meaningful in my life and in many lives.

MR. JACKMAN: Any favourite books?

MS JOHNSON: I will get to my favourite books in a moment.

We have received excellent responses from parents, grandparents – I have heard from grandparents about these kits – early childhood educators, as well as public health staff. They have talked about these kits. I know when I have had my daughter in for her preschool check and other immunizations along the way, there are many positive comments about these kits. That was phase one. As the minister said, we have piloted for eighteen-month-olds now and that is ready to roll, and then the next phase will be for twenty-four and thirty-six months old.

Mr. Speaker, we also have, as somebody mentioned here, KinderStart. I love KinderStart. I am going through that phase right now. I actually have it this Friday again. The package they gave out at KinderStart, I have to tell the Minister of Education, was so valuable. I am sure members opposite who have had these this year would know *Apple Trouble!* and *Jake Starts School*, two books included that I read over and over. It just teaches how that repetition is so important for children. Soon enough they are reading the books back to you. That is the next phase.

One piece that has not been talked about, and the Leader of the NDP talks about how it is not well thought out, how there is a gap, and how we need to get our children ready, is our Child Care Strategy, Mr. Speaker. We announced the Child Care Strategy a little over a year ago. I was very proud to do that. Our government is very committed to child care. It is a significant issue for many parents, but it is also a very significant issue for our children and their development.

Since 2003, we have increased child care spaces in the Province by 70 per cent. When you look at this year's Budget, Mr. Speaker, we are spending in the area of child care \$42.4 million.

When she talks about we do not have a strategy on child care, I do not know where she was when we announced it a year ago and I do not know where she was when we talked about it in the Budget this year. We certainly highlighted

in the Budget Speech this year about the \$9.7 million for operating grants, Mr. Speaker.

That \$42 million is made up of much more than \$9.7 million for operating grants. There is another million dollars there to continue with the family child care initiative because parents want choice and that is so critically important. We certainly respect that some parents prefer to have their children at home with them or with a grandparent, family member, or friend. Some parents, when children are young, like to have them in a family child care setting. Other parents would prefer the child care centre. It is all about parental choice. As a government, we have provided numerous opportunities for choice, Mr. Speaker.

We also see spending this year in the Budget for a workplace training model program around early childhood educators, \$500,000 for that; \$6.1 million for early learning child care supplement; and \$15.7 million for a child care subsidy program. I know one of the things that they talk about is affordability and we are committed to quality spaces, we are committed to increasing the number of quality care spaces, but we are very committed to affordability; \$15.7 million goes into a subsidy program to help parents who cannot afford child care, Mr. Speaker.

One of the other pieces in our continuum around our whole strategy, the plan that we do have in place, is our family resource centres, Mr. Speaker. I know the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services can speak more to this, but there are numerous programs that are run by the family resource centres and they are one of, unfortunately, the best kept secrets. We are doing a piece of work to market them and get more information about what is done in the family resource centres – but what a learning resource for parents or for grandparents or for caregivers of children to help prepare children for Kindergarten and for school, Mr. Speaker.

Just on the piece about when full-day Kindergarten is coming into play in 2016 – and I have to agree with my colleague, the Minister of Education. When the Opposition talks about it

is going to be in 2016, it is almost like they are accusing us that we have announced it and there is nothing going to be done but then suddenly in 2016 children will start going to Kindergarten.

Well, let me highlight for them how much planning has to go into it and how much investment has gone into the budget for full-day Kindergarten. For this year, Mr. Speaker, we are hiring two senior engineers; they will be doing a lot of travel around the Province. We know in some areas of the Province there are major influxes of children coming in and it is always a moving target. Those senior engineers will be going around the Province. We have a general idea of how many schools need minor renovations, major renovations, or need a modular classroom, but there are some that need a closer look.

We have also included funding in this year's Budget for a program development specialist to develop the program. It will be a play-based program; that much is definitely already agreed to because we know the power of play and the play-based program is the best program for our children.

To further develop that program, we have put funding in there to hire a program development specialist and also travel for that person. There is \$280,000 allotted to do some of the minor infrastructure upgrades that need to be done this year. There is nearly \$1 million there to purchase some of the modulators because the department has a lot of experience and the officials have a lot of experience with the purchasing and then, of course, the installation of these modulators. There is \$1 million there to kick start this, this year.

Then, when you look at next year's Budget, Mr. Speaker, we will be spending \$12.6 million in next year's Budget, again, for the senior engineers to complete their work and for the program development specialist to do their work. There will also be an administrative officer and we will be spending about \$4 million for more infrastructure upgrades, as well as another \$7 million for more modulators. We will

be putting funding in there to start the professional development.

Mr. Speaker, when you see that there is money in this year's Budget, there is money in next year's fiscal framework to the tune of \$12.6 million, until you get to the year that it is implemented, I do not know how anybody can even suggest that we are not serious about this. There is a major piece of work that needs to be done.

Let me tell the Opposition how well thought out this is and how serious we are about it. We have even included money for further professional development for students but we have also included money for when full-day Kindergarten is up and running in 2016. We have included almost \$650,000 for student assistant support. That is how well thought out this program is that they had the foresight to put in the full-day Kindergarten plan, knowing that student assistance is going to be required, Mr. Speaker.

It is a very well-thought-out plan and to be accused of announcing it now and not bringing –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

In accordance with Standing Order 63, this being Wednesday, Private Members' Day, it being 4:45 p.m., I go to the mover of the motion to close debate.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I would like to compliment the Minister of Finance for adding her two cents. It is something not only as Finance Minister but also as a parent as well she certainly has a grasp on this, as I am sure many members do.

Mr. Speaker, that is the most concerning thing. A lot of times when you talk about things that are very important to the general public in this House of Assembly, is to not let politics get in the way. It is all right if the Opposition parties

want to fight over one another trying to take credit for this, but at the end of the day we all have to stand to our feet here and support this because it is so very worthwhile. Everyone should agree with that and I am very hopeful that is what we will see at the end of this debate.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk. I led off, of course, and I was not able to get through all of my notes. I want to touch on some of the benefits of full-day Kindergarten because there has been quite a bit of research done on this. It is interesting to know exactly what the professionals and what the experts are saying.

The benefits of full-day, play-based Kindergarten programming are borne out of research, as I had said before, by professionals who know: stronger academic outcomes; stronger reading skills; better social and emotional development and behaviour; reduction in special education referrals; better development of independence and self-esteem, which is so very important; and better ability to handle peer interaction.

Obviously there are heightened advantages for children who are challenged from a socio-economic perspective, have developmental issues, or have language barriers, such as new immigrants to this Province, another very nice piece of this as well. It will help those folks.

The intent of full-day Kindergarten, let us be clear, is, like the intent of the entire suite of early childhood learning programming, to give all children the very best opportunities to develop the early social, emotional, and intellectual skills they will need to succeed in school and certainly in life afterwards.

I want to refer to some of the research I did come across when I was researching this. Of course, it spans quite a few organizations, countries, and jurisdictions. Some of the pieces I picked out here, and one in particular, many folks will be familiar with. It is the National Education Association, which is a very large organization out of the United States and it represents, I believe, thousands and thousands of communities right across the United States.

Their research showed much of what we have already said: "...children in full-day kindergarten classes show greater reading and mathematics achievement gains than those in half-day classes." "Full-day kindergarten can produce long-term educational gains, especially for low-income and minority students", again, as I had said earlier. "Full-day kindergarten offers social, emotional and intellectual benefits to kindergarteners...". Mr. Speaker, "...5-year-olds are more than ready for a longer school day – and do better in a setting that allows them time to learn and explore activities in depth."

Also of note, "Investments in quality early childhood programs generate returns of 3-to-1 or even higher...". I had mentioned that earlier when I was up, the return on investment. Social programs you have to spend anyways because it is the right thing to do, but it is also an added benefit when you can spend on those programs and get a return on those, when something clearly with regard to this we will get a return.

Full-day Kindergarten provides an essential bridge between pre-Kindergarten programs and more structured learning in first grade. In full-day Kindergarten, classroom teachers have more time to get to know kids and identify and address their learning challenges at an earlier stage. A lot of with regard to learning disabilities and whatnot is catching it at an early stage. That is so very important. If you are able to nip that in the bud and get it when it is at its very early stages, of course, you can better address it for later years. That helps with much.

Teachers prefer full-day Kindergarten, we have heard from many people, and parents prefer it. That was from the National Education Association. I looked further. The University of Toronto in March, 2012 did some research on this as well. As I had said earlier, Ontario is phasing in their full-day Kindergarten.

The senior Kindergarten children in full-day Kindergarten were ahead of control group children who attended half-day Kindergarten in vocabulary and reading. There were no significant differences between – and that goes into first language children as well, but we do

not have to get into there. The fact is when you have a control group that do half-day Kindergarten as compared to the group who do full day, the differences are quite easily to see with regard to mathematics and vocabulary. Obviously, those are two very important pillars in education.

Something else that study showed was that parents of senior Kindergarten children in full day rated their children as being "more ready" than parents of control children in: muscle development, getting along with other children and adults, letter-sound knowledge, number knowledge, and speaking. Those are very important aspects of education.

Queen's University, the Ontario Ministry of Education in 2013 did a joint study as well. Research in Ontario's full-day Kindergarten program concluded "...that full-day Kindergarten, and effective practices within it, is having a positive impact on reducing risk for children in Ontario."

What does this all tell us? I have noted a few different pieces of research that spans from the States to Ontario and other jurisdictions. They all point to one thing. This is something that researchers and professionals in the field all agree on. There is a consensus that it provides huge benefit to children not only in the social aspects but also in the academic aspects as well. We cannot argue that fact and if we can, I would like to see the evidence that show that it would not be of great benefit.

It is nice to know what research is being done because we stand here as politicians from different backgrounds, educational, law, whatever the case is. I do not know if there are many – I know the Minister of Education has a deeply-rooted knowledge in education but many of us here do not as such. It is nice to get the numbers and the facts from researchers, from people in the field, and that is what I have done. I think it is quite easily to see, it is very clear that the benefits are huge.

We know what the research says, that is quite easily to see. We know how it has been received

by the general public. I referred to it earlier that on the day of the Budget afterwards – I know social media was abuzz, Twitter and Facebook, it was overwhelmingly positive. It was not just by people who I knew were friendly to the party, it was by people who are partisans to other parties and people who were involved in the unions and whatnot. It was overwhelmingly positive. That speaks volumes as well.

I also spoke to a number of people out in my district face to face. Of course me, myself being a younger parent, I hang around. I have peers who are in similar situations as me, with younger children who will avail of this. It was overwhelmingly, 100 per cent positive. People really see the worth in this. They know it is a great program. It is not only going to benefit their children's academic progress but it is also going to provide some financial stability to them as well, when you factor in the cost of child care and whatnot.

Something else I have heard from, educators are overwhelmingly in favour of this as well. Right across the board, I have heard huge – not only from the educators who sit here in the House of Assembly representing districts, I have heard from educators who are in the school.

Actually, I had a chat with one person yesterday. I was at an event in Mount Pearl South, out to St. Peter's Elementary, and I had a nice frank discussion with an educator out there. They were able to share their opinions of full-day Kindergarten. As you can imagine, it was quite positive.

Another positive outcome, as it relates to full-day Kindergarten, is the socio-economic benefit. That is something I spoke of earlier but I did not really get into it, so I just want to touch on that for a brief moment. As many young parents know, me included, daycare is a very costly venture.

Before I had my second child, while my wife was still working, both of us were working, we had to put our only child at that point into daycare. We used to pay \$800 a month. I found out from speaking to other people and friends

and whatnot, that was not a bad deal, \$800 a month. Obviously, you see how much it costs.

By the very fact that now two of my children will avail of full-day Kindergarten that is a potential savings for two years of approximately \$20,000. How nice is it to be able to take \$20,000 – that is based on two children, for one year each. I am just thinking, as parents there are so many things you would like to spend your money on. That is \$20,000 now I can put into my children's post-secondary education. That is \$20,000 I would not have had if this government did not introduce and begin to implement full-day Kindergarten. So \$20,000 is certainly significant.

I am sure when you look even further – I am happy to be comfortable in life, but there are many people, obviously, who struggle. Those are the people who are particularly affected, those lower socio-economic status whatnot. This is huge for them, and it provides a massive benefit and an opportunity for them as well.

Of course, I look back at my own personal experience. We live in a society where, even though it probably is not right, generally a lot of times when a couple has a child most generally it is the wife who stays home with the child in our culture. Now, that is not always the case. I have friends that are fathers who stayed home and the wife went back to work. Generally speaking, in most cases, and in my own personal situation, my wife would take time off work.

With full-day Kindergarten, this allows, either it be the wife or the husband, to get back into the workforce. That is something, it is not only financially important, it is also emotionally important. When you are talking about self-esteem and self-worth, it is nice to be able to get back into the groove of things, to be able to get back into the workforce.

Further to that, we understand from hearing from employers that this is going to be very beneficial as well to employers. Because it is going to allow those people, instead of having to take care of their children and stay home, now

they are able to return to the workforce. Obviously, that has huge spinoffs as well.

So, like I said, there are many different angles to this. Another one that is interesting, and we did not mean for it to be the impact, but it is one of those things that now that we have opened up full-day Kindergarten, as a result it has created even more positive outcomes.

What is the impact of full-day Kindergarten on child care spaces? It is not something that my mind automatically went to when I first heard this announced, but the more you hear and the more I have read, obviously this is something that is tremendous. It is going to be anticipated by many people who have trouble finding child care spaces for children. We know in certain areas of the Province that sometimes it is a task.

We have invested heavily in child care spaces, but as always, we seem to be trying to play catch-up with it. The fact is we anticipate that regulated child care centres will convert Kindercare spaces for those children attending half-day Kindergarten to other types of spaces for children of different ages. Parents with Kindergarten-aged children will no longer be required to pay fees for full-time child care, resulting in potential savings – which I spoke of earlier – for some families in the thousands of dollars per year. I already know for myself it will look probably in the realm of \$20,000, based on two children.

Full-day Kindergarten will also help reduce stress on some employers – which I mentioned earlier – relieve stress on parents and children as half-day movement to and from school, and certainly the parents trying to get to work, leave work, go pick up the children, bring the children back home and go back to work. Somebody called it – I believe during the interview somebody did in *The Telegram* – the half-day Kindergarten shuffle, because when you are trying to carry on a work life and have your children in half-day Kindergarten you are trying to be everywhere, and it is very difficult.

With the implementation of full-day Kindergarten, affordability of regulated child

care services will be improved as parents will no longer be required to pay Kindercare fees in addition to after school care. Just as important, Mr. Speaker, sufficient regulated child care spaces will be increased as current Kindercare spaces will be converted to other types of spaces for children in different age groups.

Basically, in a nutshell, what you have there is that people now whose kids are in half-day Kindergarten, most child care spaces, as I understand it, you have to pay for the full day. Even though your child may only be there for half the day, you are required to pay the full day because the need is so great and they are able to do that.

Now, all of a sudden, if a child does not require that half-day child care, comes out of the system, goes into full-day Kindergarten, it opens up a whole new child care space. That is so important. Again, it frees up space. Not only is it helping the child go into full-day Kindergarten, it is also helping the parents who are looking for child care spaces. Again, that is really good.

Mr. Speaker, I only have a few moments left. Just as a conclusion, as parents and educators and MHAs we all have a duty and responsibility to our children. Somebody referred to it across the way as a sense of motherhood and we all want the best for our kids. This is why implementing the full-day Kindergarten is so important.

On behalf of myself, my wife, my family, many of my peers, my colleagues, the people I have spoken with, thank you so – my children, Sophia and Anna. They thank you as well, but this is such a great initiative. I am very proud. I am looking forward to having support from right across the way. I expect by extension of supporting this motion today all parties have to look at supporting the Budget because this is such a major, major piece of the Budget. While we could all support this today, I am looking for that same support when we stand to our feet and support the Budget in the coming days and weeks.

In closing, I do have two minutes left. I will simply say that there is a by-election going on. No matter who you are voting for, I encourage anybody who is home watching today to get out and vote. Let your voices be heard, and we will be welcoming a new member to the House of Assembly shortly.

With that, I will take my seat.

Thank you so much for the opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): You have all heard the question.

All those in favour of the motion, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

MR. SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Summon the members.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips ready?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: All three?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

CLERK: Mr. Marshall, Mr. King, Ms Shea, Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Davis, Mr. McGrath, Mr. Felix Collins, Ms Johnson, Mr. Jackman, Mr. Verge, Mr. Littlejohn, Mr. Hedderson, Mr. Dalley, Mr. French, Mr. Kent, Ms Perry, Mr. Cross, Mr. Little, Mr. Pollard, Mr. Granter, Mr. Sandy Collins, Mr. Cornect, Mr. Peach, Mr. Hunter,

Mr. Russell, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Mr. Joyce, Ms Dempster, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Slade, Mr. Mitchelmore, Mr. Murphy, Ms Rogers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

CLERK: Mr. Speaker, it is unanimous: the ayes, thirty-four; the nays, zero.

MR. SPEAKER: Motion carried.

Motion carried unanimously.

MR. SPEAKER: This House now stands adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, at 1:30 p.m.