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Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

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The House met at 2:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

MR. MCGRATH: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works, on a point of order.

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday during Question Period as I was having the questions asked to me, there were three questions asked consecutively. In the first two questions the Leader of the Opposition used the term – he said: Was that your Department of Transportation and Works or was it Department of Justice? In the second question he said Department of Justice. In the third question he said Minister of Justice. I replied yes to that. I misunderstood the question at the time. I thought he meant Department of Justice again. I would like to apologize for that.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will have members' statements from the Member for the District of Exploits; the Member for the District of Kilbride; the Member for the District of Harbour Main; the Member for the District of Baie Verte – Springdale; the Member for the District of The Straits – White Bay North; and the Member for the District of Bay of Islands.

The hon. the Member for the District of Exploits.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FORSEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an awarding-winning school principal in my district, James David Hibbs, son of June and Wesley Hibbs, of South Brook who has an outstanding education career.

Jim entered Memorial University in 1979 at the young age of fifteen. By the time he was twenty, Jim had earned a geophysics degree and

an education degree from Memorial University. He has spent thirty years both as a science teacher and a school administrator in St. John's, Robert's Arm, and now at Botwood Collegiate.

In 1992, Jim received the Northern Telecom National Award for the innovative use of information technology. In 2010, he received the Barnes Award from the NLTA, an award that recognizes outstanding service in the field of professional development. Mr. Hibbs was recognized again in April of 2014 for his remarkable ability and commitment when he received a distinguished School Administrator of the Year Award.

Jim is known at Botwood Collegiate as a tireless principal, who genuinely believes that putting students first should be the central focus of every decision his school makes.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in thanking Mr. Jim Hibbs for his exceptional contributions to the students of our Province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. DINN: Mr. Speaker, Emily Hayes, a seventeen-year-old, Level III student at St. Kevin's High School in the Goulds has been selected as one of the provincial delegates who will be leaving Newfoundland and Labrador on June 27 for a nine-day pilgrimage to Europe.

The pilgrimage is sponsored by the Royal Canadian Legion and is scheduled to follow the trail of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment during the First World War.

Emily and the other students representing the Province will tour Beaumont Hamel, Vimy Ridge, and the trenches. They will visit the battlefields where Tommy Ricketts carried out his great act of bravery. They will tour the various cemeteries that hold the remains of those precious Newfoundlanders who sacrificed their lives for us in the Great War.

During their nine days in England, France and Belgium the students will take part in several ceremonies, especially one at Beaumont Hamel. During their free time, they will sightsee.

Emily Hayes is a fine young lady who has her future mapped out. Next year, she will attend Grenfell College to study fine arts.

Emily is an amateur photographer and a credit to her family, her school, and her community.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Emily on her selection.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HEDDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today in this hon. House to speak of a remarkable gentleman and pediatric pioneer, Dr. Richard F. Kennedy from Harbour Main who passed away on April 11, 2014 at the age of eighty-eight.

Dr. Richard Kennedy graduated from McGill University medical school in 1951 and continued training to be a general surgeon, urologist, and pediatric surgeon. In 1959, Dr. Kennedy, with the help of the Sisters of Mercy, started pediatric surgical services at St. Clare's Hospital. Later on, Dr. Kennedy was a big part of the Janeway Child Health Centre when it opened in August of 1966 and was appointed the Chief of Surgery of that particular centre. He was a clinical professor at Memorial University's medical school and was an astute clinician who always had the best interest of his patients before, during, and after surgery.

Dr. Kennedy made tremendous contributions in pediatric surgery, both as a skilled surgeon, a compassionate physician, a skilled administrator, and an outstanding teacher.

Their family business, P.J. Kennedy Limited in Harbour Main was the hub of that community for some 100 years and only closed its doors in 2013.

Dr. Kennedy was predeceased by his wife, Maureen (nee Sullivan).

I ask all members of the House to join with me in paying tribute to this true pioneer in the medical field, the late Dr. Richard Kennedy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minor hockey players all across the Province were very active over the Easter break. I rise in this hon. House today to convey my congratulations to the Baie Verte Sabres Silver Medalists.

The Sabres captured silver in the all Newfoundland and Labrador Atom G Provincial Tournament which was hosted by Baie Verte on April 24-26. The Tommy Ricketts Arena was alive with excitement as dedicated parents, officials, and proud business sponsors relentlessly cheered on the budding stars.

The five-team tournament saw the Baie Verte Sabres squad drop a narrow five to four decision to the Northeast Eagles of Avalon in the championship game. The team played hard and ended the tournament with a tremendous show of sports mindedness and respect.

Members of the silver medal team are: Ty Austin, Landon Austin, Brady Austin, Marty Bowers, Noah Robinson, Jenna Decker, Darcy Brake, Cameron Barker, Kaelen Davis, Noah Walsh, Dawson Pinksen, Kolby Norman, Desmond Burton, and Ryan McGrath. Coaches Robert Robinson and Craig Davis, along with trainer Chris Walsh, are to be commended for their dedication to the development of the team.

I invite all hon. members to join me in applauding the Sabres upon their silver medal finish.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize athleticism and accomplishments of hockey organizations that brought ice hockey talent from all corners of this Province and acknowledge the top-shelf performance from my district.

Both Straits Rifiers and St. Anthony Polars used their skill to bring home a vast collection of medals.

Straits Rifiers upset Northeast Avalon on their home ice, bringing home the Midget C championship, as St. Anthony Polars skated away with bronze. The Rifiers took home Bantam E championship in Placentia, defeating St. John's, while Peewee D Rifiers took silver on home ice. In St. Anthony, the Peewee H Polars captured bronze at the Polar Centre, as the females took bronze in the under-twenty C division. The Straits Rifiers females were awarded a golden Hat-Trick, bringing home championship banners in under-twelve, under-fifteen, and under-twenty divisions. St. Anthony Atoms A division also defeated the St. John's Caps for a gold medal finale.

The commitment from coaches, trainers, and our players clearly illustrate a passion for community and a love of the game.

I ask all hon. members to join me in celebrating the victories of the Minor Hockey Associations on the Great Northern Peninsula, both on and off ice.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Mr. Hedley John Saunders of Curling.

Last Friday evening, I had the pleasure of attending Mr. Saunders' ninetieth birthday celebrations at the Lohnes seniors' complex where he now resides.

Mr. Saunders, a retired engineer with CN Railway for over forty-two years, was actively involved with his church for many years including the Men's Service Club and the choir. His contribution to his community and desire to give back continues.

To mark his birthday milestone, Mr. Saunders request to those attending the celebrations was that he did not want any presents, just best wishes, but a donation to the Bay of Islands Search and Rescue would be appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, over \$2,000 was given in Mr. Saunders' honour.

When he celebrated his eighty-fifth birthday, his request was for donations to be made to the local food bank, and over \$1,200, plus groceries, was donated.

Mr. Saunders is still active, in good health, enjoys a good game of crib, and as a past time, enjoys building garden benches which he built nine last year.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in extending best wishes to Mr. Saunders for his unselfish acts to his community and wish him continued good health.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Before we proceed, I want to acknowledge a couple of special groups in our galleries today. We are joined today by a group from the Salmon Cove-Perry's Cove recreation leisure 50 Plus Club.

Welcome to our Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: We are also pleased today to have a delegation from the Philippine Association of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Welcome to our galleries.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I rise today – actually, that is how I usually start off my member’s statements, but I will try something different today.

Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador’s role in the First World War is a story of courage, perseverance, and pride. In an effort to recognize the contributions of the many men and women who played a role in this effort, our government launched its *Honour 100* program in November of last year. The initiative provides an opportunity to commemorate this defining time in our Province’s history, and presents a unique opportunity to reconnect Newfoundland and Labradorians with their past and help remember the sacrifices made by honouring all those involved in the war effort.

I was pleased to officially launch our *Honour 100* Web site at Admiralty House Communications Museum in Mount Pearl earlier today, along with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister Responsible for Public Engagement. The Web site includes links to photos, events, and historical information pertaining to Newfoundland and Labrador’s role in the First World War. Through the digitization of war-time records in conjunction with The Rooms, the site also provides an opportunity to search military service files for the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, Newfoundland Forestry Corps, and the Royal Naval Reserve.

I was also delighted to launch the *Honour 100* Grant Program for arts and heritage projects proposed between 2015 and 2017 to commemorate the Great War in diverse and meaningful ways. This program, Mr. Speaker, will support community-based projects as well as those that are Province-wide in scope, in an effort to create a legacy of remembrance that reaches beyond the commemoration period, and highlight how the war affected the history and the people of this Province.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage everyone to visit www.honour100.ca to view our dynamic Web site and also obtain more information and an application for the *Honour 100* Grant Program.

Our goal, Mr. Speaker, is that our *Honour 100* initiative will help ensure the legacy of these brave men and women from our Province, to whom we owe so very much, is acknowledged and remembered as significant to the character and identity of Newfoundland and Labrador. Over the coming months, our government will be launching various initiatives under *Honour 100* throughout 2014-2018. It is our hope that the various commemoration events will put the bravery and sacrifices of the First World War at the forefront of our thinking, and help us understand the debt we owe so we can bestow the honour and respect they so rightly deserve.

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 an advance copy. I know at the launch of the *Honour 100* program, the Member for Mount Pearl South was also in attendance and invited to it, and he enjoyed it very much also.

Mr. Speaker, if we all just take our time and look at ourselves in the House of Assembly, it is because of these brave men and women that we can do this here in the House of Assembly, be able to get up and debate freely and represent people freely. Sometimes this debate in the House of Assembly gets a bit heated. Just imagine if you are in trenches in the dark and bullets are flying over your head. Just imagine the bombs going around you. That is what these men and women had to go through, Mr. Speaker, so we can practice democracy here in the House of Assembly.

It is a great tribute. I say to the minister, anything you can do to keep the memory alive is great; we support it on the Opposition side. Anything that you can do to enhance it, we

support it 100 per cent, Mr. Speaker. This is a great program to get the youth involved.

Mr. Speaker, just for a minute, if I have the time – and I think I said it last year also – we had a medal in the First World War, and it was in our family about sixty years. When we were going to find out where we were going to place it, we found out that it was the wrong person. So, we went through the archives in Ottawa and we found the person. He was in Victoria – he passed away, but his family was in Victoria, California. I had the honour of bringing down the medal to Victoria, California last summer to the family of the First World War veteran. It was a very special day for all of us, just to hear the stories of the family about their father and what they had to go through.

So anything that the minister and the government can do to recognize the brave men and women, we commend it and we support it 100 per cent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. It is important to commemorate this pivotal time in our history, but mainly to honour those who served. I am glad to see this grant program, which will encourage communities to appreciate and preserve their history. It is important that activities during Honour 100 recognize the grim reality of war, while also expressing gratitude for the sacrifices of many men and women and families, the hardships and casualties that they endured for freedom for all.

Peace, Mr. Speaker, is not just the absence of war. Peace includes a fair and just society where all can live in safety and security, where everyone has a safe place to live, food to eat, can live in dignity and respect, and has an opportunity to fully and equally participate in our society. That is the peace that we strive for.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to announce that the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission's popular youth game show, *SAFE Work NL's Who Wants to Save a Life?*, has concluded its sixth season. The show is TV-style quiz competition for junior and senior high school students from across the Province.

The game show not only educates youth on workplace health and safety, but also presents students an opportunity to win scholarships and prizes, as well as funding for their schools.

Mr. Speaker, during this final round, students from Pearce Junior High in Burin captured the junior high title and \$5,000 for their school. In addition, all five team members received an iPad Air. White Hills Academy of St. Anthony won the senior high game, with team members each receiving a \$1,000 scholarship and \$5,000 for their school. Also, completing in the final round were Canon Richards Memorial Academy of Flower's Cove and New World Island Academy of Summerford. Congratulations to the winners and the runners-up for reaching this final round of such a fun and educational competition and as well to the competing elementary schools who participated in the exhibition rounds.

Mr. Speaker, *SAFE Work NL's Who Wants to Save a Life?* was initiated by the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission in 2008, in partnership with the Department of Education. It is great initiative aimed at increasing youth awareness about preventing injuries and illnesses and avoiding potential hazards while at work.

According to the commission, over the past five years, the number of young workers injured on the job has decreased by 30 per cent. This is a positive trend which speaks to the emerging culture of enhanced safety in Newfoundland and

Labrador. To date, over 25, 000 students from more than 100 schools Province-wide have participated in the game show.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating all competitors this season. For more information on the game show, visit SAFE Work NL's Web site at www.safeworknl.com. This year's season will air Province-wide on Rogers Television this fall.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I would like to thank the minister for an advance of his statement. Mr. Speaker, this is certainly a good initiative. I know from my past life, before getting into politics, as a safety practitioner myself, that one of the most at-risk groups in the workplace is young workers. I think teaching the kids the importance of safety at a young age is a positive initiative to enshrine that culture of safety and hopefully prevent accidents when they enter the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate all participants and winners from the various schools involved. I know my colleague from The Straits – White Bay North actually did a member's statement about students in his district who participated and did so well.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is a great initiative. I appreciate the Ministerial Statement here today. I look forward to more Ministerial Statements from the Minister of Service NL when it comes to the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission when it comes to health and safety. I would like to hear more statements about things such as what his department is doing about the high levels of silica dust at IOC, and to talk about the little to no action that has been taken with recommendations from the Workers Comp review.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Maybe he can talk about the backlog in appeals (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The member's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I too thank the minister for his statement. Congratulations to the students from Pearce Junior High in Burin, White Hills Academy in St. Anthony, Canon Richards Memorial Academy of Flower's Cove, and New World Island Academy of Summerford. It is wonderful to see these teams in competition. I am sure there were many others who were involved.

It is progress to know that the number of young workers injured on the job has decreased by 30 per cent. However, the statistics from Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission also say that every day in Newfoundland and Labrador two young workers are injured on the job. That is still too many.

Prevention is the key, as most injuries happen to new workers in their first three months on the job. Being trained on the job during those first three months is extremely important. Most injuries take place in the service industry where young workers start out as store clerks, table servers, or cooks. While these contests are extremely important and I think they need to continue, we also need more emphasis on workplace education, both in the public and in the workplace itself.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FRENCH: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this hon. House to recognize National Police Week in Canada which runs from May 11-17. Police

Week provides us with an opportunity to acknowledge the tireless efforts made by the members of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police toward making our communities as safe as possible.

Being a police officer is often difficult work, requiring strength of character and immense dedication. However, having spoken to officers from both police services since becoming the Minister of Justice, I can also confirm that it is very rewarding work as well.

Police Week is not simply about recognizing the services that our law enforcement officials provide; it is also about celebrating the relationship between police and community. Every day, officers work to establish ties in the community and the relationships that develop with residents of all ages are important for improving safety and quality of life.

Over the past few days, both the RNC and the RCMP have been engaged in a number of activities across the Province to promote National Police Week. On Monday, I attended a cake cutting ceremony to launch the celebrations at St. Francis of Assisi School in Outer Cove and I thank the students and staff for being so welcoming. Other activities this week include a distracted driving display at the Avalon Mall, a crime prevention lunch, and the citizen's recognition awards. I encourage everyone to come out and participate in these events.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I had the honour of attending the International Peace Officers' Memorial Service at the Seventh Day Adventist Church in St. John's. At the ceremony, we commemorated those police and peace officers who have died in the line of duty in this Province, reflected on the unfortunate loss of life and celebrated the work they have carried out. Their ultimate sacrifice will never be forgotten.

The provincial government is committed to supporting our police services. Since 2004, we have invested approximately \$1 billion in policing in Newfoundland and Labrador and Budget 2014 includes approximately \$5 million in additional funding. Through this investment, the RNC will grow by twenty new recruits by 2016-2017 and the RCMP will hire five new

officers this year for Labrador. Budget 2014 also includes additional funding to support the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit, Newfoundland and Labrador, a unit which combats organized crime, child exploitation, and illegal drugs.

On behalf of the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, I congratulate all our law enforcement officials on a successful Police Week and I extend the most sincere thank you to them for the work they do in making Newfoundland and Labrador the best place in which to live, work, and raise a family.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

This morning's event was indeed a moving event at the Seventh Day Adventist Church with so many police officers and peace officers from all branches in attendance. Mr. Speaker, clearly, we ought not to lose sight of the sacrifices made by these officers.

Mr. Speaker, the minister needs to do more than lip service. I understand it is Police Week, I understand he should cut ribbons and cut cakes and have photo-ops and whatever, but the police need more backup from the Minister of Justice. The Minister of Justice is the boss of the Director of Public Prosecutions and I will call upon him immediately to tighten up on bail, tighten up on free weekends in and out of the jail, and implement one of the recommendations of former Chief Justice Antonio Lamer who said: assign senior prosecutors on complex investigations with police officers so we get accurate information for convictions.

So while I congratulate the minister on his new role – and he said he had only been on the job for a few days; he said that today to a Pastor at the church – I would encourage him to speak with the Director of Public Prosecutions and try

to reduce street crime through toughening up on bail, reducing weekends, and implementing the recommendations of the Lamer Inquiry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. On behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, I thank the women and men of the RNC and the RCMP who have dedicated their lives to helping us all live in peace, safety and security. I honour those who have lost their lives in service; they sacrificed much.

Today we also celebrate the great gains each of the services have made in training in mental health intervention and domestic violence, and the excellent work they do by working in collaboration with the greater community.

A shining example of that is the crucial role the police played in the development of the Family Violence Intervention Court. Every member knew the value of the court as a successful tool to deal with the complex issues of family violence and they know first-hand the damage it has caused by cutting this court.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before I begin Question Period today, I would like to recognize the Member for Humber West. We are glad to see you back, Sir. We have been thinking about you and your family the last few days.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, in government's letter confirming the cancellation of the contract with Humber Valley Paving, the issue of warranty is raised.

I ask the Premier: In general, how does warranty work on a government contracting job?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the Department of Transportation and Works any contract that goes out has a warranty attached to it. Normally, it is a two-year warranty on the roadwork.

With this particular contract, when the contract was terminated, the warranty work does carry on for the two-year period.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, in normal practice what contractors are telling us is that warranty is usually provided by the bond and it is usually kept in place for the twenty-four months after the work is complete; however, with this contract, as we know, Humber Valley Paving was released from that bond.

I ask the minister: With the bonds released, what warranty does government have on the contract that has been recently finalized and terminated to Humber Valley Paving?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, with this particular contract, there was a performance bond there which if the work was not completed, that is what the bond would

have covered. In the stipulations that we have negotiated with HVP in this particular case, the warranty work would be covered by the company outside of the bond.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, bonds are also – and the minister used those words – like an insurance and, of course, in this case they are held outside the company to protect Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. They are most often called upon if a company goes bankrupt.

I ask the minister: If Humber Valley Paving indeed went bankrupt, what warranty do we have in this case to protect Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to go back to where I went last week. In the negotiations to terminate this contract, the mutual agreement to terminate the contract, the bonds are part of the contract, so we agreed mutually to terminate the contract. The purpose of terminating the contract was to get the work completed.

We have an arrangement, an agreement, with Humber Valley Paving that they will honour their warranty upon the work that they completed – the 60 per cent. If I did not terminate the contract, it would have meant at least one more season before we would have been able to get the work on the Trans-Labrador Highway, the sixty kilometres, completed.

It was in the best interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to terminate that contract.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, what I am talking about here is the bond in place to protect the warranty that you said is held and Humber Valley Paving has agreed to do. Why did you cancel the bond if you are indeed concerned about the warranty?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are not concerned about the warranty. We have an arrangement, an agreement, in writing with the Humber Valley Paving. In the letter of termination of a contract, we have an agreement that the warranty will be covered. We are not concerned about the warranty.

What we were concerned about – my major concern and the concern of the department – was to get the job finished on time and on budget. In order to do that, we reached a mutual agreement to terminate the contract so that we could enter into a new contract, re-tender the work, and get the work finished on time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister is already on record as saying that most of the work that has been done on this file with Humber Valley Paving has been verbally; there is not a lot of documentation.

In this particular case, is this a written agreement that you have in place for the warranty on that road?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

It is a written document. The hon. member, the Leader of the Opposition, has a copy of the letter of termination and it is actually stated right in the letter of termination that the warranty will be covered for two years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: What it says here is that Humber Valley Paving would honour that warranty. You put a bond in place in case a company does not make it, in case a company goes bankrupt. In this case here what the minister is saying today, if Humber Valley Paving goes bankrupt, the warranty would not be in place.

Is that correct, I ask the minister?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is a little bit inappropriate that an assumption would be made by the Leader of the Opposition that a company is going into bankruptcy here. We are dealing with one particular contract. There are many other contracts with Humber Valley Paving.

To make an assumption that this company is going into bankruptcy for the simple fact that they wanted to terminate a contract that they felt, economically, they were not able to complete, I think that is the wrong assumption. We were not assuming, and we are still not assuming as a government that a company is going into bankruptcy here. We simply terminated one particular contract.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: I ask the minister: In normal circumstances, do you keep bonds in place to protect the warranty for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I specify the performance bond is in case the work is not completed and that is when you would go after the performance bond. The warranty work is there and it is part of the contract, that the warranty is covered for two years. It is the company that carries liability insurance and insurances to cover those warranties.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Contractors are telling us that normally you keep the bonds in place as part of the warranty for twenty-four months.

Is that the case, I ask the minister?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, every contract is done up differently. You negotiate a contract and the bonds are put in place. As I stated earlier this week, in this particular contract there were three different bonds. There is a bid bond, there is a performance bond, and then there is a labour and materials bond. What we have now with the termination of the contract is that we have put a guarantee in place from the company that the work would be guaranteed. We have our guarantee there, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: I ask the minister: In normal circumstances why do you keep other contractors' bonds, keep them in place for the warranty? Why do you do it for some companies and not this company?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I find that the Leader of the Opposition tries to mix words around. As we found out today, sometimes you have to apologize because they slip words in there very quickly.

Every contract is dealt with differently. Every contract is negotiated differently. Bonds are put in place with contracts for different reasons. In this particular contract, when we agreed mutually to terminate the contract, we also put in place a guarantee that the work would be guaranteed and under warranty for the two-year period.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: I ask the minister: In the past, have you ever kept bonds in place to protect the warranties on roadwork that has been done in Newfoundland and Labrador? Have you ever done that in the past I ask the minister, yes or no?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, again every contract that the government, through the Department of Transportation and Works, negotiates, we negotiate on different terms. That is part of getting the best deal for the people of

Newfoundland and Labrador. With every contract, there are different types of attachments.

I cannot speak for what happened in the department before I was there. I am sure there are times when bonds were kept. With this particular contract, the department made sure that we had the warranty in place. It was there when they started the job. When we mutually terminated the contract, we also have the warranty in place and guaranteed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: Given the fact that he said that this is a written document, a written agreement on the warranty if he would indeed table that warranty, that agreement, into this House of Assembly?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Speaker, again we are being asked to table another piece of paper. The Auditor General has been called in. We have agreed to call in the Auditor General. I certainly have nothing to hide. I feel that everything has been done above board in this particular negotiation. The department is quite happy.

We have professionals in the department, Mr. Speaker. They have done a very professional, excellent job. I am a little disturbed with the way that the Opposition questioned the professionalism of the employees within the department. When the Auditor General comes in – he has requested everything concerned to this file from the start to the termination –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MCGRATH: When the Auditor General is finished his report, we will be more than happy to table whatever is not sensitive.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, this is not about the AG. This is not about the work that is done with the great staff at Transportation and Works. It is not about that at all. What it is about, however, though, is that we have had the Premier, we have had the minister who have agreed to table documents in this House of Assembly. This was a contract that took eight days to cancel – eight days. It has now taken ten days, we have been asking for this documentation which this government has agreed to release.

Why is it, it has taken so long to release this documentation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I just said, we have agreed to bring in the Auditor General. I have welcomed the Auditor General into my department. I have absolutely nothing that I do not mind disclosing, but I think the Auditor General has the utmost respect on this side of the House. I would assume that he has the respect on the other side of the House. Let the Auditor General do his job. Once we have the Auditor General's report, as I said, I am more than happy to provide the Opposition with whatever material they like as long as it is not sensitive.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, there have been comments made and agreements to release documentation in this House since they have announced the AG coming in here.

I ask the minister: Why did you change your mind today and say now the people of this Province will have to wait until the AG does his report?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I believe the Leader of the Opposition was asking for a document that dealt with a warranty from the company, and of course he has already read from that document, it is the same document. Mr. Speaker, in addition, that document was tabled earlier. It is the termination agreement, the settlement.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the request we have already undertaken; we have undertaken, Mr. Speaker, to provide the correspondence. You asked for correspondence involving the extension of the contract. We will table that. This information is going to the Auditor General's department, and there have been contacts from lawyers concerned about privacy breaches and the release of confidential information. There has also been an ATIPP request.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that the documentation will all be released, both to the Auditor General and to the House of Assembly at the appropriate time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As part of those reports, too, was certainly analysis of 60 per cent of the work, and for the value to the Province, too, of course.

Yesterday, the minister admitted that it is difficult for subcontractors to recoup money

when they are owed. He said: Putting your trust in another company is part of doing business.

I ask the Premier: Do you agree with such callous remarks in protection of our subcontractors; and, how is it that small businesses are supposed to get paid for the work they have done?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, we have a law in this Province that is meant to protect people who do work as subcontractors, as material supply people, and to labour people. It is called the Mechanics' Lien Act. That is what it is. That act is there. As I said in this House the other day, if somebody provides labour, if somebody provides materials, if somebody provides work, they can just give a notice of lien to the government and they have a lien against the mechanics' lien holdback, which, as the minister said, under the 60 per cent of the contract is about \$1.1 million or \$1.2 million. That is there.

In addition, one thing I did not say yesterday, but if there is a subcontract the subcontractor has thirty days from the completion or abandonment of his particular subcontract to give notice of the lien. When the hon. the Leader of the Opposition talks about not knowing the general contract, you do not have to know the general contract; you have to know your contract (inaudible) –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, certainly there is mutual respect in this House for the role of the Auditor General. We have an ATIPPA response that shows government spent \$84 million on consultants. All of this money was excluded

from the Public Tender Act and just four months ago the Auditor General questioned government's use of external consultants, saying it is a more costly option.

I ask the minister: Why did you spend \$84 million in one year on consultants, which the AG has said is a more costly option?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We certainly do value the great public service that our public servants provide, but, Mr. Speaker, there are certain times when a specific skillset is needed. There are certain times when things like dam engineering needs to be done and global advice on petroleum needs to be done.

Mr. Speaker, we went out and hired specific training, specialized training for foster care. We hired a group to do a specialized piece of work around foster care recruitment, which resulted in 146 new placements. All of these contracts were done for very good reason. They work hand in hand with our public servants.

Mr. Speaker, again, if she could highlight one specific issue that she has an issue with that she would not have done, I would be happy to address that, but it is ones that we stand with.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, everyone remembers the government did not follow the external consultant's guideline when they hired a former PC candidate to do a \$150,000 contract. All of this falls outside of the Public Tender Act, which government still has not reformed.

I ask the minister: When will we finally see the long-promised reforms to the Public Tender Act? Will they include provisions for hiring external consultants?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, procurement reform is a priority of this government. We have initiated a few projects – a special procurement project recently, last year, where we have seen significant savings. We initiated an RFP process to look at how we can procure goods and services, and we got some learning from that.

We have a lot of work done. The work is almost complete on the new act. We have it in our Blue Book, Mr. Speaker. We put it in place here a couple of years back. We are committed to bring the new procurement reform act to the floor of this House when it is ready, and I look forward to that day.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the minister: Will she table in this House all of the consultants and contracts that make up the \$84 million?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, today we see that they have an issue with external contracts. Only a week or two ago in this House we saw that they had an issue with internal staff doing oversight around Muskrat Falls and they wanted it to go to external contract.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, that is one position last week, another position this week.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS JOHNSON: I am not sure, maybe the leader of the party can clarify –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS JOHNSON: –which side she is on in any particular given day. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the various departments have no issue at all. It is public information in terms of what tenders were done. We would be happy, as all the ministers would be happy, to table that information.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, as the minister knows, this spending amount under the \$84 million did not go through the Public Tender Act. We would like to ask – and I would like to ask – for a list of those contracts and contractors to be tabled in this House.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, again, it seems as if they have an issue with this type of spending. Let me highlight for the House some of the other contracts that were done, and we would be happy to table them. Sometimes you need to go outside to get expertise and they do work hand in hand with our officials.

When you look at Labrador West, there was a medical audit done, Mr. Speaker. Is that something that she would not have done? When you look at forest inventory and aerial photography assessments, is that something that she would not have done? When you look at

dam engineering and expertise around how to properly protect people who live in those communities and areas around dams, is that something that she would not have done?

If she can give her specific issue and we will table them, then I would be happy. It is really important for them to highlight what they would not have done because we believe in what we did do.

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 of Finance, it is easy to talk about all of the things and say what we would not have done. We want to know all of them so we can decide for ourselves which ones we would not have done.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to a lack of planning by the former Eastern School District –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LANE: – under the direction of the Department of Education we have seen St. Peter's Elementary specialty teaching areas systematically chopped into pieces to a point where children are eating lunch at their desk, doing music and gym classes in the cafeteria. The so-called solution proposed by the new hand-picked board will see this practice continue at St. Peter's, will likewise see Newtown Elementary chopped up to the detriment of students.

I ask the minister: Is this what he and his government call providing a quality education for our children?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, our view of quality education is the millions and millions of dollars

we have invested since 2003 in school infrastructure, in adding teaching resources back, investing Safe and Caring Schools, and all kinds of other initiatives to support the curriculum in the schools.

Specific to his issue, Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure the member that I am very much aware of what is happening. I am being hounded, as a matter of fact, by the Member for Mount Pearl North who has had repeated meetings with me and telephone calls on this issue. I can assure the member that we met just this morning with the school board and we have had discussions with members of the community. All of these individuals are approaching me with their concerns and wanting to sit down and talk about it. Unlike the member, I might add, who has never asked me about the issues, never written me an e-mail, who has only ever raised the issue in this House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, I have raised this issue in the House on numerous occasions. I have asked questions. I have presented petitions, and if the minister would like for me to put out another public meeting and invite him to come talk to parents, I am more than happy to do so.

Mr. Speaker, last week I met with concerned parents affected by the reorganization of the Mount Pearl school system. They expressed anger, frustration, and confusion over the decision imposed upon them and their children.

I ask the minister: Will he do what the former minister failed to do, and actually listen to these parents and work with them to find a better alternative than the unacceptable option presented?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: First of all, let me say, Mr. Speaker, that the former minister has shown

more leadership in his career than that hon. member ever will, as far as I am concerned.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Secondly, let me say that I am not interested at all in political posturing. So the member can stand in this House and posture around politics every single day while his colleague, who also represents the schools, has taken the time to sit with the school board and to sit with me and my officials and to sit with parents to try to find solutions. This government is about finding solutions for parents, not posturing in this House of Assembly for politics.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South, for a quick question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The member has time for one quick question.

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, seeing how the minister is so interested in doing what is right, will the minister revisit the decision made by the school board as it relates to the school system in Mount Pearl, yes or no?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the minister for a quick response.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I take my responsibilities very seriously, and I am very much aware of my responsibilities by the Schools Act. I am quite prepared, as I said to the Member for St. John's Centre a while ago, that if school councils want to meet with me, I am prepared to meet with them – but I am not prepared to overrule a school board decision.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Many seniors requiring residential care have difficulty advocating for themselves. Many of their families have difficulty advocating on their behalf.

I ask the Minister of Health and Community Services: When will government provide patient advocates for long-term care residents?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I thank the member opposite for bringing up this very important topic here in the House of Assembly. We take long-term care, it has been a very important matter for this government. We conducted very extensive consultations which resulted in a ten-year strategy, which was announced by this government in 2012. It is a ten-year strategy around providing services and supports to seniors throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, including the provisions of long-term care.

Mr. Speaker, with long-term care as well, we have made significant investments throughout this Province in the infrastructure needs, in the staffing needs, in providing the facilities, equipment, programs, and opportunities for seniors throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. I can tell you we make no apologies for that. We are quite pleased with the work we have done and quite proud of the work we are doing for seniors.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, no patient advocates.

The Department of Health and Community Services has a pilot project using for-profit personal care homes for Level III and IV seniors who need high levels of care. Across the country studies show that public and non-profit facilities have the best average record of quality care for seniors.

I ask the minister: Why has this government decided to turn Level III and Level IV nursing home care into a for-profit business?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I always try to be respectful in this House, and I will make my best efforts to do that again, because in the preamble of the question that the member opposite is posing to me she is explaining that we are looking at a pilot project – because we are quite willing to look at new ways of conducting business. We are quite willing to look at ways to create efficiencies and better services that we can provide to the people of the Province. On the other hand, she seems to be advocating that we should not try new ways of doing things. So I am not sure which way the member opposite wants us to do it. I am sure when she rises again she will address that.

I think it is very important for us to be open to new ways to conduct business. When a pilot project is carried out it is done so, so that we can effectively look at the results and the opportunities that exist in new programs and new opportunities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, it is the for-business aspect of this that I have a problem with.

Mr. Speaker, experts are saying that lack of home care in the community is a factor in the hospital bed shortage and backups in the ER; yet, this government chose to delay reviews of

the Home Support Program that was supposed to be done last year.

I ask the minister: When will the Request for Proposals for the home care review be put out?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If I may address another part of her earlier question when she asserted that we are using personal care homes for Level III and Level IV, Mr. Speaker, that is not right. The pilot project is for Level II plus, which is not for people who are considered to be Level III and IV as well.

The pilot project is one, as they say, that is being utilized, addressed and delivered in a way that we can look at new opportunities for us to deliver better programs and services to seniors as well. We do that in a number of ways, including the address of RFPs, which the member opposite is asking about right now. We look at all of those opportunities and we will continue to do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last night at a forum in St. John's, concerned citizens called for government to ban Tordon 101 from being used in this Province.

Will government ban this chemical from use?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Tordon 101 has been used for decades in Newfoundland and Labrador and throughout Canada. It is registered for use in Canada by Canada's Pest Management

Regulatory Agency. Mr. Speaker, we go by the guidelines of Health Canada. We actually exceed some of the safety standards that are established by Health Canada. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with our counterparts through Health Canada to ensure that anything we do in Newfoundland and Labrador meets the safety standards.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, Tordon 101 is a chemical of choice. It seems to be used for clearing the right-of-way for the power cables from Muskrat Falls to Soldiers Pond.

Does the minister think that the spraying of 1,100 kilometres of the route with a toxic chemical will have no side effects on the people or the environment of the Province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, Tordon 101 has been used for decades in Newfoundland and Labrador. We will continue to use that product as long as it is registered and considered safe as we work with our counterparts at Health Canada. Mr. Speaker, as I said, even the safety standards established by Health Canada, we exceed those standards here in Newfoundland and Labrador under the regulations we have in place.

Also, Mr. Speaker, anybody who is an operator who uses this pesticide is also a licenced operator in Newfoundland and Labrador and has to follow all the rules and regulations as set down.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, this chemical is too dangerous for use – too dangerous. How dangerous does a chemical have to be before the government decides to ban it for use in the Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, I do not consider myself an expert in chemicals and the use of chemicals, nor do I think the hon. member is any more qualified than I am to make those determinations. As a government, we are more than willing to work with our officials within government who are considered the experts and as well our counterparts within Health Canada who make these regulations and the safety standards.

Mr. Speaker, I think we have to respect the people who do this type of work, who provide the advice and the information to Health Canada and to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. We will respect their work. We will accept the safety standards, and I guarantee we will work within the safety standards that are established.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East, a quick question with no preamble.

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, there are good corporate citizens in this Province –

MR. SPEAKER: No preamble, please.

MR. MURPHY: – that only use mechanical brush clearing. Why doesn't the government stick to mechanical brush clearing as well?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation for a quick response.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, we will continue to use pesticides that are deemed safe and within the safety standards that have been established.

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.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

MR. SPEAKER: This being Private Members' Day, I call upon the Member for Virginia Waters to introduce the motion that is on the Order Paper in her name.

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

It gives me great pleasure to rise in this hon. House today. I gave notice earlier this week about a private member's resolution, which reads:

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador communities face very real challenges due to population decline and population aging; and

WHEREAS the Province can no longer rely on employment alone to successfully compete and attract and retain skilled workers needed for growth in global environment; and

WHEREAS the significant economic, social and cultural contributions of newcomers to our Province are well-recognized; and

WHEREAS international migrants, including immigrants, temporary workers and international students will continue to play an increasingly important role in helping to sustain and grow a diverse and prosperous future; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has among the lowest newcomer attraction and retention rates in the country;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this House of Assembly urge government to implement a Worker Recruitment and Protection Act similar to Nova Scotia or Manitoba which would require an employer registration process as well as a licensing requirement for companies/individuals recruiting foreign workers.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker has acknowledged the Member for Virginia Waters to introduce a motion that is in her name. I would ask all other members to remain silent while she does that, please.

MS C. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This motion is seconded by the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

I am sure there are many individuals watching the proceedings today who represent the immigrant community in our Province. On April 14, I wrote the minister indicating to him questions that I had about a worker protection act. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians must always be the first people to get the available jobs in this Province, but we cannot ignore that there are skilled gaps that need to be filled to ensure businesses can continue to operate, businesses that also employ Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first. We must be open to new Canadians from all countries, all religions, and all cultures. This includes welcoming them here to mentor and train local people so we can expand our skill and knowledge base.

I am proud in my own business that we have been able to continue to employ Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and pay taxes, and in times when other operators have struggled to do so. I am proud that I am able to bring in temporary foreign workers in

management roles that could not be filled to train my staff so they could step into those higher paying positions.

That said, I have long been an advocate for the rights of everyone, particularly those who choose to work and live in our Province, which is what this private member's resolution aims to do: protect everyone.

My request to the minister was that the Province implement active and progressive measures, such as new legislation to protect the rights of temporary foreign workers. These workers are at significant risk of abuse and violation of basic rights and compounding that is the lack of available settlement and integration services to better assist temporary foreign workers in their new workplaces and communities.

Manitoba has been one of the most successful provinces to increase their immigration levels and has taken action to introduce legislation to protect the rights and well-being of temporary foreign workers who work in their province. Nova Scotia has followed suit.

Although my letter to the minister on April 14 was not my first act of advocacy, I met with a former Minister of the Department of Advanced Education and Skills last spring where I advocated that this government bring in this type of legislation. I also met with officials of the department.

On May 5, I received a response from the minister in which he said: Our government recognizes that immigration is an important tool in meeting labour market needs in this Province. He went on to say that through PNP, temporary foreign workers who meet certain eligibility criteria can transition from temporary to permanent status, and many have done so. This reflects the Province's long-standing recognition of temporary foreign workers as a pool of potential permanent immigrants.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation has two critical components: number one, employers must register before applying for a labour market opinion or when they make a job offer; secondly, there is a requirement for those companies and individuals who are operating in the area of international recruiting to be licensed

and approved by the government so there will not be situations where companies are not held accountable for protecting people, because people matter. It is the responsibility of this government and this House to make sure that people are protected.

Government is responsible to ensure that companies are operating within the rules. As the minister, I am sure, is very aware, labour legislation comes under the purview of the provincial government. It is our responsibility to protect the human rights for all individuals and protect all of our people.

There are thousands of people working in this Province in the offshore sector, in agriculture, in hospitality, and in management. There is a very wide range of NOC codes represented by the people who are working in our Province. The passive approach this government has had to immigration, immigrants, and people who work in our Province is not cutting the standard. These people have no or very limited access to information and it has been proven that once they get the information they will be their best advocates.

The TFW Program, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, is about people. As the minister so rightly suggested in his letter to me on May 5, this is a multi-department issue that has many implications, particularly in the area of Advanced Education and Skills and Service NL. I would ask the minister about a position known as the director of multiculturalism or potentially an assistant deputy minister for the division of immigration. These roles are critical to ensure there is clear access across all departments for an advocate who is championing the issues related to immigration.

I clearly understand, and I am sure the minister does as well, as I said earlier, that government owns the accountability for labour standards for everyone working in this Province, including the people who are working here from other countries. I will congratulate the Minister of Service NL for this week's conference being hosted by the Newfoundland and Labrador Occupational Health and Safety Association, the fifty-eight annual conference, where on Friday I am pleased to be speaking in the beautiful community of Gander around the challenges

around a multicultural workforce, and the things that employers need to do to ensure the safety of every single one of their employees.

Mr. Speaker, this private member's resolution is important not only to the people who choose to live in our Province, it is important to the people who choose to live in our Province and want to stay for a long period of time.

This government, back in 2007, launched a strategy called the Provincial Immigration Strategy. That strategy identified and said – this is a quote from the minister at the time – “Other jurisdictions in Canada and around the world are aggressively pursuing increased levels of immigration to counter the impact of aging populations and low birth rates”. The minister at that time went on to say “The strategy is clearly needed; this government recognizes the challenges arising from changes in the make-up of our population. We are aging rapidly with fewer children being born. We need people if we are to grow the Province, attract investment and address rapidly emerging skill shortages in the economy. Our long-term prosperity as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians must include measures to attract and retain a greater share of the total number of immigrants who choose Canada as their home.”

The strategy had eighteen goals and was designed by this government to show a commitment to immigration and commitment to encouraging and welcoming people to come to our Province. I will read a quote now from an article that was printed in the local paper at the time. “Employers and our province as a whole have something to gain from a proactive, strategic, concerted effort to attract newcomers to our province, retain them and guide their effective integration into our society and workforce. It's in our best interest to have a plan to facilitate this, as opposed to having no plan at all for how we're going to approach and handle immigration.”

Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons I entered politics is that I believe people deserve to have a voice, when maybe they do not. This hon. House provides an opportunity for me to give voice to people who deserve the same consideration as they work hard in our Province, as they enable our economy, as they diversify in

the thousands and thousands of different jobs they do from health care to agriculture to offshore oil, to engineering, to teaching, all of those skills. They deserve protection in our workplace the same as anybody else.

This private member's resolution is designed as a small step in what should be a long-term strategy. A strategy I will be happy to work on with my colleagues on this side of the House when we are elected in a general election to that side of the House. It is important that we have a community that is welcoming and open, and that the right investments are made in the right places to enable our economy to continue to diversify while we protect people.

Two simple things we are asking for: number one, every single company that is intending to ask for an LMO be registered; and number two, any company that operates in this community of ours – Newfoundland and Labrador, our wonderful Province – be required to be licenced to operate in the area of international recruiting so that the workers as well as the businesses who operate and use the Temporary Foreign Worker Program are protected.

This is a very important conversation for me, and a very important conversation for a lot of people in this Province. I know the minister thinks very clearly that this is an important issue for our Province. I look forward to his comments as we continue this debate this afternoon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, I am really happy actually to take my place in the House and speak to this private member's resolution here today, as a person who has done international business back before my day in politics for about twelve or fourteen years.

I understand the importance of integration. I understand the importance of people coming to

our country, coming to our Province and strengthening our culture. I have a number of them who live in my community, both professional and in the skilled trade areas, and various other occupations as well.

As well, I want to make sure that community understands, and understands fully, that this government is certainly engaged in regard to, number one, the importance of the program. The federal program, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, along with the PNP and the Expression of Interest program as well.

I have in the past, since about October, 2013 – I have had several conversations with Minister Kenney and I have had the opportunity to write him on a couple of occasions in regard to my concerns in trying to strengthen the programs and for the rights of people who come here to make this Province their home. As a matter of fact, I was listening carefully to the hon. member across the way saying that she would like to see them be able to stay here for a long time.

My opinion is if they come here and there is a need for those particular workers in our Province, in Canada, well I want them to stay forever. I want them to become Canadians the same as me. I want to stand shoulder to shoulder with them in regard to the society we have here in Canada, and I am absolutely sure they will strengthen our culture and strengthen the society that we live in. They will bring a new flavour, a different perspective in regard to the way we have lived in the past and the way we will live in the future, and I firmly, firmly believe that.

As well, in regard to the responsibilities, there is a responsibility of government in regard to the protection and the well-being of these particular people who come here to work and avail of the opportunities we have. Yes, we have to protect the rights of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and make sure they come first. I think each and every country around the world understands that. As a matter of fact, they practice that in their own countries as well if we would reverse the flow. It works both ways, and that is the way it is.

As well, as in Lab West – and I have mentioned a number of occasions that the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, taking that one as an example, is very important to Lab West because of the pressure points there in regard to a growing economy. Nobody, I do not believe, in our Province – I hope nobody in our Province – would ever question if there is a need that we should have the opportunity to bring good people to our Province to strengthen us, not support us, but to strengthen us as a society. That is very important to me.

As well, in regard to that responsibility, there is a responsibility, too, of the employer. There has to be. In order for any program to work and work efficiently, there has to be that support as well. It is incumbent on employers right across the country not to abuse the program and make the program bad for others. We have people and employers in our country who certainly need those workers. It is incumbent on them to have those workers in order to make their businesses successful. I see that as a component that is really, really important.

As well, it is important that the employer, in regard to the regulations the federal government, the federal minister, and the department would place around a certain program, adhere to those regulations and the criteria set to that. It is really important because if one or the other abuses it for whatever reason they may, to take advantage of the program or whatever it may be, it makes it bad for the rest and that is not good. I see a program that, if we all work together, this particular program, our PNP, and our overall Immigration Strategy is really important to the Province, Mr. Speaker.

As a matter of fact, we are having good results over the last number of years. This year's numbers in regard to our PNP and immigration overall are actually going to be unprecedented in regard to the number of people who are going to make their home in Newfoundland and Labrador, going through the system, and becoming Canadians, just like us, Mr. Speaker. I welcome them to our country and hopefully I can attend some of the ceremonies that will happen over the next year or so.

Mr. Speaker, in regard to my chats, as a matter of fact, I have a phone call at his request and a

conversation is going to happen this Tuesday evening. I believe the call from Minister Kenney is going to come in at about 5:00 o'clock or 5:30 o'clock on Tuesday evening. It is a very important call because I have some concerns in regard to the suspension of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. The simple reason is, to me, it is nearly like, because there is an issue, he has actually killed an ant with a sledgehammer. He should not do that. In my mind, that has to be flexible because it puts a number of things at play, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that is put at play is the anxiety within the workforce itself, in that these people have come to our country, come to our Province with complete faith in our society, complete faith in our system and in our government and now as their visas run out, they may very well have to leave before it is straightened up again. I believe that should not apply as a blanket piece right across the country, in a certain sector of our industries. I do not think that is right. I think people and persons and groups that might abuse the system should carry that load and the rest should certainly be recognized as leaders within our country in regard to that particular system. I firmly believe that in my heart.

I will reference a few things as I go through in regard to the different components of our program. For instance, we have a lot of foreign students here now. The other thing that I would like to say is that sometimes when we stereotype or some people would stereotype, they would see somebody from another country, from another culture, they right away think that that person is a temporary foreign worker or something of that sort. That is not true because many of them are Canadians; they are Canadians just like us. They have achieved that. They have come here and made it their homes. That is really important to recognize as well. What I am saying to the public is do not jump to a conclusion because it is not really true. I want to point that out as well.

Then in regard to our education system, there are foreigners from all over the world coming here for quality education. I said yesterday I think it was when I stood in my place in the House and I spoke to the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador, some people might want to think that people are coming here just because the cost

is less. That is not true at all. As a matter of fact, that is the least of the things that are taken into account in regard to why they come here. They are coming here for the quality of the education itself. They are coming for the culture. They are coming for the welcome mat that we put out to the people all over the world to come and join us as a society. I firmly believe that as well. We do that each and every day.

As well, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I have addressed heavily with Minister Kenney, and also with one of the other ministers – I believe his name is Chris Alexander – that it is really important that we have a really strong settlement program. We have to have the proper supports, we have to have the proper mechanisms in place to make sure that the transition from one culture into our culture, bringing the components of their culture into ours, is seamless, Mr. Speaker. I really think that is important as well, that we have to have those supports. As a matter of fact, we have a couple in the Province right now. There is one really strong out in the area of Carbonear – Harbour Grace in regard to that settlement issue. I commend them for the work that they do and the things that they provide to the people who would choose Newfoundland and Labrador as a place to reside and live.

We have, in Lab West, if I could reference LabWest – and the minister will speak, the MHA for Lab West, later in the afternoon. I have to mention that when I go to Lab West, which is very often, actually, in regard to my role as the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, and I meet those people who are making that part of Newfoundland and Labrador their world. Some of them, as a matter of fact, have gone so far as starting a family and actually marrying Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That is an absolutely fabulous thing.

So, I am referencing a lot of the good things in regard to the programs that we have in our TFW program. Again, it is a federal program, and I just want to caution people in regard to the responsibilities and the criteria set to that particular program. It is a federal initiative, an initiative that we as a government welcome because of its importance to our growing economy, and the opportunity that is here. The

opportunity not only for people who will come here – and we have many skilled tradespeople that have come to avail of the work in our oil industry, that have come to work in our mining industry, they have come to work in various other skilled trades industries. There are a lot of professionals here in Newfoundland and Labrador in regard to doctors and nurses and lawyers. They have come here and made this their home.

I certainly welcome each and every one of them, but it is great to see a person that would come from a long, long, ways away. As a matter of fact, the weather is not even remotely the same. They actually love this land no differently than I do, and they make this their home, marrying Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and having a family here. I think that is really important as well to reference.

Mr. Speaker, I will not go through the numbers because I have them all in regard to the numbers of people who are here in our Province, but we can all get that online and see that. Really, that is not important. As a matter of fact, in regard to the protection, in regard to the welcome, and in regard to the importance it is just as important if we had one, as if we had 5,000.

I want to make sure that everybody in this House, everybody out there in Newfoundland and Labrador, realizes that this government has placed a focus in regard to our immigration strategy on just that. We are increasing the numbers. The people who are working in that division, if anybody has an issue in regard to moving to Newfoundland and Labrador, an issue when they get here, please call that office because we have qualified staff there who will work with you in regard to your issue.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I would like to propose an amendment for your consideration to this private member's resolution. I would move, seconded by the Member for Labrador West, that the resolution clause of the private member's resolution now before the House be amended by deleting the words "a Worker Recruitment and Protection Act similar to Nova Scotia or Manitoba" and substituting therefore the words "worker recruitment and protection legislation".

That is seconded by the Member for Grand Bank, the Minister of Education. I would like to table this for your consideration.

MR. SPEAKER: (Inaudible) amendment to the resolution proposed by the Minister for Advanced Education and Skills.

The House will now take a brief recess to consider whether the amendment is in order.

Recess

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I have considered the amendment as put forward by the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills and determined that the amendment is in order.

The hon. the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to the private member's motion put forward by the Member for Virginia Waters.

This is a very important issue when it comes to Newfoundland and Labrador, when it comes to our population and when it comes to the protection of our workers, and that includes the citizens of the Province and also international migrants, immigrants, temporary workers, international students and people who want to choose to live in Newfoundland and Labrador

When we look at the very challenges that we face in population decline and population aging, I only have to look to my very own district and we would see that The Straits – White Bay North has one of the oldest populations in the Province. Since 1992 the district itself has lost about 37 per cent of its population and that is happening across many rural areas specifically, and that creates challenges. It creates labour market challenges. Whereas we see in some of the urban centres there is a lot of robust growth and dynamics, and that is going to create challenges as well when it comes to how it has an impact on the economy and how you look at

recruiting, retaining workers, and creating economic development.

I will just say for the Great Northern Peninsula, the Nordic Economic Development Corporation and the Red Ochre Regional Economic Development Boards, the RED Boards that were cut by the government, saw the initiative and the need to look at the retention, recruitment, and attraction of workers, whether they be international workers, whether they be expats, whether they be new grads, international grads, to promote the Great Northern Peninsula and all the offerings. They created a Web site and they promoted the service offerings; they created advice for people who wanted to come and understand the services, whether it be transportation, whether it be communication services that were available and basically create a welcoming environment.

That is something when we look at an immigration strategy, the Town of St. Anthony launched an immigration portal and they have taken initiatives so that we can provide experiences and ensure that when we look at culture, when we look at multiculturalism, that we are welcoming people in to our communities. The Town of St. Anthony has taken that quite well, working with the Chamber of Commerce.

Any new employee who comes into the town who either sets up a business, works in health care, works in retail, in the hospitality sector, they are given a welcome basket; and in it, the local business community provides them with information so that everyone is well aware of the services that are offered, and that is important. We need to do that when we are looking at our aging population.

When we look at the gaps, we just cannot rely on unemployment alone to attract and retain skilled workers. It is a global environment. It is very competitive. We see this time and time again. We must be more aggressive in how we are able to fill positions, how we are able to create that long-term economic wealth for the well-being of Newfoundland and Labrador as a whole.

We had international graduate programs and different incentives that were created under the Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy, but

those went to the wayside by this government. They were cancelled or eliminated, and those types of things are just unacceptable there. There were initiatives and we see that with strategies that have taken place.

Why are we lacking when we have such an opportunity? We have such an opportunity when it comes to looking at how we protect our employees and how we make sure we are protecting residents, international students, and immigrants who are coming and wanting to choose to work in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want to make reference in particular to an opportunity we have when it comes to immigration and the Provincial Nominee Program. If we look at it in particular, Newfoundland and Labrador, our quota in that program, which is a federal program, has 300 nominees per year. It is one of the lowest in the country – one of the lowest in the country – when we have some of the greatest challenges in filling positions. We have great opportunities.

We look at places like Lab West that has robust mining activity and things happening, and there is specific expertise that is needed. It also creates other gaps and challenges when you are looking at trying to fill certain positions. It creates a mismatch, so then you may need to recruit aggressively outside to fill positions, whether they are in engineering, whether they are in the hospitality industry, or whether they are in caregiving.

This is where we have an opportunity because other jurisdictions have successfully lobbied the federal government to increase the PNP quota. We are seeing the western provinces fight to remove the cap, given that they have labour market challenges. We have very real labour market challenges here.

We have seen situations like in Happy Valley-Goose Bay that was reported in *The Aurora* where a megaproject like Muskrat Falls is employing many Canadians, but there is a lack in certain sectors so you need to look at recruiting. A program like the Temporary Foreign Worker Program may have to be utilized for local businesses to fill the human resource gaps that are there. We need to look at that.

An example in *The Telegram* on May 6 talked about an individual in Lab City. Her and her husband relied on temporary foreign workers to come to the aid of their disabled daughter because they exhaustively looked for help in the country, tried to employ people locally, and were not able to do so. These international workers who were employed through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program were reported in *The Telegram* as a godsend. These workers were working very diligently.

There are real concerns right now with the federal government, and the minister noted they will be having discussions with Minister Kenney. I hope he raises that nobody on the PNP, the Provincial Nominee Program, will be impacted by this moratorium of temporary foreign workers that is currently in place. That is creating a real anxiety with the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and for anyone who is currently under the Provincial Nominee Program. That is a real issue that people are facing.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to talk about myself in terms of I have experienced where I have worked internationally. When you work internationally sometimes you realize that if you do not have the act, the adequate legislation, and regulations that encompass that, you may not have the appropriate protections and security that you need.

This resolution that is put forward is calling for worker recruitment and protection. It is looking at other provinces similar to Nova Scotia and Manitoba that requires an employer registration process, as well as a licensing requirement for companies and individuals recruiting foreign workers. That is pretty key, because we want to make sure there is a protection in place. When we look at when people are recruiting internationally, we want to make sure that things are done adequately, and that the employees who are coming to Newfoundland and Labrador are not being taken advantage of.

We need to look at other pieces of legislation that have a standard; they have accountability put in place. If you look at Manitoba, for example, and their employer registration information, anybody wanting to recruit foreign workers in Manitoba has to register with

Employment Standards. They have the forms that are completely made available.

It talks about if people do not register the significant penalties that are there. Employers have to submit – there is a process, a labour market opinion application to the federal government without supplying a certificate of registration will be referred back to Employment Standards for registration. They have an adequate process that is put in place and if they do not do that prior, the offence of recruiting without having such a registration is subject to fines as high as \$25,000 to \$50,000.

Right now, in Newfoundland and Labrador, we do not such an act or legislation, or a regulation that would create a fine or a penalty in place so that we protect people, the workers. There needs to be a clear process, if not, you could have third parties, you could have all kinds of companies going out there recruiting. Then you could create benefits that these companies would be getting, that they should not be entitled to, that would contravene a law, but without the existence of having one then it creates a real problem. You leave a situation up for abuse where people could be taken advantage of.

I really think there needs to be standardization when we look at such a program, and we look at how we grow an economy around looking at immigration, looking at inviting new Canadians and international graduates. We have significant opportunity in Newfoundland and Labrador. Our rural communities, our rural economy, especially, can benefit from it.

I have seen it in my own district in St. Anthony, especially when we look at health care professionals who are there, the business owners who are there, that have moved to the region and have created jobs. They are certainly part of the community. We want to welcome that more because it will be a great opportunity for us to grow and also learn more about other cultures and have them part of Newfoundland and Labrador because we have significant opportunity.

I really thank the Member for Virginia Waters in putting this piece of legislation forward.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a very interesting topic here this afternoon, and one certainly close to my heart as well as the Minister Responsible for Labour Relations Agency; and relatively new at that, only a couple of weeks in, and we are talking about this here today.

I would like to provide some perspective around the resolution we are debating today. I will take about fifteen minutes to demonstrate to everyone in the House, everyone at home, and everyone up in the public gallery, that our government fully understands what is happening here, what is going on, and where we are coming from and where we are going, and we recognize the problem. We have begun to work towards solutions, and that needs to continue for sure, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition, I think they have done a pretty good job actually in framing out what the issue is in the WHEREAS parts of the resolution. So I will give them credit for that. I am not going to read it over again, but it certainly summarizes where we are today as a Province, our prosperity, the economy, the positive things that are happening here and the challenges around our labour market conditions, Mr. Speaker. I will not get into that, although it deserves to be repeated at some point in time to frame up, to those at home, exactly what we are debating this afternoon.

Again, there is really not much here I can argue with in terms of the WHEREAS piece of the private member's resolution. We agree and recognize there are significant challenges on how we are going to continue to grow our economy. If we cannot address and meet our labour market needs today and into the future, we as a Province will not succeed. We will not reach the full potential that we can reach as individuals and as a Province. We are very aware of this. We are absolutely aware of this.

Our primary focus is putting Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to work first. We all agree

with that. I think I have heard that on both sides so far. Through education and training, we need to have a skilled and trained workforce ready to seize the opportunities in front of them.

I have two daughters in university now. They are twenty-one years old. I have a seventeen-year-old son going to his graduation next week. They are planning their futures. The opportunities are out there. Our government provides the supports to make sure that they can be all they can be, through education, through student tuition fees. They are looking at different options and what they can be in their lives.

Our commitment is demonstrated in a number of ways, as the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills pointed out earlier. So I am not going to go too far down that road because I want to get to the piece that I am responsible for. Again, we recognize there are other initiatives that we need to take.

Our government has developed and is implementing an immigration strategy and has consulted on and is about to present a Population Growth Strategy to promote immigration and immigration retention in Newfoundland and Labrador. As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills last year, I had the privilege of working on that project for several months. I had the privilege of attending a couple of the sessions, and it was very interesting. I am very interested to see the outcome and see what the strategy is going to be on that first deliverable date coming in the next few weeks.

We have and will continue to encourage newcomers to come here to the Province through various means. Including, I think it was mentioned earlier, the Provincial Nominee Program; international foreign student recruitment initiatives; Memorial University, we have been very successful there are that; the Marine Institute; College of the North Atlantic as well; and the federal Temporary Foreign Worker Program, which is what we are talking about here today, more or less.

This is a federal government initiative, Mr. Speaker, and we need to recognize that. We need to note that. It came into place, I believe,

over a decade ago and it recognizes the labour shortages are real in certain parts of the country and in certain sectors of the economy. I think everybody accepts that. This is where we are today. The arguments that we need more workers and that we need to encourage newcomers to come here, live, and work are strong. We all get that. That is something we are not going to debate here this afternoon. I think we are certainly all on side.

With that we hear the stories that have come in the news in the last few weeks, allegations of abuses in various programs and issues around vulnerability of foreign workers. Those stories are indeed concerning; they are indeed disturbing at times, Mr. Speaker. We have heard stories, unfortunately, here in our own Province. Again, we need to recognize that there are certain things happening out there. We have to be aware of them and we have to be prepared to react to that, and be proactive as well.

Mr. Speaker, I believe when the federal government completes its review, and that is my belief and I think you pretty much get a sense of it, it will find that most of these incidents are isolated. I will provide a little bit of evidence of that in a few minutes, certainly for this Province. I believe they will continue to reform the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and it will continue. I think for sure that is where the government is probably going to go with this federally.

We need to note at this point in time, as well, and I have heard it mentioned before, earlier this afternoon by the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, there are responsibilities on all sides: the federal government has responsibility; the provincial government certainly has responsibilities that we take very seriously in terms of the Labour Relations Agency, which I am the Minister Responsible for; but employers need to take responsibility as well and the majority of employers out there, Mr. Speaker, are good people. They are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians making the right decisions for the right reasons, but for the situations they find themselves in, they are participating in this program, and the majority of these people are there employing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and people from away. They are good employers.

Our government, and when it comes to my responsibility as the Minister Responsible for the Labour Relations Agency, we are committed to protecting workers regardless of where they are from. No matter what corner of the earth they come from or what corner of Newfoundland and Labrador they come from, we are committed to protecting the workers and our workplaces here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is important to note, Mr. Speaker, that temporary foreign workers have the same rights and responsibilities as Canadian workers under our laws today here in this Province. They are protected under provincial labour laws including the Labour Standards Act, which I am the minister responsible of, and the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which just so happens as Minister of Service NL I am responsible for, both of which are important pieces of legislation to protect the well-being of our workers in the workplace.

Make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, government takes very seriously – very seriously – any and all allegations made by temporary foreign workers or anybody else regarding their rights. We take that very seriously here in this Province; our government takes that very seriously. We have and will continue to investigate all complaints accordingly. I would just like to talk about some of the statistics. I would like to share with everybody here to fully understand what the Labour Relations Agency does in protecting workers in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, from April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2014 – I am going to read out a few selected statistics here now – the Labour Standards Division received a total of 1,996 complaints. That is over that four-year period. There were approximately 176 complaints carried over from the previous years, for a total of a little over 2,000 – 2,172 complaints. That is for all workers in Newfoundland and Labrador. Of the 2,172 complaints, 1,769 complaints were resolved in early resolution mediation and 319 complaints were resolved through formal investigation. What I am trying to point out here is that there is legislation in place in this Province and there are actions our civil servants can take when we see something that is not

right. We are doing the work that needs to be done to protect the workers of this Province.

Here is another interesting statistic as well, Mr. Speaker, and I talked earlier about we do not think these incidents of abuse are very high in this Province. A total of four complaints were filed by temporary foreign workers for the period April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2014. The nature of complaints includes notice of termination, vacation pay, overtime, and wage protection. Of the four complaints filed by temporary foreign workers, two were resolved in the early resolution stage and two were escalated to formal investigation. Of the two escalating cases, one complaint had an investigation report issued, but the complaint was withdrawn by the complainant, and one case remains under active investigation. Again, the incident rates for these things happening in Newfoundland and Labrador are not that great. We know we need to do more, and this is the point I will probably make now in another few minutes.

Again, the bottom line here is the Labour Standards Act is strong, it has teeth, and it has served the people of the Province very well. Saying that, we are always looking to improve and modernize the legislation. I just had a scrum outside a few minutes ago on public procurement. We are always looking at ways to modernize legislation, and when we do modernize we have to make sure we have it right. This is what we are doing in this case.

We recognize that our labour legislation is in need of review and updating to meet the changing needs of our workplaces in our Province and indeed in our country. Mr. Speaker, we have not been sitting idle. The people within the Labour Relations Agency have been attuned to this situation overall in terms of the Labour Standards Act and the Temporary Foreign Worker Program for a while. They have been doing some good work around this.

They have done jurisdictional reviews to find out what is happening elsewhere. That work has been done, Mr. Speaker. I have it on my desk and I have read through it. It is very interesting, I must say. There are recommendations as well on my desk about how we are going to proceed with the legislative review process.

It has only been a few months since I have been here, Mr. Speaker, but I know they have been working on this for at least two years on this activity. Moving forward, a legislative review and the review process is going to happen and it is going to happen soon.

Mr. Speaker, we are not only talking about the Labour Standards Act; we are talking about legislation around recruitment and protection of temporary foreign workers. Again, this work has been ongoing for quite some time. The plans are in place and I have been working very closely with my officials. Every discussion we have and every briefing I have had in the last two weeks we are talking about this.

When I saw the private member's resolution on deck here and on the Order Paper on Monday I was not surprised. It has been in the media in the last little while. We have been doing the work; we are ahead of this, Mr. Speaker. Somebody could argue that perhaps we should have been doing this a while back, but that is an argument and that is a discussion for another day. We are doing the work. We have been doing the work and it is the direction we want to go in as a government.

Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of minutes left, but I just want to talk about how we are going to go about doing this work. We certainly want and we need to have a Temporary Foreign Worker Program in this Province. We understand the needs for it. We understand we need to improve our immigration attraction and retention. I think everybody understands that.

There is one overriding theme when we look to reforming legislation when it comes to these areas, when it comes to reforming legislation, and when it comes to the Labour Standards Act for instance. We need to consult with all the key stakeholders before we move forward on anything, Mr. Speaker. We are committed as a government to do that. We need to fully engage interested groups, the public, employers, employees, labour and industry, in consultations before we make decisions on which direction to go. The amendment speaks to that.

We will not be moving ahead on any legislative changes until we have heard from all the key stakeholders, so we are going to start that

process, Mr. Speaker. I will be meeting with my officials next week to continue to move ahead the work they have been doing and have been engaged in for quite some time.

We will conduct this review with the Labour Relations Agency, and while we are doing this we will continue to fulfill the mandate under the Labour Standards Act, which I referred to earlier as doing a very good job of protecting all the workers in this Province, no matter where they are from or what corner of the earth they are from. We will continue to do exactly the good work that needs to be done to make sure all workers in this Province are working in a healthy and safe environment and they are protected from any abuses that are out there.

Mr. Speaker, temporary foreign workers, foreign workers who are coming here to this Province, contributes to our society immensely. They pay their taxes. They rear their families here. They add something to our cultural identity. Our government is committed to making sure they are welcome at every step of the way, that they have the same protections of any other worker in this Province and in this country, for that matter, and we encourage them to bring their friends and bring their families, to move here, to stay here, and to put down roots here. This is our future; Newfoundland and Labrador needs more people. We know that we need to take care of our people first in order to get them trained up and skilled enough for the jobs that are available, but there are more jobs that we have for the people we have here.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to certainly vote for the amendment. I think it is a good amendment. I think there is work to be done. As Minister Responsible for the Labour Relations Agency, I am prepared to step up to the plate and do my part for the benefit of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and all new Canadians who land on our shores.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

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

I am very pleased to be able to stand today and speak to this private member's resolution regarding foreign worker recruitment and protection. On the surface it all looks very simple, but in actual fact we are dealing with something that is quite complicated.

I think we can recognize that perhaps this resolution has been brought to the floor because of situations over the last few weeks in Canada and here in Newfoundland and Labrador where abuses of the program were identified. We know specifically we have one case in this Province that is being investigated. I think that probably is what has prompted this resolution to come to the floor.

First of all, I want to express my concern about the way in which the federal government has acted because I think we do have to recognize this is a federal government program. The investigations that are going on are investigations that are being carried out by the federal government. I think we all recognize that the federal government has had a knee-jerk reaction to the abuses. I think that is something that has to be said.

I am very glad that they are investigating. The investigations are absolutely essential and I hope that if they are going to maintain this program, the program for low-skilled occupations, that the investigations will lead to improvement of the programs, but the thing is we do have people who are being affected by the knee-jerk reaction of putting a moratorium on the program before the reports are done. The moratorium means that there are foreign workers here in our country now that are in a very insecure situation with families in their home countries depending on them.

I, first of all, do want to name that injudicious act by the federal government of having this knee-jerk reaction. That is very, very disturbing. I think we need to name it and I think there may be some foreign workers here in our own Province who have been affected by that knee-jerk reaction. That is the first thing I want to comment on.

The second thing I want to comment on is what is happening with the federal government's policies because they affect us. The federal government, this very government that has put in place – or the temporary foreign workers have been there for a long time, but this federal government has been becoming very restrictive in allowing people into Canada, allowing immigrants into Canada who can become residents of Canada, permanent residents, get work permits, go on and become citizens. They are putting great limits on that so that somebody wanting to come in and ordered to do nothing but – to start at a low-skilled occupation. They themselves may have a lot of skills but are willing to start at a low-skilled occupation.

You do not get into Canada now to start at a low-skilled occupation. The restrictions on immigration have become very, very hard by this federal government. It is very interesting that at the same time they have done that, at the same time they have made it harder for people to come in as immigrants and to take up low-skilled occupations, they are opening up the Temporary Foreign Workers Program. In other words, they are saying: Well, you can come and do the low-skilled work, but we do not want you here permanently. This is the conundrum we are facing and it something we have to name. That is something this House does not have control over; it is the reality of what the federal government is doing.

We have to look at: What is it we have control over? What is it we can do? I am very disappointed with the amendment the government has put forward. I was not satisfied with the resolution because I did not think the resolution went far enough. The resolution that was put to the floor was, “that this House of Assembly urge Government to implement a Worker Recruitment and Protection Act similar to Nova Scotia or Manitoba which would require an employer registration process as well as a licensing requirement for companies/individuals recruiting foreign workers.”

Now, I thought that did not go far enough because even though it talked about the Manitoba and Nova Scotia acts talked about implementing acts similar to theirs, it then limited the vision down to nothing but employer registration and licensing. There is so much in

those two acts that would be needed that I would have hoped the resolution would have actually listed other things from those acts that would be a requirement. While I would have voted for that resolution, it would have been at the same time saying it is very limiting.

Now that the government has made an amendment, it makes it impossible to vote for because their amendment limits completely. Their amendment is “that this House of Assembly urge Government to implement worker recruitment and protection legislation which would require an employer registration process as well as a licensing requirement for companies/individuals recruiting foreign workers.” The only thing they are interested in is the licensing and the registration.

That is so limiting. It is very disturbing because licensing and registering are nothing. At least, I suppose, we would have the name of the companies that are doing the hiring, but that is so limiting. We need much more than that, and this government does not seem to realize it.

I am not comforted by the minister speaking about what else they are going to do and it is going to happen. Well, we have legislation in the House this week we have been dealing with, whistleblower legislation, that they told us for seven years was going to happen, so I cannot be comforted by this government over here saying we are starting with this and we know we are going to build. I do not trust that because their history is not very good.

What I want to do is talk about the legislation that is needed. If the Temporary Foreign Worker Program exists in this country, and it does, and if it is going to continue, then obviously people are going to use it; but we have to make sure that if they use it, it is going to be something that is also good for the people they are hiring. I want nothing more than to have people free to come to our country and to work here, to live here, and to want to become citizens of Canada. I think it is absolutely essential for our population growth that it happens. That is something, and I think some of my colleagues have mentioned it, they have been able to do in Manitoba, and do very well, where their retention rate of newcomers is 85 per cent, but

you do not get that from temporary foreign workers.

Temporary foreign workers in the category we are looking at here today, what I am looking at, temporary foreign workers under the low-skilled occupations designation, can only come for twenty-four months and they have to go back to their country. They can, while they are here, be transferred from one employer to another, but they have to go back to their country. If they decided to apply to try to get into Canada, they cannot use those twenty-four months as something that gets looked at as a positive that helps them come into Canada if they wanted to do it. The limitations of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program with regard to the future of people who are in it are problematic. If it exists, then we have to make sure we have what is needed to protect the workers.

In Manitoba, for example, and the minister has heard me say this prior to today when I have raised it in the House last week, but I am going to do it again because it is so essential, they have absolute protection with regard to migrant workers, and that is the category under which temporary foreign workers fall. In Manitoba, they have a special investigations unit that is under their labour standards legislation, and this unit is there for one reason only: the unit is there to protect migrant workers. It is not complaint based, as our labour standards are; it is proactive. In other words, it does not depend on a worker complaining because they recognize that migrant workers or temporary foreign workers do not have freedom inside of themselves. They know they are here under certain circumstances, and the chances of their complaining with regard to the workplace they are in are very low.

That is why Manitoba realised they had to have legislation that was proactive. They have somebody who is assigned to go out to the workplaces, to the employers who are registered and licensed, to go out there on a regular basis without warning they are coming to investigate the working and living conditions of the migrant workers and of the temporary foreign workers. They do not wait to see if somebody is going to complain. That is what we need. That is the kind of legislation we need. That is one of the things they do under this legislation.

Another thing the Employment Standards division does is it educates employers, it educates communities and workers, and it partners with community groups to provide training on rules and protections. It does worker awareness sessions as part of the workplace investigations. Those sessions would include everybody who is working in a workplace and would include those who are temporary foreign workers and those who are not. They are very proactive in making sure the workplace is a good workplace for the temporary foreign workers and that their living conditions are good living conditions.

When the government says all they want is legislation with regard to registration and licensing that to me guts totally any sense of what was in the original resolution, even though the original resolution did not name specifics other than that, which I wish it had done. The fact of not recognizing the protection that is needed for the workers is very disturbing.

There are obviously good situations. We know that. There are situations that work out well; there are situations that go well. We also have situations where abuses are rampant. We are continually over the past weeks having people coming to us telling us about things that are abuses. You are not going to get anybody to talk about them. Nobody is going to talk about them, neither the temporary foreign worker nor their co-worker who is somebody who is a citizen of Canada and of Newfoundland and Labrador. They are not going to talk about it. That is why it takes a proactive approach, which the government does not have, obviously.

In Manitoba, they also under the legislation look at the whole issue of the recruiters. It is one thing to say you are going to require an employer registration process as well as a licensing requirement – no, it does for the recruiters, but that is still not enough. The recruiters in Manitoba have to be licensed. They have to pay a licence fee. They have to provide proof of financial security, such as letter of credit. They can be investigated and they can be refused a licence. The legislation gives the details of that.

When I see the government refusing to even name the legislation that exists in other parts of

the country, it is very disturbing. Saskatchewan also has legislation which protects. The government, when it did the whistleblower legislation, was proud to say they looked at other provinces and got ideas from other provinces with regard to whistleblower legislation; why not do the same here for this, something which is so important and something which so affects the lives of people who are in this program?

Mr. Speaker, if we have a Temporary Foreign Workers Program in this country and it is operating here in this Province, then we need to have legislation to protect. It has to come. It is disgraceful to look, when you go on to the Web site of the federal government, you look at all of the requirements under the Temporary Foreign Workers Program, you see a list of provinces whose legislation has to be recognized by the employers and the recruiters, and you do not see our Province in there. You see Saskatchewan, you see Ontario, you see Manitoba, you see Quebec, and you see Nova Scotia. You do not see our Province and you still will not see our Province as a province that has its own legislations and its own requirements and its own protections for the workers, and that is what we need.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, first of all as the Minister Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs I am proud to be able to stand here today and speak to this motion.

In my former life, I had six different businesses and three of the businesses I owned were restaurants. In the last years that I was working in the restaurant business I had the distinct pleasure of working with many Filipinos on a personal basis. In my district, we have about 350 Filipinos right now, and I can say I am personally friends with 350 of them. They all call me by my first name. They are a very

important part of the society in Labrador West, and we are very proud to have them in our district. We very quickly realized the benefits that the district has.

I am going to go back a little bit in history, just mentioning foreign workers. My district, which was originally known as the Naskaupi District – the district back in the late 1950s and early 1960s, originated as an iron ore mining district. Most of the workers, when Bell Island was shutting down, many of the people in Bell Island had the opportunity as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to move to Bell Island, and they chose not to go up north. The famous saying was: I am not going up north.

Many of them went to Sudbury, Ontario, or Timmins, Ontario, or even out west in other parts of Canada, but what they found in the Iron Ore Company of Canada back in the late 1950s, early 1960s, was that they could not find workers to go to work in the mine. So they went abroad. They went to Europe. They found workers in Europe to come and work in the mines.

I remember in 1986 we had the pleasure of hosting – in 1984 and 1986 – the World Cross-Country Ski Championships. There were forty-two countries that were represented in the championships. In Labrador City, at that time a population of about 14,000, we did not have to go outside of Labrador City to find forty-two people who spoke the language of the forty-two countries that came to those games. We are very proud of that, and that is foreign workers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: So, foreign workers are a huge contribution to society. I think one thing we have to realize is that foreign workers, whether they are permanent foreign workers or temporary foreign workers, they do the same as we do, they pay taxes. They contribute to society. Not only that, one of the big things we hear of in Newfoundland and Labrador is the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Population Growth Strategy, and I can guarantee there are an awful lot of babies born in Labrador West in July, August, and September, because it is cold winters.

I personally am a godfather to two little Filipinos; one is James and one is Toby. I am very proud to be the godfather of both of them. James was actually the first Filipino baby born in Newfoundland and Labrador, and I am his godfather. I am proud to say that.

I know what they bring in. I see it in the restaurants in my district. Again, I am very proud to say that in my district, I live in a fairly robust, economically secure district. Labrador West, we are known as rich little boys in the Province. In the mining industry, of course, most people in Labrador West are making six-figure salaries. A janitor at IOC can make \$140,000 a year, if they want to work the overtime.

I experienced it personally in my businesses. My last job in the food service industry, I managed one of the food service establishments within one of the hotels there. That hotel would have had to close its dining room and its restaurant had it not been for the temporary foreign workers. They would not have been able to operate.

I saw the gas bars in my district have to go to limited hours, where they opened at 9:00 in the morning and had to close at 6:00 in the evening, because they could not find employees. As I said, if you had your Grade 12 education, you put an application into the mine, or you went off and furthered your education. It was not difficult to find a job there, and a good paying job.

If it wasn't for temporary foreign workers, we would actually see a lot of the amenities and services in my district in Labrador West – we would not be able to provide those services. I speak firsthand, because I worked in the industry. I know the industry quite well.

I want to make some references to some of the comments the Leader of the Third Party made. We recognize every one of the restraints and issues that the hon. member talked about. We are aware of all of those, and we are studying all of those. We believe there should be legislation in place, but we want to have the right legislation. We want to have the strongest legislation.

She made a comment that the temporary foreign workers have no one to talk to, no one to turn to if they are having difficulties. I have had several conversations personally with the minister about temporary foreign workers, because they come to me. When I go home this weekend, we have temporary foreign workers working in the airport. They are working in the restaurants, they are working in the supermarket, they are working in the grocery stores, and they are working in the bakery. No matter where you go, you are going to see a temporary foreign worker.

I am proud to say, every one of them are very comfortable to come up to me. They call me different things. They call you minister; they call you mister, or sir minister, or Mr. Minister. Part of their culture is it is either madam or mister. They will call me Mr. Minister or sir minister. Some of them call me – because I think in their country we are considered Congress people. They will say: how are you today, Mr. Congressman?

They are very comfortable to come to me and say, I have an issue. They will sit down and talk about the issue. They expect me then, as their representative, to go to their employer, and I am quite comfortable to do it. They are not asking for miracles, they are asking for equality.

I know that I will come back and I will talk to the minister responsible, and then he will go to the federal minister. I was very disturbed when this moratorium was put in place. I went to the minister the next day – actually, I called him from my district on Saturday when that happened, and I said: We have to act on this right away. Businesses are going to close in my district if I lose my temporary foreign workers.

He said to me: Look, we will get through the weekend and then I will call Minister Kenney. He called Minister Kenney. He has had several conversations with the federal minister. I know the federal minister has gotten back to him. He has written to the federal minister, and the federal minister has gotten back to him and requested a meeting call, I think, next Tuesday. We are acting on this. We are very aware of the issues and we are going to act upon them.

I want to touch a little bit on the Provincial Nominee Program. I think that is a great

program. It is good, it needs to be strengthened. I did not hear anything yet on the Permanent Resident Program. That is what makes me nervous, because some of the temporary foreign workers – I know here in Newfoundland and Labrador, once you are part of the Provincial Nominee Program you can apply then for the permanent residency. I have several in my district who have become permanent residents, and that is great to see. Then I have some – because they are building relationships within the communities.

When I was home last weekend, for example, I have one couple – and he has his permanent residency, so he is safe. She has not applied for her permanent residency, so she is still just working on an LMO. With this moratorium in place she only has, I think, six months left on her program. Then she has ninety days, and she is going to have to leave. That is what we need to push for. That is what we are listening to. That is what we want to change. That is what we are hoping that we can convince the federal government to make some changes there.

We need to give them – and they say to me when I go home, I will go into the restaurant, they come over and they will say: I am heavy. I feel heavy. We need to get rid of that heavy. We need to make them feel better. We need to let them know that we are working on their behalf, and we are working with the federal government and hoping to make those changes there.

I think it is important that we realize that the temporary foreign workers have all of the rights – and I did hear my colleague mention it; I heard some of my colleagues on the other side mention about the rights that temporary foreign workers have. They have all of the rights that we have. That is the glory of, I guess, living in Newfoundland and Labrador and living in Canada is that we are a free country. We are a country that is built on immigrants. Most of us, I think, if I look around the room there is an awful lot of Irish blood within this room.

At one point, going back through we all came from somewhere. Canada is young country. We welcome the opportunity to build on those who are coming in. We realize that there are problems and it is not all good. I have witnessed

first-hand some living conditions. I know in my district we keep an eye on it all of the time. I have sat with some of the temporary foreign workers. I remember one day there was a couple and they were working in another country, in Dubai actually – I have not been to Dubai but when you look at it, it is an absolutely beautiful country when you look.

I remember the temporary foreign workers sitting with me. We were actually having lunch and having just a general chat. They were telling me the conditions that they had there and how they were bused to their workplace. Then, they were given their uniform. Their uniform was washed for them every day. Before they would leave they had to shower on the premises, then they were brought back by bus, and they lived in what we would call here in Canada, or in Newfoundland and Labrador, a barn. There were probably twenty of them in a room ten feet by ten feet, beds stacked on the walls.

We do not tolerate that here. We do not agree with that here. I think it is important, what we do is we want to welcome the temporary foreign workers. We understand the necessity of them and we want to see them grow.

I know in my district they are having lots of babies. They are buying houses. They are returning to the economy. They are buying cars. It is almost comical to see some of them because they never, ever thought they would be able to drive and now they are buying new cars. What they are giving to the economy I think is very, very important.

The bottom line is that, like we do – and I do not mean to separate temporary foreign workers or discriminate. I want to do the exact opposite. We treat them like our own. We want to protect them. We realize how important they are to society and we will continue to do that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: This private member's motion, the amendment that was made strengthens the motion. I will certainly be voting in favour of the amendment. In closing, I think what we want to do, and we realize we need legislation, but we need to strengthen the acts that are out there. We will take those acts,

we will study them, and we will monitor them, but we want to have the strongest legislation when we put it in place. We want you to be part of us.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the private member's resolution and pleased to speak to and support the amendment. The amendment on its face looks like maybe a simple amendment, and it is a simple amendment, but it provides to government, dealing in good faith, additional flexibility to be able to implement the regulations that will be necessary. It is a very short, yet effective amendment which would take away the language of the statutes from two other provinces, which I think we can likely get by without in any event. The change from an act to legislation simply provides the opportunity for government to be able to deal with this by way of regulation, to analyze existing statutes, and to co-ordinate existing statutes to make this work for the people we want to bring to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, with temporary foreign workers, we have heard a lot of discussion, information, and misinformation. People are very concerned. If I could just read a few lines: The Temporary Foreign Worker Program can be used to hire foreign workers for up to four years. The temporary foreign workers must apply for themselves; however, to support these workers, the employer may need to get approval from the federal government through a Labour Market Opinion, an LMO. A Labour Market Opinion verifies that there is a need for a foreign worker and there is no Canadian who can do the job.

Mr. Speaker, this is not about displacing anybody in our country. It is not about displacing anybody in our Province. As a matter of fact, it is about filling a legitimate need which we could not otherwise fill. The Member for Labrador West spoke quite eloquently on that

point. I think it is a useful amendment and a very positive private member's resolution.

The biggest issue, in my view, that our Province faces today is population decline and an aging population. We know we are not replacing our people through our birth rate. Even with a flat population, with no increase as people age, ultimately the population will decline relatively dramatically, and that makes us shrink in comparison to other provinces in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we also know that Canada is one of the premier destinations for immigration in the world. If we know they are coming to Canada, who is our competition for people? Well, the big provinces are our competition for people because they have a bigger presence. Ontario is a big competitor for people; they outnumber us twenty-six to one. British Columbia is a big competitor for people and they outnumber us ten to one. Alberta is a big competitor for people and they outnumber us eight to one. We have something that they do not have in those other provinces; it is a lifestyle and a cost of living that I am certain that all of us, including myself, do not always fully appreciate.

The fact that we could, and in my view should, be pursuing with people who will come to Canada, who would come to Newfoundland and Labrador, is that an average person, an average family, an average couple with what we would consider a relatively normal income can practically live like a king in this Province compared to how they can live in another nation and compared to how they can live in downtown Toronto, or Fort McMurray or Vancouver. If you compare \$2,500 a month for an apartment in downtown Toronto and then if you do not have a parking spot, you can buy a parking spot for \$40,000 or \$50,000 and then pay municipal taxes on your parking spot. You can pay a million dollars for that same place in Vancouver, \$700,000 or \$800,000 in Calgary, and then fight traffic for an hour or more to get to work. You do not see your family for the first couple of hours in the morning, and you do not see your family for the last couple of hours in the evening. You work all day and head for home. We do not have that type of lifestyle here.

If I look at driving over from the West part of the City where I live when I am in town and it is

sixteen or seventeen minutes to get here it is a big deal. Well, if I were in Barrie going to downtown Toronto it would be two hours. I would be following up someone else's exhaust fumes for a couple of hours.

We have an opportunity for an outdoor lifestyle because there is so much Crown Land, there is so much game, and there is so much opportunity for fishing, hunting, and what people want to do. We have a world-class university and we have a world-class technical school, a college, the College of the North Atlantic, that teaches people in other nations the skills they need.

A potential foreign worker or an immigrant family can come here, should come here, and should relocate just based on the law of averages, but they need to know we are here. This type of resolution is really helpful. It gives this government an extra tool to be able to work to attract and retain people. By attracting and retaining people we can grow our population.

Mr. Speaker, if we just had ten per district that is 480 a year; if we had twenty per district that is almost 1,000 people a year. If we look at the potential for a slide in building permits, yet if we were able to pump up our population over even relatively modest numbers we could sustain building in this Province. We have more resources per capita than anybody else in Canada because our population is so small. This Province is the same size geographically in area as Norway. They have 5 million people and we have 500,000 people.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased with the resolution, I am satisfied with the amendment, and I am more than happy to support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): I call on the Member for Virginia Waters to conclude the debate.

MS C. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned in my original comments this afternoon, I referenced a letter that appeared in a local paper back in 2007. I would like to reference that article again.

"Clearly, increasing immigration alone is not the answer to our demographic and labour shortage challenges. However it provides part of a much-needed response to those challenges. We have to take a broad approach. Just like we diversify our strategy to grow the economy, we need to diversify our response to building the labour market and reversing population decline." The letter goes on to say, "...we need to provide opportunities for born-and-bred Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and find ways to attract and retain immigrants at the same time." The author of that letter in 2007 was me.

Mr. Speaker, I want us to take a moment to thank the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, in particular, for clarifying the current situation, particularly around the PNP, and assuring people the PNP is not affected by the situation that is happening on the federal level. I want to take a moment to thank also the Minister of Service NL for his commitment to improve how everyone needs to be treated fairly, and his commitment to legislation that will ensure that happens.

I also want to say thank you to the Minister of Transportation and Works for recognizing the human side and the personal impact of people's choices to work in our Province. I was initially surprised by the comments from the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, but I want to thank her for her commitment, compliments on the original motion, and her indication that she would have supported the original motion.

I would ask government and the hon. members to continue to challenge and look at ways to provide settlement services and supports to the Association for New Canadians. In this government's own Immigration Strategy back in 2007, it indicated that settlement services were a key priority for their government and making sure that newcomers to our Province, whether they were newcomers under any immigration stream, whether they were students, whether they were entrepreneurs, or whatever particular stream of immigration brought them to our Province, that they would have the services throughout our Province, on the Island and in Labrador, to help them understand and be well serviced by the rules and laws of our Province. I would encourage government to continue to focus very hard on something that by all

indications they have lost a little bit of sight of, making cuts last year to the division of Immigration and not implementing either an assistant deputy minister or senior person who can hover over all departments, be a liaison, and communicate information amongst departments that is critical to immigration being seen in all departments as being important.

I want to also thank the Minister of Service NL for committing to looking at the possibility of assigning one point of contact inside the Labour Relations Agency that would allow temporary foreign workers to have a point of contact if they had a concern or if they had a complaint. I think that shows some flexibility for situations that are happening now.

As was mentioned in the debate this afternoon, the Province has the responsibility, when people come into our Province, to have laws that protect the people, and it is the responsibility of this House to ensure those laws are in place. The Association for New Canadians cannot and does not support settlement services for temporary foreign workers because their funding from the federal government restricts them from doing that.

Many provinces have implemented bridge funding for the Association for New Canadians so that they can do that work. Newcomers to our Province can be further protected by having the information from groups like the Association for New Canadians, which as this government knows, has been recognized nationally for the incredible work they do on the ground. Committing to making sure they have further resources to be able to do that work is important.

The Provincial Nominee Program – the minister and I certainly agree, and I would ask that the minister do everything he can to continue to advocate on behalf of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador on increases in the Provincial Nominee Program. As members of this House are aware, immigration is an area of joint jurisdiction between the federal and provincial levels of government. As is other areas of joint jurisdiction, we often establish federal-provincial agreements to outline our share of responsibilities and our co-ordinated efforts.

There are three provinces that have worker protection legislation currently that I am aware of. Just as relevant is the fact that provinces and territories have different immigration agreements. For example, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, and the Northwest Territories have provincial nominee agreements only. So our federal-provincial agreement is limited to this aspect of immigration.

All other provinces and the Yukon have broader immigration agreements that also include terms and conditions related to temporary residents, including workers and students. In most cases, the Provincial Nominee Program is included as an annex. Ontario, Alberta, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, take it one step further, to include an annex on temporary foreign workers specifically.

New Brunswick has made a public commitment to negotiate an immigration agreement in its economic growth plan. While PEI, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan do not have temporary foreign worker annexes, their immigration agreements are still broader and reflect the role of foreign temporary workers and international students, and accountabilities for information exchange, planning, protection, and program integrity measures.

The difference places our Province at a competitive disadvantage and temporary residents at a disadvantage, in that these agreements outline terms for information sharing, especially on temporary foreign workers, that we do not currently have, at least not publicly that I am aware of. In fact, the ones with temporary foreign worker annexes explicitly refer to expediting entry – expediting entry – and also joint responsibilities for monitoring and dealing with abuse. I would think members on the opposite side of this House would certainly recognize the value to people around expediting entry. I ask the minister, continue to work hard and be prepared for questions about why we have yet to negotiate a more comprehensive immigration agreement.

With that said, the multicultural policy that this provincial government operates under and this government has released states that ensuring relevant policies and procedures of provincial programs and practices are reflective and

consider the changing needs of all cultural groups, that it should “lead in developing, sustaining and enhancing programs and services based on equality for all, notwithstanding race, religious, ethnic, national and social origin,” and “provide government workplaces that are free of discrimination and that promote equality of opportunity for all persons accessing employment positions...”.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage government to take a serious look at its multicultural policy and continue to figure out a way to make that policy an overarching practice program for the people of the Province. Immigration is something that as a Province we are going to have to continue to work hard, roll up our sleeves, and make sure the right policies, programs, and services are in place so that people do not get left behind and people have what they need when they need it most.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is an amendment to the motion, so we will first vote on the amendment.

All those in favour of the amendment, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division

MR. SPEAKER: We are voting on the amendment. Division has been called on the vote on the amendment.

We had better summon the members before we do anything like that.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips ready?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

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

CLERK: Mr. King, Ms Shea, Mr. O’Brien, Mr. Davis, Mr. McGrath, Mr. Crummell, Mr. Felix Collins, Ms Johnson, Mr. Jackman, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Verge, Mr. Littlejohn, Mr. Hedderson, Mr. Dalley, Ms Sullivan, Mr. French, Mr. Kent, Mr. Sandy Collins, Mr. Granter, Mr. Cross, Mr. Little, Mr. Brazil, Mr. Forsey, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Cornect, Mr. Hunter, Mr. Dinn, Mr. Ball, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Mr. Osborne, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Jim Bennett, Mr. Lane, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Slade, Mr. Mitchelmore, Ms Cathy Bennett.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against the amendment, please rise.

CLERK: Ms Michael, Mr. Murphy, Ms Rogers.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

CLERK: Mr. Speaker, the ayes, thirty-eight; the nays, three.

MR. SPEAKER: The amendment is passed.

Now we are going to vote on the motion, as amended.

All those in favour of the motion, as amended?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against the motion, as amended?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

MR. SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Summon the members again.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips ready for the vote?

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

CLERK: Mr. King, Ms Shea, Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Davis, Mr. McGrath, Mr. Crummell, Mr. Felix Collins, Ms Johnson, Mr. Jackman, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Verge, Mr. Littlejohn, Mr. Hedderson, Mr. Dalley, Ms Sullivan, Mr. French, Mr. Kent, Mr. Sandy Collins, Mr. Granter, Mr. Cross, Mr. Little, Mr. Brazil, Mr. Forsey, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Cornect, Mr. Hunter, Mr. Dinn, Mr. Ball, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Mr. Osborne, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Jim Bennett, Mr. Lane, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Slade, Mr. Mitchelmore, Ms Cathy Bennett.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against the motion, as amended, please rise.

CLERK: Ms Michael, Mr. Murphy, Ms Rogers.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

CLERK: Mr. Speaker, the ayes, thirty-eight; the nays, three.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion, as amended, is passed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: This being Wednesday, Private Members' Day, this House now stands adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, at 1:30 p.m.