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Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Today, before we start our proceedings, I want to acknowledge a guest we have in the gallery today, Mr. Joe Santos. He is an educator with O'Donel High in Mount Pearl.

Welcome to our gallery.

We will know a little more about him as we get a Ministerial Statement in a few moments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have members' statements from the District of St. John's South, the Member for the District of Burgeo – La Poile, the Member for the District of Cape St. Francis, the Member for the District of Port au Port, the Member for the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, and the Member for the District of Baie Verte – Springdale.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, last week I had the honour of attending the #81 N.L.C.C Polynia Annual Cadet and Parents Banquet. This event was attended by young cadets, their parents, as well as a number of senior members of the Church Lads Brigade.

For over 100 years the Church Lads Brigade has been providing young people with an opportunity to learn respect, confidence and leadership in a disciplined atmosphere. The organization is to be commended for their years of community service.

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of awards, where several young people were recognized and bestowed awards for their accomplishments and commitment to that organization.

I would like to recognize those who received awards, the parents who support and volunteer, along with many members who continue to ensure that the CLB provides the valuable service that it does.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise today to pay tribute to the late Elizabeth Jane Harvey of Isle aux Morts.

Elizabeth was born at Isle aux Morts on June 4, 1958, the daughter of the late Samuel and Martha Francis.

Ms Elizabeth Harvey was instrumental in driving the Income Tax issue for harvesters throughout this Province and the Province of Quebec. For years, she raised the matter in the media and on Open Line call-in shows. In 2011, a federal judge ruled in favour of the harvesters. She is also remembered as being a champion of many other causes, including getting a dialysis unit in Port aux Basques. Her latest call to me, just twenty-four hours before she passed, was to advocate on behalf of her neighbours for improvements to a local road.

In 2012, Elizabeth received a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in recognition of her work.

She will be deeply missed by her husband Douglas, her four children and their spouses, her eight grandchildren, two sisters, six brothers, as well as a wide circle of friends throughout the Province.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join with me in paying tribute to the late Elizabeth Jane Harvey, a true credit to her family and community, and to extend condolences to her family on their loss.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the Torbay Volunteer Fire Department for forty years of service to the Towns of Torbay and Flatrock.

The fire department was formed on April 9, 1974 with twenty-nine members joining together under the leadership of their first Fire Chief Bruce Escott. Over 161 members have come and gone, and all have contributed to the success of the fire department.

The department has forty well-trained members, with a ladies auxiliary group consisting of fifteen members who are always available to help the fire department. They are an outstanding group of volunteers and are recognized as one of the top fire departments in our Province. Residents take great comfort in knowing they are there day and night as they have responded to almost 4,000 calls over the forty years.

I would like to take the opportunity to commend Chief Michael McGrath, who has been with the department since its inception for his outstanding dedication; also, his wife Karen and family for supporting him and being a huge part of his success in his career with the Torbay Volunteer Fire Department.

I ask all hon. members to join with me in thanking all the volunteers past and present for their service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CORNETT: When the curtain rises at the Stephenville Theatre Festival on July 11, it will mark the thirty-sixth season of providing outstanding professional theatre to Newfoundland and Labrador.

A lot of credit to the success of this festival is due to leadership and commitment of the board of directors past and present. At this time, a warm welcome is extended to Artistic Director Lois Brown, and Musical Director Pamela Morgan, who will lead the cast at this year's showcase.

Headlining the 2014 season is the *Nobleman's Wedding*. *The Birthday Party*, *Jack Meets the Cat*, *The Country Show*, *Music From Home* are some of the amazing performances planned to entertain the patrons of this year's festival. Also returning this year, is audience pleaser *A Night With...*, which will feature evenings of song and music with local musicians and artists.

Stephenville Theatre Festival also features other productions including *Two Horse Tales*, *Never Forgotten*, and *The Driftwood Trilogy* that comprises of three plays: *Falling Trees*, *Building Houses* and *Wasting Paper*.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join with me in congratulating the Stephenville Theatre Festival and all involved on its thirty-sixth season, July 11 to August 10.

Thank you,

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the outstanding commitment of the Joint Mayors Committee in the Coast of Bays. I had the pleasure of attending the signing ceremony of their Memorandum of Understanding for the Coast of Bays Regional Development Corporation last Wednesday.

I am very pleased that the Joint Mayors Committee will be working in partnership to address development and areas of mutual concern in the region, as well as to support the goals of municipalities. The Coast of Bays is an ideal place to live and work. This organization will promote and facilitate public engagement in the region's future development and strategically look to foster economic growth.

I had a great evening and enjoyed the excellent performances and speeches of the young drummers and dancers. I look forward to hearing about their accomplishments and achievements in the years ahead.

I ask that all members of this hon. House join me in wishing the new Regional Development Corporation great success to ensure the Coast of Bays Region will continue to prosper well into the future.

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.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the Copper Ridge Academy Drama Troupe. They captured the Regional Theatre Festival Championship in Grand Falls-Windsor on April 11, 2014.

They performed a very challenging piece which highlighted their talent, dedication, and creativity. The group also won for best lighting and choreography. Walking away with best overall performance is quite an honour, making the entire school community very proud of their accomplishment.

Members include: Hayley Gillingham, Jonnie Ricketts, Teriann Chislett, Robyn Wells, Lindsee Clarke, and Regina Madimbu. Directors Mary Lou Stuckless and Neil Kirby are to be commended for their huge contributions to the success of the group.

Also, they just returned from North Rustico, PEI, where they participated in the Atlantic Drama Festival, capturing the best overall excellence in lighting, and excellence in music, choral, and choreography. In addition, Lindsee Clarke and Jonnie Ricketts are the proud recipients of acting distinction awards.

Honourable members, I invite you to join me in applauding the Copper Ridge Academy Drama Troupe upon their significant achievement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this House today to advise hon. members of more exciting news about our provincial economy. As everyone here would know, the country's major banks and bond rating agencies have noted the success of our economy. I am pleased to advise members that in its report *How Canada Performs: Economy*, which was released last week, the Conference Board of Canada named Newfoundland and Labrador as one of three provinces in Canada to receive a grade of A⁺ –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: – outperforming twenty-five other jurisdictions in Canada and around the world.

Mr. Speaker, with an A⁺ rating, our Province was not only ahead of Ontario, Quebec, BC, Manitoba, and the Maritimes for economic performance; we were also ahead of Canada's national performance and ahead of the US, the UK, Australia, France, Germany, and even Norway.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: In the news release issued by the Conference Board, Glen Hodgson, Senior Vice-President and Chief Economist, said, "Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador are "A⁺" economies – they rank higher than any advanced country in our analysis."

Mr. Speaker, our government has made significant investments to strengthen the economy and to encourage continued growth. Since 2006, we have decreased taxes, putting

hundreds of millions of dollars back into the hands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This year alone, savings to residents is approximately \$600 million. Our Province continues to maintain the lowest personal income tax rates in Atlantic Canada. Total personal income tax reductions since 2006 are estimated to have returned approximately \$2 billion back to taxpayers in the Province. Effective July 1, 2014, our government will decrease the small business corporate income tax rate to 3 per cent. As a result, this Province's small business tax rate will be tied with Nova Scotia for the lowest rate in Atlantic Canada.

Newfoundland and Labrador has seen significant economic growth over the past ten years and we led all other provinces in economic growth last year. There have been substantial improvements in many economic and financial indicators, with gains in real household disposable income per capita – a measure of average consumer purchasing power – outpacing all other provinces over this past decade.

Mr. Speaker, more people are working than ever before and the unemployment rate is lower than any time since 1973. For the first time in over forty years, Newfoundland and Labrador no longer has the highest unemployment rate in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of our economic growth over the last decade and the significant impact it is having on our people's lives. Through our social and economic plan we will continue to strengthen the business environment, encourage the development of innovative industries, and diversify the economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of the statement. The Conference Board of Canada's report is clearly about revenue, and it identifies that this A grade, after years of D grades, is due

to oil revenue. The Conference Board clearly raises a flag about government's reliance on volatile oil revenues. The Conference Board of Canada is also the same group who said our population will decline to 482,000 by 2035, and predicts declining economic fortune for Newfoundland and Labrador for the next two decades.

It is also the same group that said we have the worst health care spending of any province in Canada – the most per capita on health care of any provinces, yet still the worst overall outcomes.

While this government may try to politically position itself as the star of the moment – based on a report from an organization that in the past they have dismissed – it is important to acknowledge that the board in this report clearly raises concerns about long-term employment opportunities, which this government, and all of us know, will decline after the large-scale projects are completed. What is the plan not to revert to the years of D ratings?

The report recognizes the value of the assets of the people of the Province to add to revenue; but, let's be clear, economic management, strong fiscal management, is ensuring that every penny of revenue is accounted for and that it benefits the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. Of course, this has some good news, but it has little to do really with how this government takes care of the people that they are entrusted to take care of, with the money that they say they are making for us.

It is good news for corporations and those who have seen the benefit of the economic boom, but it is cold comfort for many in this Province. I doubt people waiting months for placement in

suitable long-term care facilities would give government an A⁺; nor would people lying on gurneys in hospitals hallways or people waiting months to see medical specialists; nor the parents of children with autism spectrum disorder who have to wait months and years for a diagnosis of their child; and I doubt people forced to destroy their vehicles on provincial roads in atrocious disrepair would give that grade to government.

Mr. Speaker, I have a longer list, but time will not allow me to list the many failings of this government in the way in which they spend the money in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to update my hon. colleagues on an event I participated in this past weekend in partnership with the Bonne Bay Marine Station in Norris Point.

To better inform people about how the ocean is affected by climate change, this government has partnered with the Bonne Bay Marine Station and Memorial University to develop an interactive climate change exhibit called *Newfoundland and Labrador: A Sea of Change*.

The exhibit was funded by the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, the Office of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, and Memorial University's Office of Public Engagement. It allows visitors to learn how climate change is impacting the oceans that surround Newfoundland and Labrador.

The interactive tool is powered by iPads at the Marine Station and uses the latest technology to inform and educate visitors to the centre as well as others who can download the interactive application to their smartphones from the app store.

Mr. Speaker, climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing jurisdictions around the world. Scientists have determined that 90 per cent of all the extra heat caused by global

warming is absorbed by the ocean. Water temperatures are rising, sea levels are increasing, and stronger storms are happening more frequently. As a government, we are acting to do our part.

The *Turn Back the Tide* campaign on climate change was launched in 2012 to help Newfoundlanders and Labradorians learn how climate change is impacting the Province and the ways they can take action to tackle climate change and to make a difference. To date, there have been over 58,000 visits to the Web site. This significant work ensures that Newfoundland and Labrador is resilient to the impacts of climate change, Mr. Speaker.

For example, Budget 2014 provided funding to continue to the Coastal Erosion Vulnerability Project to help communities make informed land-use decisions and identify areas for protection along our coastlines.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite my colleagues to visit our Turn Back the Tide Web site and download the *Newfoundland and Labrador: A Sea of Change* app to learn more about the great work that is happening to tackle climate change in Newfoundland and Labrador and how we can help make a difference.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. Mr. Speaker, last year – or last session, I should say, I asked questions about the coastal erosion plan in this House. The minister responded with answers about emissions and emission controls. That is because that report sat on the shelf for two-and-a-half years. While I am delighted to see \$500,000 in this year's Budget towards coastal erosion, it was evident last session the minister did not know that the coastal erosion plan was sitting on a shelf for two-and-a-half years.

Mr. Speaker, government is still sitting on their energy conservation initiatives that were outlined in the 2007 Energy Plan. Government promised a host of energy efficiency initiatives in 2007, and we are still waiting to see those. They even said that they would create a culture of conservation. It is easy to talk the talk, Mr. Speaker, but without action, it is only talk; it is only promises. We have seen lots of policies, but no real action.

The minister mentioned as well in her statement investments in Budget 2014; but, I have to ask, with so much attention being paid to the weaknesses in our electric system this winter and government preaching the importance of energy conservation, why – and we are, on this side of the House, very disappointed that in Budget 2014 there were no tangible energy conservation programs.

Mr. Speaker, she talked about visits to the Web site –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The member's time has expired.

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. I am quite surprised because this is a government that is leaning all the time towards consumption and never on conservation. So, sometimes I am surprised actually when I hear some conservation messages coming out of them.

Mr. Speaker, one of the people I would like to mention, and probably a place for government to turn in order to get some advice when it comes to climate change in this Province, is a gentleman by the name of Mr. Norman Catto – I think I am pronouncing his last name right. Working out of Memorial University, he has done innumerable studies already on the effects of climate change, for example, on communities and upon the coast here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

May I suggest that government look at some of the studies that have already been done and

probably turn more attention to those. We already have some work that has been done in that direction and government need not look further than that in order to progress with some of the work that it needs to do and needs to do urgently on climate change.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to recognize educator and safety advocate, Mr. Joe Santos, for his continued contributions to health and safety awareness and the positive impact he continues to have on his students, his school, and the greater community.

Mr. Santos is an educator at O'Donel High School in Mount Pearl. He first introduced the Workplace Safety 3220 course at O'Donel High, which is now in its third year and has had over 170 enrolled. The course, created in partnership with the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission, provides students with an opportunity to learn the importance of safety and emergency preparedness in the workplace and gives them the tools to keep themselves and others safe when they move forward into summer jobs and eventually careers of their own.

In addition to this, Mr. Speaker, as a certified Red Cross First-Aid and Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System instructor, Mr. Santos also ensures that all students in his classes are properly trained and provides instruction to his peers during school district professional development days.

He was also instrumental in arranging for the purchase and installation of an automated external defibrillator (or AED) machine at O'Donel High School, which was a first for any school in Newfoundland and Labrador. When the machine was installed, Mr. Santos took it upon himself to see that all staff, including the school's custodian and evening users of the

building, were adequately trained and familiar with its use.

Mr. Santos is a leader, supporter, and mentor. He has founded a popular first responders group at his school, arranged for his students to benefit from the health and safety expertise of external speakers, employers and other organizations, and even works with students who compete in the workplace safety category at Skills Canada competitions.

Most recently, Mr. Speaker, he was named 2013's Health and Safety Educator of the Year by Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission. With all his efforts in furthering health and safety in our Province, Mr. Santos is very deserving of this accolade.

I ask all hon. members to join me today to congratulate Mr. Joe Santos on receiving the Health and Safety Educator of the Year award, and to thank him for his continued contributions to the lives of young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. We, too, in the Official Opposition would like to congratulate Mr. Joe Santos on being named the 2013 Health and Safety Educator of the Year by the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission.

I certainly want to acknowledge all of the great work he has done at O'Donel High School, which happens to be in the District of Mount Pearl South, by the way – a beautiful school. He has taken many initiatives, as indicated by the minister, whether it be with the AED, which they put in the school, the training of the staff on it, whether it be teaching students first aid, teaching students women's courses, and of course the introduction of the Safety 3220 course.

Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated in the past in speaking to similar Ministerial Statements, it is very important that we target workers at a young age. We know that many of the accidents that occur in the workplace involve new workers, young workers. If we can target them at a young age to change that mindset – to get them into that mindset of health and safety, then I think we are going to help reduce accidents and all the associated costs in the future.

Congratulations to Mr. Santos. You are certainly a great leader in the field of health and safety. You have set a great example, and you are showing what it is to be proactive in that field.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement today. Congratulations as well to Mr. Santos for all the work that he is doing educating our young people, staff, and students at O'Donel High as regards to worker safety and student safety in this case too.

It was only last week that we were talking about worker safety here in the House. An interesting statistic, I do not know if it got out in the debate or not, but when you go to Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission they talk about the number of young people, for example, who are being injured in the workplace these days.

We are talking about the average of two workers – and that is two workers too many, Mr. Speaker – between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four who get injured every day in the workplace, particularly most noticeable of course in the service industries. Just to make note of that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Santos, for all the work you are doing. It just goes to show that the

more emphasis that we have on worker education, safety, and student education, the better off we will all be.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Before we start Oral Questions, I want to acknowledge another guest in the gallery, the President of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Churence Rogers.

Welcome to our gallery, Sir.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It has been reported today that BP is in talks to buy the refinery at Come By Chance. This comes after news last fall that the refinery would be either sold, it would be downsized, or closed.

I ask the Premier: Since there are hundreds of people in communities who depend on the refinery for work, can you provide an update on the status of the sale of the refinery?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to echo a comment made by the Leader of the Opposition, a concern that many people have who are working in a refinery and the impact it would have directly on those employed and on the communities in the surrounding area, as well as the contribution of the refinery to the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

I can report here today the discussions are ongoing with Harvest and other proponents, Mr.

Speaker. We have not been advised that the refinery has been sold, but we have been in discussions and I have been in discussions personally with the union as well. Both the union and the company are very clear on the position of government, that we want this refinery to continue to operate in this Province. We are prepared to support it and have discussions with the company as discussions and negotiations are ongoing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government placed a moratorium on fracking over six months ago and at the time they said an internal review would be undertaken and that the public would be given an opportunity to comment. Now, we have heard very little about this since and both industry and the anti-fracking groups are very concerned and have questions.

I ask the Premier: After six months, why have you yet to engage the public in the open process of fracking?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, because of concerns members of the public had raised about this issue of fracking – and fracking has been around a long time. It is really the issue of horizontal drilling and multi-stage fracturing; that is the difference. We have heard those concerns and that was one of the reasons we put in a moratorium.

Since that time, government has been engaged in its own internal review. The government has looked at the regulations to make sure they are robust and that they meet the world-class standards. They have looked at the geology in Bay St. George and the Green Point shale, and now the department is giving consideration to the final piece, which is to have public consultation.

We have heard the calls for external reviews. Mr. Speaker, we understand the concerns and that is why we only support economic development if it happens with public health and safety and mitigates against –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Many groups, of course, the anti-fracking awareness group and indeed industry in itself, are very concerned about where this is going. What they want to do and what we are hearing from them is they want to be engaged in the process.

I ask the Premier: Why have you chosen such a very secretive internal review right now and when indeed will we expect to see the public involved?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am well aware of the concerns and the interests of the anti-fracking awareness groups. I have met with them personally. I have had a discussion and certainly made a commitment to them that as we proceed through this process they will be fully engaged and I will give them every opportunity for input.

I have taken those initiatives and we are doing some internal work, Mr. Speaker. It is nearing completion, at which time as I said clearly on a number of occasions that will help determine our next steps, which will involve some form of public consultation.

It is important we do this right. It is a very sensitive issue. The protection of health and safety and the environment is obviously a priority for this government, but beyond that, Mr. Speaker, responsibility that comes for economic development and to benefit people in

every opportunity that we can is also very important and a responsibility of this government. We will find a way through this, Mr. Speaker, but everyone will have an opportunity for input.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week we saw the release of yet another report that lays the blame of DarkNL on Nalcor. The interim report by the Public Utilities Board says that Nalcor's deferral of maintenance and failure to ensure availability of resources caused or contributed to the power outages in January, 2014.

I ask the Premier: Now that the PUB and Liberty Consulting have made it clear that decisions by Nalcor caused DarkNL, what are you doing to restore accountability of this Crown corporation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, it was unfortunate in January we went through a very difficult time in the Province with respect to power outages. There was a commitment made both by myself as minister and our government at the time that we would be supportive and co-operative to do all we can to restore confidence and to ensure that we strengthen the reliability of our utility system into the future.

The Public Utilities Board engaged in a study and some work - Liberty Consulting, Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, Newfoundland Power, all contributed information around that unfortunate event, as well as information, Mr. Speaker, that will help strengthen our utility system into the future.

Mr. Speaker, we welcome these reports. What is important here is it does not lie on a shelf, that we get proactive, that we engage in priority recommendations, Mr. Speaker, and I have

every confidence we will move forward and do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What we are looking for and what people in the Province are asking about is the accountability given the fact that we know there were delays in maintenance and it was actually deferred. The reports also conclude that the first request for the conservation measures were issued too late to actually have any effect and that Newfoundland Power was not asked for input or provided a copy of the advisory prior to the release.

I ask the Premier: Who actually made the decision to wait so late before issuing the conservation request on January 2?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, the responsibility of the operation of our utility system in this Province is a very complex system. It rests with the utility operators themselves, Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, Newfoundland Power, and the key stakeholders as well, the Public Utilities Board.

Through a series of reports that have been ongoing since January, some very good information has been provided. One of the things that were highlighted, Mr. Speaker, any time you go through an experience that we went through it is important that the stakeholders and parties involved review communications, ultimately communications that has a concern for the general public and the safety of the general public.

Mr. Speaker, recommendations were made around communications and I have every confidence that our utilities will certainly comply and find ways to improve the whole situation that took place in January.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We understand the whole idea of responsibility and who is responsible for this, but ultimately the responsibility lies right here with this government.

What I asked you was: Who was part of the decision to actually wait two hours before the announcement was made on the rolling black outs? All I am asking is: Were you, as minister, involved in that decision at all?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I will say that I am not involved in the direct operations, day-to-day decisions around our utilities. As I indicated, it is a very complex system. We have an isolated system here in the Province. We have a system in Labrador, as well. Mr. Speaker, there are multiple stakeholders involved and thousands of kilometres of transmission lines; hundreds and thousands of generation capabilities out there, Mr. Speaker. So it is a very complex system and I will leave it to the experts to make the decisions around the operations.

Drilling down into the exact detail as to who made that decision, I would have to go back and check it. It certainly was not me who made the call two hours before, as the member is alluding to. Again, Mr. Speaker, in the larger picture, here is a commitment to improve reliability, to strengthen our system, and any improvements that can be made from the experience in January we are certainly going to be focused on that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, fees collected from the taxpayers of this Province to implement and

operate the 911 telephone service is paid through the NL 911 service fund.

I ask the minister: In the event there is a significant amount of excess revenues accumulated in the fund, are there safeguards in place to prevent any of the funds from being directed to provincial coffers?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are very excited, as a government, to be advancing legislation that is going to result in the establishment of Province-wide Basic 911 service for everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: To answer the member's question, we are setting up – through this legislation we will have the ability to set up an arm's-length bureau, the Newfoundland and Labrador 911 Bureau that will manage and monitor the 911 implementation and collect the revenue that is associated with implementing the service.

This is going to be done on a cost-recovery basis. So it is not the intention to build up a large surplus of funds. These funds will also be used to do the development work that is necessary to plan for Next Generation 911, but this will be done on a cost-recovery basis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: That was one of the questions we asked this morning in a briefing, Mr. Speaker, so I ask the minister if he can follow up later and just get an answer back on that.

Mr. Speaker, government has already invested through Budgets 2013 and 2014 over \$2 million to implement the 911 service.

I ask the minister: Will the government be recovering the money it has invested from the

911 fees that residents will be charged on their telephone bills?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Again, Mr. Speaker, the fees that are being collected are being collected solely for the purpose of implementing the 911 service. Beyond getting Basic service in place across the Province, we have to begin the planning work for Next Generation 911 as well.

In terms of the budget dollars for this year, about half of those dollars are being used for the actual technical set up, planning, and development to get us ready for the end of this year to have Basic service in place. The other \$1 million is being advanced to the public safety answering points, for instance, and to the bureau to start their work. A portion of those funds will indeed be recovered.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, forestry workers on the Great Northern Peninsula face uncertainty again this season due to inaction and poor decision from this government. A prosperous industry employing up to 400 people a few years ago has dwindled to just dozens.

I ask the minister: What is your government prepared to do to protect the small contractors and employees who work in the Peninsula's forest industry?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, the forest industry is obviously a very valuable industry in this Province with some 5,500 people working in the industry. It is a \$250 million industry, Mr. Speaker. Our government certainly acknowledges not only the value but we also acknowledge the challenges in the forest

industry over the past eight or ten years, there is no question, Mr. Speaker.

Particularly on the Northern Peninsula, Mr. Speaker, our government has committed \$10 million to an industry on the Northern Peninsula. I can assure you, any players in the industry would certainly welcome that type of investment. It has met with some challenges, Mr. Speaker, but we have progressively been working with a company that has a keen interest on the Northern Peninsula, and certainly I believe if we are able to bring that to a successful conclusion that will benefit the entire region.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, contractors have been advised that an agreement with Corner Brook Pulp and Paper expires in early June. This means limited or no buyers for pulpwood for the Peninsula. Contractors must make critical decisions to invest and hire workers under a limited time frame and unstable conditions.

I ask the minister: Will he commit to working with industry ensuring contractors have a buyer for pulp until a longer-term arrangement can be established, possibly with Rentech?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I have certainly committed to work with anyone within these industries. They are very important to the Province, they are important to their communities, and above all else it is important to their families, and I certainly understand that.

What we have to recognize as well, the challenges within the industry, particularly in terms of the exchange of fibre that is fundamental to the success of the forest industry. Corner Brook Pulp and Paper is a key player. We have made a significant investment on behalf of the people of the Province, and

particularly those engaged in the forest industry, to help protect the long-term sustainability of the forest industry.

So the answer is quite simply, yes, I will continue to work with them. We recognize Corner Brook Pulp and Paper is only one answer. We are very actively engaged with Rentech to provide another answer, Mr. Speaker. Again, the goal is to improve the long-term sustainability of the forest industry.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, last week the minister asked me for ideas on how to reduce the \$84 million worth of consulting fees. The Auditor General reviewed government's administration of oil royalties in 2008, and again in 2013. In both reviews, five years apart, the AG said the timeliness of audits was an issue. He also said that outsourcing these audits was costing government significantly more than if they did it in-house, and there are hundreds of audits to be completed.

I ask the minister: Why hasn't your government listened to the Auditor General and implemented corrective actions to cost-effectively and in a timely manner complete oil royalty audits so that the people of the Province receive the maximum benefits they are entitled to?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, the member should check Hansard. I did not ask her how to reduce it. I asked her to point out to me which one she would not do. Would she not do specialized training for foster families? Would she not do things around dam engineering?

Mr. Speaker, we take the Auditor General very seriously, and that is shown through the fact that we have initiated and nearly completed 92 per

cent of his recommendations over the last number of years.

I also committed in this House, Mr. Speaker, to go back and look at the \$84 million and talk to ministers and to table that, in terms of what was listed in the AG's report. I had my officials go back, Mr. Speaker, and they cannot find any reference in the Auditor General's report to this \$84 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, since 1998, oil royalties account for \$18.9 billion in revenue. If audits are not completed in the required audit period, the Province could lose millions in revenues. Five years after the AG said there was an issue, it is still an issue.

I ask the minister: Do you think dismissing the Auditor General and continuing to use external consultants for critical work your government must do to safeguard the people's royalties is good use of taxpayers' money?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I cannot figure out where they are. Some days they come in this House and they argue we should not be using external consultants; other days they are saying we should be using external consultants.

Specific to the royalty question, Mr. Speaker, it is a fair question in the fact that the royalties our government has established with the oil companies in the production of oil offshore is absolutely significant to the Province and significant to our future. Built within that, there are mechanisms where we engage auditors in-house and sometimes externally to do a detailed audit and review, making sure the people of Newfoundland and Labrador get the full benefits we have agreed to with these oil companies.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General did a review of that. We certainly welcome his comments as

we always do and we will certainly continue to implement those as we go through the process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, our Province has the highest rate of diabetes in Canada; 11.4 per cent of our population has diabetes. With almost half our population living in rural communities, accessing diabetes care, not to mention healthy foods to prevent the onset, is more challenging.

I ask the minister: What is your government doing to combat this epidemic and to prevent diabetes?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the member opposite. Diabetes in Newfoundland and Labrador is a very serious matter. It affects families and communities throughout our Province. We have taken a number of steps to ensure the best interests of patients who live with diabetes and the effects of diabetes receive the best value possible from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador through health services and otherwise.

We make significant investments throughout the Province. We make investments with community groups and organizations. We make investments with groups that encourage an active lifestyle, healthy lifestyles. As well, we also invest significantly in the health care side once a person has been diagnosed with diabetes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, sadly Aboriginal communities have an even higher rate of diabetes. In 2011, our Auditor General indicated that one in three people living in Innu

communities in Labrador have diabetes. These statistics are alarming when you think about the additional barriers to care for Aboriginal people.

I ask the minister: What are you doing to address this epidemic in our Aboriginal population?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When I speak of the investments we are making in health care and specifically to his question in diabetes, those investments remain throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. We make investments in preventative measures. It is a view and a goal that we must continue to strive towards. We must encourage and support healthier lifestyles, better diets, and physical activity. Also the prevention of the onset of disease and illness throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, we have invested heavily in that. We work with partner organizations throughout the Province. That is on the investment and the preventive side.

On the other side of when a person has diabetes and has other health care matters, we have also made significant investments there through dialysis, which throughout Newfoundland and Labrador has been significant. There are over 500 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians requiring dialysis –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

My questions have been geared towards prevalence of diabetes given our astronomical rate compared to the rest of Canada. I noticed the minister mentioned dialysis, which if you talked to any doctor is an admission of failure. It is the back end; we are talking front end. It costs over \$100,000 per year to administer dialysis to one person. Investing in dialysis at

the end stage – more needs to be done in prevention and wellness.

I ask the minister again: What is your government actually doing to lower the prevalence of diabetes and to ease the burden on our health care system?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are well aware of the benefits of preventing the onset of illness prior to and not just dealing with the illnesses and diabetes and the requirements for dialysis that exists after. We have more dialysis units per capita in Newfoundland and Labrador today than any other province in Canada. That is reflective of the needs of the population of Canada because of the number of people in Newfoundland and Labrador who suffer from diabetes and the effects of diabetes.

We are making investments. We have the chronic disease strategy in place as an example where we are working throughout Newfoundland and Labrador to get better value and to create a culture of a healthier lifestyle, better for the people of the Province, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, many residents on the North Coast of Labrador are receiving hydro bills that are often double or triple of what they were the previous month. One bill went from a normal \$150 per month to an astounding \$1,500 the next month. It appears that we are already paying for Muskrat Falls in an area of the Province that will receive no benefit whatsoever from the project.

I ask the minister: Why are the hydro bills so inconsistent when there are metres on every home?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is not paying for Muskrat Falls, just so that is clear. None of the ratepayers are paying for Muskrat Falls. That takes place when the switch is thrown on Muskrat Falls.

It will be a great project for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We will move from an isolated to an interconnected system. It will be a system that will give us more reliability, Mr. Speaker. We will certainly acknowledge the efforts by Nalcor and the support of this government to support the people in coastal Labrador where, there is no question, there still remains a challenge. We have small communities on diesel-operated systems; we are doing a pilot project in Ramea to find a solution. Again, we will continue to commit to the people of –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains, for a quick question without any preamble.

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, will the minister conduct an investigation into the inconsistency of billing, especially in Labrador?

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

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, any time the ratepayers raise concerns around their bills, obviously that is important and it has to be considered. If there is a specific case the member wants to bring forward, I will gladly make sure that someone looks into it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

There has been discussion in the media regarding whether or not Nalcor has appropriate conflict of interest rules in place to regulate actions of its board of directors.

I ask the Premier: Can he tell us if Nalcor has rules governing conflict of interest and when were they brought in?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I understand that Nalcor does have a code of business conduct and ethics. I have received a copy of it and I just had an opportunity to go through it.

Mr. Speaker, under the Corporations Act, it is the board of directors of a company that is required to manage the company. I understand that under the Energy Corporation Act that the board of directors of that company has a duty to carry out the aims, the powers, and the objectives of the corporation.

I would expect that the board of directors if they felt that there was anything lacking in course of conduct, or in business practices or in governance, given the resources that they have, given their access to the best legal advice in the country, I would expect the board of directors to undertake that work to ensure that the board is reaching the highest standards of governance.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Premier: Is he tabling the document that he has referred to?

Thank you.

PREMIER MARSHALL: I will be happy to table it.

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Province's Public Utilities Board, when it is allowed to do its job, shows that it is more than capable of protecting the interests of the people of the Province.

I ask the Premier: Will he now allow the PUB to oversee the construction of the Muskrat Falls Project?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, we have the highest respect for the PUB as a regulator of the electrical system in this Province, but we also, a number of years ago, set up a corporation called Nalcor. The objective of that corporation was to take advantage of the energy resources we have to provide wealth and value for the people of the Province. If we have to tweak the system from time to time to allow the people's energy corporation to succeed and be successful, we will do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, in Nova Scotia, the government have entrusted their utility board to the overseeing of the construction of the Maritime Link.

I ask the Premier again: Why doesn't government have the same faith in our PUB, especially as they have proven they are up to the job?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, we have total confidence in the PUB to carry out their duties – total confidence. The difference is that in Nova Scotia they are regulating a private company; here it is the regulation of a company that is owned by the people of the Province. It is the people's resources. It is the people's energy company. We are going to do whatever we can to ensure the people's energy company succeeds and it is prosperous because it is going to provide wealth to the people who own the resources, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is the difference.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A company that is obviously proving it is not competent for what it is supposed to be set up, according to the report.

Mr. Speaker, as the PUB notes in its latest report, there is not much time before winter sets in again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: It notes Hydro's plan to install much needed extra power generation as ambitious.

I ask the Premier: Will his government assure this House that extra power supply will be in place in time?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is referencing Nalcor and their competencies. I will just quote from the Member for Virginia Waters who served on the

board, a former Chair of the board, and very intimately involved with Nalcor and the decisions. She had quoted on *Out of the Fog*: I have a lot of confidence in the work Nalcor has done; there are some incredible, talented people there who are very committed to the Province and to our success. I read that today because the people directly involved in Nalcor know the talent of the people there and I want to echo that today.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to moving forward with some of the recommendations from the reviews, absolutely, Nalcor are committed. They welcomed the reports and they are going to do all they can to ensure we do not have this situation again in the new year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Department officials this morning said that local knowledge, culture, and language will be important in successfully operating a 911 system in Labrador. At the same time, government is considering running 911 calls from coastal Labrador out of Corner Brook, instead of Labrador West where there is already a service.

I ask the minister: Will he recognize that Labrador needs its own PSAP 911 dispatching centre located in Labrador to serve all of Labrador?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, it is really important to keep in mind that even with Basic Province-wide 911 service fully implemented, the emergency response providers in each of our communities, in each of our regions, will not change. The same people in Labrador who are addressing unique cultural needs, language needs and so on, on the ground delivering emergency services will be the same people once Province-wide Basic 911 service is in place as well.

In terms of how many public safety answering points there will be, we anticipate there will be two or three. Whether there will be one in Labrador, whether there will be one required in Labrador is something that we will determine in the months ahead.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, some areas in our Province still have no cellphone service but you could be paying an extra charge for 911 on your cellphone even if you live in an area with no cellphone coverage.

I ask the minister: What is government going to do to ensure that cellphone providers do their part in the provision of 911 services?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, while the regulation of cellphone service in this country is actually an Industry Canada responsibility, a federal responsibility, this government has done a great deal of work to improve cellphone coverage throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

The important piece of what we are doing here through this 911 legislation is we are moving towards a service that will ensure that for every land line and for every cellphone in Newfoundland and Labrador, people can access the universal 911 emergency number. This is a huge step forward. It is one that has been important to us and we have been working on for some time. We look forward to not stopping there. We look forward to taking it to the next level with Next Generation 911 service in the next few years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the Energy Corporation Act and the Hydro Corporation Act, it is my pleasure to table the Nalcor Energy 2013 Business and Financial Report, along with the 2013 Consolidated Financial Statements of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro.

MR. SPEAKER: Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice under Standing Order 11 that I shall move that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 22, 2014.

I give further notice under Standing Order 11 that I shall move that the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 22, 2014.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on Wednesday be moving the following private member's motion:

BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly supports the provincial government in its efforts to position Newfoundland and Labrador for leadership in arctic development, which will be amplified in 2016 as our Province hosts the

Annual International Arctic Technology Conference.

This motion is seconded by the Member for Harbour Main.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that the motion just presented by the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune will be the private member's motion to be debated this coming Wednesday.

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

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS until 2013, calcium was applied to provincially-owned gravel roads in and around communities to suppress dust; and

WHEREAS dust suppression is very helpful for residents experiencing health conditions like asthma and allergies; and

WHEREAS the cost of administering the calcium program is very affordable to government; and

WHEREAS dust suppression is an effective way of improving safety for the travelling public;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, beginning in 2014, to reinstate the calcium application program on

provincially-owned gravel roads in and around communities.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the minister was on and did an interview this morning talking about this very thing, which is a huge issue. Again, now we are coming into the spring and summer season, we are getting warmer weather, we are getting huge amounts of dust flying around. It is causing health hazards for the people in those coastal communities who are in my district. He said: It is the dust you cannot see that you have to worry about, not the dust that you can see. Well, I want to assure the minister, Mr. Speaker, that where there is dust you can see, there is definitely dust that you cannot see.

I have a definition here: road dust is – he talked about it not being serious to the people – road dust is earthen material or dirt that becomes airborne primarily by the friction of tires moving on unpaved dirt roads and dust-covered paved roads. It consists mainly of coarse material, which in some cases may be contaminated with man-made and naturally occurring pollutants such as asbestos, mining by-products, animal and human waste, snow and ice control application salt, and engine oil.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the serious things that the residents in my district are breathing in. I was in Cartwright on the weekend, it was a hot day. It was absolutely terrible. The media is interested in coming in now and doing some more coverage of this. I asked them to bring a load of masks while they are there for the children to wear in those communities. Seven hundred thousand dollars – I think it was, Mr. Speaker – is the amount it was costing the whole entire Province. Yet, we see that the government made this dollars and cents decision. It is absolutely terrible.

Mr. Speaker, we need an analysis of dust. What is the link between dust and cancer? I would like to know where the Health department sits on this and how they feel about the dust that the people in those communities are breathing in just because a small nominal amount of money was cut.

He made a comment it was ground dust. We know that ground dust is dangerous. Silica, fine sand, and fine sand particles are all very dangerous, Mr. Speaker, when you are breathing it into your lungs and for people who have breathing problems. I will continue to petition for the reinstatement of this calcium.

Thank you.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS there are extreme overcrowding issues at St. Peter's Elementary and Mount Pearl Senior High, a direct result of poor planning by the Department of Education; and

WHEREAS the solution imposed by the English School Board to deal with this now crisis situation will have a devastating impact on many students, families and teachers in Mount Pearl Senior High, Mount Pearl Intermediate, St. Peter's Elementary and Newtown Elementary; and

WHEREAS there are other less disruptive solutions which can be introduced to alleviate this overcrowding issue including capital investment as a preferred option as well as catchment area realignment; and

WHEREAS the English School Board was not provided with the financial flexibility by the Minister of Education to explore more suitable options; and

WHEREAS the government has intervened in board decisions in the past such as in 2005 in Bishop's Falls reversing the closure of Leo Burke Academy;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to intervene in this matter, commit appropriate resources to the

English School Board and instruct them to develop more suitable options.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I table this petition again today. I will continue to do so from now until this session of the House concludes. I do so on behalf of the many students, the many families, the many teachers in the Mount Pearl school system who are going to be negatively impacted, I would say devastated, many of them, as a result of this poor decision that was made by the board.

As indicated in the past, this need not have happened, had there been proper planning done by the then Eastern School District under the auspices of the Department of Education, ultimately the responsibility of the Minister of Education. Instead of letting the situation deteriorate year over year over year, had they taken action a number of years ago we would not find ourselves in this situation that we find ourselves today.

Mr. Speaker, I have questioned the minister, the new minister, and basically all I got from the minister was insults coming across the other side. Despite that, I will not be deterred in any way from continuing to fight for the students in my district. I will present this petition every day, if nothing else, to remind the minister of how he is failing the students of Mount Pearl.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS Route 434, Conche Road, is 17.6 kilometres of unpaved road; and

WHEREAS the current road conditions are deplorable; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Automobile Association ranked Route 434 the seventh worst road in Atlantic Canada; and

WHEREAS it is government's obligation to provide basic infrastructure to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians; and

WHEREAS an improved paved road would enhance local business, fish processing operations and tourism, which is vital to the health of the communities affected;

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge government to allocate funds in the provincial roads program to pave Route 434.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, last week in the House of Assembly when I asked about the condition of paved roads, the minister did say that he was in discussions with the mayor from the community of Conche. So, we will see where those discussions go and where the commitment with government lies for paving this particular road, which is a community hub which has a fish processing plant that has over 600 commercial trucks go through over this gravel road. There are a lot of commuters from Englee, Roddickton, Bide Arm, Croak, St. Julien's, Main Brook, and outside the district whether it be from Piccadilly or other areas of the Province that are employed at this facility.

My colleague for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair talked about dust and the impacts of dust on someone's health. Well, there is a significant amount of dust happening on Route 434. At minimum right now the minister should look at establishing dust monitors. We should be doing that so that we collect additional information as to what the implications of this dust are having on people's health and the impact and the long-term consequences.

I think that is a great initiative brought forward and suggestion when it comes to what happened when you cut the calcium chloride program,

especially for roads and communities in Labrador. This is essential; we need to look at infrastructure and how we build stronger communities. Conche has a very vital and vibrant community, and it can get even more prosperous if we look at paving this road. A multi-year plan could be the direction taken. I will continue to put forward this petition on behalf of constituents. It is signed by St. Anthony, Bide Arm, Roddickton, Main Brook, Englee, and Conche as well. It is really a regional thing, and I think you will be hearing more from the Northern Peninsula East regional joint council on this issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition to the hon. the House of Assembly concerning the hospital in Corner Brook:

WHEREAS we wish to raise concerns regarding the recent delays of the construction of the new hospital in Corner Brook;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to commit to the planning and construction of a new hospital in Corner Brook as previously committed to and in a timely manner as originally announced without further delay or changes.

Mr. Speaker, I have petitions today from people from Happy Valley Road, Summerside, Fords Road, Pasadena, Corner Brook, and Windsor Street. I have petitions, Mr. Speaker, because the people are concerned about the delays of the hospital.

We hear different dates of when the hospital will begin. The latest was 2015. The other report was it was going to be 2016. From my understanding, the residence part is going to be built first and then after that the long-term care facility.

Mr. Speaker, there is one thing I have to raise to the Minister of Health, the Member for Humber

East, and the Member for Humber East. In Corner Brook now, the hospital now, there is a major problem with the number of residents for long-term care. My question is: Creating 100 beds at the new long-term care facility, is it enough? That is one of the concerns we have with the hospital.

First when the long-term care facility was reconfigured, Mr. Speaker, back in 2004, there were 100 beds cut out. Now we are putting 100 beds back in. The day the long-term care facility opens, the beds will be filled. Shouldn't we plan ahead? This is a concern that a lot of people in Corner Brook now have on the hospital itself. What will be scaled back?

I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, about the ultrasounds. There will be six down to three machines. Is that being scaled back because of the radiation unit and because of the PET scanner unit in the hospital? These are the types of questions we cannot get answered. These are the types of questions people are asking. The action committee –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: I know it touches a nerve over there, and I am well aware of that, but this is an important issue that I am going to continue to raise. They can harp as much as they like, but I will continue to raise the concerns. I present this petition on behalf of the residents of Western Newfoundland and Labrador, and I will continue trying to get answers. Answers are what we need, Mr. Speaker, not rightsizing or downsizing; we need answers to ensure that when the design is done that it is going to meet the needs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You caught me off guard there.

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

residents of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS in 2006, the provincial government created a commission to review the Individualized Student Support Plan/Pathways model and make recommendations to improve the delivery of special education programming in the K-12 education system; and

WHEREAS in 2007, the ISSP/Pathways Commission delivered a final report to government outlining seventy-five recommendations for creating a better system for the delivery of special education programming; and

WHEREAS to date, many important recommendations of the ISSP/Pathways Commission have not been acted upon, including those related to: public disclosure of assessment and wait-list information; guidelines for comprehensive and ethical assessment practices; procedures to address the needs of all at-risk students; creating an effective appeals process for families; meeting the needs of exceptionally able – in other words, gifted – learners; expanding the role of student assistants into teacher assistant roles; introducing special education department heads in schools; and improving on special education teacher qualifications and certification;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to fully implement the recommendations of the ISSP/Pathways Commission in order to improve the delivery of special education programming for all students, parents, teachers, and schools.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, we have people who have signed this from all around the City of St. John's. This is an important petition and one that I have presented a number of times before. A number of these recommendations could be acted upon and implemented with a relatively modest investment. One of those, which I think would work nicely with this government's newfound commitment to openness and transparency, would be the public disclosure of assessment

and wait-list information. We should not have to request that information. If government is truly interested in being open and transparent, that assessment information, that wait-list information, times for wait-lists, breakdowns by school for wait-list times for assessments – I said in the House earlier last week that some of those assessments to be done by guidance counsellors can take up to twenty hours to do because of the shortage of guidance staff we have in our schools. Unfortunately, we have wait-lists of twenty, thirty or more students in some schools who are waiting for assessments.

That sort of information can be made publicly available on government's new openness and transparency wait-list with a modest investment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker; I will continue to raise this.

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

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, a petition to the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned humbly sheweth:

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS cellphone service is essential for business development;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to partner with the private sector to extend cellphone coverage

throughout Gros Morne National Park and the enclave community of Trout River.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, government has announced today, and provided a briefing, that 911 coverage is going to be extended throughout the Province. This, in the case of Trout River, will be one more reminder of what they are not going to get. They are not going to be able to receive 911 coverage because they cannot get cellphone coverage.

Mr. Speaker, many of the residents of Trout River own cellphones. Several hundred of them apparently own cellphones, not because they can use the cellphones at home, not because they can receive a call but because when they travel they are able to phone home.

Imagine the frustration now of recognizing that they will have cellphones, they will not have cellphone coverage. The 911 coverage will be extended all through Trout River Gulch where people travel on a regular basis through all sorts of weather. People will be coming from worldwide, as they have done so in the last few weeks with the Royal Ontario Museum going to Trout River to recover a massive blue whale, all of this, and no cellphone coverage.

Mr. Speaker, the residents of Trout River, a town that is properly incorporated, pays its dues and fees as every other town. By the names and addresses, I can see they have streets. They have street numbers. They are fully engaged, but they are being left behind by this government.

This is a petition by more residents of the Town of Trout River asking government to partner with the private sector to extend cellphone coverage so they can be fully able to engage, to receive, or make 911 calls.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As per Standing Order 32, I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, we move to Orders of the Day.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that we now move to orders of the day. All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to Standing Order 11, I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, Tuesday, May 20, 2014.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that this House do not adjourn on Tuesday, May 20, 2014 at 5:30 p.m.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, Pursuant to Standing Order 11, I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Conservation, that the House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. today, Tuesday, May 20, 2014.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that this House do not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 20, 2014.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This time I would like to call from the Order Paper, Order 8, second reading of a bill, An Act To Establish And Implement A Province-Wide 911 Telephone Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies. (Bill 14)

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice, that Bill 14, An Act To Establish And Implement A Province-Wide 911 Telephone Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies, be now read the second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 14, An Act To Establish And Implement A Province-Wide 911 Telephone Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Establish And Implement A Province-Wide 911 Telephone Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies". (Bill 14)

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As Minister Responsible for Fire and Emergency Services Newfoundland and Labrador, it is with great pleasure that I stand before you today to open debate on Bill 14 and talk about the work we have undertaken to implement a Province-wide Basic 911 service for the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, as a government, we are very much committed to expanding 911 service to all residents in this Province by the end of this calendar year. The purpose of the Basic 911 service is to facilitate the contact of emergency services by residents. It is a widely recognized

and easily remembered number that is available to almost everyone in Canada and the United States. I am pleased to say that all residents will soon have access to this internationally recognized emergency telephone number on both land lines and mobile phones where cellular signals are accessible.

The 911 service model will incorporate a call-taking service where the call taker will relay the 911 call to the appropriate emergency response agency, whether it is the police, a fire department, or an ambulance. The dispatching of services will be carried out by the respective emergency service provider and is consistent with the practice in the Maritime Provinces.

Currently, the 911 service is available in three areas of the Province by land line and this covers approximately 40 per cent of the Province's population. Residents in the Northeast Avalon region, Corner Brook-Bay of Islands region, and the Labrador West region already have access to Basic 911 by land line. All residents of Newfoundland and Labrador can currently access 911 from a cellphone where cell signals are available.

As reflected in the recent Budget, *Budget 2014: Shared Prosperity, Fair Society, Balanced Outlook*, the provincial government is committed to ensuring residents share fully and equally in the prosperity resulting from the Province's recent economic growth. In keeping with this theme, the government believes that all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians need and rightfully expect to have a Basic 911 service available on their land line telephones. Therefore, the approval of the Emergency 911 Act is crucial to ensure we deliver on this commitment for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The approval of this bill will provide the legislative framework for the establishment and operation of a Province-wide Basic 911 telephone service and the rollout of Next Generation 911.

Mr. Speaker, the 2012 report by POMAX Public Safety Incorporated outlined areas to be examined before a Basic 911 service could effectively be put in place, including infrastructure, financing, governance, and legislation. Therefore, in preparation for the expansion of Basic 911, Fire and Emergency

Services officials began this work in August, 2012. A senior-level 911 implementation team was established beginning in August of last year to continue with Province-wide implementation of Basic 911 by December, 2014. The 911 team continues to make steady progress towards our goal of having a Basic 911 service for all residents.

There are three key parts contained within this bill. Part I establishes the emergency 911 telephone service and requires participation by every municipality, emergency service provider, and public safety answering point, the 911 call centre. It also provides for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to determine the location and boundaries of the primary public safety answering points and calls for emergency service providers, such as fire departments, ambulances, and police forces, to identify their emergency response zones.

The identification of these zones will enable the 911 implementation team to accurately define geographical boundaries of the responsible emergency providers, which will then be incorporated into the technology used at the public safety answering points. The 911 implementation team will record these zones, following consultations with municipalities and emergency service providers throughout the Province.

Mr. Speaker, Part II of the bill also establishes the Newfoundland and Labrador 911 Bureau, which will operate as a not-for-profit corporation. Consistent with policy direction to establish an entity at arm's-length from government, the Newfoundland and Labrador 911 Bureau will own its property, be responsible for its staff, and liable for its contracts. It is also charged with establishing and operating an emergency 911 telephone service in a manner that is efficient and cost effective. This service will be flexible, responding to changing technologies, while also protecting the confidentiality and security of the information that it is required to collect.

Mr. Speaker, the bill also facilitates the creation of a board of directors for the Newfoundland and Labrador 911 Bureau to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The board of directors will consist of a maximum of nine

individuals, including the director of the bureau, a representative from Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, a representative from each primary public safety answering point, and at least one director who is a resident of Labrador. The operations and duties of the board include conducting regular board meetings, holding annual general meetings, and submitting annual reports and audited financial statements to government.

Mr. Speaker, in order to fund this service, the bill provides authority for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to establish a fee, which will be charged to subscribers of wireless and landline telephone service.

I will just quote POMAX's report, "In conclusion, we find that a cautious, progressive, and planned implementation of Basic 9-1-1 and, eventually, a multi-year plan resulting in the implementation of Next Generation 9-1-1 throughout Newfoundland and Labrador is quite feasible at an estimated (based on what we know at this time), equivalent of less than \$0.75 per month per telephone line or wireless subscription."

It was also noted that – and again I quote – "these estimates could vary significantly from a final tally, however, further investigation after this feasibility study and the involvement of various government departments and stakeholders will refine the approximations...".

Mr. Speaker, fees collected will fund the expansion and ongoing operations of Basic 911, including the Newfoundland and Labrador 911 Bureau, the public awareness campaign, and the modernization of technology that is required as we move towards next generation 911. A small portion of the fees collected will cover the administrative costs of the telecommunications service provider.

It is also important to note that the levy fees will be reviewed over time, and the Lieutenant Governor in Council has the authority to reduce the levy fee if it is deemed necessary. The bill also establishes a fund known as the Newfoundland and Labrador 911 service fund into which fees will be deposited for use by the 911 Bureau on a not-for-profit basis. The funds are for the purposes of developing, operating,

and improving the emergency 911 telephone service and they are for no other purpose.

The Newfoundland and Labrador 911 Bureau is mandated to ensure the confidentiality and security of information provided to it by the telecommunications service provider. Liability protection will be provided to the individuals who provide the emergency 911 telephone service when acting in good faith.

The 911 telephone service is intended for a person, not an alarm, who is in need of a live voice for emergency reasons. To protect the integrity of the system, the bill prohibits a person from connecting an automatic alarm system of any kind to the emergency 911 telephone service. In addition, the bill states that a person shall not use or permit another person to use a telephone to place a false call to the number 911. Depending on the circumstances, provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada respecting public mischief, false messages, or indecent or harassing phone calls could be applicable.

Mr. Speaker, municipalities and other stakeholders have an important role to play in implementing the new service. They have had an opportunity to be directly involved in identifying their emergency response zones through consultations with the 911 implementation team that took place across the Province throughout April and earlier this month.

If a council that has an established fire department is unwilling or unable to identify its emergency response zone, the bill makes a provision for an amendment to the Fire Protection Services Act that allows the fire commissioner to determine emergency response zones. This provision was included to ensure that if there is a boundary dispute among neighboring fire departments for instance, that there is a clear avenue for resolution.

While Basic 911 service will not improve emergency response times on its own, government has made significant investments to improve response capabilities for Fire and Emergency Services. Since 2003, the provincial government has continued to advance efforts in fire truck and equipment funding, training, and

support for the approximately 5,900 volunteer firefighters across Newfoundland and Labrador. Also since 2003, the government has contributed \$19.1 million in funding towards the purchase of 125 emergency response vehicles for communities throughout the Province.

Mr. Speaker, as recently announced in Budget 2014, the provincial government has made a record-breaking commitment of \$5 million to fund firefighting equipment and vehicles in 2014-2015. This is a \$3 million increase in vehicle and equipment funding from last year and the provincial government's investment this year is the largest ever made in fire protection services in this Province.

This investment will allow Fire and Emergency Services Newfoundland and Labrador to invest in three critical areas: regional rescue vehicle extrication services, regional fire protection services, and the replacement of aging fire protection vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, as our Province continues to attract new and diverse industries, it is important that our firefighters are equipped with the necessary resources and skills to respond to any type of emergency situation that they face; therefore, we have also included \$120,000 to support hazardous materials response training for the nine municipal based fire departments that participate in the program. This funding will support ongoing training initiatives for these firefighters and help address their occupational health and safety needs.

Mr. Speaker, we also have a fire and emergency services training school, it is held annually –

MR. JOYCE: A point of order, please.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member for the Bay of Islands, on a point of order.

MR. JOYCE: I just ask the minister: Are we speaking about the Municipal Affairs budget or are we speaking about 911 services?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying before I was interrupted, we also have a Fire and Emergency Services training school that is held annually. It offers approximately thirty-five courses in the latest techniques and approaches for municipal workers, emergency management partners, and firefighters.

This year the training school will be held in Clarendville from May 24-30 and the curriculum has been expanded with three new courses, including a mental health first aid for youth program. This program was developed in partnership with the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Department of Health and Community Services, and the Paramedic Association of Newfoundland and Labrador.

This training effort will provide an opportunity for interested fire service personnel to participate in a train-the-trainer course and help educate other first responders to identify a mental health crisis situation in any emergency response call.

Mr. Speaker, due to the geographical realities of Newfoundland and Labrador, we recognize that the training school cannot address the educational needs of all career and volunteer firefighters in the Province; therefore, since 2011, our government has offered a financial incentive to municipal fire departments who offer training within their regions, thus expanding opportunities for training at the local level. To date, over \$56,000 has been paid out to municipalities Province-wide to meet this objective.

Our government has pursued other measures in support of fire and emergency service capabilities as well. For example, on June 18, 2013, the provincial government demonstrated its continuous efforts to enhance ground search and rescue capabilities by signing an agreement with the Civil Air Search and Rescue Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, a volunteer, non-profit aviation association. This agreement augments air search support services to supplement ground search and rescue programs in the Province.

Budget 2014 also provides an additional grant in the amount of \$580,000 over the next five years for the Newfoundland and Labrador Search and Rescue Association to upgrade vehicles and equipment and for radio licensing fees. In addition to search and rescue capabilities, approximately \$920 million has been invested in policing services since 2004 and more than 140 additional front-line police officers have been deployed throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Additionally, Budget 2014 sees an investment of \$4.8 million for police services, which, among other things, will be used for additional funding for Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit, Newfoundland and Labrador –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker is having trouble trying to determine the relevance of the minister's comments to the principle of the bill. I would ask the minister to speak to the principle of the bill.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaking to our emergency response capabilities on the ground in communities and in regions in Newfoundland and Labrador is what I am attempting to do through my remarks. While certain members opposite do not seem interested, I think it is really important to let Newfoundlanders and Labradorians know what kind of emergency response capability exists on the ground because that is an essential component of emergency response and it is very much related to the Province-wide Basic 911 service that we are implementing.

Anyway, I will move on. With many important investments being made to support our Fire and Emergency Services capabilities, the passing of this emergency 911 bill is definitely the next logical step, and that is the point I am trying to make this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Having Basic 911 coverage for all land line telephones in the Province will also provide the groundwork needed for Next Generation 911, which will allow emergency services to keep pace with changing methods of communication and data transfer such as text messaging and image sharing.

Mr. Speaker, once this bill has passed and the implementation work has been completed, Basic 911 services will be available to all those who have land lines and also to those with mobile telephones where a cellular telephone signal is available. I am certainly very pleased to be part of this important legislation that will ultimately improve the safety of all residents and visitors to Newfoundland and Labrador through the expansion of Basic 911 service.

I will conclude my remarks at this point and I will have a chance to speak later in second reading at the conclusion of the debate.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 14, An Act To Establish And Implement A Province-Wide 911 Telephone Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, just let me say that on the surface and in principle I agree with this legislation. It has certainly been a long time coming for sure. There is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that 911 is a universal number that we all recognize, but unfortunately for many years here in this Province – and I am sure we are not alone – there are many areas throughout the Province where 911 is not available. We have been able to enjoy the 911 service here in the St. John's-Mount Pearl area – so we have been able to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to take my seat, and I will speak a little later to it, now that the Member for Bay of Islands is here.

Thank you.

MR. JOYCE: By leave by the House Leader.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: By leave by the House Leader, I (inaudible) stand up for a second as the critic

and I can finish off (inaudible) fifty-eight minutes.

MR. SPEAKER: The member has twenty minutes to speak.

The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: But, Mr. Speaker, the critic has one hour, and by leave, because I had to step out for a second that the Government House Leader –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Standing Orders recognize the first speaker on the opposite side with sixty minutes after the minister speaks. The first speaker was the Member for Mount Pearl South who is now sitting down and his time has expired.

I recognize the Member for Bay of Islands who has twenty minutes to speak.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Government House Leader, but I thought anything we could do in here with leave we can do it – as one day we had a petition here where the Premier got up and spoke on a petition by leave.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I would ask the member to speak to the bill.

MR. JOYCE: I know; it is just to point it out.

Mr. Speaker, I just heard the minister talk about some of the capabilities of the – I want to talk about some of the capabilities of Municipal Affairs that are not, Mr. Speaker, right now in the – and I will do that at a later time because I will have fifteen minutes to speak about Municipal Affairs also with the lack of services. I will speak on the bill now.

First of all, to the minister himself, I will just thank the officials, Mr. Speaker, for the briefing they gave us this morning. It was a good briefing by all the officials.

This 911 service, Mr. Speaker, was in first reading last week. Today, we received a briefing this morning, the minister had a press

conference today, and now we are up debating the bill. Especially in a bill where we are all trying to improve the services for people in Newfoundland and Labrador, we need more time to do a bit of research on it, to do a bit more review. If there is any way – and this is with government and ourselves also, to give more time to do a bit of review on the bill itself so we can add some positive comments and we can make some highlights, some issues that can definitely enhance the bill. That is something I bring to the Government House Leader, if there is any way – especially something so important as 911.

I heard the minister go on about the enhanced services, Mr. Speaker, in around like – I will use Frenchman's Cove, for example. There is no water and sewer in a part of Frenchman's Cove. Even if 911 were called, there is no fire protection. This has been on the radar; it has been stopped for the longest while. The funding has not come through. Even if we called 911, there are no services there for fire protection, and it is a big concern.

The minister mentioned some other things in it. I will go through some more at a later time, Mr. Speaker, on that. The minister mentioned POMAX Consulting Incorporated. They did a feasibility study on it. It is now estimated that 40 per cent of the population have Basic 911 service right now; the Northeast Avalon. I know in Corner Brook we have it. Parts of Labrador have the Basic 911 service. Lab City and Wabush has it, I believe. What we are discussing here today is an enhancement of the 911 service for all the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We all know – the government opposite and the Opposition – that there are a lot of challenges to this. This is not something where anybody can walk in and wave a magic wand to it and expect that everybody in this Province will have an enhanced 911 service.

We are going to offer some suggestions to the 911 service. We will be supporting this Basic 911 service. There will be some questions that we will be asking. There will be some questions that we will be raising, but we do support the basic concept of 911 in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador for all of the

residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

Another concern that was brought up today, and it was brought up at the technical briefing and was also brought up at the press conference, was cellphone coverage. Mr. Speaker, we heard members on this side on numerous occasions bring up cellphone coverage. We asked the former Minister of Industry and Trade about it. Is there any plan with the federal government to try to bring in cellphone coverage in certain areas of the Province?

Mr. Speaker, as we all know when you go around the Province, there are certain parts of the Province, vast parts of the Province actually, where you cannot get cellphone coverage. I will just use this for an example, Mr. Speaker. If you are driving in an area which is isolated, you have an accident, or come upon an accident, or there is some emergency, you cannot get hold to 911.

In my opinion, we have to try to find and develop some strategy – I know the former minister is looking at me attentively. We have asked: Is there some plan to have a 911 cellphone coverage across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador with the federal government? I do not expect that to happen overnight. The easiest thing in the world to do is stand up and say we want this, but the implications of it and the cost of it. Have we ever developed a strategy whereby we can start making representation to this, whereby we can start – and this would enhance the 911 service all throughout the Province.

That is something that I think that the Minister for Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs should also try to bring up to enhance it. We would be supportive of cellphone coverage throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador on this side. Before we do that, we need to come up with a comprehensive plan that we can approach the federal government. We need the federal government on side, we need the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador on side, and we need the service providers on side also to ensure that we can get cellphone coverage throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. That would enhance this 911. Again, I say to the minister, it is not going to happen overnight. It is definitely

not going to happen overnight, but if there was some strategy that we can look at for down in the road.

Mr. Speaker, I know in a lot of cases with 911, being able to call the same number anywhere in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, land line or if you have cellphone coverage, that will enhance safety. It definitely will. In some areas of the Province if you were going to call a hospital, for example, you need to know the hospital number. If you are going to call the fire department, you need to know the fire department number. If you are going to call an ambulance, there is a different number. In this case, Mr. Speaker, it is just call one number: 911. It is a great concept. Even people with cellphone coverage in service areas, they definitely can use 911. People with cellphones – and I think people must be aware of this – you can use it if you are in the range, so it is not just landlines that we are talking about here.

When this concept first came about a few years back, it took almost four to five years to bring it to this stage. We are not sure how long it is going to take to bring this to the next stage, the enhanced 911, the Next Generation 911, but we have to strive towards it. We definitely have to strive towards the Next Generation 911. Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt there are going to be challenges, there is no doubt that there is going to be issues arising from it, but we have to approach it in such a way that it is all inclusive, that any new idea that can enhance this bill will definitely enhance the bill.

Mr. Speaker, just for an example, in Corner Brook right now it goes to the RNC. The RNC have people on staff. If you call 911 in the Corner Brook, Bay of Islands area, it goes to the RNC. If this new Basic 911 system is in place now, the question a lot of people will be asking is: Will it improve and make it quicker? The answer is no. It will make it better, it will be easier for the people, but it will not make the service any quicker, Mr. Speaker. This is a system where you call – it all has the same three digits throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, but, Mr. Speaker, the dispatchers then will take the information and pass it on to the emergency personnel. People have to be aware that this will not increase the time that someone will respond to an emergency.

Mr. Speaker, the new advanced 911 that is planning on coming in, this has been implemented in other places across Canada and North America. This will allow for texting, hearing impaired, be able to allow for images and videos of the emergency scene. Again, I think the timeline is looking at three or four years before we are bringing that system in. Mr. Speaker, this is further down the road and this is a progression that we are all looking for.

Some of the findings of the feasibility studies: The infrastructure, technical, and organizational resources already exist in Newfoundland and Labrador to support the extension of 911. We have the system now where we can use the 911 in Newfoundland and Labrador. The system exists now. The system is there whereby this service can be provided by the local carriers here in Newfoundland and Labrador as we speak.

We were talking earlier about the cost. This is something that the minister spoke about earlier. How much will it cost for the implementation of this program? We have a major concern, or I do, personally, because there are two things happening here. Every person who has a phone in Newfoundland and Labrador will be charged up to – there has been no limit set. They are saying the maximum that it should be is \$1 per phone per month.

If some household has three phones, you will be charged \$3 extra a month. If some household has two phones with two different numbers and their kids have three different cellphones, it is an extra \$5 a month. The estimated cost of revenue from this, Mr. Speaker – and we were told this morning at the technical briefing there are 600,000 phones. The estimated income from this would be almost \$7 million. That is a lot of money. These are some of the concerns that we have.

Mr. Speaker, with the \$7 million, if a business has eight, ten phones, they will be charged for each phone in that business. This can become a huge amount of money being collected. The question I asked at the briefing this morning is, what will all this money be used for? They mentioned also it is going to take back the money that the government put in. I think it was, just off memory, \$155,000 last year; \$2.1 million that was in the Budget this year to

enhance this program. This \$2.1 million will be collected back from this fee. That is what we were informed this morning. That is why I asked a question today for the minister to clarify if that was actually fact.

Mr. Speaker, I asked a question also about if – and this is very important to the minister. I asked the question, is there any guarantee that these funds have to stay within the organization that was set-up? Can government get at it through general revenues? The answer was yes, if the association that is set-up asked the government or the government asked them, they can ask the government to take the funds. There is no guarantee that this will not be put in general revenues. That is what we were told this morning, that there is a possibility.

I ask the minister if he can try to find some way to guarantee that the funds have to. It says in the legislation may. There is no shall stay into the registered body. This is a big concern for us because right now if there becomes an excess of funds, what will happen to the funds? That is the question I would like answered by the minister. Will there be funds given back to the ratepayers and decrease the monthly amount, or will it just stay, collect the money and government – it could be any government. I am not just saying this government, it could be any government that happens to come into play later on – could ask for these funds and use them for some other possibility.

Mr. Speaker, the other question that was asked today, I think by the Third Party, was: Will any of these funds be used for cellphone towers? It is a legitimate question. We were told no, they cannot be used for cellphone towers. This is something also. Will any of this be used by the business people who say, well, now there is money going to the government, give us some of that money; we will put up cellphone towers. The ratepayers will be paying for it, not the providers, Mr. Speaker, or the people who do not even need it; who will not need the cellphone towers will be paying for it. So that is a few guarantees, I say to the minister, that we need.

Under the briefing we had this morning, Mr. Speaker, concerning this act, every municipality emergency service provider is required to

participate. I ask the minister, will that be enshrined in this legislation that every emergency provider – if they are volunteers, will they be mandated to participate in the enhanced 911 service? A lot of the groups that I already know – fire departments are mostly volunteer they would participate no matter what happens but we need municipalities involved for many reasons.

One of the reasons we need them, Mr. Speaker, is to ensure that all the municipalities – we need a number system on their house. That is a major concern in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, the location of a house. I will just use an example of out in York Harbour, which I am very familiar with. Out in York Harbour, each house does not have a number. When an emergency number comes in now with the 911, because if we go to the local dispatcher now it would be fine, but when you get into the enhanced system, Mr. Speaker, when you have a locator you need numbers on the houses so that the emergency responders will be able to track down the house itself. So that is very important.

With the municipalities, and I spoke to MNL today, they are in favour of this also. There is a lot of work that needs to be done with it. We will ensure that anything we can do to help out. This is something for the minister, how are we going to get local service districts to co-operate? They are not mandated now by Municipal Affairs. This becomes the bigger picture, is will the local service districts and the limited community governments, how will they be mandated or forced to participate in this? This is something we did not have explained.

I ask the minister if he can explain to us how this is going to be done with the local service districts. A lot of the local service districts now are off on their own, they have no regional authority. For the next stage we need to ensure that everybody is involved and that government has the authority over the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the other part of the briefing we had today is Cabinet shall determine location of public safety answering points and determine its boundaries. As we were told in the briefing today, is that one cut off point here will be Sunnyside, I believe we were told this morning – Sunnyside. East will be to St. John's.

Sunnyside to out west will be Corner Brook. It takes in the lower parts of Labrador. Then the one in Lab West, I think they are looking to see how they can enhance that and see if there is some way to incorporate all of Labrador.

So, Mr. Speaker –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

MR. JOYCE: By leave, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: Does the member have leave?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

A previous ruling of the House, when we give members leave, it is for a maximum of two minutes but I am of the understanding that you want to give the member forty minutes leave?

MR. KING: (Inaudible) the maximum.

MR. SPEAKER: Forty minutes. The member has leave for forty minutes.

The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I will not be going forty, but thank you for that, to the Government House Leader.

Mr. Speaker, earlier when I said that I am not sure if you were here when we gave leave to the Premier to speak on a petition. We were told by the Speaker at the time that the House can decide whatever they want by leave. That is why I thought they can – anyway, thank you for that, for reviewing it and ensuring that I have the time I needed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying earlier, that is going to be the three points focal points that we were told in the briefing today. From my understanding, Mr. Speaker, the St. John's Regional Fire Department will be doing Sunnyside East on this. Then from Corner Brook, they are in negotiation with the City of Corner Brook for the fire department, from my understanding. To the people at the RNC in

Corner Brook who are answering 911 now – and I ask the minister to clarify this because we were told today, and just to confirm it, because I have no misgivings about what we were told at the briefing. It was a great briefing and I thank the officials for it. I know people who are working with 911 in Corner Brook now.

The question I asked: Will these people be displaced if the fire department in Corner Brook – we were told, and I am sure there are going to be a few of them watching today, that, no, whoever is working at the RNC now, at the 911 at the RNC, will remain. When the duties are moved on to the fire department, if this works out in the negotiations with the City of Corner Brook for their fire departments, they will be reassigned other duties to ensure that their jobs are still there. That is one question I had this morning and that is the answer I was told. I ask the minister to confirm that just to alleviate the concerns of some of the 911 dispatchers now because I would hate to see anybody displaced because of this.

Also from my understanding, Mr. Speaker, Lab West right now is being administered by the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary. That is my understanding. Who will be doing it in the near future is the Constabulary in Lab West. If the Constabulary are going to be doing it also in Lab West, a concern was brought up this morning about Southern Labrador and if there was any way we could encompass all of Labrador in the future instead of having someone in Corner Brook answer the calls from people from Labrador, especially if we get into the new 911 enhanced services. It is very, very important.

Another point we were told at the briefing today, Mr. Speaker – and I have to ensure we are on record with this also. This is very important. If this was implemented January 1, 2015 and a call came into Corner Brook – and I ask the minister if what I am saying here is incorrect that the minister clarify it because it is very important. If a call came in to a dispatcher at the fire department in Corner Brook now, January 1, 2015, when this is in place, the dispatcher then will notify the responders in that local area who do have the local knowledge of the area.

That is a big concern because some people are saying: Well, how would someone in Corner

Brook know what is happening down on the Baie Verte Peninsula? From my understanding is that when a call comes in to a dispatcher in Corner Brook, the dispatcher then will contact emergency services in that local area, whoever they would be. That is very important for the general public. Someone in St. John's is not going to be trying to give information, help some emergency responder to get to a location that he is not familiar with. Someone in Corner Brook is not going to be doing it. The Constabulary also in Lab West, from my understanding, will be contacting the emergency service provider in the area. That is my understanding of it, and I see the minister nodding. I thank the staff that gave the briefing today. They were very adamant that this is the way it would be, Mr. Speaker.

When this happens, Mr. Speaker, it is very important that whoever is directing the responders or whoever is directing the emergency personnel that they have a bit of a local knowledge or have some idea on this. The system with the Basic 911 will keep that in place; it will ensure that.

Mr. Speaker, this is important so we do not delay the services and this is the procedure that we are told, and the minister agrees, is going to be in place for that. For people who think that because Corner Brook is doing Sunnyside West, Gander, Grand Falls, and other areas that someone in Corner Brook is going to be directing emergency personnel; it is not the case. The 911 initial contact will contact the emergency personnel at the location, Mr. Speaker. That is very important.

I am just going to speak for a little while about the corporation that is going to be set up with this here. The corporation will be entitled NL 911 Bureau Inc. That is what will be established. The corporation is not an agent of the Crown, Mr. Speaker.

We have the bill here and we will go through the bill. We can go through each clause in Committee under the bill. We will go through each clause.

The Newfoundland and Labrador 911 Bureau Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation. I think the minister answered that question today, and we

got it in the briefing today, that it is a not-for-profit. Then the question arises if it is not-for-profit, how will the funds be dispersed, how will they be used, what if there is extra revenue in the funds? When will the determination be made that yes, we are collecting two months. We were told today in the briefing and I know the minister said it today also that no one is sure how much is it going to cost. No one is sure.

They feel the maximum is up to \$1. They are looking at seventy-five cents now is what the minister said today, seventy-five cents per line, Mr. Speaker. We are at that level now, what if the cost is lower? Will the money be reimbursed back to the ratepayers? Will it stay in a fund for a certain period of time? What is the period of time before a decision has to be made.

My colleague for St. Barbe – and I mentioned this earlier – went through the legislation and we asked: Can government get at this fund? We were told, technically, they can. We were told that this morning. There is some way that the government – there is nothing there that prohibits the corporation not asking the government, or the government coming back to the corporation and saying: Well, we are requesting funds; there is nothing there.

I ask the minister to clarify that or some way to strengthen the legislation. Once again, Mr. Speaker – and I just want to be fair – this is not because this government may take the funds. It may be this government or the government five years or ten years down the road. This is by no means trying to deflect attention that whichever government – your government is in now, that you may do this. This is protection down the road, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we will do it right. It is very important that once we put it in place that we all could stand here in this House and we can all say yes, we agree with this bill, yes we did our best to enhance it for the general public, and yes, that every safeguard that we could put in there, that we can possibly think of, is put in there.

Mr. Speaker, also we were told today, and it is in the legislation, Cabinet shall appoint a board of directors for the corporation. The board is going to be made up of regional representation, and it will consist of: The board shall consist of a maximum of 9 directors, including the following

persons: one member from the MLN board of directors; and one representative from each of the established PSA – each area say Corner Brook, St. John's, Labrador – the director of the NL 911 Bureau Inc. At least one director shall be a resident of Labrador. The Cabinet shall appoint one of the directors as chairperson and one as vice-chair.

Members of the board of directors shall receive remuneration established by Cabinet. This is important, Mr. Speaker, that there will be remuneration paid out, which it should be. If somebody is giving up their time they should have their expenses paid. That is not an issue. A lot of people think: oh, it is by the board, now government is just going to appoint people. The remuneration we were told will be at Level II, I believe, which is fair, because if people are going to give up their time and energy to oversee the corporation they should be in some way paid remuneration.

A director shall hold office for a period of four years. This is a bit higher than what we are used to, holding office four years, Mr. Speaker. Most corporations are usually set up for two years, probably three years, but we notice here: a director shall hold office for a period of four years. I will ask the minister later to explain how the four years came about. Because that is a bit higher than what we are used to seeing for appointments, I say to the minister.

The corporation shall hold an annual meeting in each calendar year. The board of directors is responsible for appointing its staff and employees, anticipated to be four or five employees, plus a director. That is the other thing. The minister later on in his discussions will explain what type of personnel will be needed, what will be the pay salary for these employees. Because we just went through one, I think, through the Public Accounts where a corporation was set up and there were pay raises being given out with a wink and a nod. As we found out, the Minister of Health at the time went down to the chairperson and gave them a wink and a nod. They went back and got over a 100 per cent increase with a wink and a nod, nothing in writing.

AN HON. MEMBER: Changed the classifications.

MR. JOYCE: Changed the classifications, the Chair of the Public Accounts said, changed the classifications.

This is something we have to be leery of, Mr. Speaker, because when that board and the personnel were set up, they were at a rate and then before anybody knew it – when the Auditor General went in, we found out that the chairperson came out and met with the Minister of Health at the time, we are going back five or six years now. The Minister of Health came back and said: Yes, the minister said go ahead and do it. All of a sudden when the minister said go ahead and do it, they walked down and said: well, can you give us – they would not give it in writing. They just went up and said it. No, no, nothing in writing, Mr. Speaker.

Then we asked questions in Public Accounts, when we were in discussions with it, we were told, no, it was with a wink and a nod. This is why I say to the minister, when employees are hired, set the pay scale so that everybody will be on the same page so there will not be any surprises.

Then if you are going to put the 911 system in place, people have to have confidence in it. That is to have confidence in it. Have confidence in the people who are running the 911 system and then having confidence in the 911 system will ensure and help what it is supposed to do, help with the safety of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is just a suggestion to the minister, to ensure that there is confidence.

The corporation will enter into an agreement with a telecommunications provider who will be responsible for collecting the fees and remitting them to Service NL, Service Bureau Incorporated. Mr. Speaker, we asked about that this morning also in the briefing and we were told that up to four to five cents for the service provider will be paid for their administration of collecting the fee and submitting it to the bureau. That is something we were told is industry standards. I have no reason to believe it is not because if they are going to collect it and remit it to the bureau, someone has to pay for the administration of it. If four to five cents is the industry standard, which we were told it is, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that is proper and it is the right amount.

Mr. Speaker, Cabinet will be responsible for settling the fee that is yet undetermined. The anticipation is it will be under \$1 per month per telephone line. Mr. Speaker, we were told, I think, about a year and a half or two years ago when the former minister had the first announcement on this here that it looked like no more than \$1, but we are not sure how much. With 600,000 phone lines at a dollar a month, it is \$7.2 million if it is up to \$1. That is a lot of money.

I will ask the minister this and he can explain this: at the press conference we had about a year and a half ago, if I remember correctly, we were told there were going to be certain centres set up across the Province. That is why the fee has to be that high. What we understand now is that if the fire department in St. John's and the fire department in Corner Brook – the infrastructure is not there. If the RNC in Lab West is going to carry out these duties, the infrastructure is not there.

A year and a half ago when we were told the reason why the cost would be so high, it was because there was going to be one or probably two centres set up. With that is the cost of the building itself and the cost of maintenance, heat and light, and staffing in each building. If that is not going to be in place and the staffing is going to be lower because we will add to the complement that is in the fire department in St. John's, the fire department in Corner Brook, and also the RNC, why is it the same amount per line? That is the question I would like the minister to explain later, to justify to the general public why it is, Mr. Speaker.

I mentioned the cost of the providers, Mr. Speaker, the administration fee. They were saying four to five cents, or maybe up to seven cents. When we do our investigation into this and do some research, we would like for the minister to have what all the other providers around who are supplying this – what their administration fee is. If it is up to four to five cents or up to seven cents – I think seven cents is what we were told this morning. I will say four or five cents, and it may be four or five cents, but I thought seven cents. If that is the standard and if that is the norm, then that is acceptable to us.

Mr. Speaker, there will be an established fund called the NL 911 Service Fund. This fund the money will be provided into, and then it will be decided upon by the board the best way to spend the money and also how to go to the next stage with 911. The question again that I ask the minister: Is there any amount already for any other Province that went from 911 to the enhance 911, to the future generation 911, Mr. Speaker? Is there any other province that has this information that we can take so we can plug it in here to see what amount we need, how much will we need for the need for the next three or four years to bring it up to the new generation? That would be very useful information for us to ensure that we are in line with the rest of the provinces that have this.

Mr. Speaker, we are looking at this Basic 911 system to be in place by 2014. I understand the minister is looking at that date. I understand that everything is still in line for that. I look forward to it. I actually look forward to the 911 to ensure that it is going to be in place at the end of 2014.

From my understanding – and once again these are questions that the minister can answer – for the enhanced 911 they are looking at up to three years to bring it up to the enhanced form, to start planning now and buying the equipment, Mr. Speaker, to work out all the bugs, to look at other jurisdictions to see how they did it, and see what best practices there are around Canada. From our understanding, it is going to take three years to bring it up to the enhanced 911.

Three years seems like a long while, but in the briefing that we had today when you look at some of the challenges that they have, when you look at some of the difficulties, and when you look at the technology that is in place, it will take a while – three years. If that is the standard around other provinces, how can we try to make it quicker? How can we bring it to our Province a bit quicker? How can we learn from other jurisdictions around Canada so that we can try to speed this up to ensure instead of three years we will get it in two years? That is something I am not sure if the minister can answer also later when he stands.

Mr. Speaker, civic addressing will be a concern. This civic addressing that we have is not

necessary for 911, but if we are going to go into the enhanced system, it is very important that we have this civic addressing. Mr. Speaker, MNL has agreed that they would do whatever they can. The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador through the minister said: I urge all municipalities in the Province to start planning. There is going to be a cost to the civic planning. There is absolutely no doubt.

I ask the minister: In the fiscal framework agreement, will this be discussed; or, if there are any excess funds, will this be able to help any municipalities? These are the types of questions that municipalities will be asking. I already spoke to a few people on it. It is a cost for this civic addressing. It is going to be borne by the municipalities. Some of the municipalities cannot afford it. Some like Corner Brook and St. John's have that in place already. There are a lot of places that do not, Mr. Speaker. Just to give you an example, in rural Newfoundland and Labrador when someone makes a call and you drive – where does John Doe live? Oh, just over by the blue house next to the fire truck. Mr. Speaker, that cannot work with an enhanced 911 system. We need addresses. We need the buy in by all the municipalities. We need to ensure that the municipalities have the financial resources to do this because it is very important.

I will sit down and I will have a few words later in Committee, but to the minister and to the government any time that you can enhance services for the safety of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, I am in agreement and our Opposition are in agreement. That does not mean that everything that is put in legislation we are going to agree with, that we are not going to have questions and we are not going to try to improve it, but the Basic concept of 911 for the Province is a great step. It is a great step, Mr. Speaker. None of us here may ever need it, but the day that someone is somewhere and cannot remember the number to the hospital, can call 911, and it is an easy number to remember – Mr. Speaker, it is well worth it.

The other thing I forgot to mention, and this is something that was brought up at the briefing today. I asked: Is part of the funds that are going to be coming in from the \$1 a month? We are not sure how much – and this is part of the question about the amount of money that will be

raised by this and the amount being spent. Part of the funds that will be used will be for an education program so that you can get people aware that 911 is being used, and also for an enhanced system is the education program, civic addressing. Part of the funds that will be collected will be, again, used for an educational program as we move along so that people become aware of it, people will know how to use the system, and some of the funds also will be used for training. Then again, once we get a breakdown of what the funds are being collected and the revenues, what the expenditures are, Mr. Speaker, I think we all can have more confidence in it.

Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat. Again, I thank the Government House Leader for leave, as the critic, to finish on with the extra time that I had on this. I look forward to discussing this later in Committee and I look forward to some of the answers that the minister has.

I will say to the government because a lot of members over here also have a lot of connections with municipalities. A lot of them served. I look at the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace who sat on the town council. He is aware of this. If we take some good suggestions here and we ask government to look at it, it is not being critical. Please do not take it as being critical.

AN HON. MEMBER: No, not me.

MR. JOYCE: I heard one member say not me. This is bigger than all of us, Mr. Speaker. The minute we say that we might have some suggestions, right away, you cannot make any suggestions because that government knows it all. I am glad the minister is open minded, not like some members sitting behind him. I am glad the minister is open minded for some suggestions and looking at it.

Mr. Speaker, with some members sitting behind him, I can see why they are not up front because they are not open minded.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LITTLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before I start I would like to say that we are open, we are transparent, and we do listen to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

This particular bill, Bill 14, which is a very important bill, the approval of the Emergency 911 Act will provide the legislative framework for the establishment of a Province-wide emergency 911 telephone service, which would be very important across all municipalities of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The bill is intended to establish 911 as the primary emergency telephone number for use in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. It also supports the operation of Basic 911 and the implementation of Next Generation 911. This bill will identify mandatory participation for every municipality, emergency service provider, and public safety answering point. This bill will also require emergency service providers, which generally include fire, ambulance, and police, to identify their emergency response zones.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will establish the creation of the Newfoundland and Labrador 911 Bureau Inc. as a not-for-profit corporation, not an agent of the Crown. This includes establishing a governing board of directors. This particular piece of legislation will define the responsibilities of the board of directors to include submitting annual reports and audited financial statements to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Also, this piece of legislation will highlight the necessity for standardized guidelines, policies, and procedures for a 911 service. Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation, Bill 14, will provide authority of the Lieutenant Governor in Council to establish fees charged to subscribers of wireless and land line telephone services to fund the 911 emergency telephone service, known as the Newfoundland 911 Service Fund. The fee is expected to be under \$1 per phone line per month.

The government's objective is to expand the Basic 911 service to cover the entire Province by December, 2014. Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this 911 service is to facilitate the contact of individuals requiring emergency assistance with the appropriate emergency service provider. Basic 911 is also available throughout the Province from mobile phones where a cellular telephone signal can be accessed.

Approximately 40 per cent of the population of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is covered by a Basic 911 service on land line telephones: the Northeast Avalon Region, Corner Brook, Bay of Islands, and the Labrador West Region. Once established, Basic 911 services will be provided for all those who have land line and accessible cellphone service in the location from which they are calling.

Mr. Speaker, municipalities and other stakeholders have a role to play in implementing the service across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have made significant progress to date on this major, critical project, beginning with the establishment of a four-person 911 implementation team. We have cast our net wide to ensure that this new service meets the needs of stakeholder groups across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The team at Fire and Emergency Services Newfoundland and Labrador has held discussions with many groups, including: Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Combined Councils of Labrador, the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, the Newfoundland and Labrador Chapter, and representatives from the deaf and late-deafened community.

In essence, Mr. Speaker, we have communicated and consulted with a group of stakeholders, which is very important, and we listened to some of the viewpoints that were brought forward by some of these stakeholders in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have also begun discussions with the St. John's Regional Fire Department call centre about the possibility of expanding 911 call-taking services on the Avalon Peninsula. We are also in discussions with the City of Corner Brook regarding their interest in taking calls from the rest of the Province.

We will continue to work on the regulatory and governance structures necessary to implement a Province-wide Basic 911 service by the December, 2014 deadline. For example, important steps include the drafting of regulations, the creation of the NL 911 Bureau Inc., the appointment of its board of directors and hiring of its staff, procurement of office space, hardware and software, and concluding arrangements with telecommunication providers.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, there will also be public education sessions regarding what the public can expect with the implementation of Basic 911 services. We will continue to connect with the public in relation to dialogue, and how the Basic 911 services will be implemented in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Basic 911 is not a dispatch service; it is a call-taking service, Mr. Speaker. Basic 911 is designed to interact with the existing ambulance services and is expected to be modified accordingly once a centralized dispatch is in place. Fire and Emergency Services Newfoundland and Labrador and the Department of Health and Community Services are working closely together on this aspect.

The new 911 emergency service act requires emergency service providers and municipalities to identify emergency response zones and the services they provide. The delivery of fire protection services is a local government responsibility under section 183 of the Municipalities Act, 1999. Mr. Speaker, municipalities can decide whether they will establish a fire protection service within their boundaries, if they will purchase fire protection services from a neighbouring municipality, or share fire protection services with one or more municipalities, either formally through a shared-service agreement or a mutual-aid agreement, or informally through verbal agreement amongst themselves.

Mr. Speaker, the municipality is responsible for determining the level and type of fire protection service it will offer and for making decisions about the type of equipment and/or vehicles it will provide to its fire department. Fire and Emergency Services Newfoundland and Labrador has a legal mandate through the Fire Protection Services Act section 4(2)(d) to,

through the Fire Commissioner, advise the minister and municipalities about establishing fire departments and evaluating their firefighting capabilities.

The assessment of fire departments provides a basis for determining the type of fire protection services provided and lends support for decision making regarding the type of training, vehicles, and equipment that they require. Government's approach to enhancing community capacity is to encourage the sharing of services and to provide incentives for communities to work together.

This is not uncommon, Mr. Speaker. In the District of Bonavista South, the municipality of Trinity Bay North which encompasses the former communities of Little Catalina, Catalina, Port Union and Melrose – in relation to fire department supports, vehicles and training, the municipality actually amalgamated. That particular community is actually sharing fire equipment and providing a good standard of fire services to all the communities that I just discussed. The municipality is actually called Trinity Bay North, Mr. Speaker.

It is not uncommon in my district that fire departments actually communicate with each other from different regions of my district. The Town of Bonavista actually services the municipality of Elliston when it comes to fire and emergency services, Mr. Speaker. There is another fire department, the Five Coves, just five kilometres from the Town of Bonavista and they co-ordinate services from time to time and work together as municipalities on the tip of the Bonavista Peninsula to share services when needed.

The assessment of fire departments provides a basis for determining the type of fire protection services provided and lends support for decision making regarding the type of training, vehicles, and equipment that they require. Government's approach to enhancing community capacity is to encourage the sharing of services and to provide incentives for communities to work together. This is what this government has been doing in the past and we will continue to work with the communities of Newfoundland and Labrador in the future.

A senior level 911 implementation team was established beginning in August 2012 to further define a plan to expand and implement Province-wide 911 service. This includes recording emergency response zones. Mr. Speaker, the 911 implementation team began consultations with communities throughout the Province on April 9 and is concluding the week of May 12 in Labrador.

An important topic that will be addressed is the identification of emergency response zones. This will enable the team to accurately identify geographical boundaries of identified emergency responders which will then be incorporated into technology to be used at the primary public safety answering points. Section 32 of Bill 14 makes the provision that should a council when an established fire department are unwilling or unable to identify its emergency response zone as required by the bill, the fire commissioner may determine those zones.

Also, Mr. Speaker, it is the intention of this section to address response areas that are outside municipal boundaries, for example, along the Trans-Canada Highway. This provision was included to ensure that if there was a boundary dispute amongst neighbouring communities' municipality fire departments that there was an avenue for resolution of the dispute. Once the fire commissioner makes a decision, should the municipality object, the matter can be referred to the Minister Responsible for Fire and Emergency Services Newfoundland and Labrador for a final decision.

Fire and Emergency Services Newfoundland and Labrador is of the view that the best way to work through operational issues associated with emergency response zones of municipal fire departments is to meet and explore various options to share fire protection service consistent with prior policy direction.

In the future, we are actually planning to go beyond enhanced 911 and move directly from Province-wide Basic 911 to the more complex Next Generation 911, Mr. Speaker. That is the plan right now and we are having some discussions around that. The 911 implementation team has captured and recorded information that will be utilized during any transition from Basic 911 service to the Next

Generation 911. Additionally, a couple of significant pieces of work must be completed to prepare for any such transition to Next Generation 911, such as civic addressing and up-to-date digital based mapping.

The municipalities in the District of Bonavista South, most of the municipalities, most of the streets are identified to this point. Most recently, the local service district that encompasses eight communities on the upper end of the District of Bonavista South has identified all of the streets in each of the eight communities, Mr. Speaker. That is actually in the Lethbridge, Jamestown right down to the Sweet Bay area of the district. Actually I was in Sweet Bay this past weekend. I noticed that the streets were identified in the small community of Sweet Bay, which is very important to identifying where people live in the streets when it comes to emergency response vehicles going out into the communities and knowing where people live on a particular street.

Mr. Speaker, additionally a couple of significant pieces of work must be completed to prepare for any transition to the Next Generation 911. Like I said, that includes civic addressing. It is very important and it takes time to put signage up in all of the communities around Newfoundland and Labrador. That is something that can be worked on in the future.

I would like to say that I will definitely support this piece of legislation, Bill 14. It is a very important piece of legislation that will help people out in emergency situations in the future, Mr. Speaker. It is easy to dial 911. It is a number that is certainly remembered by most people and it will be very useful. This piece of legislation, when it is implemented, will be useful to citizens in all areas of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

Infrastructure, technical, and organizational resources already exist in Newfoundland and Labrador to support the expansion of the Basic 911 system using the same translation-encoded methodology already in use at the existing 911 centres. That is very important, Mr. Speaker. Existing models that are most applicable to the needs of Newfoundland and Labrador can be found in other provinces: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. A fair

amount of groundwork has been done in relation to other jurisdictions.

Like I said earlier, I will definitely support and I am delighted to be able to speak on this particular piece of legislation. I commend the people who actually gave me the briefing in the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his speaking time has expired.

MR. LITTLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I guess we can say I take pleasure in standing up and talking about 911 today. It seems to be a good piece of legislation, albeit we have a number of questions as regards that. I note the previous member talked about one of the particular points I wanted to talk to as regards to the set-up of the public safety answering points.

I understand there are going to be a number of challenges here in setting up Basic 911, let alone advancing to Next Generation 911, which is the desire, I think, of everybody in this Province to have. I know they have been pursuing it in other areas of this country now for a long, long time. I know the latest article I have been reading as regards to the upkeep and the promotion of 911, if you will and the growth overall of the 911 system is aimed mainly at the Northern Canadian regions. It seems like Newfoundland and Labrador has been forgotten about in some cases. It is nice to see that government is progressing through with it, but at the same time there are a number of challenges.

Just to come back to what my comrade was saying just a short time ago in the House when he talked about the challenges we are going to face in Bonavista South, where I guess he is from. He was talking about the challenges

having to be met by municipalities in civic numbering and addressing, as this bill would pertain to. This is one of the challenges, so I will just touch on one or two of them.

The simple fact is – and I can look at the area of St. John's, Mount Pearl, the Kilbride area, and the Goulds area of St. John's when I am talking about this – is the extra naming of streets, for example. If I go and I am looking for McGrath Place, we have a McGrath Place in the east end of St. John's up there off Higgins Line area. We have a McGrath Crescent that is in Mount Pearl. We have McGrath Place West that is up in the Goulds, not too far away from – well, actually, right across the street from the fire hall up there.

Whenever you are looking at the big municipality of St. John's or a big municipality like Mount Pearl, the question has to be asked as regards to the renaming of some streets even. There are challenges like that. That is the first thing I will bring up as regards to what the minister was talking about when it comes to the public safety answering point.

The second point that comes to mind is a lack of control here on part of the Canadian Radio-television and Communications Commission in this country, and it is this – I do not know now the logistics of what government is going to be doing here or what logistics if you will that the government has considered in this, but this is another consideration and it is simple. When you are talking about the type of Basic 911 system or the enhanced 911 system if you will, or even the Next Generation 911, it is the transference of phone numbers.

We just had a recent ruling, I think it was three or four years ago, that you could actually go and take a phone number with you. If you take a phone number with you, I am not sure if the mechanics of the system itself are going to be designed as such so that when you pick up the phone to phone, that the address of the subscriber to that telephone, for example, are already going to be in an automated system where it says this phone number belongs at such-and-such an address; or, is it going to be the name, for example, of a person themselves? If somebody moves and ends up not taking the phone with them, for example, I would presume it is going to be picked up by the phone

company and will probably be central in part to the 911 system.

I can appreciate logistics when it comes to this, but the recent CRTC ruling, like I said, throws a little bit of a complication in here when it comes to this. Does this mean that the phone number goes with you? When I want to talk about the logistics end of things, I know at one time it used to be easy in this Province to identify a phone number with a particular region of the Province, or even within a region of St. John's.

For example, just to give everybody a bit of a flavour. If I pick up the phone and I am in the west end of the city, for example, my first three digits are either going to be 364, 368, or 745 exchange, and I think the new exchange out in the west end would be 747. So basically four exchanges, maybe there are more in recent years, but now if I move down to the east end that phone number comes with me, if I choose to take it with me. I can have a 745 number down in the east end if I wanted to, or a 747.

I know this is going to be the logistical end of things that government is going to have to look at. They are going to have to make some tough decisions as regards to what is going to happen with people's phone numbers in this particular case, or maybe they will not. Maybe they will be going on name only. Maybe they will be going strictly by the civic addressing here. If somebody cannot speak, for example, on the phone when they are trying to call 911, they do not have the ability to use their voice, they go by the address then. That might be a logistical nightmare in some cases for them to address.

The other point I wanted to bring up as regards to this is the setting up of the public safety answering points. I asked a question in the House here earlier today because I had a concern about Labrador and about knowledge, and about the knowledge of the various communities that are out there on the part of the set-up of where some of these PSAPs are going to be set up. The question was this, when it came to addressing the needs of Labrador, Coastal Labrador, I asked a question whether Coastal Labrador calls should be handled by a phone centre in Corner Brook, knowing the geography, number one, of the Province; number two, the physical layout of the area as regards to the

resources that are handy, for example, around Coastal Labrador.

It is a simple question that we ask our search and rescue officials in Halifax when we are talking about the dispatching of a ship or a helicopter when it comes to rescuing somebody here in the Province. I kind of point a finger at government that perhaps it is probably better that somebody from Labrador would pick up the phone whenever the phone rings in Labrador for emergency 911 service rather than having somebody who is so far away from the service that they do not know what is happening in Labrador, for example. That might be a better way to be doing things.

I wanted to point that out to government as well, when it comes to that. That I think we can be doing a little bit better here. I see right now, right off the bat, there is an immediate need here, for example, for three public safety answering points rather than the proposed two right now. There is probably potential here for four, because I cannot see myself picking up the phone in Little Heart's Ease, for example, and phoning 911 and having somebody in Corner Brook even know about the geography in Little Heart's Ease, or perhaps it might even count for Robert's Arm. It may count for the Connaigre Peninsula where somebody in Corner Brook does not know exactly about the geography of what is happening or the geography itself of the Connaigre Peninsula. There is a possibility here as well and I think that government should consider it. It sounds like it is a little bit top-heavy, but the simple fact is we are talking about human lives here, we are talking about response times as well that could be critical here, and knowledge base is going to have to be where government is going to have to be making the decision on this. It seems easy to me that I think if there was enough information out there, I think government would certainly have to consider the placement of a public safety answering point in Central Newfoundland as well.

Again, on the basis of population, we have to look at various growth factors around the Province. For example, is the Northeast Avalon going to be able to be handled just by the City of St. John's services that are there now? We may have to expand them because I think the number

of calls we had there out of that 911 centre alone were something in the order of 30,600 calls in the briefing this morning. That is an awful lot of calls. Again, I do not think those calls actually included, for example, accidental dialing of 911 and that sort of thing.

That is quite a number of calls. Again, like I said, geography plays an important role. We ask it of search and rescue. We ask it whenever we are dispatching helicopters and Halifax are dispatching search and rescue teams. I think that it would matter here as regards the placement too of a public safety answering point somewhere on the West Coast as well as Labrador and indeed in St. John's. I think that government, like I said, definitely has to look at the possibility of having one of these public safety answering points within Central Newfoundland. We need experience whenever that phone is picked up. We are going to need people who are good and are knowledgeable about these areas of the Province whenever the phone rings.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of other things that come to mind when we were at the briefing on Bill 14 this morning, the cost to municipal numbering and the cost to getting municipalities to get into civic addressing may have to be addressed by the Province. Certainly when it comes to the new municipal funding arrangement, there is a possibility there that we can see new funding come to municipalities to address that, but at the same time I think municipalities are going to be the ones that are going to have to address the cost here.

Before I get too far away from the safety answering points, I want to bring up another point. As regards the number of dollars that were put into the resources here of 911, we have to ensure that we are going to have a backup system in place in case there is a failure of the 911 system. I have to come back to the whole issue of the fire at Allandale Road several years ago where we did have a failure within the phone system for several hours. I think at that particular time, Mr. Speaker, it did affect the 911 system. We have to make sure we are going to have the backups in place for that system to catch it when it falls, at the same time.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, in Newfoundland and Labrador, I think there were 30,600 calls here on the Northeast Avalon; overall in the Province last year about 96,000 calls for 911 service. Those calls, of course, are mostly centred in St. John's and Corner Brook. It is going to cost, for those calls to be answered, if the number of phones are right, according to the POMAX report, the response we had when the POMAX report was released, I believe there was something in the order of 217,000 hard lines into houses and businesses; and there were a considerable number of cellphones in this Province, approximately 400,000. I am trying to recall the number now. My researchers are looking for that number and no doubt I will have that in a little while. That number is considerable anyway.

We are talking about the fact that we are going to placing probably \$1 or under per phone in the Province. That has the potential of raising about \$7.2 million or \$7.3 million to go towards the 911 system. It would be nice if we had some clearer direction as regards exactly what the money is going to be spent on, to make sure all the bases are covered here. We know we are going to be looking at the various service points in the Province, the big question as regards the number of service points in the Province.

The number of people on the board is a concern, Mr. Speaker, from anybody I have been talking to as regards this. Right now, the government proposal is to have nine people there. I do not know why they would have it so top-heavy because in other regions of the country, in some cases, they do not run it by the board; they run it by the various departments of government, for example. The various departments of justice would be running such a corporation and would have responsibility for it. I am wondering about government's position as regards having a board there and if that was a necessity.

I can understand when they are looking for input, for example, from the fire commissioner. I have questions as regards the dispatching of that. The final decision, I think, of the sending of resources when it comes to that, should be up to the fire commissioner and not the municipality at the same time. While the municipality should have the responsibility of naming roads, giving civic numbering, and that

sort of thing. When that phone rings in the ditch I want to make sure that it is not going to be necessarily a councillor who is going to be answering the phone call if I happen to be tangled up in an accident. I want to make sure that I would have the experience of somebody who has been there, for example, a fire commissioner to actually give the best advice on where help should be sent from. Knowing where the resources are in the municipality is one thing, but knowing who to send at that particular time is absolutely critical, particularly in life-saving.

I think we have to move away from the municipality when it comes to that responsibility. The maintenance of a fire service or a police service may be their responsibility of where they are based, but not necessarily the responsibility of the municipality to send in this particular case. We are looking at the person being able to phone 911 or be able to have services dispatched, and those services being sent automatically from a central dispatcher.

I think that is probably where the fire commissioner's role would come in here. I can see him or her being appointed to the board. I could see a representation from the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary being on the board or the RCMP in this case. I think both would make fine representatives on that board to make sure that police services will know exactly how services are dispatched. Somebody from the ambulance services here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I guess in this particular case from one of the health agencies as regards ambulance dispatching.

Of course we know that government in its ambulance report are going to be coming out with new proposals so our ambulances are going to be displaced. Perhaps the office responsible for ambulances will have a representative on that as well. I would hope that search and rescue representatives may be able to sit on that board. We are talking an awful lot of people right now who meet on a regular basis already and probably already co-ordinate a response be that if it is in a mock disaster scenario they are already well-versed and well-practiced in some of that.

That is probably about where I wanted to go on the logistical end of things. The other one, like I said, the board is going to be there and they are going to oversee the implementation of the enhanced 911 system which is great. We are really looking at Next Generation. Some of the information that they will be gathering over the next two or three years when it comes to municipal numbering, for example, may lead you already into Next Generation.

I do not know; it will be a matter of curiosity I guess if we can implement in some areas of the Province, for example, as things progress, as technology progresses and technology becomes available. For example, if we were able to have Next Generation kick in within the City of St. John's while we are still developing other areas. In other words, are we going to wait for one particular form of 911 to come in before we progress with the other? Are we going to let everybody progress at the same time from one generation of 911 to the next? So it is a good question for government as regards what they are going to be doing there. Because if St. John's was ready to go for Next Generation 911, would they be made to wait, for example, until somebody else catches up? I would like to know a little bit more about that. It is a good question, I guess, in this particular case to be asking.

As regards the cost, one of the things that caught my eye, I guess, while government is saying there is an implementation cost here that they are talking about which could be anywhere between seventy-five cents or \$1, this one – under section 23(2) “A telecommunications service provider may retain a portion of the fees it collects for the emergency 911 telephone service as a monthly service fee.”

I am thinking to myself, whenever I look at my cellular bill already I am looking at – I think the last time I looked it was about \$50 for access to the network. I am thinking to myself, I think the telecommunications providers right now are getting a few dollars too much, in some cases, for network access fees. Now here is an opportunity for a provider, at the same time, to step in and slap us with another monthly service fee. So I have a question to government as regards this. Are they going to limit telecommunications service providers as regards how much they are going to take?

I am all for paying \$1 for 911 on my cellphone, if only cellphones worked all over the Province. That is the other point that I want to make here too at the same time. Is this fund that consumers are going to create because they are going to be paying into it, the money they are going to be paying in there, is a telecommunications provider – it was a curious question when I asked it down at the briefing, a great briefing by the way, Minister, I have to say. When I asked a question about whether telecommunications companies are going to be able to draw from this fund in order to set up a cellphone service, it was kind of open. I still do not think I received a concrete answer on it.

If we are dedicated to paying for 911, I can appreciate the fact that some areas do not have 911 service. Are telecommunications providers going to be able to draw from this fund in order to provide cellphone service where there is not presently? Like I said, it is a bit of a curious question. I think it is still up in the air whether they are going to be able to or not, because right now they simply do not invest in areas where they know there are no monies to be garnered back from making that strategic investment.

So, I will leave that question with the government. I know there will probably be plenty of other opportunities to speak about this issue.

I thank you very much for the time, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to say it is great to stand in my place again today and speak for a few moments to represent the great people of the District of Bonavista North. I am hoping that relationship between myself and Bonavista North will continue on for a few more years yet. As long as I get the opportunity to speak, and speak on their behalf, and represent them in the way they have grown accustomed to, then we want to keep that going.

Today, Bill 14, we are talking about, Mr. Speaker, the Emergency 911 Act. We were briefed this morning about this act from the wonderful people in Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs office, and it is indeed always a pleasure to visit the many departments and to work with the civil servants in all departments. The expertise, the knowledge we get from them, Mr. Speaker, really enables us to do our work here, but it really gives us that admiration for the dedication and commitment made by these officials.

Before I get into the meat and the nuts and bolts of what I want to talk about today, there are a couple of things. I sort of want to add to what the previous speaker to me spoke, and this is not to rebut what the Member for St. John's East said. It is probably something that his comments stimulated a little further comment from me. So I want to make sure it gets on the record such that, if there is a little concern here – and that is what we all speak about when we get up – if there is any little concern, Mr. Speaker, we can take that concern and make sure any feelings we have are alleviated.

He was talking about name places. Like McGrath Place was the one he referred to, I guess, in that there is one in St. John's, one in Mount Pearl, but when you look at that, just about every single, small community in Newfoundland and Labrador, many of them in my district, Mr. Speaker, are all generated around one street, Main Street. When you look at these calls going in, there are probably 150 Main Streets in Newfoundland and Labrador. All of these start off a numbering system with number 1, I would assume, Mr. Speaker, and continue up.

There are many, many ways this could be confusing, because this is not a dispatch service where this call is going in, it is a call-taking place. The actual contact is made back to the local dispatch that is already in place. So I feel that most of our communities, the people who are in our communities will feel the comfort that the same people who are answering the calls now, whether it be at the local senior citizen's homes, the hospitals, or the clinics where people work twenty-four hours around the clock, and they manage the dispatch systems for our fire departments, Mr. Speaker, that the people in our

communities have to realize this relationship is still continuing.

This call taking is done, it is relayed back, but the main piece of information with it is that now we have a uniform number. If I am travelling to Musgrave Harbour, or if I am travelling to Cow Head, or if I am travelling to St. Anthony, I know I can call 911 and everything gets relayed to the local dispatch. People can have the comfort but they can also have the comfort when they are travelling to take that simple three-digit number with them all over our Province and be able to get a connection with the emergency services they need, whether it is fire, hospital, or ambulance that would be needed. These are all dispatched through the same, so you do not have to remember the seven-digit number. It is a simple three-digit number now, Mr. Speaker, 911.

I have to say, not to be humorous about this, but we have seen it on TV when people get up and say: What is the number for 911? That is universal; it is something you are not going to forget. You are going to have these three digits etched indelibly in your psyche that you know exactly what to call. Now it will be the same throughout the entire Province, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. gentleman who spoke before me also talked about, what about Newfoundland and Labrador? We are sort of forgotten in the rest of the country in the sense that 911 is not implemented here yet. If you look at what has happened in Newfoundland, really when you look at the last few years, the most populated areas have 911 Basic service in Newfoundland and Labrador the same as they do in Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia.

It is just that there is probably more networked closer groups of communities in larger centres in these other provinces that they may have a higher amount of coverage than we do, but basically we still have a Basic 911 service in the most populous areas being the St. John's Metro Region where you dial 911. I have not asked the question but I guess that connects us, Mr. Speaker, with anywhere that you would dial without a long distance call from the St. John's Metro area. The same in the Corner Brook region and the same in the industrial heartland of the Big Land in Western Labrador where these

are the three areas where 911 Basic service is currently in place.

We do have the challenge of that geography and we are overcoming that, Mr. Speaker. Our minister stood and said it is going to be overcome by the end of this calendar year. By the end of 2014 we will have the comfort, Mr. Speaker, that we can in any community or with our cell, wherever the cell ranges are – and we know we are going to have little geographical dips, the big hills, and all these things that would prevent the signals from meeting in some places. By the end of 2014, everywhere we have that cell signal and everywhere we have a land line, we will be able to contact 911.

We did not just jump into this, Mr. Speaker, and that takes me to where I really wanted to go. There are two or three things I would like to just talk about. I want to talk about the survey or the study that was done, and then I want to develop into probably the differences between some terms that have been used in the last few minutes, terms like the Basic 911, the enhanced 911, and Next Generation 911.

It is like basic *Star Trek* from back in the 1960s, then you have enhanced, and then you have deep stellar space and whatever. It is not quite as complicated as that, Mr. Speaker, but it does confuse some of our people who are probably watching on TV. What do we mean by this as we throw around these terms? We need to define these and make sure everybody gets a clear understanding of what it means.

Also, another group in our community that probably are not using the telephone the same as you would use it or I would use it are the people who are hard of hearing and hearing impaired. There are certain things we may have to put in place to overcome some of the obstacles in those areas. If I may for four, five, six, or seven minutes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring my notes around to these points of view and be able to express that so we can alleviate some of these concerns and to understand why we went about it in this way.

Mr. Speaker, first things first, let us go to the terms, the Basic 911. Really what that refers to is your typical three-digit 911 number and the services by a land line. You are going to quickly

connect to a 911 emergency service answer point. What is this in comparison to the enhanced 911 or the next generation?

The enhanced 911, Mr. Speaker, means you are going to build a little more into your 911 system. The call taker in 911 enhanced would be able to – it almost seems like they have a caller ID or they have some way of registering, that they know where you are calling from, your phone number, and your civic address. These things would be in the enhanced 911 system.

It gives a little more information. It might alleviate some of the parts of the problem with the different names of the different streets. Even though it might be Main Street it will also have the community attached to it and the phone number attached to it. That bit of identification of information is important. Right now that is not such a big concern because everybody who is answering the calls in our little communities knows who lives out behind Aunt Martha's house or who lives down back of the cemetery, if that is where they are calling from.

Again, you might have four Joe Canes in our community and, oh, I am the one who lives such and such; or I am Lucy Bob, I am Lucy Maud, or I am Lucy whatever. The way the names are attached is nicknames of people to identify them in our communities. Again, that is not going to be fixed by the enhanced 911; that is just the little idiosyncrasies in our little communities that exist. No matter which we have, the Basic, the Enhanced, or the Next Generation, these points are not going to be covered.

Now, the Next Generation 911 takes a little step further in evolution, Mr. Speaker. It seems that within the next couple of years, two to two-and-a-half years or so, as the study indicates, we will be moving into the next generation, but we have to prepare things and prepare things to get there. That will also enable us to connect our computer systems into the 911. We will be able to relay text messaging and relay other things to the 911.

As our telephone system, and it may in the next two or three years, evolves to the point we will be looking at pictures on the screen as we are talking, even in our basic land lines, then what happens is we have to roll with these changes. We have to make sure we keep enhancing this to

get to the best possible system, and that will happen by the time two to three years pass, Mr. Speaker. We will have overcome the Basic installation and the Basic concept set-up of the 911 system and we will be able to roll this through and have the Next Generation, not just the Enhanced or the Basic system, in our Province. That is one way we are going to move.

The next thing I would like to touch on is the feasibility study that was done to get ready for this. I have a few notes together here and hunted for some information on this. This was studied, Mr. Speaker, in 2011. We contracted an external consulting firm, POMAX Public Safety Inc., to carry out this feasibility study, to study for 911 and/or the enhanced 911 system for Newfoundland and Labrador. That is what we did. We contracted POMAX.

They are a company that has been around since 1996. They are operating and incorporated in Canada and the United States, so they know their stuff. They know how to look for the technical skills that are necessary for this and the supports that need to be in place. They have worked with other public entities at all levels in public safety, Mr. Speaker. They studied this for us.

In June 2012, we released the feasibility study that POMAX did for us for implementing the 911 services across our Province. The purpose the study was taken for was probably five or six fold, and there is a list here, so these pieces of information and things we do. We look at the purpose, the advantages, and limitations of 911 systems in its different generations.

We also have to look at different governance options. We looked at the regulations and legislation for 911 in other provinces and in other countries, Mr. Speaker. We looked at call receipt and dispatch processes in many jurisdictions and how best that would fit our Province. We looked at what technical architecture we need to put in place to be able to make this work for our Province.

In doing so, we really studied all of the different aspects. We looked at, also, what complications there would be with staffing and the impact on the 911 system we currently have. Also, it

looked at the civic addressing and the problems that might portray or might throw into this by the time it is implemented for us.

It was recommended, Mr. Speaker, by POMAX that the Province would move forward cautiously – cautiously, it came back from them. Do not jump and get the best newfangled system that is out there that you can get right off the top because you are not going to be ready for it. Move cautiously, get your Basic system, and move it in place so all the other little things that you would have to put in place to get to next generation are starting to be implemented at the same time. Therefore you would actually evolve your 911 system and within a couple of years you would be comparable to anywhere in the world. It was recommended we should be cautious.

It was also noted that municipalities and other stakeholders have things to play in this, Mr. Speaker. They have things to do; they have responsibilities for their citizens as much as the Province would have in order to help in a role to get this ready so it is fully implemented.

The findings of this feasibility study can be summarized very quickly. Number one, we move ahead cautiously; that we do have to look at and involve other stakeholders, Mr. Speaker, in this; and that we evolve it such that as we grow the system in a short period of time we will have the best system that fits for our Province and it will not be that costly. The amount they came back and suggested would be probably to the maximum of \$1.00 per telephone connected to the system. It is possibly going to be wiggled back from that \$1.00 so it is probably – some members are throwing around the eighty- to ninety-cents range. That is what is covered in other places that go through this.

It is very important that we look at this and say, look, we are just not jumping into this. We used the professionals, we brought in the expertise, and we are now stepping forward cautiously, Mr. Speaker, with the right amount of information. When you have the right amount of information that fits, as I heard our Premier say, you tailor your suit to fit the garment not the big ball of cloth; and it is for the person and for the users that this system is being tailored.

Now, there is one other challenge too, Mr. Speaker, before I sit down and it is just a moment or two I would like to speak about that. We always have to have the idea that there are going to be challenges. There are people who cannot use a telephone. One of the pieces of information that was brought forward with this in our briefings was that people who are hard of hearing are limited in the communication that they can use the telephone system for.

It is not just limited to the people who are hard of hearing; there are other individuals who have a physical limitation and they cannot dial the telephone. They may not have a voice to speak. It is not just people would have to use their hands for sign language; some people have a physical disability as well, Mr. Speaker. I do not have to look too far from my heart to find someone in that situation. There is also going to have to be adaptations made such that people who use other communication devices can use them to access 911.

As a father of a child who does not have a physical voice, a person can communicate but it is a silent communication for the most part. Can you imagine when you have a child who can actually contact you by telephone and in using the telephone system, connected with their iPad, they can use their finger to say: My dad is such and such; or, how are you today? This is an active communication. So, we are going to set the stage through all of the changes that we need to put in place that there is nobody left behind.

It is not just a video relay service for people who are hard of hearing, Mr. Speaker, but others with physical challenges who can use an iPad to communicate eventually with the Next Generation 911. Everybody will be equal in how they can access an emergency and call for services in this Province. That is just phenomenal and amazing, Mr. Speaker. It makes the hair stand up on the back of your neck when you think that we are moving ahead with this and it is a reason to move forward. It is a reason to be joyous about this move that we are taking on, that we are moving this forward in a way that we are doing it that best fits this Province that we call Newfoundland and Labrador.

This is wonderful legislation, Mr. Speaker. I am sure everyone on the opposite side have stood up and said yes, this is good legislation; there are some things I would like to tweak about it, just as I would like to tweak some things about it. When it is all done and all in place and all the questions have been asked by the Opposition and the Third Party and the minister can take the legislation and mould it, then we will have the best for our Province. That is exactly what we all want here and I am sure that is where we are going to sit.

Right now I would like to thank you for this time to speak, to represent my feelings, the feelings of my district, and to take my place and say I have had my say and I think I have made a contribution.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, with leave of the hon. the Government House Leader, I would like to continue with the remainder of my time.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the member have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I had indicated when I spoke earlier before the little bit of confusion that occurred, in principle as other members have said – and I do not think anybody on either side of the House is going to disagree – that having a provincial 911 system is a good thing. I think we all support that.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of 911, I actually have a background there myself. Many moons ago, long before getting involved at any level of politics I worked at 911 at the St. John's Regional Fire Department. I was one of those people for a couple of years who was actually taking the 911 calls and dispatching whether it

be fire trucks directly or transferring for ambulance at the Health Sciences, or whether it be transferring to the RNC, RCMP, and some of the outlying volunteer services as well that the St. John's Regional –

MR. SPEAKER: Excuse me. Not to interrupt the member, and I will give his time back, but I just wanted to clarify something. The hon. member speaking now is the first speaker to respond to this bill. Ordinarily, he would have had sixty minutes. I understand the Member for Bay of Islands spoke for sixty minutes with leave. Is the leave granted here to replace the twenty minutes or is it with respect to the first speaker who was speaking on behalf of the Opposition? There is a big difference in the time allocation.

MR. KING: To be clear, Mr. Speaker, what transpired was the official critic missed his opportunity to stand. By leave, the Member for Mount Pearl who was speaking sat and with leave we gave the sixty minutes to the critic. This speaking time now would revert to twenty minutes that the member normally would have. That was the understanding on which the leave was based.

MR. SPEAKER: With that clarification, the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That was clearly my understanding as well. I thank the minister for the leave.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, it is certainly something I can identify with, the need for 911 and making it available to everybody, and ensuring that everybody can get a very timely response to an emergency situation when they need that timely response. That can range anything from a fire emergency to a medical emergency to a police emergency.

More often than not, when 911 calls are received – not always, and that is where education comes into play – they are indeed just that, they are emergencies, and quite often someone's life could be on the line. Particularly when you think about things like medical emergencies, a second could be the difference between somebody surviving a serious medical condition

and not. So, having that system in place is definitely a positive thing, and having it for the whole Province, I think, is a positive thing as well, and we would all agree with that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of questions that I have, and some of it has been stated and some of it has not. Every piece of legislation, as we have said before, the Opposition, whether it is the Official Opposition, whether it is the Third Party, we have a role to play as well. We have a role to play to review the legislation, and obviously we do not have the ability as the government, as the department, as the minister would have. The minister brings forth the legislation, but that is after much, much consultation with the minister's staff and consultants and so on, and I am sure Cabinet sees the legislation before it comes forward, and they all have an opportunity for input and so on.

As a general rule, we would see the legislation the day of or the day before. Generally the day of, you do a briefing and then it comes into the House. Then you kind of have to scramble, to some degree, to review it as fast as you can, and the briefing that you have to try to formulate your thoughts and so on. It is difficult, sometimes.

So, sometimes when we ask questions about it, perhaps if there was more time to really formulate your thoughts some of the questions could be answered otherwise, but this is really our only opportunity to raise these concerns; and if they turn out to be unfounded concerns, well that is good, but at least we have the opportunity to raise them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the big questions I have – I have a few here. The first one I am going to just put there for the minister and he can respond when his time comes to respond. I am wondering about the new whistleblower legislation. I am wondering will that apply to this entity. Because the whistleblower legislation, that we are still debating, it named a number of government departments and agencies and so on to which it applied to. It did not apply to municipalities, which I have questions about that; but I am wondering, will the whistleblower legislation – has it been contemplated? Now that we are going to form

this new entity, will this entity be subject to the whistleblower legislation? If it is not, then perhaps the whistleblower legislation should be amended to add this new entity to it so that it does apply. The minister can respond when he is ready and able, but I throw that out there.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing is the whole idea of this separate entity, arm's-length entity, or autonomous entity that is going to be managing this system. They are going to be managing a lot of money. I think the number I heard was based on the number of subscriptions to cellphones, land lines, and so on, and \$1 per phone; \$5.4 million to \$7.2 million annually will be the revenues collected through the phone service charges that will go to this entity that will manage that system, manage the funds, and so on.

Perhaps there will be measures in place, and if there are, that is fine. There should be a system in place to ensure that there is open disclosure of the financials, that the financials are posted somehow publicly, and that the financials are able to be scrutinized publicly, at least on an annual basis; whether it is Members of the House of Assembly, the Auditor General, or whoever, that there is a method whereby the public knows exactly how much revenue was collected and what the money was spent on. I think it is important to have that oversight function.

I know the government has made it arm's-length, but I would question oversight, particularly with that amount of money, to make sure the ratepayers, because that is who we are talking about here, have assurances that the money they are spending for this service is getting spent wisely, and that they know how much money was collected and exactly what the money was spent on. I think that is an important point to note as well. Again, if that is covered somewhere in all this legislation, that is wonderful. I am throwing it out there just to make sure we get that point across.

Mr. Speaker, another point I want to make here, and really this comes down to the funding model and so on, what I am reading here is the cost to get the first step done, which they hope to get done by 2014, \$1.5 million was the capital investment required. The government did

budget, I believe, \$2 million in Fire and Emergency Services this year. I am told there is \$1.5 million in capital going to be spent to get this first stage up and running.

After it is established, full implementation will be \$2.3 million annually upon full system implementation. If it is going to cost \$2.3 million annually after it is implemented at the end of the year, yet we are going to collect anywhere from \$5.4 million to \$7.2 million in revenues, that means we would have the remainder on an annual basis, based on the numbers I have been given, anywhere from \$3.1 million to \$4.9 million. Anywhere from \$3 million to \$5 million left over once we pay that \$2.3 million operating cost for stage one, so that is \$4 million to \$5 million every year.

If it takes two years, three years, four years, or whatever it takes, say it takes three years to get to the next stage, the government would have collected or the agency, the entity, would have collected anywhere from \$9 million to \$15 million over and above what it costs to run step one. So there is \$9 million to \$15 million in a kitty. I would question, what is all that money going to be spent on?

I know there was some talk about planning and all that kind of stuff. That is fine. I understand you have to plan and equip for the next phase and so on, but that is a lot of planning money – it is a lot of planning money – and it is a lot of education money. I know they are talking about doing education on the new 911 system, Mr. Speaker, so I guess some of the money would go toward that, but again, we are talking a substantial amount of money that is going to be left over after we pay for this phase one of the system and I wonder where all that money is going.

It has been suggested, I think, by the Member for St. John's East perhaps some of that money could go to helping with civic addressing. Perhaps some of that money could go towards subsidizing service providers for cell towers in areas where we do not have cell coverage. I am not sure if that is the plan or not, Mr. Speaker. I would like to know what the plan is.

Basically one of the issues that, say, somebody in Mount Pearl, somebody in St. John's, or

somebody in Torbay, Paradise, or whatever might ask is: I have 911 now, I already have a 911 system, so right now in the City of Mount Pearl, for example, or like I said it could be St. John's, Torbay, whatever, I call 911. The St. John's Regional Fire Department answers the call, and then they will either send a fire truck, they will transfer to the Health Sciences, or they will transfer to the RNC and what have you. I already have that without paying \$1 on my phone bill. I am not paying an extra \$1 on my home phone, I am not paying an extra \$1 on any of my cellphones, and I have it already.

The way it is done now to my understanding, Mr. Speaker, as it stands right now, if I pay my municipal taxes, for example, the City of Mount Pearl pays for fire services. They are part of the St. John's Regional Fire Department. They pay a proportionate share for all fire services. Those fire services include all of the particular fire stations and all the equipment, the Jaws of Life, and all that stuff. They pay for all the salaries, and it also pays for the dispatch centre at the Central Fire Station. It pays for the dispatch centre, all the equipment, all the staff and so on associated with 911.

The people in Mount Pearl and the people in St. John's, through their municipal taxes, are already paying for 911. They are already paying for it. Now, under this new system, they are going to have to start paying \$1 on their home phone. If they have a couple of cellphones, they are going to have to pay for that. There are people who have a Lifeline, for example. Elderly people have it; they put it by their bed table and so on. If they were feeling sick they can touch a button. That is a separate line.

There are people, for example, who are paying for Lifeline, they are paying for a regular phone, they might have a cellphone, and they are already getting 911 because they are already paying for it through their municipal taxes. Then people would ask perhaps in this area in particular and perhaps in Corner Brook because they have 911, if I am already paying for a service and I am paying for the equipment and everything through my taxes, why am I going to pay again? What am I getting extra for this \$1 on every phone I have from here on in? What am I getting out of it?

If the answer is at some point in time you are going to have an enhanced 911 system, well, once you have that enhanced system and that new equipment – and if you need to hire a couple of more people or whatever to operate it, that is fair game – at that point in time determine what the cost is and then bill us accordingly for that service. Why am I paying upfront for three years, at least, with no improvement whatsoever, but I am still paying on my phone, when I am getting it now for nothing? I am not getting it for nothing. I am paying for it through my municipal taxes. That would be a concern, Mr. Speaker, people certainly would have here.

Then when we talk about civic numbering; civic numbering is going to be very important. It is not as simple as just sticking a number on a house. In a lot of the rural areas, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, because there are a lot of long laneways and all that kind of stuff, those people are more than likely going to need to have, I would think, some sort of a post or something cemented into the ground at the end of their driveway, or the end of their property with a civic number on it and so on. They are probably going to require street signs and so on, because they do not have street signs in some cases.

Are they going to pay for those street signs, or is the extra money we are paying on our phones going to subsidize that? That is the question, because it kind of sounds like, when you look at the amount of money and the numbers, it kind of seems like we are subsidizing all the other areas. Now, I do not know if that is the plan. I do not know if that is the case. I am throwing it out there, because if you look at the numbers, that is what it appears to be doing. It appears to be a subsidy.

When we are talking about having these four areas or three – I am not sure if it is three or four areas now they are talking about, where you would have a dispatch centre and so on. If the dispatch centre we have now is at Central Fire Station, and that is going to remain, and we are going to expand our boundary a little perhaps to go out to – I am not sure if it is going to go out a bit further than what it goes now. Maybe each of the regions, if it is going to be divided up into dispatch regions, dispatch areas with dispatch centres responsible for them, maybe each centre

should be funded on their own. Maybe they should be funded on their own.

Maybe in this area, the people who utilize the 911 service for whatever radius it is, those people would pay for it. If we have all of our equipment in place, everything is in there now anyway and we are paying for all of this, then we would just simply continue to do so. Maybe we need to charge a little bit to enhance it, and we decide to pay for that either on the phone bill or through our municipal taxes like we do now.

Maybe other areas would do it the same way or maybe they would do it differently, Mr. Speaker, but the bottom line is no matter what way we do it, we have to be fair. We have to make sure people get what they pay for. We have to make sure people are paying for what they use. We have to make sure it is not an overall tax grab.

That is one of the other issues here, as it has been outlined already, Mr. Speaker, is there is nothing to say that the money is not going to go into the general coffers. There is nothing to say the leftover money will not be directed towards other things. Really, if that is what it is, it is just taxation through the backdoor.

If we are going to use this as a fee for service, which is fair, then I should pay the appropriate fee for the service I am receiving. If I am already paying for a service through another mechanism, for example, my municipal taxes, and I am getting a service that I am paying for, then I am not sure why I would want to pay an additional fee for no additional benefit. It would not make sense to the people certainly in my district. It would not make sense to them.

If in certain areas, Mr. Speaker, because of the population, because of the geography and so on, if the provincial government sees fit to put some sort of a program in place through Municipal Affairs and so on to assist with civic numbering or whatever they choose to do, or some programs, if they choose to do that, that is fine. We want to be fair to people, but it is not fair, I do not believe, for somebody who is in an area here paying their municipal taxes, getting a service, and now all of a sudden they are going to be hit with all of these fees for nothing. That is what is going to happen, and I do not think that is necessarily the way to go, Mr. Speaker. I

am sure a lot of people would certainly agree with that.

I am sure people in Torbay would agree with that. I hope the member there –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LANE: - would stand up and speak about it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed a privilege to get to speak to this piece of legislation, An Act to Establish and Implement a Province-Wide 911 Telephone Service for the Reporting of Emergencies.

Mr. Speaker, I heard my learned colleague over there talk about this being a tax grab. Well, I do not know what they do on that side of the House but on this side there is no such thing as tax grabs. What we do here, we invest so that everybody in this Province has access to proper services, particularly when you talk about life-saving services, and that is what this is, Mr. Speaker, a life-saving service for the people, which everybody should have access to.

I have to compliment the minister and his officials for taking the lead on this, for being able to find a mechanism that we can give everybody Basic 911 services, and that is what this is purely about. It is about another mechanism for our first responders being able to make sure the proper information is available and people can respond in a timely fashion.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about a lot of the good things we have invested in, particularly around life safety, and 911 is a very important one. We talk about some of the things that need to be done here. Just a few points here I would like to note, on how this piece of legislation is a go forward and it is going to enhance not only our life safety here but the working mechanisms and the partnerships in a lot of the communities that

we have out here. The 911 establishes a governing body, Mr. Speaker, another example of how we enable people and give the resource back to the people who have the expertise to do that.

For the service, we are going to appoint a board of directors and finalize arrangements with telecommunications providers and 911 call-taker services, also known as public safety answering points. That is what we are looking at. There was some argument here or discontent about where these services would be. These services are going to be where they best serve the people.

I know as a first responder in a former career, when you look at the fact that in some of these rural communities they only have a standard number that goes right to the fire hall or right to the police station. That is fine if you live in that community and you have it at your fingertips, but if you are a visitor or if you are somebody coming home to your community, or you are driving through for whatever particular reason, or if you work in that community, that number may not be at your fingertips. Having a 911, a universal number that everybody is familiar with and comfortable with gets you to that first response area and gets the person then to direct exactly what your emergency may be. This was a great piece of legislation which does that.

The purpose of the Basic 911 service facilitate and contact for emergency services by residents and businesses, and that is what we are doing here. We are adding another mechanism here where people will have the supports and where the community themselves take a better lead and a better stake, and where the stakeholders have direct input to what we are doing here.

This incorporated model taking services with call takers and facilitate the call to the appropriate emergency responder, whether this is police, fire department, or an ambulance. The dispatcher of services will be carried out by the respective emergency services provider and is consistent with the practice in the Maritime Provinces.

We are not reinventing the wheel. What we have done is we looked at other jurisdictions, as we do with a lot of our legislation, but we modify it to work and fit the needs of particular

communities in this Province; those rural ones, those more isolated, and those in the urban centres. When we talk about the shared facility here we also talk about the shared responsibility. We do talk about the shared costing, because all different various parts of this Province contribute in their own way. Some more financially, some because of the aesthetics of what it does for the Province, some because of the resources they develop. So we have a stake here, not unlike my colleague there who talked about the municipal taxes in one urban centre and that they may now have to be charged another small fee for this service. That small fee goes into a bigger pot as we do in health care and as we do in education so everybody has proper access to these services. Again, I compliment the department for being creative and innovative, and opening it up that people would have equal, shared responsibility, but also access to those services.

Additionally, all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador can currently access 911 from a mobile telephone where cellular signals are available. We do realize there are some challenges there. As the minister outlined, in the primary, Basic 911 we are going to try to alleviate that by having the direct phone lines accessed in every community. A fair number of the mobile ones will also be accessible.

Is there a move afoot down the road as we move into the Next Generation of the 911 service to look at the other services that need to be enhanced? Sure there is, and that is why we are looking at an overall umbrella and how we make sure we have the best 911 service to the people of this Province. That is how we are moving things forward.

Once this bill is passed in the House of Assembly, it will provide legislative framework for the establishment, operation, and long-term enhancement of Province-wide Basic 911 telephone service, including the role of next generation. The role of Next Generation is very important here. As we rollout the Basic 911, everybody is quite familiar with that. They all understand the process. There is no doubt not one first responder organization or individual would dispute the need for 911 service, and that is why, no doubt, they support it.

Those I have talked to in my previous life and those I have talked to in my own district support this process and want to move it forward. They actually do feel for remote communities that do not have access to it, and that is why we are moving this to the next level. The Next Generation 911 will be very important to what we do.

I did hear my colleague also make some notes there about the civic addresses and all this, and this will become part of the next line of service we put in favour. The system we have designed here does fit well. It is not required for Basic 911, as noted in the POMAX report; that would be addressed as part of the Next Generation 911. It is not necessary. We do not need that. We have a system in place here where the first responders will be able to respond to the individual's need.

Creating civic addresses for all areas in Newfoundland and Labrador is no doubt going to be a grave undertaking. It is going to be a financial investment and there are going to be resources that need to be put in place. There is no doubt we are going to be moving to that level.

The issue here is that we are also engaging the stakeholders. The municipalities have a major role in how this is going to be rolled out. We have been looking at that over the last number of months and there is no doubt there will be more dialogue with municipalities. I do know in my own district the municipalities now have just invested in all new street signs and they have engaged the citizens about doing civic numbers, and that is in a rural community. The process has started. Once people know they have access to 911 in all parts of this Province, I am very confident the municipality will take the lead, but so will the citizens in wanting to move this forward.

The report also concluded that they establish a civic address "to support E9-1-1 systems across Newfoundland and Labrador using Location Based Data is very much feasible but will require a financial investment and a governing body with a clear mandate and decision-making authority to achieve this goal." That is what we have done. We have outlined that. The minister outlined it in the briefing today. He outlined it

in the press conference and he outlined it in the House and so did my colleagues the same way.

We are to move this forward. We will be engaging the proper stakeholders. We have the research done. We know what needs to be done to make this very viable and make it work. The Basic 911 is the first step of doing that and it is the most important one, particularly for those first responders being able to get in a timely fashion and get to the right locations.

Under the Municipalities Act, 1999, it says “council may name and mark all highways within the municipality and may require the owners of all buildings on the highways to number those buildings.” They have the authority to act on their own. In discussions with municipalities, they have been telling me that they are trying to work with the business community. This is not overstepping their authority or enforcing their authority; this is about people understanding if we invest in this process, which we are, the benefits to them would be quicker response, the ability to be able to get an ambulance to a certain civic location to make sure that a timely response is there for that particular patient, if it is firefighting, if it is police services, and these types of things. The process of moving 911 from a Basic level to a more Enhanced generational service is in the right stages, Mr. Speaker.

It is important to note, too, a civic address is not required to operate Basic 911; it would be a key component for Next Generation. That is the process that we are going to be starting. Once this is implemented here – and I know my colleagues on the other side will see the light, understand this, and no doubt vote that this is a very important piece of legislation and would want to move this forward.

As we sit down with our municipal friends and start to develop the stages here, we want to try to minimize the impact financially. Communities only have X number of dollars to go around and they are responsible for a multitude of services. How do we instill in the citizens themselves that these are the types of programs and services that benefit them and that the taxpayers, be it a small increase in their bills, it could be a very important life-saving mechanism that they have for their citizens? I would think nobody ever

argues about when we invest in health care, when we invest in education. This, I am confident, will be seen in the same light. We are investing in every component there. It is part of education, it is part of health care, but it is part life-saving.

Particularly in this Province we have so many volunteer fire responders. This is another testament to us supporting what they do. We want to be able to make sure that when they respond to an emergency they are going to the right address, that they know there are no issues about how they get there, what is the most timely fashion, and they know their response is going to be appropriate. As the calls come in, a dispatcher will put it out to the appropriate response team. That response team, in turn, will obviously respond and give the necessary services that are vital to those individuals.

I want to talk about a few of the other things that were talked about today. There are three parts to this bill, very important parts that need to be identified here. First is the answering point, and there has been some debate about how do you make those viable, how do you make them more efficient. Well, we have that technology right now; we are going to bring them all under one umbrella in various regions. The people there are very familiar with the geography. They are familiar with what the services are in particular communities, in particular regions, in particular zones, and they are going to be able to allot that accordingly.

Obviously, because we have engaged the municipalities and the first responders, we get a better understanding of how these clusters of zones are going to work so that they better benefit the response time, but also the services that are in a particular area so that every zone would have access to the proper types of services. We have designed that under a process that is very engaging, and obviously very beneficial to the people who are going to use it.

The bill also provides the Lieutenant Governor in Council to determine the location and boundaries of the primary areas and call on emergency service providers, such as fire departments, ambulances, police, to identify their emergency response zones. As I noted, this is part of what our legislation will be; but before

we get to those points, our process is engaging, asking those first responders: Where is it you can best serve? What other services do you need? How do you collaborate? How do you co-ordinate some of those services and make those work?

Once all this is put in place, and as minister noted, we are still looking at designing where these cluster zones are going to be, and once that is identified if there are other additional resources that need to go with it, that is all part of a bigger process that we look at here and how we support those, as we continue to support first responders in any emergency situation.

Part II of the bill established the Newfoundland and Labrador 911 Bureau, which will operate as a not-for-profit corporation. (Inaudible) at a not-for-profit corporation that will take into account the services and call takers and facilitate all the intricate workings of this process. It is very important that we have an umbrella group that can look at the financial needs, but also look at the service needs, but also look at the additional training needs and the go-forward-basis process that we move things in the proper manner.

Dispatching of services would be carried out by the respective emergency service providers, and is consistent with practices within the Province. All zones will have similar processes, because the plan is to have similar pieces of equipment to be able to respond. There is no doubt bigger urban catchment areas would have to run into certain challenges. They will also be looked at, because the service providers would be the ones who will advise the committee on how these things work.

We are also looking at how we put a better process in place so that the 911 response moves to the next level as quickly as possible. There is no delay in what we are trying to do for the people of this Province, Mr. Speaker. We have also looked at pieces of legislation – I have said it earlier to one of my colleagues. While this is a very detailed piece of legislation, it is very simple, and simple to the fact that this is something that will give people an opportunity to be better engaged and feel safer about the responses in their own communities.

It is broken down – and again, I noted earlier about the staff giving a very detailed breakdown. The Opposition have tried to pick holes in it. The only holes they can pick into it is: How can we move it quicker? We are moving as quick as we can. With support from our colleagues on the opposite side here, this legislation will get passed. We will move this to the next level, it will get implemented, the stakeholders will be engaged, the staff in the department will start the process, the umbrella organization will then start engaging what other supports they need, and this will be something that will be seen as another tool for life-saving processes and supports in rural areas and urban areas as a whole.

Again, it is an example of how we engage every part of this, for every zone of our Province to have equal services. Sometimes it is hard to do. In this case, we have managed to do it.

We have also looked at the bigger picture of how we are going to go back to servicing some of those other areas, too, in our emergency needs there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, I just want to look at a couple of things that were noted here. One of the things here: Should a council that has an established fire department be unwilling or unable to identify emergency response zones, the bill makes a provision for the amendments of Fire Protection Service Act that allows the fire commissioner to determine the zone.

If councils, for whatever reason, do not have the expertise, or for some reason there are some challenges with other communities, we now have the fire commissioner's office who are very talented, very trained, very equipped; because they have always been engaged with all of the first responders, would come in and look at the particular zones, look at the services that are needed for that zone and then put a collaboration of those types of skillset that they have, the equipment that may be available, and the necessity for being able to locate how those services are going to be moved out to the various communities.

It is important to note that while the initiative will not improve emergency response times on its own – and I still challenge some of that because they, as a first responder, if there is a delay because you do not go directly to 911 because you do not have it and you have to go through a relay, be it a fire department in a rural area or a police station, there is a delay time by the time it gets to the 911 for the immediate responder.

While I, in my personal view, think there will be an increased response time for people and this will indeed, no doubt, have a positive influence on being able to access services by people who may be in need. We have made many investments to improve response capabilities for fire and emergency services. As I noted, we are putting the fire commissioner's office here to work very closely with municipalities because that agency and that organization is one also who outlines to the department, under emergency services, what kinds of equipment is needed, and where we need investments when it comes to new fire equipment, when it comes to looking at other services in various parts of the Province, if it means a different piece of equipment that firefighters themselves may need. It is very important that we move that in the right direction. We have done that here.

I had the fortune of working with the fire commissioner's office a number of years ago as part of another career. In those days, we talked about a Province-wide 911 service. Unfortunately, the technology was not as advanced as it is today. Unfortunately, some municipalities were not ready for it. There were a lot of challenges about the local service district. There were a lot of challenges about communities that are not serviced by anybody and who takes the responsibility, but we have moved beyond that.

You wanted to be very careful not to step on anybody's toes, but we have moved to the point now where there is a good working relationship. Part of that relationship is identifying exactly what are the services people need. Over the last number of years, 911 service was told to us by the service providers, by the municipalities, and by the general public that they wanted that safety-oriented process to be put in place, and so we have moved that.

With so many important investments being made to support our firefighting service capabilities, this bill, to me, is the most logical next step. It moves it to where we need it to go. It enhances the supports we already have out there. It shows that this Administration and, I would hope, members on the opposite side support our first responders. It shows we are going to maximize the best use of the supports we have, be it equipment, be it technical supports, or be it the volunteer sector, because we have a big volunteer sector here when it comes to first responders in search and rescue, in firefighting capabilities, and in all the other avenues we have out there. We want to maximize that.

It gives us an opportunity, also, to partner with our federal colleagues, with the RCMP and the federal government, and with the telecommunications industry so we can find a way to enhance better access to 911, be it through mobile telephones or be it through land lines. These are all more investments that have been going as we move forward. Our announcements over the last number of years and our partnerships under broadband are another example of how we want people to have access to information, but particularly access to information that is going to be beneficial for lifesaving, particularly those organizations and groups we are very closely connected to.

Mr. Speaker, I want to note in my last couple of minutes a number of the very important components of this bill: "A person shall not use or permit another person to use a telephone to place a false, frivolous or vexatious call to the number '911'." That talks about at the end of the day people have a responsibility. We have a responsibility as a government, but so do the citizens here. They have a responsibility here when we talk about cost recovery. This is not about cost recovery; this is about cost investment so we can move this service forward.

We need to also let people know that this is an important service that has to be used properly. With the service comes responsibility, and we are implementing that we cover every component of this act. It is not only about the small fees that are in there, but it is about all the other challenges we could face and we are trying to get out in front of that. These have come

because of the way we have talked to our first responders.

We also want to look at how the minister here with some of the regulations respecting communications may be considered emergency 911 telephone calls. This is simply about making sure people understand what falls under the 911 scale. We need to do that through proper education, explain to people that this is a very valuable tool, but it also has to be used right. Because at the expense of somebody else if this tool is not used properly, then no doubt it could mean a detriment to somebody's life-saving capabilities or a responder responding to somewhere where they did not need to be and there is another community that may be in need at the time.

"The minister may adopt and constitute as regulations by reference (a) a code, rule or standard relevant to the Act, or an official abridgment of a code, rule or standard". These are normal in any first responder process. Our firefighters have it, our police forces have it, and our search and rescue have it. We have it as legislation. These are all things that need to be put in place so that people understand their roles and responsibility.

This is better co-ordinated when it is done in zones, and it is done through the co-ordination of the services that you have in that area and the co-operation of your municipalities who we take very seriously as our partner in this government, who we look at the services that they provide both on a volunteer basis and through the tax base that they generate and how they put that back in to the communities.

We also want to look at: How do we engage those areas that do not have a tax base, that are not incorporated, that have communities that are outside of the norm there? How do we make sure that they have access to these services? Well, a universal 911 service where everybody pays for it, pays a minimal cost, it goes into a major pot so it can be distributed so that it is cost recovery; but also then if there is in any way, shape or form a balance here that it can be looked at how it is invested in to move it to the next level. What we are saying here, as the minister has noted, this is about being cost recovery. At the end of the day if there is

money to be generated, we have a process here that it can be put back in, particularly with input from the first responders and from the corporation that is going to oversee this.

Mr. Speaker, I see my time is done. I will be supporting this piece of legislation, and I would hope that all my colleagues on the opposite side will be doing the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am happy to have the opportunity to stand today and speak to Bill 14, the Emergency 911 Act.

Obviously, nobody is going to stand here in this House and say that we do not need 911. Here on this side of the House, I know in our caucus, we have been calling for 911 –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: – for a number of years. Having 911 is essential. As we all know, right now we only have three areas in the Province where we have the 911 service. Here in the St. John's area, in the Corner Brook area, and in Lab West. So, yes we want 911; there is no doubt about that. My concern is that we are already so far behind the rest of North America with regard to 911 that even the Basic 911 that this legislation is covering is not going to be in place for three more years.

Even though the minister has said, and even though the legislation says it, that as this gets started we are going to continue moving forward and continue working towards the future, at the same time in three years' time we will still only have the Basic 911. Surely that has to be concerning us. I think the people in the Province are really going to need to have it explained to them what is going on with this

new legislation because I think people have perceptions that are not going to be reality. If the government is not clear about explaining what we have, people are going to end up being very frustrated.

Right now we have these three areas, the three public safety answering points, and when the system comes in place – I know others have explained it but I am going to do it again. When the new system comes in place we will still have that answering point, these primary answering points, but when people dial 911 in an area that is – when people dial 911 now they will get the primary answering point.

When this comes into play in three years' time, they will get the primary answering point but the primary answering point will have to send them on to a secondary point. They are not going to be getting it directly if they live, for example – no matter where they live, they are not getting the service directly. They are getting the primary answering point first, and the primary answering point will be sending them on to the secondary point. So we have a two-step system when you dial 911.

I already today had somebody say to me: Is this going to mean, for example, where we have 911 currently, where we have the Basic 911, is that same thing going to happen? Even if you are in a place right now where you have the primary answering point, are you then going to be sent on to the second? Now that happens somewhat here in St. John's, Corner Brook, and Lab West as it is.

For example, if I dialed 911 and it is an ambulance that I want, I get transferred to the ambulance. However, we can deal with the emergency if there really is necessary information that has to be given by the person who answers at the primary point to keep somebody maybe even alive while they are waiting for the ambulance or waiting for the fire trucks to arrive. There is a service that happens at the primary point for that person. Is that still going to continue? Is that service going to be there no matter who calls the primary answering point? Is that service still going to be there?

What is going to happen right now is that people have an expectation I think, again, because of

what you see on television, what is out there in the general knowledge around 911. People have the expectation that when they call 911 they can easily be found, but in actual fact this is not going to be an Enhanced 911. You are still going to have to be able to explain where you are located to the person you speak to. Whether it is at the primary point or at the secondary point, you are going to have to explain where you are. We still do not have what they have elsewhere in North America. We are already years behind and we are going to continue to be years behind.

There is a lot of concern out there. I have been receiving messages from some people in the emergency services themselves, people who are working in the emergency services. They have a real concern that what you are going to have at the other side when you dial 911 are call takers, not proper dispatchers.

The language in the bill concerns some of the people in the emergency services. One thing that concerns them is the public safety answering point to a secondary public safety answering point shows that you are not getting proper dispatchers. This is a concern they have. So I would like the minister, when the minister stands and speaks and I think as we further pursue in committee, it would be important for the minister to explain who is at the other end when you dial 911.

Will they be the same qualified dispatchers that we have now who, if need be, can actually keep somebody on the line and help them while they are waiting for the emergency services to arrive, whether it is ambulance or fire, or are they just call takers? I think this is something that is going to be extremely important for us to know because people have to be clear about what it is they are getting.

One of the concerns that has been raised is, it is possible that somebody can dial 911 and then when they get sent on to the secondary public safety answering point they could actually get what sounds like an answering machine, and then that machine sends your message to the beepers carried by the on-call paramedics. That is when you are dealing with ambulances. You are talking about a very complicated system here, yet I think people are going to think it is

going to be 911 like we have it right now. No matter where you are in the Province your 911 is going to get immediate response, but that is not going to be the case.

My point is, since this is all we are going to have for quite a while yet, it is going to be extremely important for people to understand the limitations of our system. It is not the Enhanced 911. They need to understand that, because that is what they are used to. We are going to need that kind of information clear as well for visitors to the Province.

A couple of times when we have talked about this in the House of Assembly, I remember ministers talking about tourists, and we have raised the issue of tourists. Tourists, when they see now there is going to be 911 all over the Province, they are going to expect the 911 which is an Enhanced 911, which locates you when you call. That is not what we are going to have.

People are still probably going to need their fire station number on the refrigerator. They are still going to need the ambulance number on the refrigerator, places that right now do not use 911. That is also what is going to need to be explained, because if they call their local fire station directly or the local ambulance service directly instead of 911, will the service be available or will it only be available if they actually call 911 first? In actual fact, it might be faster for them to forget 911 and just call their service right there in their community, unless the system from here on in, once this gets put in place, says you will not be able to do that.

This is very, very complicated. It is not simple at all. I am not against having 911, my concern is that we make sure people understand the limitations of what it is that is going to be put in place. That it is so far behind what exists elsewhere, they have to know that. There is no sense in government going around saying isn't it wonderful we have 911 and puffing themselves up and making people feel really good, when in three years' time this gets put in place if it is so far behind people's knowledge or hope for what the program is. In actual fact people might be in more danger because of the 911. They may count on it in a way that is not justified.

All I am saying is the government is going to have to make sure that they do real education about what it is that exists. It is not fully clear to me and like I said if we do not get answers from the minister when he stands at the end of second reading, we will be able to push him more during the Committee stage to try to get some of these very basic questions answered.

Are they call takers at the other end or are they dispatchers? Are they going to be able to help people no matter where they are in the Province if the people have to be helped while they are waiting for the emergency service to arrive? If they are sent on to the secondary call point, does the primary call point stay engaged? Will they know what is happening? Will they know when they go to the secondary that they are being taken care of? There are just an awful lot of questions here about how this is going to work, especially knowing as we all know what the situation is out there in rural Newfoundland and Labrador and coastal Labrador, knowing how difficult it is as it is to find people.

We have a lot of questions that need to be answered, Mr. Speaker. A couple of more that come to me, I am concerned about this level of the corporation. I do know that New Brunswick has a corporation, but Nova Scotia and PEI do not. Other provinces across the country do not. I really question why government felt they needed to put money into a whole new bureaucracy when in other places it is carried on through government departments. We have our emergency services, why couldn't our emergency services be expanded to cover the new 911 system? Why do we have to have this whole new structure put in place and money going into that whole new structure?

I understand that you can have, for example, advisory committees that advise a government department that is in charge of a 911. That would give you the kind of expertise that apparently government thinks we need this new corporation for. I am not against having people involved who have expertise and giving advice, but I really wonder why we have to have a new corporation with a whole new board of people. It just seems to be a waste of resources. Expand our emergency services; expand it so it can do the work. It can also do the educational work,

the information work that needs to be done. Why a whole new corporation?

I think we are going to need the minister to explain that as well. Why a whole new corporation? It just seems to be excessive; I just do not understand why it is necessary, especially when it does not exist in the majority of places in the country. Why is the government doing it here? To what degree then is this corporation going to be the same as a government department? To what degree is it going to be under government and government directly involved in what is happening with the corporation?

This one, I do not understand. I do not understand why they thought this was necessary. It seems to me that we are putting a lot of energy into something which is adding red tape. This is a government that says it was always going to reduce red tape. Well this, to me, is a whole new phase of red tape. This, to me, is something that is taking away from the energy where the energy really needs to go. Is this another way of government putting things at –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: – an arm's-length from government itself?

I will have more detailed questions, I think, in Committee to ask the minister, unless he does manage to answer all of these questions when he stands.

Most of the legislation is about the corporation itself and that concerns me. Most of the legislation is not about the system, but about the corporation. A good part of the legislation is the definition of what we find there, but the real details of what the new system means for people and how much it really is going to be as good – my concern is: Will the new system which will be Province-wide be as good as the system as it exists right now in three areas? By putting it in the way they are putting it in, can people everywhere in the Province be assured that they are going to get the same service that we get now here in St. John's, or in Corner Brook or in Labrador West?

I am not sure that is the case, so I look forward to the minister giving more detail on it. If I do not get answers from him when he stands at the end of second reading, we will just have to push for more answers when we get into Committee.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This bill is intended to establish a 911 as the primary emergency telephone number for use in the Province. If you listen to the Leader of the Third Party, you would almost be afraid to dial 911. It is like there is going to be some foreign animal out there on the other side that is going to grab you.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, out our way in the Central Region, a lot of people have been asking for 911. I will give you an example, there are three people in our house, and I bet you there are two of us who do not know the number to the emergency numbers that we need to know in our local area.

MR. HEDDERSON: (Inaudible).

MR. FORSEY: I am probably one of them, I say to the Member for Harbour Main. I will say I do remember one number and I still dial it and it is the cop shop. I remember it from years ago and I never forgot it.

Today, using the emergency numbers, 911 is an easy number. It is okay for the Leader of the NDP, the Third Party; she has been using 911 for some time now. She probably does not know the phone number for the St. John's Regional Fire Department, or do not know the number for the emergency in St. Clare's. I am not saying that is a bad thing because I do not know it either; 911 is a lot easier to remember. This is what we are trying to do, put in Basic 911 service right now. That is the intention.

AN HON. MEMBER: The Third Party has asked for it.

MR. FORSEY: Yes, and they have asked for it and so have the Opposition asked for it. I can see it working. It is such an easy process. When you dial 911 under the Basic service, you are going to get a call centre in Corner Brook or St. John's, wherever the minister and his department decides to set up the three or four sites that we have. They will, in turn, direct that call right to the proper emergency respondent team in that location. It is a simple process.

If somebody in Botwood or Bishop's Falls dials 911 and they want the ambulance, well this 911 call centre will call the local ambulance service in our area and they will know then who they are dealing with. They will go right on with that resident who is in trouble. They will have a good general idea of where they are.

Granted, we want to get into the Next Generation, but that is a couple of years down the road. We have to start with a 911 Basic service. Coming from a rural area, I understand it is not easy to do when you have to identify and do locations for respondents. Especially in small areas where you do not have street names, you do not have numbers on the houses. It can be an issue, but what we are saying is 911 is a lot easier to remember than probably the emergency number that you should know to your local emergency respondent, whether it is the RCMP, whether it is the ambulance service or whoever it is, the fire department that you need or ground search and rescue, whoever they are. I bet you if I asked most of the crowd out my way what the number was to some of these places they probably would not know either. I know I do not.

So, 911 is a Basic service. That is what we are saying, it is a Basic service. It was set up, and the way it works is we require emergency service providers – which generally include fire, ambulance, and police – to identify their emergency response zones. That is what this is intended to do.

Then establish the creation of a Newfoundland and Labrador 911 Bureau as a not-for-profit corporation, not an agent of the Crown. This includes establishing a governing board of

directors which will – and I wanted to get into the levy and why the levy is put there. It is put there for these reasons. We also defined the responsibilities of the board of directors to include submitting annual reports and audited financial statements to the government.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this 911 service is to facilitate the contact of individuals requiring emergency assistance with the appropriate emergency service provider, which is what I just explained. It is a very simple process. Basic 911 is also available throughout the Province right now from mobile phones where a cellular telephone signal can be accessed. There are a lot of us in the Province who did not know that, that we can access 911. If you have a cellular phone and you have access, you can actually get in contact with 911.

Right at the present time, Mr. Speaker, approximately 40 per cent of the population of the Province are already covered by a Basic 911 service on land line telephones. The Northeast Avalon region, the Corner Brook-Bay of Islands, and the Labrador West Region. Once established, the Basic 911 services will be provided for all those who have land line and accessible cellphone service in the location from which they are calling. That is basically what I was saying just a few minutes ago. We can call from some place in a rural area and you can be diverted to the emergency respondent in that zone immediately.

Like anything, Mr. Speaker, most likely you have an idea where you are, so you are going to tell them where you are. You are going to give them your location. No doubt, there could be a case where, depending on the emergency, you are not exactly sure, but in most cases people know where they are and they know what the emergency is.

Important steps include, right now in setting this up: drafting of regulations, the creation of the NL 911 Bureau, the appointment of its board of directors and hiring of its staff, procurement of office space, hardware and software, and concluding arrangements with telecommunications providers.

I wanted to say this because I wanted to get into the levy and why the levy is there. It is going to

be charged to everybody, unlike some of the members who live on the Avalon who probably have had the opportunity and the advantage of using 911. Well, we are all going to pay for it now, but we are all going to get the service. It is really nice that we can all share the same cost right across the Province for this Basic 911 service.

Something else that we need to do, and will be doing according to the minister. There will also be public education sessions regarding what the public can expect with the implementation of Basic 911 services. Just so that the Leader of the Third Party will know, Basic 911 is not a dispatch service. It is a call-taking service that will be set up in three or four locations within the Province, under the direction of the minister and his staff.

There has been some conversation and some concern about the levy. Well, I think the minister did a great job in delivering the bill here in the House today, right from every detail that is defined in the bill. Some of my colleagues, on both sides actually, spoke on it. Some of them were very informative, especially on this side, and even some in the Opposition. There are one or two there that leaves a little bit to be desired but we will leave that for the time being.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of financing, the most common approach across the country is the use of a user pay system, also referred to as a monthly levy fee from telephone subscribers. It is a basic fee. The funds will be collected by the telecommunications service providers through their regular customer billing process and then remitted to NL 911 Bureau.

The service provider, whether that is Bell Aliant or whether it is Rogers, whoever it may be that your service is with, that is who will collect the fee. Then the fee will go to the board in order to maintain their operations. It says right here in the bill that funds collected will be allocated to the operations and maintenance of the 911 emergency telephone service. The monthly levy fee would ensure sustainable financing for the long term for maintenance and improvements of the 911 service including 'evergreening' the required technology.

The exact cost of the levy has not really been decided, but you heard the minister today and he is saying it is going to be less than \$1. I think during our briefings – we had briefings with the department, so did the Opposition and they have the same understanding. We are in a very good cost, a very low cost for such a well-deserved service.

The POMAX study suggested that based on what they knew at the time a progressive and planned implementation of Province-wide Basic 911 followed by Next Generation 911 could be achieved for less than seventy-five cents per month per telephone line. As we work through the actual cost, it may be slightly higher but less than \$1. We are probably going to be between – and this is only me, I do not make the final decision because I do not have the analysis, but it will be less than \$1 as was stated.

Currently, costs associated with the 911 service are offset by taxpayers through government funding based on the number of 911 calls received. That is currently. When we get into the Basic 911, everyone who has a phone, land line, cellphone will be charged that levy, that fee.

The 911 fee currently being collected on some mobile phones is not revenue to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we probably should explain that a little bit because some people are getting charged that now probably. That 911 fee currently being collected on some mobile telephones is not revenue to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and will not be revenue to the NL 911 Bureau. It is a fee for the wireless service providers to fund the required 911 telecommunications infrastructure and network maintenance in order to provide the 911 service.

Mr. Speaker, some examples of levies across the country: in Alberta, right now it is forty-four cents; Saskatchewan, sixty-two; Prince Edward Island, seventy; New Brunswick, it is fifty-three; and actually, Ontario and British Columbia are currently working on provincial legislation for collecting a levy fee via telecommunication providers. Manitoba has legislation in place; however, it does not include provisions for a cost recovery fee. This is what we are doing

here, Mr. Speaker, today; we are putting in a cost recovery fee.

Now, before I sit down, there are quite a few different sections of this bill. I think the minister and a lot of my colleagues have explained quite a bit about the bill. The automatic alarm systems and false calls – I would just like to touch on that before I sit down. Individuals or businesses that have contracted services with companies that include automatic alarm systems will not be permitted to have 911 automatically dialed if their alarm is triggered.

I know in my office in the district, I have an alarm system there, like a lot of businesses do, and you go in and you key in your numbers; that is not included in the Basic 911 service. The 911 service is intended for a person, not an alarm, in need to get a live voice when they dial 911.

Typically, alarm service providers call the landlord or owners when the alarms are activated. Unfortunately, that could be sad sometimes for me if it is 4:00 in the morning and somebody breaks in and they call me. It is probably something I do not want to do, but I will have to get up and respond.

To protect the integrity of the 911 service, the bill prohibits a person from connecting an automatic alarm system of any kind to the emergency 911 telephone service. In addition, the bill states that a person shall not use or permit another person to use a telephone to place a false call to the number 911. This number is there for public safety, not for abuse. It is there for when people need it. We do not want to be tying up lines and have calls from somebody who is in need and need to get through; and even if it comes to where they send out a response team to an area where actually there is no emergency. This kind of stuff cannot go on. Therefore, you will not be able to make these calls.

Depending on the circumstances, provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada respecting public mischief, false messaging, or indecent or harassing telephone calls could be applicable. So, there you go. You could very well, and you

will be, charged for making false calls, Mr. Speaker.

I will be supporting this bill; it is a good piece of legislation. It is something that I know I have heard constituents ask for time after time after time. This is going to be good for the response team, the responders who are out there, and it is just going to speed up the process, regardless of what the Leader of the Third Party might try to suggest.

This is a good service, a good Basic service, a number that we can all remember, and the three people in my household will be able to dial 911 and not have to worry about what the other numbers are. They will make the proper connections and the emergency will not be delayed because we have to dial 911. As a matter of fact, it will probably save us the time to go to try to find the phone book, which we cannot find, if we are home, and trying to look up a number of a name that we cannot find. So by that time the emergency –

MR. JOYCE: Put on your glasses.

MR. FORSEY: Yes, I could put on my glasses; that is true.

In the meantime, this is a good piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker. I will be supporting it, and I am sure the rest of us will be supporting it.

With that, I will take my chair. Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 14, which is to establish a Province-wide 911 telephone service.

Living in a global world and with advanced telecommunications the way that it is moving forward, certainly establishing 911 service is essential. What we are talking about here today is a very Basic 911 service, something that is twenty years of outdated technology, basically, that all other jurisdictions in North America

already have; but you have to establish the basics and move forward to get to the enhanced piece.

One of the things – and I will talk about it as I go through – is around the telecommunication, the ubiquitous coverage. As the member opposite had talked about cellular coverage, well if you dial a cellphone right now you could get a 911 dispatch. Whether it be in the Corner Brook area, whether it be in St. John's or whether – it would likely go to the St. John's area. In doing so you have to have that cellular coverage in order to be able to dial 911, yet you still pay that fee. It comes down to a period of fairness when you are looking at those particular pieces.

This government likes throwing out statistics. When we look at the number of people who are currently serviced by Basic 911, the statistics are pretty alarming that there are only 40 per cent basically covered and quite a higher amount who is not receiving that level of service based on government's numbers.

I want to point out that it was only in the fall of November when the fire chief, Vince MacKenzie, talked about Basic 911 service is still twenty-year-old technology. He made a comment to the CBC that when it comes to the actual provision of the service itself, you are not going to get what maybe you would expect as to – you see maybe in the United States of America on some of these shows that you dial 911, you get the live operator, you get right there and they know. They have this GPS technology that they can dispatch and find your location.

We are not talking about that here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We are talking about basically you are getting to a call access point where they would take down your information, then they would have to look up and find the place to defer, whether it be fire services, whether it would be a medical emergency, or whether it would be the police to get to that local area. It can lead to service being delayed.

Basically, what Vince MacKenzie the fire chief said is that this is not going to increase the speed at which the fire department deploys or firefighters get to the fire station. We need to make that very clear, that this is not going to

increase the speed of service. In fact, it might delay the speed of service and the response time that would happen in Newfoundland and Labrador.

These are not my words, Mr. Speaker; these are the words of the fire chief MacKenzie who talked about it. According to him, he talked about Next Generation. That is something that was talked about here is that Next Generation uses the GPS co-ordinates. It helps locate a person. It is critical in time of emergency that you be able to do that. We know that our cellphones have the GPS technology in them. We should be able to do that as well from land line communication services. This is why levies and fees are being charged in other jurisdictions to pay for that technology.

In November 2013, I actually spoke out on this very issue when it comes to the delay in getting to a Basic 911 service and what it means for our rural communities. At the MNL annual general meeting, I questioned the Minister of Municipal Affairs, pressed the need for civic addresses, and highlighted some of the challenges it would present for our many local service districts and unincorporated communities.

I represent a district that has thirty-five communities; there are eleven municipalities, ten local service districts, and fourteen basically unorganized communities. Without it, there are no roads that are designed in terms of street address. There are no actual numbering on the houses highlighting if there is an apartment there and these types of things. That is a very real concern for people who would be dialling 911 under a Basic system. That is a very legitimate concern that people will have.

Under Basic 911, a caller is still going to be required to provide directions, such as the location of the emergency, and the person there at the answering point is going to be required to have knowledge of that area. They are going to need that local knowledge in order to relay correctly the directions to the applicable emergency service provider. If I am talking about somebody in The Straits – White Bay North, somebody in, for example, Green Island Brook, and they call 911 under this Basic system, they will get transferred to the Corner Brook office, which would be the closest point,

but that person then would have to describe basically where they live and what colour house they live in because there is no mapping. There is no address.

For them to do that, we are almost going back to maybe primary school where you have this telephone game you play and you are relaying a message. Unless that person is taking everything down and hearing, they may miss something. Then they have to look up and find the provider, whether it is a local fire department, and relay that message. They have to make another call, a second point, and relay that message adequately. If they do not, then they are going to have to go back and call that person again because the GPS technology does not exist under Basic 911. We are going to see situations where service may likely be slowed down.

The real lack of movement and the challenge there, because I pointed this out in November, is that we really need to move towards civic addressing. I am not sure how the minister and how government is going to get adequate civic addressing if they are only looking at the municipalities. They need to provide the adequate supports to local service districts and the unincorporated communities to really carve out a plan so that rural Newfoundland and Labrador, instead of having an additional level of communication that will increase the risk of an emergency response, it may be unnecessarily delayed or sent to an incorrect location.

Until street addresses are mapped, people in emergency situations will still have to describe colours of houses, names of people, and other generalities. Government really needs to move forward. They need to really clearly indicate – and it has been talked about. The member opposite just talked about how an Enhanced 911 service is only two years away. He said a couple of years. We have been waiting a very long time for the Basic.

Is the minister going to get up on his feet and commit to saying there is going to be an Enhanced 911 service in two years? Is that carved out or is that just a statement made by a member who is promising something that he is unable to deliver? Because we have heard that before from this government. We really do need

to roll out that Enhanced 911. It needs to be clear, it really does.

I have some points I want to make towards the actual legislation as well when we look at the overall fee structure, how fees are going to be put forward, and how this legislation is actually adding to the bureaucracy. It is actually adding more cost to the consumer. In the fact that it is collecting fees from land line users and cellphone users is that you are creating another entity that is creating additional cost. You are looking at the reporting piece, but I think in this type of system you want to absolutely keep your administrative cost low.

We have not been revealed and provided the overall cost structure of what it is going to take to operate this new corporation that is going to be there, how many employees, and the overall cost. If the telecommunication providers, if the land line companies and the cellular companies are entering into agreements and they are doing the work and actually collecting the fees and just remitting them to government, then there should be absolutely minimal cost to the taxpayer in terms of the overall administration of the Basic 911 service, and we should be able to see the majority of these funds go towards looking at Enhanced 911 service.

This should be costed. There should be a clear direction as to when government is going to get to Enhanced 911 and not make empty promises like the member opposite just did saying that they are going to get to Enhanced 911 in two years. That is something which is a big issue for me.

Another piece is around the fact that many cellular providers right now – if you look at the bill that you get, you are already paying a 911 fee. This is something the CRTC allows as a regulator for the industry. They are not required to remit that fee right now or ensure the 911 service is made available, and that we have improved infrastructure to make sure that you have a ubiquitous cellular network.

There are many areas in my district, many, many areas, and many in rural areas, especially in Northern Coastal Labrador, where cellphone service is basically nonexistent. Where is that

plan and partnership to make sure we get to a more ubiquitous coverage?

As well, we need to look at if they are already charging a fee for cellular providers than is this an additional fee the consumer has to pay for this particular service? Because it basically then amounts to double billing, and where is the accountability in that? If the cellular provider can already charge a fee without ensuring that 911 fees are going to enhancing and providing increased cellular coverage in areas that we are going to see another fee tacked on by anybody who has a cellphone bill. Many consumers, many businesses have multiple lines. They will end up paying multiple bills. Was there consideration to looking at a group rate or a group fee? Because that is something that is a situation.

We also look at the overall cost when we are talking about implementing such a service. There are very real issues that our local volunteers and people are going to face, and it is going to have an impact. I think we need to move forward on a 911 service. I am pleased to see the legislation is going to see the Basic 911 service but I think it should be a whole lot more. There should have been more preplanning done in this situation. We should not have been in this situation where we are twenty years, basically, in the making of providing this service. We have a lot more work to do in making sure and a lot more partnerships to enter into.

There needs to be clarity when you are talking about entering into agreements with telecommunication providers, as to how much they are going to collect for their administration and how much is going to be lost. If you are going to be charging less than a dollar, we need to make sure the bulk of that actually goes in towards providing the service, enhancing the service, and not out in administration or not to the telecommunication providers.

I have had the ability to speak to this, Mr. Speaker. I have made a few points. I have talked about this legislation previously, and many of my other colleagues in the House of Assembly will talk about it. Our rural communities certainly need an Enhanced 911 service, and this is just the first step.

I think we have a long way to go when it comes to the legislation. I wanted to really make the point clear, that Basic 911 will not increase the delivery and the response time. It can technically decrease it. Without the civic addressing, there is going to be an incredible problem. There will be fallout from that if government does not really move expeditiously in putting that forward. There needs to be a real plan; we need to see that from the minister.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a privilege and honour again to stand on my feet to speak in this House of Assembly on Bill 14, An Act to Establish and Implement A Province-Wide 911 Telephone Service for the Reporting of Emergencies. Before I get into the crux of what I wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank again the constituents of my District of Baie Verte – Springdale for their continuing support. I am honoured and privileged to serve them. It is because of their decision that I am here today. As all MHAs, we take our jobs very seriously and we do a great job indeed. I want to thank them once again for this humbling experience.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I also want to commend and applaud the officials of the department for their well-organized and very comprehensive, very thorough briefing this morning. I really want to say congratulations to the officials – it is a lot of hard work behind the scenes – and to the minister for bringing this bill to the House of Assembly's floor today.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good piece of legislation. It is a good bill. It certainly will save lives. I know that the Third Party and the Opposition were asking for this 911 service for some time now. I am sure that the people in my district as I went around my district from time to time and from place to place have all been inquiring of when our government is going to implement 911 service. I commend the minister and our

government for taking the lead and implementing this 911 service today.

Mr. Speaker, my comments first of all will be alluding to some general comments to the Emergency 911 bill. My good friend and colleague for Bonavista South already reviewed this, but for those people who are listening at supertime, it might be a good opportunity just to review this again.

The approval of the Emergency 911 Act will provide the legislative framework for the establishment of a Province-wide emergency 911 telephone service. Mr. Speaker, a lot of people will ask what this bill will actually do. There are several things it will do. First of all, the bill is intended to establish a 911 as the primary emergency telephone number for use in the Province; secondly, it will support the operation of basic 911 and the implementation of Next Generation 911; thirdly, it will identify mandatory participation for every municipality, emergency service provider, and public safety answering point which is known as PSAP. It will also require emergency service providers, which generally will include fire, ambulance services, and police services, to identify their emergency response zones.

The bill will also establish the creation of the Newfoundland and Labrador 911 Bureau Inc. as a not-for-profit corporation, not an agent of the Crown. This includes establishing a governing board of directors, Mr. Speaker. The bill will define responsibilities of the board of directors to include submitting annual reports and audited financial statements to the government. The bill will also highlight the necessity for standardized guidelines, policies and procedures for 911 service.

The will also provide authority for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to establish fees charged to subscribers of wireless and land line telephone services to fund the 911 emergency telephone service known as the NL 911 Service Fund. The fee is expected to be under \$1 per month per phone line, Mr. Speaker. As we said earlier, this is not the exact cost. It is not finalized yet, but in terms of financing, the most common approach across the country is a user-pay system, which is commonly known as the

monthly levy fee. Those are some general comments pertaining to this legislation.

Back in December 2012 or so, Fitch & Associates did a very comprehensive review of the ambulance program in Newfoundland and Labrador, which they did on behalf of the Department of Health and Community Services. They discovered that the ambulance program faced numerous challenges, basically because of the geography of our Province, Mr. Speaker, because of our large land mass, we have very harsh, wintry conditions, and we have a widely dispersed population. What they also found, though, is that the providers are very caring, they are to be commended, and they are committed to a very high standard of care.

Mr. Speaker, originally, our ambulance program began as a grassroots humanitarian effort to address the needs of those who were sick and those who were injured, to get them from point A to point B, to transport them from the point of injury or the point of sickness to a medical facility. In the past ten years, our government invested heavily into the road ambulance program. The size of the budget grew 350 per cent from \$14 million in 2001 to about \$50 million in 2011-2012.

What was our goal for the ambulance program at the time? Well, our goal was to have an ambulance program that would reach its full potential as a high performance emergency service that will consistently and predictably deliver clinical excellence and provide reliability in response time. Of course, Mr. Speaker, it will provide – or our hope or our goal is to have an ambulance program that is efficient, that is effective, that is sustainable; and the hallmark of that program would be quality and for our customers/patients to be satisfied with the service that they get.

With respect to ambulance services, the Province has an average of 185 emergent and routine ambulance transports every day in this Province. We need to ensure we continue to have a system that is responsive to the needs of the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. The provincial ambulance program review report was released October 7, 2013. Now, consequently, the Department of Health and Community Services immediately reached out to

all stakeholders and users of ambulance services to hear their views and concerns.

The department had open and frank discussions about the current ambulance program and they welcomed views of their recommendations and their priorities. The feedback collected, Mr. Speaker, will guide the department as they work with ambulance operators and professionals to continue to strengthen the industry.

Now that the Department of Health and Community Services has their recommendations from the review and the benefit of stakeholder feedback, they are developing an action plan so that we can all move forward. The process will include analyzing best practices, look at costing other models, and the development of a multi-year implementation strategy.

The proposed changes have the potential to affect the general public, ambulance professionals, and the ambulance industry. As government, we need to ensure that when changes are made the ambulance system meets the needs of stakeholders while being the most effective and efficient system possible. These changes as we all know, Mr. Speaker, will take time to implement them properly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the legislation at hand, Fitch & Associates' recommendations are designed to integrate the proposed Province-wide 911 service with the work of the ambulance operators. Currently, the road ambulance program lacks continuity – that is what they found – with little communication between the services. There is a wide range in dispatch technologies currently being used, which results in varying levels of ambulance response.

There are sixty-one ambulance services working independently of each other right now in the Province. There are sixty-one different numbers to remember to call for an ambulance. It is a lot of confusion there, Mr. Speaker. When 911 is integrated with the proposed central medical dispatch centre, the program is expected to operate as one seamless system sending the closest available ambulance to respond to emergency needs or calls.

A critical element of Fitch's recommendations is the creation of a central medical dispatch centre that controls ambulance response and co-ordination. This service will ensure that the closest available ambulance will respond in an emergency, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to say that in Budget 2014, \$400,000 was allocated for planning to establish a central medical dispatch centre which will help integrate 911 service, streamline routine and emergency response transports, and help improve ambulance availability and response times. Mr. Speaker, that is good there. Budget 2014, almost \$500,000 to expedite this program.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I will have a few comments pertaining to the summary of findings of the POMAX feasibility study as a backgrounder. As was said earlier by other colleagues in this House this afternoon, it is estimated that 40 per cent of the population of Newfoundland and Labrador have Basic 911 service. In Newfoundland and Labrador, Basic 911 service is currently available in three areas of the Province. Where are they? Northeast Avalon, Corner Brook-Bay of Islands, and Labrador West – Labrador City and Wabush.

Due to the distribution of the population in the Province, unique challenges exist in remote and isolated areas, in particular the Labrador Region of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. The Northeast Avalon 911 service is operated by the St. John's Regional Fire Department. While the remaining two systems are operated by the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary.

Basic 911 is also available throughout the Province from mobile phones as long as a cellular signal can be accessed, and this service is available even in areas where landline phones cannot access 911. Cellular 911 calls that originate from geographic areas not normally answered by the St. John's Regional Fire or RNC are received at the RCMP B Division in St. John's. The four 911 centres are known as the Public Safety Answering Points, known as PSAPs for short.

Mr. Speaker, also infrastructure, technical and organizational resources already exist in Newfoundland and Labrador to support the expansion of Basic 911 system using the translated, encoded instruction methodology

already in use at the existing 911 centres. The 911 delivery through the use of translation encoded instruction means there are no significantly united or unique challenges associated with the delivery of Basic 911, Enhanced 911, or Next Generation services in Labrador or remote or isolated areas of the Province. Mr. Speaker, existing models that are most applicable to the needs of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador are found in Nova Scotia, PEI, and New Brunswick.

Mr. Speaker, before I sit down you might ask the question: Why is it taking so long for Basic 911 Province-wide to be implemented? Well, the POMAX study on the feasibility of 911 recommended a very cautious, progressive, slow approach and planned implementation of Basic 911. We are following their advice, Mr. Speaker. That is the reason why we had the feasibility study. We are laying that foundation first and then we can build on that after, progressively.

We have made significant progress to date on this critical project, beginning with the establishment of a four-person implementation team. We have undertaken a number of activities towards the establishment of Basic 911 service. A key milestone was the drafting of this bill here now which we are debating. The next stage of the process, which commenced April 9, is to undertake a series of consultations with a lot of towns, a lot of municipalities and emergency service providers to confirm and establish emergency response zones.

Mr. Speaker, as was alluded to earlier, we have cast a very wide net to ensure this new service will meet the needs of all stakeholders across the Province. The team at Fire and Emergency Services Newfoundland and Labrador has held several discussions with many groups including Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Combined Councils of Labrador, the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association Newfoundland and Labrador Chapter, and representatives from the deaf and late-deafened community.

We have also begun discussions with the St. John's Regional Fire Department public safety answering point on the possibility of expanding Basic 911 call-taking services on the Avalon

Peninsula. We are also talking with the City of Corner Brook on a centre regarding their interest in taking calls from the rest of the Province. Mr. Speaker, a lot of work has been done already on the regulatory and the government structures necessary to implement a Province-wide Basic 911 service by the December 2014 deadline.

Mr. Speaker, there are some phrases used already. I will mention this one: What is the difference between Basic, Enhanced, and Next Generation 911? A lot of people out there may not know the difference between these three terms. Basic 911 is a way to quickly contact emergency services by using a universal and easily accessible three-digit number. Enhanced 911 provides additional information to the 911 call taker such as the caller's name and their civic address. Next Generation 911 incorporates Enhanced 911 and allows emergency services to keep pace with changing methods of communication and data transfer such as text messaging and photo sharing, Mr. Speaker.

One more question; 911 is to be implemented by December 2014 we said, yet the centralized dispatch for ambulances is not due until 2015, so why are these two processes not in sync? The answer is Basic 911 is not a dispatch service. It is a call-taking service. Basic 911 will be designed to interact with the existing ambulance services and it is expected to be modified accordingly once a centralized dispatch is in place. Fire and Emergency Services and the Department of Health and Community Services are working closely together on this aspect.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my comments. I am sure this piece of legislation will pass with flying colours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am happy to stand and speak for a few moments to Bill 14, An Act to Establish and Implement a Province-wide 911 Telephone Service for the Reporting of Emergencies.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, many aspects of this bill are a positive thing. I am happy to see we are moving in that direction as a Province. I think I probably first became aware of the bill when I was sitting on the provincial Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador board. At that time, I expressed some grave concerns I had around rural communities, coastal communities in particular. Mr. Speaker, I am going to echo some of those concerns again today.

Once again, it is not a case of Labrador complaining but clearly, Mr. Speaker, we are going to have an equal fee across the board for everybody but we are getting a very unequal service. I am going to speak from my district in Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

We have heard the various members who have stood up to speak so far talk about the three different levels, the Basic, the Enhanced, and the Next Generation. Well, I have a number of communities that will never go beyond the Basic, and that would be the communities of Williams Harbour, Pinsent's Arm, Paradise River, and Norman Bay. Those communities are going to pay the same, Mr. Speaker, as every other community in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador but they are going to have an unequal service.

Another concern I have, Mr. Speaker, is that sometimes when you hear 911, automatically in your mind you seem to think that is eliciting a fast response but there will be no improvement in the response time in my area. I hope there is a much better education piece than what has been done so far around this because I have concerns that people might think the response time is going to improve. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would venture to say that because of the confusion, because of the local knowledge piece being missing, that there will be delays in responses.

That is really concerning, Mr. Speaker, when you think about the fact that when you are talking 911, when you are talking emergency, delays means lives; moments means lives. I am fearful, but I hope it does not happen, that somebody will depend on a 911 service where things will go bad and it will cost a life, Mr. Speaker.

I want to use the example, this morning in the briefing – and I thank the minister for the briefing, it was a good briefing. Many of the questions I had, Mr. Speaker, there was no answer to them. It seemed a little bit like I was back in Question Period, if I might add that, Mr. Speaker. It looks like one of the points of answering service for Labrador will be Corner Brook.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know how that is going to roll out for remote, isolated communities like Norman Bay that have no medical facilities right now. They rely on the community clinic in Charlottetown. Our nearest police detachment is 100 kilometres from Charlottetown in Mary's Harbour. So when somebody from Norman Bay calls Corner Brook, I hope certainly somebody who is answering the phone on the other end has the education piece to be able to direct them in a timely manner. That is a big concern.

Mr. Speaker, it seems very, very unfair, it is inadequate that people who are not going to be receiving equal service will still pay an extra fee. In my district we have twenty-two communities and only two or three access cell service. We have many more people than that who actually have a cellphone, because people who might travel out Christmas and Easter time have a phone they use at that time. Somebody who has a phone that provides a personal use to them for a month of the year maybe, maximum, they are now going to pay a fee on that phone for twelve months of the year, Mr. Speaker, and that is really, really concerning.

In my mind, we are implementing a service – a good service, I am not going to debate that. We are implementing a service where some of the smallest communities with the lowest income are going to be the hardest hit, and they are not going to have the service they are paying for. I know there is going to be resistance to that. That is not going to resonate well with the people, Mr. Speaker. They are going to say: What am I paying for? If I am in a little community and I have to call 911 and the police still has to come from 100 kilometres away, what am I paying for, nothing has changed? I am sure, Mr. Speaker, we are going to be hearing more on that as time goes by.

Mr. Speaker, cell coverage; once again I have stood here many times and petitioned the House of Assembly to bring cell coverage into the remote areas that really need cell coverage. Where people move and work in hazardous work conditions, move on terrible roads. Right now we are being charged fees on cellphones where we do not even have a cell service. It reminds me a little bit, Mr. Speaker, like the recycle fee we are paying on big TVs. We are paying \$42 on a big TV in our district, yet we do not even have a recycle depot set up. Again, we are putting the cart before the horse in that we are charging some people unfairly with this amount.

My colleague from Torngat, many times has mentioned Burton Winters and a cellphone in his pocket. Burton could have picked up that cellphone and dialed 911. It would not have made any difference to him because like my district, the District of Torngat does not have cell coverage, Mr. Speaker.

In my district I have mainly municipalities but I have a number of local service districts that are run completely by volunteers. They do not even have one paid staff. Also, I have a number of communities that do not have a functioning governing body right now. I am just wondering how things are going to roll out for those communities.

I am thinking about the community of Black Tickle, I am thinking about the community of Pinware. When these people dial 911, where is that call going and who is responding to them? These are all things that are very, very important that we discuss, that we put in place to understand that mechanisms are there to respond to these people in as timely a manner as possible just like the rest of the Province, Mr. Speaker. We do not differentiate on the value of a life depending on your civic address.

I will move to civic address, Mr. Speaker. Many of the communities in my area, they have a long way to go in terms of getting a civic address in place. I am just wondering what kind of help the government will be providing to help those towns get numbers on their houses. Some of them do not even have street names, Mr. Speaker. Can you imagine the confusion of a little community in Labrador calling and getting

a voice on the other end in Corner Brook, in Western Newfoundland, saying I am in the blue house up behind Uncle Tom's?

We have to have this ironed out. We are talking 911. Mr. Speaker, I am fearful that because we are doing all of this education and it is in the media the Province is implementing a 911 strategy, there is going to be confusion. There is going to be misunderstanding on the parts of some of the people. Well, we have 911. We are going to have a fast response system. Things are improving. Well, in fact, nothing is changing.

The only thing that is changing in the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair that I can see, Mr. Speaker, is that many people are going to be charged with an extra fee. That is what is happening right now, paying fees on their cellphones. Parents who have given their kids a cellphone so that when they travel out periodically they are now going to pay that fee every single month even though most of the time that phone sits in their drawer. That is a big concern for me.

Mr. Speaker, I am thinking about the many, many challenges, not just in my district but in other rural communities, places like Gray River, places like Nippers Harbour. They are paying an equal fee but they will never go beyond the basic fee.

This morning, Mr. Speaker, while we were in the briefing I asked about the education piece. Because so far somebody has come into one town in the southern part of my district, one town, and spoken to that town only, Mr. Speaker. Down in Southeast Labrador and in the other communities we certainly need to not only come in and meet with the town, we need to educate community leaders and different community groups on this bill; and here we are, we are ready to vote on it, Mr. Speaker.

When we are talking about safety, Mr. Speaker, there are other areas we need to be going in those coastal communities. I have a number of communities that have had requests in for years now trying to get a fire truck. They are looking for fire equipment. We are looking at \$7.5 million here with the fee that is going to be collected. Why won't government entertain using some of that to put some safety equipment

back into those communities so those people can help themselves respond to a disaster when it happens? Like 911, Mr. Speaker, has been available for a long time in certain parts of the Province, we know that the Basic service is currently available on the Northeast Avalon, in the Corner Brook, Bay of Islands area, and in Lab West, Wabush. I did hear one of my colleagues this morning talk about it being about eight years before things really got running smoothly down in Lab City and Wabush – eight years.

We are going to need to see some amendments – I do not know if it is amendments to the bill. We are certainly going to need a much broader education piece, Mr. Speaker, before this bill is able to be effective in my area. Even then it will not be able to be completely effective because we do not have the infrastructure that other areas have in place. We are going to be paying a fee; we do not have the cell service. We do not have the capacity there for several communities to ever get to an Enhanced service or to a Next Generation, some of the small communities.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, you might think a basic telephone line is something that everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador has, but it is not uncommon for me to get calls from communities like Pinsent's Arm to say our phones are out, our phones have been out for three days. What happens then to this 911 service that we have in place when phone lines are out in a community? I believe that we are going to have to be very in tune with service providers to try and iron out as much of these things as possible as we move forward with the 911 service.

Mr. Speaker, we see that Bill 14, the bill enacting the Emergency 911 Act will, “establish ‘911’ as the primary emergency telephone number for use in the province; and require the establishment and implementation of a province-wide emergency 911 telephone service for the reporting of emergencies.” In the small communities there is normally only one point of contact anyway.

I understand that this will enhance a number of the bigger areas that had difference ambulance services and did not know hospital numbers and things like that. In most of our places you call the community clinic and there is only one

detachment that is providing a service to maybe six, seven, eight communities in that area – just one.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that people in the rural communities will not get excited because the Province is rolling out a 911 program and will get the wrong impression that this is going to mean an expedited service. As I said, once again we are going to be paying the fee, but we are certainly not going to have the service – an equal fee but unequal service. That is the message that I saw clearly and that I heard clearly in the briefing this morning.

I did ask a number of questions. I was concerned about the local knowledge piece not being there, if the point of an answering service is in Western Newfoundland for some of these remote communities, Mr. Speaker. I did see that sometimes this board, this NL bureau, that is set up will seek expert advice. I just wonder where they will seek that expert advice. I hope, Mr. Speaker, there will be some dialogue with the people on the ground, with the people who know these communities, the people who live in those communities.

We know the corporation is not an agency of the Crown. We know that the 911 bureau is a not-for-profit corporation and any excess revenue shall be used to further the objects of the corporation. Mr. Speaker, we had some conversation at the briefing this morning about places where we felt some of that money should be directed if they run into a surplus. Certainly, putting some infrastructure back in those communities to help them be able to avail of cell service would be one vital area. Because, once again, here we have people paying for a service, being charged, yet no cellphone coverage. It seems very unfair to me, Mr. Speaker.

We see on the NL bureau that at least one director shall be a resident of Labrador. Mr. Speaker, many people reference Labrador as the Big Land, and it is very diverse. You have a couple of urban areas like Goose Bay and Labrador City, but then you have all of these coastal communities that have their own unique set of challenges.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that the coastal communities, because of the differences there and the

differences and the challenges, should warrant an extra director sitting on that board so that they bring their own separate knowledge to the table. It is very, very vital, Mr. Speaker, when you are implementing a service, 911, to respond to emergencies where moments mean lives, that you have people who understand the demographics, understand the geography.

We do not live in communities where somebody gets sick, an ambulance is called, and they are rushed into a hospital. We live in communities where somebody is brought to a clinic, perhaps, before the police even arrive on the scene, which is maybe an hour or so later, depending on the community. Then there is a plane that has to be dispatched from Goose Bay, normally, with a flight medical team and it can take hours, Mr. Speaker. We know this because we live there and we go through it.

The person who is answering that phone, a point of answering service in Corner Brook, they are going to need to have that local knowledge as well, Mr. Speaker. I certainly look forward to more education around this whole 911 in those rural communities. I would be very interested in hearing what the minister will have to say when he gets up in terms of responding to that.

We know that right now, Mr. Speaker, the fee is going to be \$1 per month per telephone line, or it is between seventy-five cents and \$1. When we asked the questions in the briefing this morning about small businesses that might have several phone lines, I really could not believe what I heard from one of the senior people in the room: Well, maybe that business might have to look to see where it could cut phone lines. Mr. Speaker, I could not believe that: A business would have to look to see where they could cut phone lines if they wanted to cut down on the cost.

Here we have businesses paying for a service where there is no cell coverage, for all of these different lines and then to sit this morning in that briefing and to be told they might have to look at cutting lines to save cost. It is very unfair, Mr. Speaker, I feel, in my opinion, where once again you have an equal fee but an unequal service.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that the Basic 911 service is to be in place by the end of 2014, but it will take at least three years to get to the next

level of service where we will have the Enhanced 911. I do not know if that is going to mean an increased fee, but for those communities – and as I mentioned there are four in my district at least that do not have the infrastructure to support anything beyond the Basic. I certainly hope there is no extra increase in the fee for them. I know there will be resistance already to paying for a fee, paying on a service that is not available.

I am very anxious to hear some comments from the minister on the civic addressing and how they are going to propose to move forward on that in some of the tiny remote communities, how they are going to provide assistance to the local service districts and to the different municipalities that are already very strained in their governing the town. Many, as I said, that have no paid staff.

I do not know what the cost would be involved to getting street addresses and numbers on all of the houses in the communities, Mr. Speaker, and the whole logistical piece around that. I am anxious – I am looking forward to hearing the minister's comments when he gets up.

Just to reiterate, Mr. Speaker, before I sit down – my time is almost up – the piece about the corporation being able to solicit expert advice on matters of interest and concern relating to the development, establishment, and operation of the emergency 911 telephone service, I certainly hope that some of that advice is local knowledge. You cannot replace local knowledge if you want input into how to best roll this out, Mr. Speaker.

I am very happy to have the opportunity to speak to the bill. I noticed that, "The corporation shall hold an annual general meeting in each calendar year at a time and place...". I would encourage the minister when they hold these annual generals, that they move them around the Province. I think that would give people in smaller communities who do not necessarily have the funds – oftentimes, I know small communities do not even get to go to events like the MNL AGM, which is very beneficial in terms of networking and knowledge sharing. I would encourage the minister to move those AGMs around so that people in rural areas who

have a different set of challenges are able to sit in, listen, and provide feedback on that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 14.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Further speakers?

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

It is an unexpected pleasure to stand here and speak to Bill 14, which is a long-awaited piece of legislation, one that I think people are happy to see here in the House of Assembly. I have a number of notes and different questions and concerns when it relates to this piece of legislation that I will have the next twenty minutes to proceed through.

I have read through the legislation and it is a brand-new piece of legislation. It is not one that has been amended or changed. It is something that had to be created to allow for the implementation of Basic 911 throughout most of the Province. There are already a number of areas as has been stated here ad nauseam that are already covered, but there are going to be a lot more places, a lot more coverage in this Province.

I think what I want to do is just put some of my concerns out there first so I do manage to get them covered. I will go through the legislation as well to ask different questions. I know the minister will not answer the questions now, but I put them out there now so he has an opportunity at some point to maybe address them either in closing or during the Committee stage.

One of the things that I think has been mentioned before, but I am going to mention it because it certainly affects a great portion of my district, and that comes to cell service. I have spoken on numerous occasions in this House about cell coverage when it relates to the entire Province, but especially about my district.

I am going to look at – if you just want to look at the communities – the community of Grey River, there is no cell coverage. Once you leave Burgeo and go out on that Burgeo road, which is about 148 kilometres, you have no coverage all

the way along. I have to bypass an entire section and then I hit Cape Ray. Cape Ray down to just pass Margaree, you are fine; you have cell coverage. Once you get past Margaree, cell coverage is either extremely spotty or non-existent right down to Rose Blanche-Harbour le Cou and certainly down into La Poile.

One of the things that I have put forward on a number of occasions is that I think we, as a Province, should be moving towards better cell coverage for the entire Province. One thing I have asked for of numerous ministers and on numerous occasions in the House: Is there a map or some kind of information that shows where there is coverage and there is not coverage so that we have a better idea of what we have to grapple with? Again, I know this may be out there, and I know you may never get it covered, I know that private business plays a part of this; however, I think we need to know where we start from.

Again, I have no idea when it comes to cell coverage where it is not covered. I know I drive across the Province and there are a number of areas; but I guess the point of what I am getting at is that we know that this service is going to be paid for through the implementation of billing on people's land lines, as they are called, and on their cellphones. Many of the people in the communities in my district live in areas where there is no cell coverage, but they have a cellphone. I heard one minister say: Why would they have cellphone? The fact is that they have to travel outside their home for numerous reasons: for work; again, we have to travel to hospital visits; in many cases now, you see their children have a cellphone so if they travel the road to go to school elsewhere, they have a cellphone. That is just the way it is now.

You have the cellphone, you are paying for the cellphone, and the simple fact is you do not have coverage in many of these areas. Two of those areas are Route 470 and Route 480 – so, the major roadway is in the district, and there is no coverage. I have an issue with being forced to pay for a service for which you cannot avail on a cellphone. I know I may not get around that, but I have to put that out there.

I have an entire stretch of roadway. You just look at the Burgeo road; it has been cut off twice

in the last two years. People were completely trapped. Once during the winter, due to the snowstorms and the lack of equipment – it was a huge storm, people were trapped and could not travel for days on end and they have no cell coverage. So, what is the purpose of Basic 911, Enhanced 911, or anything if you cannot call it when you need it? That is one of the points that I want to make sure is covered explicitly here. Certain people will get it, certain people will not, but everybody has to pay for it.

One of the things, too, that I want to talk about is Grey River. Grey River is a very isolated, scenic, pristine community in my district, right along the coast. It has about anywhere from ninety to 100 people living there, depending on the time of year. One of the problems that I have – this is a beautiful community, but it is isolated. The only way in and out is by chopper or by boat. This community will not be able to avail of this service. From what I gather, and the minister will answer this when it is his time, why would the people in one of these communities, in my community – and I believe there are six across the Province. The Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair already mentioned it. Why is it fair to charge someone for something they cannot use?

That is patently unfair. It is not good enough to just say well, we have to treat everybody the same. You are not treating everybody the same. You are treating the people in Grey River differently than you are treating them elsewhere. Again, I am only going to talk about Grey River; I know there are five other communities. I do not care if it is \$1 or if it is \$100 dollars. Why should they be charged for a service they cannot use, they cannot call, it is not going to serve them?

With the number of people who we are dealing with, and that one community, I think something could be done. If they cannot have the service, if the technological means are not there to provide the service, then you do not bill them. Now, I am not going to stop on that. I live in Port aux Basques. The service, I can avail of it; it is there. It has to be paid for. I can deal with it; but if I live in Grey River and I cannot avail of this service, why should I pay? Why? If somebody can answer that, I would be happy.

That is one of the things that I want to put out there.

Now again, speaking to the bill as a whole, this is something we have waited for and longed for. This is a great thing to know that we have 911. The biggest reason for me is that I cannot, for the life of me – depending on when I need it – remember the phone numbers to RCMP or the fire department or EMS. I cannot remember them. It especially scares me – I have them put up on the fridge. Even more so now since I have the three-year-old, I have those numbers there; I want to know them. The fact that I have a 911 number that I can remember and that I can call, I think that is a great thing. Obviously it has to be paid for – and I will get into my, not issues, but some questions I have on the billing aspect of it. Again, it has to be paid somehow, and we all know that.

Coming back to the fact that if I am going to have it and I can avail of it, it is there, that is fine, I have no problem; but if you are not going to provide it to a community, then do not charge them for it. That is unfair. It is the version of the old maxim of taxation without representation. That is what it comes down to. They are paying for a service they cannot have. I am going to bring that up again, but I wanted to put that out there.

Now, the other thing – and this is something I do not know how you would get around it – my understanding, if I am correct, is that it would be charged to every phone line, even if it is a business. Again, I look at a large business or a small business. For example, Marine Atlantic – Marine Atlantic in Port aux Basques has 158 phone lines. They have thirty-three in Placentia; they have forty-five in St. John's. So just using the 158 in Port aux Basques, we are going to pay \$1 per line. Now, that might not be a large sum of money but it adds up. I put that out there. I do not know if there is some way to – Marine Atlantic is one thing, but if you look at the small business that may have a number of phone lines so they can handle their customers or any aspect of their business, this is a cost that has to be brought in there. This is not going to kill them but it is something we have to look at because they have to deal with it.

There are a couple of other things I want to put out there and address. One of them is something I am glad to see in this bill, and that is civic addressing. That is something that prior to this bill coming into existence – just in my meetings with ambulance providers and EMS, one of the things in our service back on the Southwest Coast, many of the paramedics they employee come from Ontario. There is nothing worse, they tell me, than when they are trying to get the address from a frantic person, trying to find out where they have to go. They are from Ontario; they do not know the community.

When the person says – number one, the person may not even know their own address. They have not had a number on their house forever. Then you try to explain where you are going and there is no house number. You say: Well, I am down the road here by so and so. There is nothing worse to these EMRs; it is a panic situation. They are trying to get there quickly and they cannot get there. So anything we can do to alleviate that stress, and civic addressing to me – I know it is going to take time. I know it is not going to get done right away, but it is a step in the right direction to make sure that we can make this job easier.

As we all know, in any kind of emergency time is of the essence. If we can minimize that time, cutting out time that people are wasting trying to find where the emergency is then I am all for it. I do not think it is a big cost on people to be forced to affix their civic address to their house. I do not think that is a big deal. I have no issue with that. I know you are going to need a lot of buy in from the municipalities. Again, I do not think you are going to have an issue with that. We have to stick to that and make sure it happens, and I am certainly all for it.

Now one of the big things for this, and I cannot say whether I like the structure or do not like the structure. It seems fine to me. We have a new corporate structure created to run this and it is a not-for-profit. Basically, the revenue they take in, which is going to be – the number I heard here earlier, it may have been anywhere from \$6 million to \$7 million. I do not know what the cost is going to be yet. Now the minister may have said it and I simply missed it. If that is the case – it may be hard to tell because we have not actually started it yet.

What I am getting at is I think after a period of time we should have an idea of what the cost is going to be to run this system. At that time I am hoping there is a system set up in place so that there is no need for this corporation to build up a huge surplus. This corporation should have enough there to cover the cost. If they are making more than they need in any given year, then that money should not be going back to the consumer, the consumer should not be charged for it if it is not necessary.

It is a case of trial and error. It is going to take some time, but this is not about making money off the backs of people. It is about providing a service that people need. It is there for them. We have to pay for it but we should not have to pay any more than what is necessary, I guess you could say.

I am looking forward; I like the fact there is an audit system in place. I like the fact that every year there is an AGM. We get to ask these questions and we get to look at this structure to see how it is operating. Is it operating to the best of its ability?

It is like any board, it is made up of a number of people. I believe nine is the maximum number. This composition is taking from, I think there is one from Labrador, there is one from MNL, there is one from each of the PASP – the acronym is there.

It is like any board. Let's make sure the right people are on it and the best people are on it. We have to make sure this board is running to the best of its ability because it really is, when you think about, a life and death situation when we are talking about the purpose of this board.

Now I want to, just very quickly, go through the legislation itself to point out a few different sections. I read through it all and there is a lot of standard stuff that you see in any new bill, and there are a few other questions I have. One thing I want to bring up that I found very interesting, and I think this is important. Under section 2(i)(iv) it talks about “an ambulance service organized to serve an area of the province, and”. This is what falls under “emergency service provider”.

One thing I want to point out, because this all fits in together. Obviously, we are relying on emergency service providers to fulfill this service. When we call in the right people are serving us, and one of those emergency service providers is an ambulance service. Obviously, it gives me concern when I hear that emergency ambulance services, especially in rural parts of the Province, are being cut, and therefore have less capability to provide the necessary emergency service at the same time we are bringing in the 911. I think that relates.

I think we cannot put this 911 in on one side and on the other side cut funding to ambulance services and say, hey – they are going to do the job even when they are calling out and saying there are already a number of red alerts or periods of time when there is no emergency coverage, and we are going to increase that red alert time. That is an issue.

The Member for Bay Verte – Springdale referenced earlier in his commentary to this piece of legislation. He talked about the ambulance service. He talked about the Fitch-Helleur report. That is one we all waited for with great anticipation because we know the ambulance service in our Province is of such importance. It is going through some transition. It needs to go through some transition. There are some changes that may need to happen.

One of the problems I have is – a number of the things referenced in the Fitch-Helleur report are not actually being done. One of them is the centralized medical dispatch. Again, I think it had a date on it of early 2015 it could have been done, but there is not even enough money put out in the Budget to do it.

We have to look at all of the different aspects that make up the emergency service coverage. I say we cannot put this act out and say we are doing this, we are doing that and it is a great thing, and on the other side cut the guts out of our ambulance service so that people in rural areas do not get coverage. I put that out there. I will get an opportunity to speak to it again in Committee. I think it is quite important. I have paramedics calling me on a daily basis. They want to contribute to this. They want to know about the report and they are not getting an opportunity.

I come back to section 2.(r), is the part I talked about earlier about subscribers. It means “...an end-user who is assigned a provincial telephone number and who subscribes to (i) a landline-based telephone service...or (ii) a wireless telephone service...”. It is good to know that the fine folks of Grey River are going to pay for two phones and cannot use either one. I just put that out there. Maybe there is something we can do to treat them with fairness because that is a guiding principle we should all be governed by.

I move into the next section and it talks about the corporation that is going to be created, NL 911 Bureau Inc. It is not an agent of the Crown. I think the Member for St. Barbe raised a good point. Will they be covered by whistleblower? I do not know if the answer is there yet.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. A. PARSONS: I am sorry; the Member for Mount Pearl South actually brought that up.

If it is not an agent of the Crown, does whistleblower coverage provide? It is another piece of legislation we are debating right now concurrently. I think that is important because this is a very important corporation that is being created. Its members are being appointed and we would want to know that the people working there will be given the same protection as other public service. That is a good question I think should be answered in the Committee stage.

Section 10 lays out the purpose, and I think that sets out quite well: What is the purpose of this corporation? Really, what is the purpose of this legislation? It lays it out there in a number of sections. It moves into the corporate structure. The corporate structure seems fine. There are a couple of things here. Reimbursed for expenses, that is fine. We want the best people doing this and we have to make sure they are paid to do the job. It is not an issue. I have no problem with it.

I found it interesting, “A director shall hold office for 4 years from the date his or her appointment becomes effective.” That is fine. In fact, I think it is recommended in many cases that it be four years, or five years. That is in a lot of cases. Now I would note that the Privacy Commissioner only gets two years. Maybe that

is something that was overlooked. Four years fine; reimbursed for expenses fine. That is what we need to do. I am sure the Privacy Commissioner is out there now saying maybe I can get onto this five-year term business.

I think we create these structures and these legislations with the best intent in mind. Nobody doubts that, but the issue becomes not with the intent but with the actual, what happens, what actually transpires. That is what our job is, and not just now. We are laying out what seems to be a fine structure, but how does the structure operate down the road?

One of the things I noticed in section 14.(2), "Where the term of a director expires, he or she continues to be a director until re-appointed or replaced." I would say it is going to be incumbent upon the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make sure that people do not have their terms expire but they sit here on that board and get to do the job for whatever reason. There are a lot of good things here, but people have to do their job and make sure the right people are there and that we are not just leaving a board there for no reason. There is a set term there. You get four years. You can do three different terms. I think it is three years after the first term.

As we move further into the corporate structure – my time is running out but I may get an opportunity in Committee. The annual report and audit is very important because we need to know what this is costing. We need to know what people are paying in. At the end of the day there should not be any more coming in than what is necessary. We know it is going to cost. Let's make sure the cost is covered off but let's not be stockpiling money. I know there is an Enhanced service coming, but from what I can gather I do not think it is in the foreseeable future.

AN HON. MEMBER: Three years.

MR. A. PARSONS: Three years. So we should make sure that the Basic works, which is fine. I have heard the commentary, especially on this side, saying we are already behind in the sense that we are only putting in the Basic now, but my big thing is the cost recovery. What is this going to cost? Because it is the taxpayers

paying for it and our job is to protect the taxpayers of this Province.

I will get another opportunity at another juncture.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Conservation, to adjourn debate on Bill 14.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that debate be now adjourned on Bill 14.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, debate adjourned.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time I would like to call from the Order Paper, Order 9, second reading of a bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act And The Tax Agreement Act, 2010. (Bill 17)

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to introduce amendments to the Revenue Administration Act and the Tax Agreement Act, 2010. The Department of Finance is implementing a risk-based approach to processing applications for gasoline tax rebates.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Did the minister move second reading of the bill?

MS JOHNSON: Oh, I was supposed to move second reading first.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Education.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 17 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act And The Tax Agreement Act, 2010". (Bill 17)

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

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The night is only young.

I start again, Mr. Speaker, with the –

MR. BALL: (Inaudible).

MS JOHNSON: Thank you for that, so is the minister. I appreciate that from the Leader of the Opposition.

I am pleased to rise in this House today to introduce amendments to the Revenue Administration Act and the Tax Agreement Act, 2010. We are implementing a risk-based approach to processing applications for both gasoline tax rebates and the Labrador building materials fund rebate and this is to ensure more efficient use of resources and to improve processing time for payments.

Just some information on those two rebates. The gasoline tax, those are generally rebates that are received from fishers, farmers, and municipalities. We get about 1,052 of those rebates a year, which comes to a total of about \$1.3 million. The Labrador building materials rebate is where we rebate the provincial portion of the HST on building materials for homes in Labrador. We get about 703 of those applications for rebates a year and that totals about \$1.5 million.

The way the process currently works is that when you submit for your rebate, you are required to submit all supporting documentation, receipts. The current time to process applications is approximately eight to ten weeks. Some applications can take longer. They may take four to five months until all of the information is in from the applicant and processed.

With the change to post-auditing rebates, we expect the processing time will be reduced to a couple of weeks, Mr. Speaker. These legislative amendments are necessary to provide the legislative authority to make the appropriate regulations to recover overpayments of government tax rebates from having the risk-based audit system in place.

Under a risk-based approach, selected types of applications will require supporting documentation at the time of application. Supporting documentation may also be required from applicants prior to processing if an application contains abnormalities. The remaining applications will be analyzed post-payment, basically by choosing a sample for review.

Applicants selected for review will be required to submit documentation to support their claim. It is very much the way income tax is done, your tax at the end of the year and so on, Mr. Speaker. Again, it is to improve efficiency. It is to get people the refunds they own in a timely manner, and to give us the legislative authority to recover overpayments if that should arise as a result of the audit.

As I said, the risk-based system will be applied to the Labrador building materials rebate and the gasoline tax rebate. The current application and verification process for other rebate programs such as the parental benefits, the Home Heating Rebate, and the Residential Energy Rebate programs, these will not change. These are universal programs. There is not really a need for an audit when it comes to parental benefits. The birth certificate is the birth certificate and the proof of that is in the pudding, shall we say, from the hospital. These are the ones where we could implement that and make it easier for our taxpayers.

On average, in each of the fiscal years 2011 and 2012, recoveries totalling \$300,000 annually were identified through the application verification process currently being followed, and these recoveries are expected to continue under a risk-based audit process as well. So there is no worry here that we will not get monies owed to government due to overpayment. It is just to make it simpler and easier for the user and get the money back in a timely manner, but also making sure we do our due diligence when it comes to audits.

Full verification, as we know, of low-risk claims is not an efficient use of our resources. It is not efficient for the people who submit the claims who are waiting for their rebate. As an industry best practice, tax administrators routinely employ risk assessment mythologies to select audit workloads.

There is not a whole lot to this bill. As I said, it gives us the authority to go back and receive overpayments if an overpayment is discovered through the audit. We did provide briefings to the Opposition. My understanding was that there were not any concerns; it is very straight forward. It is very good to see that we are moving forward in a manner that makes it easier for the taxpayer, for the people who apply to this, and take out a lot of the red tape; but, at the same time, ensuring that we protect the government purse in terms of overpayments.

That is all I have to say on that. If there is any questions, which I understand there were not any of any major significance through the Budget process, I will be happy to answer them during Committee.

Thank you.

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

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

I am pleased to rise in this House today to speak to Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act and the Tax Agreement Act, 2010. I certainly thank the minister for her insight and want to say thank you to the staff who provided us a briefing last week on the intent of the bill. As the minister rightly said the

risk-based approach and assessment to audits can be an efficient and effective process. This bill is designed to amend the Tax Agreement, 2010 and allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations providing for the recovery of overpayments of rebates and make regulations with retroactive effect.

The key with ensuring that the risk-based approach is efficient and effective are the matrixes that are used to determine the risk assessment and the sample size; in addition, the process for change management. My understanding from speaking to staff in the Finance department during our briefing is that currently it takes the equivalent of two full-time positions to complete the work which recovers about \$300,000, as the minister referenced in her comments.

With the system changing inside the Department of Finance, there is certainly an expectation that employees, particularly those who are going to be implementing these changes, would be provided a series of discussions and training on how to make sure that they, number one, have the correct matrix in place; number two, that they have the correct training for risk assessment; and that there is a follow-up process to make sure that we are looking at ways of preventing and identifying fraud.

Certainly trying to be more efficient is a commendable goal, and I certainly support the minister's efforts in that. That said, things like the planning around this change, defining accountability for roles and responsibilities inside the department to ascertain who has ultimate sign-off on the matrix is important, making sure that stakeholders are informed – the \$300,000 in recovery certainly will be able to be recovered should stakeholders, particularly those people paying the rebates, understand there is a risk associated and the accountability under the risk-based approach.

I ask the minister if she would clarify – when she gets the chance to speak again – what process is going to be used to inform those stakeholders of the new expectations around the risk-based approach. Those stakeholders would be certainly public servants, those individuals who are applying the rebates, and those

individuals who are managing this activity in the Department of Finance.

Planning, defining accountability leadership, informing stakeholders and aligning the workforce to handle this new mythology of completing the work is going to be important. Risk really comes down to two things; it comes down to the likelihood of something happening and the consequences. As we remove the auditing process for every single one of these – in excess of 1,700 rebate requests – it will be important to make sure that the consequences and the risk associated with the audit process and any subsequent fines, et cetera, be communicated to those stakeholders if that is the intent of government.

While on an annual basis, if you combine these two rebates that minister referred to are about \$2.8 million. On a go-forward basis, that is obviously going to be growing number and over a number of years that number certainly will multiply, which is why it is important that the systems and process is established inside the Department of Finance now that will make sure that the \$300,000 worth of recovered taxpayers' money is, in fact, continued and maintained on an ongoing basis.

It will be important that standards are created around the matrix that employees inside the Department of Finance use. In our briefing, when I asked the question – and I am sure there is a logical answer – about what training and additional supports staff would be provided, or what organizational changes would be happening, I was advised that there would not be. I am sure the minister will be able to clarify that.

As the minister mentioned, the gas tax is consumed in fishing, farming, logging, manufacturing, processing, transportation by boat, locomotives, generation of electricity, household fuels, and they may be exempt from certain taxes. While it is admirable and certainly correct that we get this money back into the hands of the taxpayers who pay it and get it back quickly and efficiently, especially to the small business operators who need it, it is also the responsibility of government to ensure that the revenue that comes in from any tax is correctly and accurately collected.

With about 1,700 rebates, one of the questions I did ask in our briefing was around how the department would define and identify the models for assessing the random audits. While I certainly understand that it is important to keep that type of information confidential so you do not let the people know how many audits you are going to do, it certainly is best in class practice to have a standard program, a standard profile of how those audits have to happen, especially if they are random, and how the randomness will ensure that the \$300,000 is, in fact, recouped on an annual basis.

There are some questions about organizational change management related to this bill, and I look forward to hearing the minister's response to how her department is going to look at those options as we look to approve this bill.

Thank you.

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

MR. CORNET: Merci Monsieur le président

Ce me fait un grand plaisir de me présenter dans cette Chambre d'assemblée législative et de prendre la parole sur cette législation importante et nécessaire.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand in my place tonight in this hon. House to speak to Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act and the Tax Agreement Act, 2010. I want to take a few minutes just to talk about the changes to this bill and what it would mean.

Mr. Speaker, we look at the explanatory notes in the bill and it says, "The Bill would amend the Revenue Administration Act to allow the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to make regulations providing for the recovery of overpayments of rebates.

"The Bill would also amend the Tax Agreement Act, 2010 to allow the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to make regulations providing for the recovery of overpayments of rebates; and to make regulations with retroactive effect."

Mr. Speaker, let me read to you some sections of the piece of legislation that we are debating this evening. In the Revenue Administration Act, “1. Section 107 of the Revenue Administration Act is amended by adding immediately after paragraph (f.1) the following: (f.2) providing for the recovery of overpayment of rebates.” In the Tax Agreement Act, 2010, “2(1) Section 7 of the Tax Agreement Act, 2010 is amended by renumbering it as subsection 7(1). (2) Subsection 7(1) of the Act is amended by deleting the word ‘and’ at the end of the paragraph (a) and by adding immediately after paragraph (a) the following: (a.1) providing for the recovery of overpayments of rebates; and (3) Section 7 of the Act is amended by adding immediately after subsection (1) the following: (2) Regulations made under this section may be made with retroactive effect.” Commencement, Mr. Speaker, “3. Section 1 and subsections 2(1) and (2) are considered to have come into force on April 1, 2013.”

Mr. Speaker, what we are doing here with this amendment is allowing the Department of Finance to implement a risk-based method to administer applications that will be filled for gasoline tax rebates and the Labrador building rebate. This will in fact make the process more efficient and effective. May I add, as an industry best practice, tax administrators routinely employ risk assessment methodologies to select audit workloads. Any time we can enhance service delivery, it is a good thing for the people of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, in the event that a repayment may take place for any given reason, we will need to be able to retrieve the money. Of course by putting into place this new mechanism or this process, we need to make the necessary changes to the legislation so we can recover these overpayments that may happen. That is what we are doing this evening.

With this new method we will need specific types of information. Documentation will be needed to certain applications upon applying. If there are some anomalies in the application, then there may also be a need for other documentation or documentations in order to process it.

Mr. Speaker, if there are any flaws in the application process you may be required to give more information and more documentation to support your application. That is a pretty normal process. I know the Canada Revenue Agency does it frequently as well. We are streamlining, we are keeping in line and in pace with other institutions as well in this form.

Mr. Speaker, for those applications that do not require other information, it will go through a regular process of analysis and post payment. If you are applying and everything is in order, then it goes through the proper analysis and then payment goes through.

A sample of applications will be chosen for review as well, just like an audit. Mr. Speaker, we encourage people out there to save your receipts, save your documentation because you may be audited down the road. Just like CRA, you are randomly chosen for an audit and you have to produce the documentation to go with your application.

Mr. Speaker, these applications require the applicant to file supporting documentation for their claim. Once the process or the audit is complete, any claim that has an overpayment status will be subject to repay the overpayment. What we are saying here is that once the audit takes place, once the analysis is done, and if you are seen to have been overpaid, then you have to pay back those monies that were paid to you. It is a mechanism in place to retrieve the overpayments that may have occurred.

This amendment to the Revenue Administration Act and the Tax Agreement Act, 2010 will now provide the Department of Finance to make the necessary and proper regulations on how to recover the overpayments. As the Minister of Finance said in her remarks earlier in the debate, on average in each of the fiscal years 2011, 2012 recoveries totalling \$300,000 annually were identified through the application verification process currently being followed. These recoveries are expected to continue under a risk-based audit process.

Mr. Speaker, the new approach, the risk-based system will be applied only to the gasoline tax rebates and the Labrador building rebate. As the hon. Minister of Finance said as well, the current

application and verification process for other rebate programs such as the parental benefits, the Home Heating Rebate, and the Residential Energy Rebate Programs will not change, it will stay in the same form as it is now.

En terminant Monsieur le président, merci pour l'opportunité de discuter les mérites de cette législation

As I conclude, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 17, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act And The Tax Agreement Act, 2010.

Encore merci pour l'opportunité de participer dans la discussion et je vais appuyer cette législation 17.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, as well that I will be supporting Bill 17.

Thank you.

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 happy to speak to Bill 17. Though it is not a major bill, sometimes we say something is housekeeping. In a way this is, it is important housekeeping. It is not just changing language to make language up-to-date or something. It is important, but nevertheless, it is not an in-depth kind of thing, as has been pointed out already. This amendment we have in front of us deals with the Revenue Administration Act and the Tax Agreement Act.

With regard to the Revenue Administration Act, it has to do with allowing the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to make regulations providing for the recovery of overpayments of rebates. That has been explained by the minister and I think is quite clear. The bill would also amend the Tax Agreement Act to allow the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to make regulations providing for the recovery of

overpayments of rebates, and to make regulations with retroactive effect.

I find it interesting that this bill has a retroactive effect in it whereas the whistleblower legislation is not allowing for any kind of retroactivity. I have to wonder why the government thinks it is good to be retroactive in one place and not in another, but I just put that out there, Mr. Speaker.

The rebates are tricky things. It is necessary, of course, to make sure rebates are accurate and that we have mechanisms in place for recovering a repayment if a rebate is paid out. This is a very controversial thing, especially in this case; it is not sort of on a personal level. When you have rebates and mistakes are made, it becomes very problematic to give money out and then to have to take it back.

I think the more we can do to make sure that rebates are accurate right from the beginning is the way to go. When people receive a rebate they are assuming – whether it is individuals, or businesses, or whatever – the rebate is accurate, they are assuming the money is theirs. They will, of course, use that money. They are not going to say I am going to put this in the bank now just in case they tell me I have to pay it back to them.

Putting in place regulations to make sure that things are correct right upfront is extremely important. Having things correct in the beginning will save time, because what was happening was, when mistakes were made, the amount of energy that had to go into locating where the mistake was, was really an inefficient use of the department's resources. That is what was presented to us in the briefing, and I can believe that.

The core mandate review recommended changing the legislation to allow Cabinet to make regulations for recovering a rebate overpayment. Now, of course, the thing is we have no idea about what was in the core mandate review and we ourselves 'ATIPPed' that and, basically, we were told it is none of your business. So, here we are today passing a bill, which is quite legitimate and I think it is a good bill, but based on recommendations from a core mandate review that we have not been allowed

to look at. It is very interesting to see how this government sometimes on the one hand looks like it is doing something that is open and transparent and, on the other hand, a recommendation coming from a piece of paper that we are not allowed to see. I think it is necessary to point that out, Mr. Speaker.

It will be important to make sure that we understand when the regulations are put together – and that is the other thing: regulations do not come here to the House. Regulations for the recovery of overpayment of rebates – when those regulations are put together, that they are the best possible regulations and that they just do not look at government and protecting government but also the recipient of rebates. Once again as I said, regulations do not come to the House and so we have to trust that these regulations are going to be regulations that serve everybody.

Mr. Speaker, there really is not a lot to say about this. I am not going to take time just trying to fill up the air, because I do not think that benefits anybody. I have made the points that I wanted to make. I see no reason for not approving for this bill, but it would have been nice if we had seen the core mandate review to see what the actual recommendations were and why the recommendation was made.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER : If the hon. Minister of Finance speaks now, she will close debate.

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate everybody's input on this bill. As was said by the Leader of the Third Party and the Opposition Finance critic and our own member on this side of the House, it is straight forward, but it is an important piece of legislation that needs to be done. It does improve efficiency, cuts down on processing time, but also at the same time ensures we have

ability to collect overpayments, should we need to.

I agree with the Leader of the Third Party that it is important that you get the rebate as accurate, as correct as possible, the first time around; it certainly makes it easier. It makes it easier for the person applying, and makes it easier for government all around. It is never a fun experience trying to collect monies. You also have to remember it can only be as accurate as the information that the person applying provides. We do need to retain the right to do an audit.

Around the regulations, this is done throughout industry. This is done in the federal government, so we will certainly follow industry best practice there.

I know I am answering a lot of the questions now before we get to Committee, but in the spirit of saving time and while I have the information here with me. In terms of updating the stakeholders, we will be updating our Web site. Of course, there will need to be an update made to the application itself and we will put out a news release and other means through tweets and social media to get this information out there.

In terms of training, certainly training will be done where it is required, and in terms of making sure that the proper information and matrix is in place. I can assure you in my experience, my short time with the staff in the Department of Finance, that they will have all of their ducks in a row when it comes to collecting overpayments to the Treasury, Mr. Speaker.

Again, this is widely done throughout industry. Anybody who has a business knows this, and certainly as individuals, when you submit your income tax online – not only online but when you submit your income tax, you can be audited at any time. Those are industry standards that are out there that we will be following.

If there are any further questions during Committee, I would be happy to answer those; but, again, thank you for everybody's input in this very important bill.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act And The Tax Agreement Act, 2010. (Bill 17)

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

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

MR. KING: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act And The Tax Agreement Act, 2010", read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 17)

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time I call from the Order Paper, Order 8, An Act To Establish And Implement A Province-Wide 911 Telephone Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies, Bill 14.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, for sure, the 911 bill is a good move by government. It is a little late, as other speakers have noted, because most of the world think we have 911; and, in fact, we have 911 in

some parts of the Province and not in other parts of Province.

Mr. Speaker, I have gone through the bill and would like to point out some of the concerns or some of the issues that seem to jump right out. I do not know if they are just as a result of sloppy drafting or unclear thinking, or just maybe too much haste, because the bill has really significant weakness. For example, clause 10 says: Objects of the corporation. Under Objects of the corporation 10.(1)(b)(iii) it says, "integrates data from the civic addressing system where that data is available".

Mr. Speaker, wouldn't it make sense to have had the data available? Wouldn't it have made sense for the government to have introduced the news of 911 coming maybe a year or two years ago, like what happens in any sort of public relations campaign, and work with municipalities to make sure that streets were named, homes were numbered and where homes are far from the roadway, that there is a proper numbering system in place?

What this says is the objects of the corporation are to integrate data from the civic addressing system where the data is available. So, Mr. Speaker, what that seems to say is that if you have a street and an address, we are going to hook you up with 911; and if you do not, well, good luck to you. I think that is what it says. I am not really sure what it says, but that is one of the objects of the corporation, the new corporation that will be created.

Mr. Speaker, when you continue on in clause 12, dealing with the board of directors, the board of directors does not look like a board of directors, in my view, looking at the way that it is going to be constituted. It looks more like a management team. A board of directors, I would expect, to provide oversight, would be fiduciaries, would provide specialized background, specialized knowledge. What this says under section 12, "Subject to a unanimous shareholder agreement...". Well, Mr. Speaker, the government owns all the shares, so why do you need a unanimous shareholder agreement for one shareholder? Clearly, the shareholders are going to agree with the shareholder.

Then it goes on to say "...the board shall exercise all of the powers and discharge all of the duties of the corporation and administer and manage its business." Mr. Speaker, it seems very odd that you would have a board of directors that is actually taking part in what appears to be the routine day-to-day management of the corporation that is to be created in order to look after 911 services.

Then, the board of directors becomes even more curious. The next subsection says, "The board shall consist of a maximum of 9 directors...". It does not say anything about a minimum number of directors but a maximum of nine directors. So, I suppose it could be a minimum of three or four or five; but then, when they are defined, it says, "one member of the board of directors of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador." That would seem to be a good idea since the municipalities are going to be mandated, they are going to be forced to participate. It would seem to be a good idea for Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador to supply at least one director. That way the person will be available as a liaison from MNL and also to provide insights that the other board members may not have.

Then it goes on to say, "one representative from each primary public safety answering point", one PPSA. At this time the briefing said there are four of these in place. That would mean that takes care of four directors. Why is it necessary for the people who are answering the phones to have a director? That is what it seems to say to me.

That takes care of four more of the nine. Then, "The director of the NL 911 Bureau Inc. shall be a director of the corporation by virtue of his or her office". Is this person an employee of the corporation? If this person is an employee of the corporation, does that mean you have an employee sitting, basically an oversight, as a director? Does this mean a director is overseeing the employee who is also a director? If so, that would seem to be an inherent conflict. That would seem not to be in the best interests of the corporation.

That is one more. Then "...one director of the board shall be a resident of Labrador." That looks like a good thing, Labrador is large and

unique. Mr. Speaker, that accounts for seven of the nine directors. We have a maximum of nine directors, and this accounts for seven of them. It would seem that many of them do not have the fiduciary oversight responsibility you would expect from most boards. In this case we have nine directors – a maximum of nine. Seven have been allocated, and four are with the outfits who are already answering the phones. It does not seem to be very well-thought-out.

Then this continues on to say, "Exercise of the powers of the corporation is not impaired because of a vacancy on the board." Mr. Speaker, does that mean one vacancy or does that mean more than one vacancy? If it says a vacancy then I suppose it could be two vacancies, and I suppose it could be three vacancies, and maybe it could be four vacancies or five.

Does that mean if people die or leave or quit and the board continues on, then who is actually going to be the directors of the corporation overseeing this? This will be an accumulating pool of money at a rate of maybe \$1 a phone a month which some people have said may be \$7 million a year could be accumulated. It is going to be a rapidly building pool of money for a benefit that is not yet received, for municipalities that are required to participate for civic addresses that some of them do not have.

That seems to me like the government is putting the cart before the horse. Maybe a public relations campaign at the beginning would have been a better thing and the prep work would have been better done early on instead of after the fact.

Mr. Speaker, the board becomes even more curious because continuing on in section 14 it says: A director, other than the director of the NL 911 Bureau Inc. – so one person can serve for more than three consecutive terms, the others may not serve for more than three consecutive terms. That seems to be okay because in all likelihood some turnover would be good.

Mr. Speaker, is that for a three-year term or a four-year term? When you continue on reading the same bill it says, "the majority of the directors shall be appointed for a term of 4 years; and (b) the remaining directors shall be

appointed for a term of 3 years.” We start out with as many as nine directors. It sounds like five of them will be for four years, and four of them will be three years. Or is it six and three, or seven and two? This is extremely cumbersome. It seems that somebody is trying to account for directors with a different term so that you will not get automatic turnover in the board on short notice.

If the objective is not to get automatic turnover on the board on short notice, then maybe the subclause 14(7), which says, “The Lieutenant-Governor in Council may remove a director from office before the term of office of that director expires”. It does not say anything about cost. It says that the LGIC may remove a director from office before the term of office of that director expires. That means they could all be fired tomorrow morning. That means they could all be let go without cause and no notice. I am not sure that generates any sort of stability.

If we continue on in section 16(1) it says, “A majority of the directors constitutes a quorum for meetings of the board”. Does that mean a majority of the nine directors, which would be five, for a quorum? Or does that mean if the number of directors has fallen to seven you would need four, or if it has fallen to five you would need only three?

If it has fallen to five – because it says in an earlier section that just because people are no longer on the board and they have not been replaced does not mean that corporations cannot continue on. It clearly says, “Exercise of the powers of the corporation is not impaired because of a vacancy on the board.”

Let us say we had four vacancies on the board leaving five people. Three would be a quorum. The three people could be somebody from maybe one of the phone answering organizations, one could be from Labrador, and one could be the director. Now you have a quorum of three and they have a vote and two of them can outvote the other one. Now you have basically two people running the Newfoundland and Labrador 911 Bureau Inc.

MR. LANE: A \$7 million budget.

MR. J. BENNETT: This is an annual revenue of \$7 million. It seems like it is not very well defined.

It gets better or worse depending on your point of view. First of all section 17(1) says, “The corporation shall hold an annual general meeting in each calendar year at a time and place set by the corporation. (2) Notice of the meeting shall be provided to the public.” It does not say it is a public meeting. It does not say the public is allowed to attend.

I suppose the public could have an announcement saying that we are going to have the next AGM at such and such a place, but no, you cannot come. It would seem to be against the spirit of the bill and against the spirit of openness and accountability.

Maybe it is simply sloppy drafting. Maybe there should be another clause which says these meetings are open to the public. Maybe it ought to say that the annual general meetings ought to be in a major centre in the Province, say St. John’s, for example, or Gander, or Corner Brook. It does not say that.

As a matter of fact, notice could be given that the board is going to meet maybe in some ski hill in the Laurentians. It does not have to be in the Province. There has to be an annual general meeting and the public has to have notice. This board that is accumulating this money must have a public meeting. They must tell the public we are having a general meeting, but you are not allowed to go and –

MR. LANE: You cannot participate.

MR. J. BENNETT: You cannot participate. There is no participation provision provided for.

Mr. Speaker, if you go further on into clause 19, it says, “The board may appoint those officers, managers, other staff and employees and retain consultants, advisors and other professional persons that it considers necessary and may fix their remuneration and terms of service in accordance with any guidelines the Lieutenant-Governor in Council may prescribe.” This really provides the power to pretty much appoint anybody, pay them whatever you like, retain consultants and advisors, get opinions, and

really start going through the money pretty quickly.

The next subclause says, “A person who is appointed under this section does not, by reason only of the appointment, become an employee of the province.” I wonder: could a director also be an employee? It is certainly silent there. This corporation, is it required to file annual financial statements and be open to inspection from the Auditor General? One would hope so.

Mr. Speaker, to go on further in the bill that is presented. Under section 24 it says, “There is established a fund called the NL 911 Service Fund.” Subsection (4) says, “The corporation may use the fund for the following purposes: (a) developing, establishing, operating and improving the emergency 911 telephone service; (b) the operations of the corporation” – but it does not necessarily say what they are – “(c) paying for costs associated with administering the fund.” Then the interest rolls back in.

It does not say that if a nice surplus accumulates – and people of this Province are familiar with surpluses that accumulate in governmental organizations. We only need to look to the EI fund that was grossly oversubscribed. There was far more money taken in because of the rulings made, a nice pot of money for the federal government to deal with.

Are we being put in a situation here where we potentially could accumulate significant revenues and a significant pool of capital? Then all of a sudden the government says: Well, we are the sole shareholder. We are the ones with the unanimous shareholder’s agreement. We are the ones who can appoint and dismiss directors at will. We think we would like \$15 million or \$20 million to go into this year’s Budget, or whatever that happens to be, with no accountability. This seems to be very loosely and sloppily written in the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the big issue that I think will be facing people in understanding how some of the big issues – one is that all telephone lines, whether they be cellphone lines or land lines, will attract the cost, supposedly, of providing the service. It seems to be limited to no more than a dollar, but we do not actually know what it is. That will mean in some cases, as the Member

for Burgeo – La Poile pointed out and the Member for Cartwright – L’Anse au Clair, some communities will not be able to benefit from the service because the service is not there, but they will be paying for it.

Approximately 40 per cent of the telephone lines in the Province are already covered by a 911 service. These are in the larger municipalities, as a person might reasonably expect. This is being imposed on everybody, and approximately 40 per cent of the people already have the service. Would it not have made more sense to leave them alone for now? Because they already have a service they appear to be satisfied with, that they are already paying for, and then have government extend 911 service, which is a useful service. I am sure at the end of the day most, if not all, members will support it because to not support it would mean that we are not supporting 911 service which is useful.

Why isn’t government moving to extend 911 service to parts of the Province that does not currently have it? Leave the parts of the Province alone that have 911 service, and after they have established the other 60 per cent of all of the other smaller communities, the unincorporated and the remote communities, after their service has been properly put in place then maybe merge the services if there were some efficiencies there. Because we know this government is fond of mergers. This is not to be set up with the existing service, which seems to be working fine, and the new service which is going to be apparently overlaid.

There is some benefit in the early stages of implementing a service. If you have one that is working well and if you try to replace it with – plus, all of those who do not have the service, any shortcomings will likely flow into the people who are currently receiving the service through St. John’s, Mount Pearl, Corner Brook, and Labrador West. There is the possibility, and maybe even the likelihood, of disrupting their service by trying to extend service Province-wide.

Why not leave them alone for two, three, or four years, or however long it takes, and then put into place Province-wide services? Then there will be an opportunity to see how well the existing service is working and how well the new service

is working. By having two services running alongside of each other, you have more or less a template. You have like a check or a balance. It is working really well here already, so what are we not doing right or what are we doing wrong in the rest of the Province?

At this point, the current service receivers are not being offered that benefit. They are already paying for a service that they are perfectly happy with. They are not really being given anything. They are having a benefit imposed upon them.

Mr. Speaker, if government were to stand back and say we are not going to do this right away – even though government has been appropriating money last year and this year to put this in place. Maybe those funds should be used for a public relations campaign so that smaller communities could have an opportunity to get up to speed on naming their streets and their roads and having numbers.

Maybe the Department of Municipal Affairs, instead of charging ahead with this – which really looks like a political maneuver – could say we intend to introduce 911 service and you, the small community, need to be available to sign on because it will be mandated. We have arranged with a different company to supply maybe plates for street names, maybe numbers for homes that will be consistent, that will be reasonably priced so that the whole Province could be organized to receive 911 service instead of having the 911 service mandated today when pretty much nobody is in a position to receive service –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. J. BENNETT: – but for the 40 per cent of the Province that already receive the service, and they do not need the bill.

It seems this has the feel of maybe a PR move for purposes in the next year or so, and maybe a cash grab to start generating a significant pool of capital that the use of which is not very well defined at present.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure there will be questions in Committee.

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly an honour for me to rise in the House again today to speak to this very important bill, Mr. Speaker, and I will be happy to vote in support of this legislation when we get to the third reading phase.

I am going to speak tonight – we have had some very interesting discussion on the 911 and I hope the people listening at home have been able to learn a lot about what is in this act. I am going to focus, Mr. Speaker, talk just for a few minutes on the emergency response zones.

The fire departments in my region – as a rural remote area, we have certainly been looking forward to 911 service for a very, very long time. Mr. Speaker. I have twenty-one communities and there are fourteen incorporated municipalities. We have fourteen fire departments. Then, as well, in my local service districts we have four more. They co-operate with each other on a regular basis but this bill in particular is going to ensure they co-operate on a more frequent basis. I think as this bill evolves, and as their partnerships and communications evolve, we are going to see significantly enhanced emergency services throughout all of the Province. In particular, rural Newfoundland and Labrador where working together is critical.

The new 911 Emergency Services Act requires that emergency service providers and municipalities identify the emergency response zones for the services they provide. This is a task now that will be undertaken, Mr. Speaker, by the fire department and municipalities.

The delivery of fire protection services is a local government responsibility. It falls under section 183 of the Municipalities Act, 1999.

The municipalities themselves, Mr. Speaker, can decide whether they will establish a fire protection service within their boundaries, if they will purchase fire protection services from

neighbouring municipalities, or if they will share fire protection services with one or more municipalities either formally, through a shared services agreement, a mutual aid agreement, or informally through verbal agreement amongst themselves. We have a lot of those types of agreements in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

The municipality itself is responsible for determining the level and type of fire protection service it will offer, and for making the decisions about the type of equipment and, or vehicles it will provide to its fire department. Fire and Emergency Services Newfoundland and Labrador has a legal mandate, through the Fire Protection Services Act, section 4(3)(d), to, through the fire commissioner, advise the minister and municipalities about establishing fire departments and evaluating their firefighting capabilities. The assessment of fire departments provides a basis for determining the type of fire protection services provided, and lends support for decision-making regarding the type of training, vehicles, and equipment they require.

Government's approach to enhancing community capacity is to encourage the sharing of services and to provide incentives for communities to work together. Again, Mr. Speaker in rural, remote areas, the working together piece is absolutely critical. I think we are going to see shared knowledge, shared expertise, enhanced knowledge, and enhanced expertise, as a result of the increased communications that will be taking place as these emergency response zones are developed within regions.

The implementation team, Mr. Speaker, is going to play a very important role, in addition to the fire departments. A senior level 911 implementation team was established beginning last year in August of 2012 – over that now, a year and a half ago – to further define a plan to expand and implement province-wide Basic 911 service. This includes recording emergency response zones. They will be mapped out and recorded.

The 911 implementation team began consultations with communities throughout the Province on April 9. They concluded them the week of May 12 in Labrador. An important

topic that was addressed during these consultations, Mr. Speaker, was the identification of these emergency response zones.

This is going to enable the implementation team to accurately identify geographical boundaries of identified emergency responders. That is going to be incorporated, Mr. Speaker, into the technology that is going to be used as the primary public safety answering points. Section 32 of this bill makes provision that should a council with an established fire department be unwilling or unable to identify its emergency response zone, as required by this bill, the fire commissioner may determine these zones.

The intention of this section is to address response areas that are outside municipal boundaries, for example, along the Trans-Canada Highway, the Bay d'Espoir Highway, the Hermitage highway in my case, and the road to English Harbour area. All of these, Mr. Speaker, will be encompassed within these zones.

The provision was included to ensure that if there were a boundary dispute among neighbouring fire departments of municipalities, there is an avenue for a resolution of that dispute. Once the Fire Commissioner makes a decision, should the municipality object, the matter can be referred to the Minister Responsible for Fire and Emergency Services for a final decision, Mr. Speaker. We have mechanisms in place for any disputes that may arise around the boundaries.

I am going to conclude my speaking with that, Mr. Speaker, and say once more, just re-emphasize how Fire and Emergency Services Newfoundland and Labrador is of the view that the best way to work through operational issues associated with emergency response zones and municipal fire departments is for everyone to meet and explore various options to share fire protection services consistent with prior policy direction. We are going to be opening the doors to working together even more. We do a fabulous job of that already. I certainly will be happy to support this bill, and even happier to have the safety and security of 911 service when I am driving on the highways in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I am happy to speak in the House today on Bill 14, An Act To Establish and Implement A Province-Wide 911 Telephone Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies. I want to thank the minister and his staff, in particular, for the time they spent with us today briefing us on the bill. I appreciated their time and attention to answer our questions.

Mr. Speaker, the revenue anticipated from the collection of the fees, which will be charged on every land line and every cellphone line, will range in the vicinity of \$5.4 million to \$7.2 million. I am very supportive, as is this side of the House, around ensuring that people have the best service when it comes to 911.

The questions I have relate to how the board will be established. In reviewing the bill this morning with staff, one of the questions I asked – and I would ask the minister if he would respond to this when he speaks again – is around board skills matrix. Whether or not there will be a requirement for anybody on the board who has a CA designation or a CDA designation – because with that type of money it is going to be very important and quite frankly that amount of money that is taxpayers' money – to have a skill set on the board that allows the board to develop best practices around ensuring every dollar is spent wisely.

It is certainly recognized, and has been spoken to a number of times, around the public education that needs to happen as a result of this bill. There will be people in the Province who believe that 911, when they call it, will give them the same response - as was said in the meeting this morning – that they might see on TV. Ultimately, what this bill does is really provide an answering service that redirects the calls to existing phone numbers and existing services. The enhancement is really around the call answer. It is not around the services that will be provided in parts of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, what has been interesting, as I sit and prepare to speak to this bill tonight, are the number of e-mails I have received from my constituents in St. John's who are confused about how they have the service and believe they are paying for it now inside their municipal taxes, but will be paying for the service again on their cellphone and land line bills. I look forward to the minister maybe clarifying that for those people around the Province who have the service already.

The question was already asked, Mr. Speaker, around whether or not the rules and regulations we are debating under the whistleblower act will also apply to this corporation. That will be important particularly when – as somebody said earlier today – collecting \$5.4 million to \$7.2 million through a Crown corporation for a service is a little bit like taxation without representation. It certainly would be important for us to get clarity on where those dollars are spent.

An interesting story that was brought to me today by another constituent was the fact that a lady who is a senior, a widow, living in her home –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS C. BENNETT: - would be required to have a land line. As the minister knows, when the lights go out, it is important for seniors to have a land line. It is also important for many seniors to have services like Lifeline and some also may feel the need, for their own protection, to have a cellphone that they can carry. Those seniors certainly will be hit with a tax of an additional \$3 a month. I am not sure if is something that has been considered, particularly for those seniors who are already paying a municipal tax in the City of St. John's which provides a 911 service to them.

I would ask for some clarity as well – hopefully we can get that when we go to Committee on this bill – around the discussions that have happened with the City of St. John's. Particularly how they see this bill affecting how they provide service and what integrations and things need to happen there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS C. BENNETT: One other question that certainly is unclear to me when you review the bill is: Who actually establishes the mandate for the board? My expectation, I think members of my constituency and people around the Province, would expect the mandate of the board should be established by government and written clearly in the legislation.

The description of the board's mandate and the priorities for that board in the bill certainly are scant. Most not-for-profit boards that I have experienced, and others have, there are much deeper mandates, much deeper rules and regulations, terms of reference that those boards operate. Certainly, we do not see that in the bill today.

For me, the biggest question I have is with regard to the monthly service fee that will be also charged to cover administrative costs. I am assuming – I know the minister will clarify this – that administrative service fee will be built into either the seventy-five cents to \$1 that phone users will be charged for. What I am curious to know is, who actually negotiates, approves, and signs off on that monthly service fee? How frequently does that negotiation happen? Is that left to the board of the NL 911 Service Fund or is that something government is responsible for doing?

My last comment and question would be around the cost associated with administering the funds. We are going to see in this corporation administrative costs, general admin costs that are not going to go into providing Enhanced service for the people of the Province. My constituents have concerns about the fact they have a service that they already feel they pay for, and would hope that that will be taken into consideration as part of this bill. More importantly, that costs associated with things like general administrative costs really are an inefficient spend of taxpayers' money that could be spent on providing a service that is so needed throughout our Province.

In conclusion, I would thank the minister again and his staff for the briefing we had this

morning. I am certainly very supportive of a Province-wide 911 service, but from my vantage point I think there is some opportunity for some clarity. Because we have in some parts of the Province taxpayers who are going to pay a fee for no additional service and in some parts of the Province we have taxpayers who are going to pay a fee for no accessibility to service. I think when you have those two extremes on a spectrum it is important for government to show leadership and address those concerns.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

If the minister speaks now he will close debate.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank all members for their participation in debate. In the limited time I have, I probably will not be able to answer all of the questions raised or respond to all of the points that were raised in debate but I will do my best to cover a number of them. Certainly, during the Committee stage of debate we will have an opportunity to discuss further whatever issues people wish to discuss.

Early in the debate this afternoon a member raised a point on cellphone coverage and whether we should develop a strategy to make representation to the federal government and service providers to enhance cellphone coverage in unserved areas. I believe there were three members who raised this issue. We are aware that the lack of cellphone coverage is a concern in certain regions of the Province.

Telecommunications is an area of exclusive federal jurisdiction, under section 91 of the Constitution Act, 1867. Cellular coverage is provided by the private sector, as members know. Wireless networks rely on base station antennas to operate.

As communities demand new or improved wireless service, local carriers respond to this

need by installing new network equipment. This often requires building a wireless antenna structure, commonly called a tower. The cost of cell towers which provide significant range often exceeds \$600,000. In non-populated areas there are no subscribers to support these costs and therefore no business case for companies to invest.

The Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development continues to discuss these matters with carriers and equipment providers to explore options to address the issue of coverage on transportation routes. Industry Canada is responsible for regulating radio communication in Canada, including authorizing the installation of radio communication towers and sites.

Just last month, Mr. Speaker, I wrote a letter to the hon. James Moore, the federal Minister of Industry Canada, seeking more information about how the federal government, through its regulatory policy and programming tools, might be able to encourage greater cellular access in rural communities and along certain highways that currently do not receive service. I would encourage other members to also make their views known to the federal government.

The question of cost of implementing Province-wide 911 has come up. As I noted earlier, the POMAX feasibility study suggested that this could be done for about seventy-five cents per phone per month. Assuming there are about 600,000 phone lines in the Province, that would extrapolate to about \$5.4 million a year.

As POMAX noted in their report, “We have had to make some assumptions in order to come up with a cost estimate for the implementation of Enhanced or Next Generation 9-1-1 throughout the province. Readers should note that these estimates could vary significantly from a final tally, however, further investigation” – after this feasibility study – “and the involvement of various government departments and stakeholders will refine the approximations discussed in this section.”

We are still working through the details. The annual budget and the levy could be slightly higher than that but we think it will be around that amount. The Member for Bay of Islands

asked for clarification that the monthly levies collected would have to stay within the bureau.

Section 24 of the bill establishes a fund into which the emergency 911 telephone service fees, less the portion of the administrative costs of the telecommunications service providers, shall be deposited. This fund is deemed not to contain public money for the purpose of the Financial Administration Act.

Under subsection (4), the corporation may use the fund to develop, establish, operate and improve the emergency 911 telephone service for the operations of the corporation and for costs associated with administering the fund, always in a manner consistent with the corporation’s objects as set out in section 10 of the act. I would refer members to section 10 of the act. Any excess revenue must only be used for the objects of the corporation which would not include transferring funds to the general revenues of government.

The member also asked if every municipality and emergency service provider will be mandated to participate. The answer is yes. Under section 5, municipalities, for the purpose of Bill 14, the communities – the way it is defined in this legislation includes local service districts and Inuit community governments as well. So communities would indeed be mandated to participate.

The member also asked about the type of personnel needed and their pay scales. The POMAX report envisioned five staff dedicated to Next Generation 911, and we are working from that expectation. As per section 19 of the bill, “The board may appoint those officers, managers, other staff and employees and retain consultants, advisors and other professional persons that it considers necessary and may fix their remuneration and terms of service in accordance with any guidelines the Lieutenant-Governor in Council may prescribe.” So, Cabinet can prescribe guidelines for the compensation rates for employees of the bureau.

The member also asked for additional information on how much it would cost to implement Next Generation and how that relates to other jurisdictions. According to the CRTC, Next Generation 911 is currently only available

in Calgary and parts of British Columbia. It is not available throughout any specific province in Canada, but it is a level of service that many provinces wish to achieve and working towards achieving. The POMAX report gave us some technical advice on the cost of implementing the service, which have formed their recommendations for the seventy-five cents per phone line.

The Member for St. John's East raised a number of points. He suggested considering running 911 calls from all of Labrador out of Labrador West, where there is already a service, and suggested additional public safety answering points in Central Newfoundland.

I would like to inform members that we have not made any final decisions on the location or boundaries for the public safety answering points. We have had discussions with the St. John's Regional Fire Department in the City of Corner Brook, and we have also had discussions with the Town of Labrador City and the Town of Wabush about public safety answering points. Those discussions are ongoing and, as noted in section 6 of the bill, Cabinet will openly decide the locations and the boundaries.

The local knowledge that emergency responders have will continue to be utilized. Those same fire departments, police detachments, and ambulance providers will be responding in their communities on the ground as they are today. That will not change. Local people in local communities in the various regions of this Province will still be providing the emergency services, whether that is police, or fire protection, or ambulance services.

The Member for Mount Pearl South asked if whistleblower legislation will apply to the bureau, and I believe the Member for Burgeo – La Poile raised it as well. Yes, Bill 1, once proclaimed, will apply to the bureau as well.

The Member for Mount Pearl South certainly got my attention when he was talking about Mount Pearl taxpayers. He suggested that they might be paying twice for the same service. The current 911 service on the Northeast Avalon is funded by the Department of Health and Community Service, the Department of Justice, and the St. John's Regional Fire Department.

So, Mount Pearl is contributing to the cost of the St. John's Regional Fire Department's services to its residents. With Province-wide 911, residents of Mount Pearl will continue to require and pay for dispatching and fire protection services through their municipal taxes, as they do today.

They are also going to benefit from the new service through the availability of 911 throughout the Province. People do travel. People do move about the Province. Through a more reliable, higher standard of service with built-in redundancy and the eventual implementation of Next Generation 911, we are talking about a service everywhere in the Province that will be better as a result of this legislation, as a result of the establishment of the bureau.

Members opposite also asked about the accountability for the collection of and the use of fees. The bureau will be subject to the Transparency and Accountability Act, the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and the Public Tender Act. I would actually draw member's attention to section 18 of the bill, "(1) The board shall appoint an auditor who shall annually audit the financial statements of the corporation. (2) The corporation shall submit to the minister before September 30 of each year (a) a report on the activities of the corporation in the preceding financial year... (3) The minister shall table the report and statements referred to in subsection (2) in the House of Assembly as soon as practicable after they are received."

The Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi asked if people can still use a seven-digit number locally. The answer is yes. Municipalities may choose to continue promoting the seven-digit number within their community. I am not sure why they would or why they would want to, but they still have the ability, certainly, to do so and those numbers will still be active, they will still function; but 911 is an additional option for residents, and it is also for tourists. It is also for people who may be visiting these communities who may not have the local seven-digit numbers memorized for the ambulance operators, for the fire department, and for the police detachment. So, 911 will now be available to everybody in the Province, which is the real objective here.

The Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi also asked why a separate entity is required to manage this service, instead of simply doing it through Fire and Emergency Services. That was one of the questions I initially asked when I moved into this role. Why was it that it was determined that we should set up a separate entity as opposed to just simply running it within the department?

We found through our research that a not-for-profit bureau would best serve as the governance model for 911 for a number of reasons. The sole focus and purpose of the bureau is to expand and continually improve the 911 service. Operating as a non-profit organization and financed through the emergency 911 telephone service levy fees, the bureau is a cost-effective and efficient structure that would not be impacted by fluctuations in the annual provincial Budget process. We are really talking about ensuring the long-term sustainability of 911 services.

We also looked at Commissioner Timothy Denton's CRTC report recommendation regarding the need for better governance for 911 services across the country. Also, the bureau will provide funding to educate residents during the expansion of 911 to ensure that the general public are well informed of the service, how it works, and what the implications are for them.

The Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi also suggested that call takers are not dispatchers, and that is correct. There are two distinct services here. There may be some public safety answering points that also enter into agreements to provide dispatch services to various emergency responders, but many have their own dispatching, including police and ambulances in certain areas. If dispatching were centralized at the public safety answering points, this would lose the local knowledge amongst dispatchers that the Member for St. John's East pointed out was really important.

The member also asked to what degree the bureau will be under government. We are establishing an arm's-length, not-for-profit corporation but we will retain authority for Cabinet to appoint the board of directors, to approve or alter the telephone levy, to make regulations relating to civic addressing, and to approve any borrowing or pledging of its assets.

Also, as minister, I will have to approve any codes, rules, or standards as described in section 30 of the bill, and I would draw member's attention to that as well.

A couple of members, including the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, spoke about the importance of public education. That is a big, big part of this plan. The POMAX report identified the need to consider public expectations. That is why my predecessor and I have been regularly updating the House and the public on our progress. A public awareness campaign will be developed and it will outline how the general public will interact with this new system and what it means. This campaign will include social media, print, radio, Web site promotion.

The Member for The Straits – White Bay North referenced a quote attributed to the President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services, describing Basic 911 as twenty years behind the technology. I want to address that as well. In moving to Province-wide Basic 911, it is not the final step, but it is an important step. It is going to be a major improvement over the emergency call system that we have today and it is an essential building block towards Next Generation 911.

It was recommended within that feasibility report, that was done by POMAX, that the Province should move cautiously with Basic 911 service implementation for the rest of the Province before beginning to plan and implement Next Generation 911 service. We are acting upon the best professional advice we could find in this area.

We are planning to go beyond Enhanced 911 and move directly from Province-wide Basic 911 to Next Generation. There is Basic, there is Enhanced, and there is Next Generation. We are going to move right from Basic, once we get it implemented over the next few years, right to full-fledged Next Generation 911.

Considering that Enhanced and Next Generation 911 cannot operate without civic addressing, it would have prolonged the implementation of 911 to those who currently do not have it until civic addressing could be completed, which POMAX stated could be three years for digital

mapping, which is also a requirement for enhanced Next Generation 911. So with Basic implemented first, it allows everyone with a landline or a cellphone, where a cell signal is available, to have access to the service.

I will also draw the member's attention to another quote from the President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services. It was in today's news release, "The Basic 911 service is an important building block and a necessary step towards establishing Next Generation 911. With this legislation, and the other ongoing work being undertaken by the 911 implementation team, we applaud the Provincial Government and are encouraged by the progress to date towards the launch of a solid emergency service." So, we are consulting with important partners like the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services as we move through this process.

That same member, along with the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, spoke about the need for a plan for civic addressing, and I could not agree more. Under section 171 of the Municipalities Act, a council may name and mark all roads with a municipality, and may require the owners of all homes and other buildings on those roads to number them. They have the authority to act on their own.

As I said in the news conference today, I will say it again in the House this evening, I would encourage municipalities to act. They have the authority to do so now, and I would encourage them to do so. Now, if we need to play a role, if we need to provide some support and some advice and some guidance and some assistance, then we are going to be there, because we need to get the civic addressing in place in order to move forward and move towards Next Generation 911. There is definitely a role for us to play, but there is nothing stopping communities today from addressing civic addressing in their communities.

Under section 29 of this bill, Cabinet may make regulations requiring civic addressing, and I suspect we will, Mr. Speaker, because it is imperative we get civic addressing in place consistently across the Province in order to move forward with Next Generation 911 – but it is not required to operationalize Basic 911. It

would be a key component for Next Generation, and once we have Basic operational Province-wide, we will begin working with the bureau to begin planning that next step.

The member also asked about Enhanced 911, and again, we are going to move past Enhanced 911 directly from Province-wide Basic 911 to Next Generation 911. The member also asked if there would be a double fee for cellphones. The CRTC requires wireless service providers to give customers access to 911 services wherever they are available. In most jurisdictions, the services are run by municipalities or other local governments in conjunction with telephone companies. So, although the CRTC has approved the rates the telephone companies may charge wireless service providers for 911 network access, providers may incur additional costs for 911 calls; and, according to the CRTC, those providers are free to determine how to recover those costs.

In a recent report for the CRTC, Commissioner Timothy Denton found that funding for the current 911 emergency calling system comes from several sources: Canadians, service providers, and from government coffers as well of course. He concluded the costs and funding of the current system are not tracked in a systematic way at the national level, nor is the information about funding and costs made available to the public and decision makers in an organized fashion.

The 911 fee currently being collected on cellphones is not revenue to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and will not be revenue for the Newfoundland and Labrador 911 Bureau. It is a fee for the service providers to fund the required 911 telecommunications infrastructure and network maintenance in order to provide the 911 service through their technology and through their facilities.

The Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair also noted that there are six communities in the Province that would not be able to access Next Generation 911. Basic 911 services, which are what we are going to have in place by the end of this year, can be provided and will be provided to all communities in Newfoundland and Labrador – all communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. Implementation of a more

advanced Next Generation 911 system is not today possible in six communities in the Province; and those are Nippers Harbour, Grey River, Williams Harbour, Pinsent's Arm, Norman Bay and Paradise River, and that represents 230 telephone lines in total.

According to telecommunications providers, currently the technology required to include these six communities with the Next Generation system would be cost prohibitive. These six communities will nevertheless have access to Basic 911 and they also, of course, will be able to access it when they are travelling outside of those communities.

Another issue that came up a couple of times during debate today related to local knowledge of call takers and how this could impact the service. Call takers will have information about the emergency responders and their emergency response zones for every community in their call-taking area. Once the caller identifies where they are and the nature of their emergency, they will then be put in contact with the appropriate local emergency responder who would have the local knowledge, as they do today. The local emergency response providers have that local knowledge; they will continue to have that local knowledge. Residents will certainly retain the option to call their local emergency responder's seven-digit number directly if they wish, as I pointed out earlier.

The member also said that there was only consultation in one community in her district. Consultations on this important piece of legislation and on this move towards Basic Province-wide 911 service were held in Wabush, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Forteau, St. Anthony, Deer Lake, Corner Brook, Port aux Basques, Grand Falls-Windsor, Gander, Clarenville, Marystown, Carbonear, and St. John's. Another teleconference is actually planned for tomorrow for communities that were unable to attend in person.

All communities were invited to attend. So, any town or local service district in Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair could have attended the session in Forteau. I recognize it is a geographically large district, and they certainly could have participated by teleconference. They can

certainly participate in tomorrow's consultation session as well.

The Member for Burgeo – La Poile asked why people who do not have cell coverage should pay for 911; 911 will be available wherever there is a land line, or cellphone coverage in the Province. So, communities that do not have cellphone coverage will, nevertheless, have Basic 911 via land line phones in all cases, in 100 per cent of cases.

I only have a few seconds left. The Member for Virginia Waters asked about making sure we get the right composition of skills and experience on the board. I certainly concur that that is important and that is something Cabinet will certainly take into consideration.

I certainly appreciate her interest in government appointed boards.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I look forward to further discussion in Committee.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Establish And Implement A Province-Wide 911 Telephone Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies. (Bill 14)

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

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

MR. KING: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, “An Act To Establish And Implement A Province-Wide 911 Telephone Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies”, read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 14)

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Conservation, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 18, An Act To Amend The Fish Processing Licensing Board Act; Bill 17, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act And The Tax Agreement Act, 2010; and Bill 14, An Act To Establish And Implement A Province-Wide 911 Telephone Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole and that I do now leave the Chair.

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

We have now resolved ourselves into a Committee of the Whole, are you –

MR. KING: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I am not sure of the protocol here.

I intended to refer also our review of Estimates for Executive Council as part of the discussion of the Committee of the Whole.

MR. SPEAKER: We have now resolved ourselves in the Committee of the Whole. With the consent of the House, the hon. Government

House Leader could refer the other bill in question to the House (inaudible).

MR. KING: With the consent of the House, or procedurally we could –

MR. SPEAKER: Does the minister have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

MR. SPEAKER: With leave, the hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: In addition to Bills 14, 17 and 18, Mr. Speaker, we also want to refer to Committee of the Whole consideration of the final Estimates to be considered.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Littlejohn): The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

At this time I would like to consider, first of all, Bill 18 in Committee, An Act to Amend the Fish Processing Licensing Board Act.

CHAIR: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

We are considering Bill 18, An Act To Amend The Fish Processing Licensing Board Act.

A bill, “An Act To Amend The Fish Processing Licensing Board Act.” (Bill 18)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The hon. the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace.

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the fishery bill. The minister stated these are minor amendments and they essentially fall under the housekeeping category.

I understand the purpose of the amendment is two-fold. One is to allow the existing board members to perform their role after their term expires until another board member is replaced. As we know, such a process can sometimes involve delays in naming a new board member, such as the lack of nominations or a delay in getting a nominee's resumé.

At the briefing we were told that this amendment is a common element in most acts pertaining to the boards. I guess it was overlooked when the Fish Processing Licensing Board was established back in 2004. The aim, we were informed, was to ensure that members do not cease to be members simply because of a date. This can result in the board not having enough members to have a quorum and applications are then delayed even more.

The second part of the amendment pertains to the number of times the board meets. The current requirement is that they at least meet six times a year, whether they need to or not. This modification in the act will now require them to meet at least two times a year. They can come together more times than that, but that is the minimum requirement.

It is interesting to note, Mr. Chair, that according to the stats on the DFA Web site, the last time the board met their obligations for meeting six times a year was in 2009. It is always around (inaudible) on the service at least. Like these straightforward, run of the mill charges to act, one of the first concerns I have is the fact that members can retain their positions until somebody is appointed to replace them. Could this see numbers being rolled over indefinitely, which I hope is not the purpose of this amendment.

As it stands now, the chair of the board and a second member are appointed for a four-year term. This is staggered with the remaining three being appointed for only two years. The idea of it being provided is what they call corporate

memory to the board, a continuity of knowledge and insight. Which is good, there should be at least a lifetime outline on how long a member can serve on the board, and certainly a limit imposed when a new one is appointed. I am told they can serve as many terms as they want.

I would think perhaps having members serve, say one term or two terms, would ensure new blood is injected into the board and its operations. I also wonder, Mr. Chair, if this amendment really shows a lack of interest in the Fish Processing Licensing Board, that the minister did not want to take the time to get qualified individuals and appoint them to this board because the fishing industry is not high on this government's priority list. That worries me some.

The other concern I have, Mr. Chair, is the reason for the second amendment, that of requiring the board to meet only two times a year supposedly because the numbers of applicants coming in are decreasing each year. I think it is a sad reflection on our whole industry that the processing industry is in decline.

Back in 1993, there were over 189 primary processing plants, Mr. Chair – yes 189. That is a phenomenal number I know, perhaps too many. By 2011, there were 101 plants. That is a decline of over 46 per cent. I am told today by officials of the Department of Fisheries there are currently only eighty processing plants in the Province. We had an estimated 8,427 people involved in the processing sector last year. Back in 2003, there were over 11,000. Unfortunately, we are likely to see more of a decline in numbers in both plants and processing workers in the years to come.

Surely this government must understand that when we eliminate jobs in processing plants, all the associated costs of production, the need for product development, advertising –

CHAIR: I do not want to interrupt the hon. member, but I ask the member to speak to the bill.

MR. SLADE: I am speaking to the bill, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: No, I ask the member to speak to the bill. The bill talks about the number of board members. It also talks about the reduction in the number of meetings. I ask the member to stick to the bill please.

MR. SLADE: Mr. Chair, in order for me to get to the point that I was trying to make –

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I spoke at length and in great detail on this particular bill and raised a number of concerns in actual debate. I wanted to ask the minister, since he made the point of appointing board members and extending their terms indefinitely, can the minister outline the search requirements they have undertaken in the past? What efforts where a board member's term has expired? How many vacancies have been held in the past?

Can we get clarification on this, knowing that there has actually been activity in trying to fill these five positions on the board, as to the reasoning behind why a term would have to be extended indefinitely? We need some clarification on that, Mr. Chair.

I raised a number of other issues beyond licensing application and transfers that the board has responsibility for. So I question: Why would the bar be set so low to have the meetings at a minimum of two rather than the current standard of six?

Thank you.

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

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

I will just throw a few things out for the minister so he would probably have a lot that he can respond to instead of waiting. I, too, want to ask about the term, because it seems to me what we are creating here is the senate of the fishing industry. You could end up being appointed and to be there forever.

I really want to know from the minister: Did they not think about that? Did they not realize that perhaps government should show itself to be self-managing by putting in how long this can go on before somebody either receives a reappointment or is replaced? Because if not, it is just self-perpetuating. As I said, it becomes the senate of the fishing industry. I would like to hear from the minister something logical about this because there is no logic in it for me.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, in regard to a couple of the issues raised, I will just speak to those in regard to the expiry and having the member sit until a replacement would be found. Mr. Chair, that would be an exception rather than the rule in cases where there were issues coming before the board in regard to licensing applications, in regard to transfers, just to make sure there would be no issue of quorum in regard to having those issues heard. That would be a concern. We would not foresee this happening a lot, but as a precaution that was recommended in terms of allowing that to happen, to make sure it is covered off, and there certainly would be no delay in the board hearing the application.

In regard to the change from six to two; looking back historically in regard to the board and its autonomy, and its ability to call at the request of the Chair in hearing particular applications that are before him, again, it is an autonomous board. It is pretty transparent and accountable, that can call when the need arises. There is no need for the board to meet if the applications or the requests are not in front of them.

This is in regard to being able to respond at the appropriate time when issues appear before the board, or applications are put before them. All of this is overseen, and feedback and consultation from the industry on the processing and on all sides of the industry. Again, it is open and transparent. People see what is happening in terms of applications that are made, in terms of how and when they are responded to.

These two adjustments make the act more flexible and ensure that when the board meets there is a reason to meet. It is at the call of the Chair, and the independence of the board will determine when they make that call based on when the applications are received.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace.

MR. SLADE: Mr. Speaker, the Fish Processing Licensing Board's role is to review and make recommendations to the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture on all requests for new processing licences, transfer of licences, and changes of operators for fish processing plants, as well as appeals for reinstatement of licences cancelled due to inactivity. This is an important role in our industry. If the board is to be healthy and alive, that means the industry is healthy and sustainable.

Just to conclude, it has been over ten years since the board was formed. Perhaps it is time for a review of this board as a way to enhance its role. Finally, Mr. Chair, in its activity report, it is interesting to note that people in Newfoundland and Labrador are listed as last in the list of clients served by the board. The Minister of DFA, fish processors, fish buyers, all precede the people of the Province.

I would suggest that the board's main role, as it is with the department and this government, should be the people. There are reasons why we are all here, and never let it be forgotten that the fishery is the reason people populated these shores and why we have a 500-year-old history. My greatest wish is that the great fishery gives us 5,000 years and more.

Mr. Chair, the board arose from the recommendations of the *Dunne Report: Fish Processing Policy Review*. Development of a new policy framework in 2004 that will be more open and transparent, attempt to eliminate landed capacity in the industry, and make processing more accountable to government. The report recommends that this framework include and establish an arm's-length fish processing licensing board, as well as a formal industry government policy advisory committee,

a focus on active processing licences, adoptions of a species licensing system linked to a resource threshold, establish criteria for new licences and licence transfers, a requirement for processors to submit annual processing plans, and an annual requirement to report corporate shareholders in fish processing companies.

The policy review of the Province's management of the fish processing sector was commissioned in June, 2003. Commissioner Eric Dunne held more than fifty meetings with industry members – any concerned citizens from close to 100 communities. Mr. Dunne delivered his final report with twenty-five recommendations on December 15, 2003.

Mr. Chair, appointments to ensure equity and impartiality, all board members are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The board has five members. The role of the board, Mr. Chair, is the board reviews and makes recommendations to the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture on all requests for new processing licences, transfer of licences, and change of operators for fish processing plants, as well as appeals for reinstatement of licences cancelled due to inactivity.

The Fish Processing Licensing Board is responsible for reviewing and accessing all fish processing licences, proposals or requests made to the provincial government to ensure that interested members of the public have the opportunity to provide comments to the board with respect to fish processing licensing applications. Applicants must advertise their intentions in both a generally circulated and regional newspaper. Mr. Chair, as it stands right now there is no formal appeal process for new applications, which perhaps there should be.

Information management system; in its 2013 annual report, the DFA indicated they were in the process of establishing a new licensing information management system for both aquaculture and processing licences. We have not heard of any progress on this issue. Has it been completed?

Mr. Chair, in its activity report it is interesting to note that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are listed as last clients. I went

through that before, Mr. Chair, and I do apologize for that.

The board is guided by a policy manual. This manual provides guidance to be reviewed and assess the process of fish processing licensing board and identifies important factors in the recommendation making process. The board's analysis will be considered and the implications of new licences or licence transfers in the regions and in the Province.

One of the board's commitments is to serve the public. Each individual demonstrates respect from the public they serve through the following actions: timely and courteous responses to public inquiries; efficient and cost-effective delivery of programs and services; and identification of cost-saving measures, whenever possible.

In the end, the board only makes recommendations to the minister, who has the final say on all licensing matters. Funding to the Fish Processing Licensing Board is funded annually by the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture. This funding is used to cover costs of travel, remuneration of board members according to Treasury Board guidelines, as well as other miscellaneous costs associated with meetings. Costs related to the board are normally offset through revenues associated with application fees. DFA says the revenue collected is about \$55,000 per year.

Mr. Chair, I spoke very briefly on the first of it about the number of processing plants that were there. In 1990 there were 231; in 1993, 189; in 2003, 145; in 2004, 138; in 2005, 137; in 2006, 140; in 2007, 138; in 2008, 136; in 2009, 118; in 2010, 121; in 2011, 121; and 2012, 110. From what we can understand now, there are eighty; meanwhile, the board reports ninety. We are not quite sure if it is eighty or ninety.

Mr. Chair, certainly this shows that the once great Department of Fisheries has gone down a lot in numbers, and I am quite concerned about that.

On that note, I will take my seat.

CHAIR: Just before I recognize the hon. member, I would just like to remind hon.

members that this is an amending bill. It is an amending bill and the debate in the Committee of the Whole, when we call clause 1, can be fairly wide ranging; but, again, it has to be in respect to the context of the amending bill. It is not about the act; it is about the amendments to the bill.

Now, I gave have clearly gave the hon. member leeway, but I will be asking people to speak to the amending bill. It is about the amendments; it is not about the act. We are speaking to two pieces of the amending bill. One of the amendments is clearly about the reduction of the required number of meetings from six to two, and the other piece of the amending bill is the members continuing past their expiration so they can maintain quorum. So I ask members to speak to the amendments, or I will ask members to come back to those two pieces.

Thank you.

The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

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

In looking at the number of times that the Fish Processing Licensing Board should meet or needs to meet, it is important to know about the

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AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. J. BENNETT: I hear the commentary from the former Minister of Fisheries who allowed the sea cucumber licence to be transferred from Cook's Harbour down to the Burin Peninsula, and cut the Fogo Island Co-op's legs out from underneath them.

CHAIR: I ask the hon. member to come back to the bill, please.

MR. J. BENNETT: That is the very thing that this bill will do. This bill will limit the number of appearances that people can put before the Fish Processing Licensing Board, and it is absolutely disgraceful.

It is a disgraceful thing that last year the Fish Processing Licensing Board met five times, and now the Minister of Fisheries, presumably, has advanced this bill so that the people who he

succeeded, the former member from down on the Southern Shore who was found guilty of conflict of interest after he went to Ottawa on fisheries-related matters, could acquire that sea cucumber licence through the Fish Processing Licensing Board.

This is what we are dealing here. What we are dealing with here, Mr. Chair, is an attempt by this government –

MR. DALLEY: A point of order.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources, on a point of order.

MR. DALLEY: I just have to question the relevance of what is going on, on the Southern Shore, with another former member – what this has to do with this, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: There is no point order.

The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Chair, the Fish Processing Licensing Board met five times last year, four times the year before, and now this government wants to limit the minimum number of times that the board can meet to two times. Why, Mr. Chair, would the government, why would the Minister of Fisheries want to cut the minimum number of meetings for the Fish Processing Licensing Board by 60 per cent from last year and 50 per cent from the year before? They may as well do away with the Fish Processing Licensing Board.

The irony is that this government created the Fish Processing Licensing Board in the first place in 2004 – a former Administration of this government. So, to cut the number of meetings, what this will do – and I point out to the listeners that the person who chairs, and to be completely relevant, it says that meetings shall be scheduled at the call of the Chairperson. Well, the Chairperson is someone that this government gave \$10 million to for the Roddickton pellet plant, so I think that is relevant. That is the person who is the government's handmaiden to carry out their wishes under this bill, under this amendment.

So, we can be strictly relevant and that would be absolutely accurate. The reason that this government needs this bill to say that people can automatically stay in place is because a few years ago, they forgot to reappoint board members and the number of board members shrank to as few as two, Mr. Chair. So, I can understand why they need to have this thing put on autopilot because they really do not care about the fishery. The Fish Processing Licensing Board is an inconvenience because it is something that purports to maintain an arm's-length distance between government and processors. In fact, what they are doing is they are using this as a rubber stamp now to deny processors their rights; and by doing that instead of saying in this bill that a processor could apply and have a hearing so that the case could be heard, right now before the Fish Processing Licensing Board there is an application to transfer a licence, a whelk licence away from New Ferolle.

CHAIR: I remind the member to speak to the bill.

MR. J. BENNETT: Yes, Mr. Chair, that is exactly what I am doing.

The request to transfer can be heard on two occasions per year. Mr. Chair, last year if they met five times and next year, they meet only twice, how can an applicant to have a transfer made be expected to have it heard if it can happen as few as two times per year – and if it is to be heard by people who have been on the board for so long that they have been reappointed for the last ten or fifteen or twenty years, they might be barely alive and still be on the board. That is what this amendment does.

Mr. Chair, I am speaking precisely to the amendment. This amendment limits the number of times that the board will meet. It limits the number of opportunities for people to make applications in order to have a vigorous, vibrant progressive fish processing industry which clearly this government does not want because they are cutting back the power of the board. They want to put it on autopilot because they do not even want to have to bother to get around to reappointing members of the board. They are absolutely gutting the Fish Processing Licensing Board, turning it into no more than a rubber

stamp and the rubber stamp, Mr. Chair, says no. It does not say yes; it says no. It says no because it means that there is only going to be two opportunities per year, even to have it appear before the board. So, processors can make an application and they miss the six-month window and then they wait for another six months and then the season is gone.

This bill is going the wrong way with the Fish Processing Licensing Board. It should be more robust. It should be more open. It should be more accountable. For sure, the directors, members of the board, should be required to be appointed on a much more frequent basis.

We just saw in a bill that we debated a few minutes ago term limits on the number of reappointments, and here we have no term limits on the number of reappointments and you do not even have to be reappointed. You will automatically stay in place if they forget to reappoint you or if the board forgets to meet. This is just stripping the Fish Processing Licensing Board, and I have nothing good to say about this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Briefly, the hon. member referenced they can only meet twice a year, and nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Chair. This is an autonomous board. They can meet twenty, twenty-five, thirty times a year based on the call of the Chair, based on the applications and the information that is before them. It is not limited in any way.

On the rare occasion where a member was not reappointed and a quorum is needed, that member would sit to make sure that any requests before the board could be heard, could be expedient based on the time of the year that may be needed. Nothing could be further from the truth, what the hon. member has mentioned in regard to limitations or gutting the board or anything of that nature.

This board continues with its autonomy, with its direction, with its ability to call meetings when and if it wants to, and will continue to do that. These are volunteers. We certainly respect volunteers and their insight and the role they play. I would not have questioned them in any way in terms of the work they do. They do very good work and we are appreciative of the work, and this does not limit their ability in any way.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

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

I would like to ask the minister a question regarding comments the hon. Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace mentioned in his comments earlier this evening, specifically around how the bill will ensure that board members are not rolled over indefinitely. Secondly, I would like to ask specifically how the bill will ensure that term limits and board succession plans are in place that allow for retaining corporate memory at the same time as encouraging new and innovative thinking to go on the board, please.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, as I said, in regard to the term limit and the expiry of a member and having them continue to sit, that is in regard to if there was a case where, for whatever reason, that appointment was not made as expeditiously as needed, they would be able to sit and hear appeals that are before them at a point in time to ensure the industry – if there were issues that had to be heard in the licensing board, they could be heard. The quorum would be there to hear them.

Normal procedures in terms of what is in the act in regard to replacement continue on, in regard to new people who come to the board. They are always looking for changeover in the boards. You balance that between corporate knowledge of the industry and transfer in a few people who are interested in serving on the board.

Collectively that will continue. It will continue to have a very solid board by volunteers and continue the good work they have been doing in the past number of years.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It certainly is a pleasure to stand in this hon. House and make a few comments in Committee of the Whole on Bill 18.

Mr. Chair, the issue I am hearing over on this side of the House, and certainly the issue I raised the last time I spoke to this particular piece of legislation, its amendment, we are talking about of course, as we know, extending the term beyond four years and a minimum of two meetings a year annually versus six meetings annually. I think the concern we have, or at least the concern I have, is we do not want to see this board which plays a very significant role in the fishery in terms of recommending new licences, recommending transfers of licences and so on to the minister and the impact of those timely decisions – and timing is very important with this, as we know – we do not want to see this watered down.

I think that is the concern we have, is that this board and the decisions it makes will have huge impacts on communities in Newfoundland and Labrador, on the processing plants in terms of the licences it receives, the employment it is able to provide to people in the community –

CHAIR: I remind the member to speak to the bill, please.

MR. LANE: Yes, Mr. Chair.

The impact of the decisions being made by this Fish Processing Licensing Board is huge to all the stakeholders in the communities. So when we start talking about reducing the number of required meetings from six annually as a minimum, down to two annually as a minimum, when we start talking about extending terms beyond the four years – I understand the minister is saying that does not mean indefinitely. The minister clearly said this does not mean indefinitely.

This would not be the norm. It is to get you over a hump in extenuating circumstances and so on. If that is the case, if that is what this is all about, then spell it out. Spell it out in the legislation in order to alleviate the concerns which have been raised by members on this side of the House.

That is really all we are saying. Is that because it can be interpreted one way or the other, perhaps the intent was to use it in extenuating circumstances, perhaps that is the intent, but because a new minister could come in, perhaps new board members, perhaps new staff and so on who advise the minister, and because it happens to meet someone's particular agenda for whatever reason, all of a sudden they can change their interpretation of what was intended here, then that is a problem.

We are saying let's eliminate this interpretation, or this misinterpretation. If there is a purpose for which these amendments are made, be very clear in the legislation in how the legislation is written, that we are totally clear on exactly what is meant to be achieved and the legislation will reflect that. If there are concerns around how it could be misinterpreted, let's spell that out in the legislation so it cannot be misinterpreted. That is really all anybody on this side of the House are saying. This is a billion-dollar industry affecting so many people, particularly in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

This board is responsible for making decisions around that. All we are doing over here on this side of the House of Assembly is pointing out the fact that the way these amendments are currently written, it leaves itself open to interpretation which may go against what the intent of the minister of the government was. That is really the point we are making. We would hope that the minister, the government and so on, would take these recommendations seriously, perhaps amend it; but, if at the end of the day they are not prepared to do it, at the very least we will have it on the record. I will have it on the record that I expressed these concerns. It is as simple as that. I make no apologies for doing so.

I know that sometimes – I was really surprised, disappointed, to actually hear a government member in the media complaining, 'sooking' over the fact –

CHAIR: I ask the member to speak to the bill, please.

MR. LANE: – that I had the nerve to raise the issue on this bill. That I had the gall to raise these concerns on these two clauses. These two clauses I had the nerve to raise them, and that is shameful.

For the record, I just want to state once again that I have these concerns. What other members have, they may want to get up and raise some further concerns, some further questions, and that is certainly their right to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Chair, I will ask the question again. In the bill, particularly this piece of amendment to the act, I would like to get clarity on how term limits are affected in the act. Obviously, this particular amendment does not address that so I would like to ask the minister how that will be addressed.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, the term limits are outlined in what they would be in the actual act. What this is doing is looking at those exceptional cases where due to time or an unforeseen incident happened a replacement was not filled and, therefore, the requirements need to continue on to hear appeals until it is replaced.

Other legislation has similar provisions: the RDC Act, the Pharmaceutical Services Act, the Credit Union Act. This is pretty standard in terms of other pieces of legislation in how this is done. As I said before, it is an exception rather than the rule just to look at a particular circumstance that may arise so we can deal with it, hear anything that is before the board, and proceed on from there. Then, further to that if there is a vacancy, go through the normal procedure filling that vacancy.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is where the issue comes in; the fact that the minister is saying this is meant to be the exception not the rule. When we look at legislation, the legislation is quite clear on how it is written. It is written in a way that would allow any member to have their term extended to an indefinite point.

It does not provide clarity. What it actually does in terms of looking at the actual piece of legislation and the amendment, it is clear the Fish Processing Licensing Board has not been following the act in the current legislation in terms of meeting its minimum required meetings of six. We have also had board members who have not been in compliance.

We are talking about a major industry here. We are talking about a small number of members where we have seen many other departments where there are boards that have term limits that expire and you are able to find people. We are talking about the expertise of the fishery here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Surely there are a minimum of five people who could serve on a board, or willing to serve, and to have that transfer of knowledge and that succession planning so when somebody's term is about to expire you could have one, two, or multiple candidates in place, lined up to fill when somebody's term is expiring. You could have a short list. There are many ways to make sure you can get quorum at a meeting like the Fish Processing Licensing Board.

For the minister to put forward these amendments without having it clearly and explicitly stated that this will only be done if it is absolutely necessary and there is a defined, definitive timeline, and a process to say how they will recruit and replace that member – because you do not want members serving for an excessive period of time. It is great to have the institutional knowledge that comes with a term or a second term. Then, like many other boards, people have to sit off a board for a while to allow for new members to get that experience so you can have good continuity and build that

institutional knowledge that is needed, especially from advisory panels.

Looking at the way the legislation is written and this piece, it is really unacceptable to look at. It takes away the value, it takes away accountability. This is a step backwards. It is actually regressive. It is regressive in nature and I want to put that forward. That is why I am significantly concerned about the amendments the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture has put forward in this particular bill.

There are situations where board members have been basically not in compliance, and we have also seen where the meetings are not in compliance with the legislation. Rather than find a mechanism and a solution to make the board and its role to be more accountable and to be meeting, and meeting the act itself, we see these amendments come forward to allow the board to be less accountable to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I find that quite appalling.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Chair, the bill says: “decrease the required minimum number of meetings per year from 6 to 2”, yet last year the board only met five times and the year before it only met four times. I ask the minister: does he have any explanation as to why the Fish Processing Licensing Board that he appointed is ignoring the legislation, or are they able to do whatever they please?

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clause 2

CHAIR: Shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, clause 2 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

CHAIR: Division has been called.

Ring the bells.

Division

CHAIR: Are the whips ready?

Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour of the enacting clause.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: The enacting clause is carried.

AN HON. MEMBER: We have to stand.

CHAIR: We have to stand, I am sorry.

Thank you.

Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

CLERK: Mr. King, Ms Shea, Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Davis, Mr. McGrath, Mr. Crummell, Mr. Felix Collins, Ms Johnson, Mr. Jackman, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Hedderson, Mr. Dalley, Ms Sullivan, Mr. French, Mr. Kent, Mr. Sandy Collins, Mr. Granter, Mr. Cross, Mr. Little, Mr. Pollard, Mr. Forsey, Ms Perry, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Cornect, Mr. Dinn, Mr. Russell.

CHAIR: All those against.

CLERK: Mr. Ball, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Mr. Osborne, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Lane, Mr. Slade, Mr. Mitchelmore, Ms Bennett, Ms Michael, Mr. Murphy, and Ms Rogers.

CLERK: Mr. Chair, the ayes twenty-six, the nays twelve.

CHAIR: The ayes have it.

Shall the enacting clause carry?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Fish Processing Licensing Board Act.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Now we move to Bill 17, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act And The Tax Agreement Act, 2010. (Bill 17)

CHAIR: Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 17, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act And The Tax Agreement Act, 2010.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act And The Tax Agreement Act, 2010". (Bill 17)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 and 3 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 and 3 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 and 3 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act And The Tax Agreement Act, 2010.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 17 without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This time we move to review Bill 14, An Act To Establish And Implement A Province-Wide 911

Telephone Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies.

CHAIR: Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 14, An Act To Establish And Implement A Province-Wide 911 Telephone Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies.

A bill, "An Act To Establish And Implement A Province-Wide 911 Telephone Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies". (Bill 14)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It gives me great pleasure again to speak in Committee now to the 911 service implementation of Basic 911.

The minister in his response took an interest in what I had to say and made a significant response in terms of some of the issues I raised around going from a Basic service and how a Basic service really does need civic addressing – even though the minister is saying that, that is not the case.

I just want to make this clear, that if you had the Enhanced 911 service you would have the GPS technology and that ability to just push 911 and they would be able to track you and your location. They could get those particular co-ordinates. Well, with a Basic service itself, if you cannot tell somebody where you are located, they are not going to be able to find you.

The importance of having civic addressing – the minister talked about the municipalities can do it. There are 276, give or take, municipalities, because some amalgamated and things like that. There are others that are incorporated that are not active. I have to point out there are a lot of local service districts, a lot of unincorporated, unorganized communities. I have fourteen in my particular district that are not local service

districts, are not municipalities. They do not have street names. They do not have numbers. They do not have that legislative authority as to how that is going to be provided.

When this legislation moves forward – and constituents in my particular district have questions around why they are paying a particular fee on their land line and as well on their cellphones. They have the anticipation they are going to have improved service delivery.

If they live in Croque or Grandois, or they live in Sandy Cove, and they phone up and push 911, whether it is on their cellphone or on a land line, they are going to get a call station and that person is going to ask where they are located. If you do not have the civic addressing done, if you cannot pinpoint where you are located – because right now if you travel to many rural communities across the Province, that addressing, that ability is not there. You would say the person's last name, or this colour house, or some geographical location in the community, and that is how this service is going to be working.

The fire chief has stated that this is twenty-year-old technology. It is very dated, and you are not going to see the Enhanced services and the quick response that you think you are going to get. That is something that really needs to be made clear in this particular piece of legislation because that is a concern I have.

If I have a constituent who calls from Croque, and if their house is burning, for example, and they get this number, they are not going to tell them they live on 9 Pearson Street or 912 Main Street, because their street is not named, their house is not numbered. What are they going to tell them? Many members of this House of Assembly see this as a big issue, they should.

If you are not taking the time to carve out a plan to map the civic addresses, to organize and create these spatial maps for the responders so that we can get a quick response time, then we are missing the point of what Basic 911 is about. Basic 911 does not allow GPS technology. It does not do that. It has to get a physical location, and you have to be able to provide that.

If I am stopped on the highway and I am in an area I am not familiar with and I do not know the actual route I am on, and that might happen in a particular area of the Province where somebody is travelling, a tourist may be travelling or you might know you left Route 430 and you went to Route 433, you have no idea and you have an accident. You call on your cellphone and you are not able to clearly tell them where you are located. Without the Next Generation technology, well it does not matter, because they are not going to find you, they are just not. That potential is not there because you need to provide an address about the location.

The minister needs to be very clear about that. That is why the focus should be on the civic addressing and mapping, because you need it for Basic 911. To say otherwise is a big challenge.

As well, the clarity of the double billing that is going to exist, because there is going to – everybody is paying a fee right now on cellphones. Some of it is seventy-five cents; some of it is ninety-five cents. It all depends, but it goes through the CRTC. They are pointing out that this is for their 911 service. Now the Province is going to look at, through its corporation, adding more bureaucracy. They are going to charge an additional fee to cellphone users. They are going to charge an additional fee for something that is already being provided to the user of a cellphone.

It is not happening in rural areas of the Province that is currently underserved, about 60 per cent, but we look at the areas that are serviced. Members on this side of the House have raised that people who are receiving the Basic 911 service now it is already incorporated in their municipal taxes. They are paying a fee for that particular service. We are talking about the fiscal framework of the Province and we are talking about how we can give municipalities more revenue, more ways to raise revenue and different options.

It looks to me that this piece of legislation is going to create a potential of double billing. Is that fair? Is that fair to consumers? I have no issue with people paying for the services they receive. If people are already receiving these services, paying a fee, and having to pay it twice, well where is the fairness in that? Where

is the fairness around going through the cellphone providers and charging another fee?

There needs to be further clarification made by the minister as to the justification of this, and also around the point as to how much revenue is going to be utilized to get to Next Generation. Will he clarify that the Member for Exploits had pointed out that Next Generation is coming in a couple of years? Can he quantify that number to make sure that Next Generation technology is there and that those fees are sufficient, or will we see fee increases? What is the exact fee that is put in place?

The member opposite is using under \$1. Are the contracts signed with the telecommunication providers, that will be the land line users and the cellphone providers? What fees are the cellphone and the telecommunication providers going to collect in terms of their administration? How much of this is going to our own administration in terms of staffing, in terms of office space, in terms of all the other things that are set-up with creating an independent corporation around administering Basic 911?

Has the minister considered an alternative to look at making sure more revenue that is collected goes into improving the service and not just administering the service? We have seen that in situations before where a lot of the cost has come into the actual administration. Then, consumers, the people of the Province who are already paying – the majority are already paying a 911 fee at some point or another, whether it is through a mobile device, or whether it is through their municipal taxes.

That is an issue I would like for the minister to answer as I am going through this. I may have some other questions in Committee, but those are the main points I want to put forward right now, minister.

Thank you.

If you would be able to answer some of that it would provide some clarification.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will certainly try to answer a number of the member's questions. I may get back to some more of them as we proceed here.

He raises some questions around Basic 911 and its limitations. We recognize that Basic 911 is just as the name implies, it is a Basic 911 service, but we are very much committed to getting the Next Generation 911 service. In fact, we may even get the Next Generation 911 service faster than many jurisdictions in the country.

Today, there is only Next Generation 911 service in place in Calgary, I believe, a small portion of Alberta, and certain areas of BC. It is not widespread; most jurisdictions in the country do not have Next Generation 911 service today.

We know there is no GPS technology for Basic service. That is why we plan to go past Enhanced 911 from Basic 911 directly to Next Generation 911 service. In terms of the fees, we are confident the fees that will be collected over the next few years will adequately cover the preparation and the investment that is necessary to cover Next Generation 911 service.

The POMAX feasibility report recommended the approach that we are taking, the approach of building. We get the Basic service in place for everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador and while it is not the Enhanced service the member speaks of, Basic 911 service is better than no 911 service, which is what exists in many places in the Province.

In terms of the timeline to address a couple more of the specific questions the member raised, the fee will be under \$1. We do not know whether it will be seventy cents, or eighty cents, or ninety cents, or sixty cents, that is still to be determined based on the work that is being done to prepare us for full implementation by the end of this year. I am confident in saying that the fee will be less than \$1.

The POMAX feasibility report that was done said it could probably be done for about seventy-five cents per line which would be, if you do the quick math, about \$5.4 million a year. That revenue does not just allow us to deliver the Basic 911 service; it provides the revenue that is necessary to put the various pieces in place to

get ready for Next Generation 911. We anticipate it is going to take about three years. Might it take three and a half years? Absolutely. Can it be done in less than three years? Probably not, based on the consultant's report and based on our work to date.

I have addressed a few of the member's points, I am happy to address more questions as we continue this evening.

Thank you.

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Just a couple of points, I want to come down to section 12 of the act, "The Lieutenant- Governor in Council shall appoint a board of directors of the corporation." I know at the briefing this morning there was some mention of getting more people with accounting and legal skills. I would like to get his opinion on that particular piece.

I think this is mainly logistics that we are dealing with here when it comes to 911. I can see where some people may have to have accounting and legal skills, but to me, like I said, it is more about logistics. I am wondering about having hands-on people who are going to be part of that board too, for example, the ambulance operator himself, or the paramedic, or the police officer in question. I know there is some representation from the police services.

We are told as of the briefing this morning when it comes to section 12, these people are going to oversee implementation of Enhanced 911. The minister just got up and said it is not likely we are going to see Enhanced 911 anytime soon, but there is a possibility. I asked the question in debate earlier about the possibility of Enhanced 911 in some areas of the Province. It is obvious that according to what the minister has said there are some regions of different provinces – for example, like he said in Calgary and some parts of BC – where there is Enhanced service now, but in other areas of the provinces it is not.

So my question to the minister is: When it comes to the appointing of the board members, number one about their accounting and their legal skills, if he thinks there is going to be a good mix there, what kind of a mix does he desire to see when it comes to the board? The second question is about the overall implementation of Enhanced 911. We know we have the Basic here in the City of St. John's, Mount Pearl, the Goulds, some areas of the Northeast Avalon, Corner Brook, of course, and Labrador City. Where does he see Enhanced 911 going as a result of already having the Basic here in the Province?

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The member raises a question around accounting professions, legal professions, having those types of skill sets on the board, and also having hands-on emergency service providers represented on the board. Those are good comments. There is nothing in the legislation that prevents us from appointing those types of people to the board.

The Member for Virginia Waters made a good suggestion today in second reading as well around doing a board skills matrix. On several boards that I have been on we have taken that kind of approach to board development and recruitment through nominating committees to make sure that you identify the gaps you have, and then go out and deliberately recruit the right people with the right skills and experience to fill those gaps.

In this particular case, I would agree that it would make sense to have somebody with a finance background, given the volume of revenue we are talking about. It would make sense, as the Member for St. John's East suggests, to have somebody who has some experience in emergency response, somebody who has had on the ground, hands-on experience, to use his language, in delivering emergency services.

Not only do I welcome the members' suggestions on board composition, I can speak for a number of my colleagues on this side of the House in saying that we also welcome suggestions on appointees. If there are people you feel would be a good fit – anybody out there feels would be a good fit for this board – then we welcome those suggestions because we do want to move quickly. We do want to get the board in place as quickly as possible to advance implementation on time, and we would certainly welcome suggestions in term of appointees. Getting those types of skill sets and that type of experience as part of the board composition makes very good sense to me, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR (Verge): The hon. the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would recommend to the Minister of Municipal Affairs to maybe look at appointing a youth to this committee, unlike the MAA recently and the appointments that have –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: I am getting a lot of push back from this. Is the other side not supporting youth appointed to a committee?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I find it quite interesting that I would get such a comment and response from suggesting that a youth be a member of a committee.

My point around the bill itself: When it comes to Basic service, the minister has pointed out the shortcomings of it and I want to ask questions,

because it is something that I have been pressing since – I asked at the Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador Conference, and I will ask it again because I am really trying to get an answer as to why there really was no plan during the lead up here around the civic addressing.

There is no costing; there is no look at how it is going to be applied to local service districts, no information around the unincorporated communities, no information. The minister said the municipalities may look at civic numbering and may do street addressing but the clause itself does not say shall, meaning that they must do it; it is just encouraged.

We have been through this through Bill 29 around the “may” and “shall” and debated it to quite an extent. We need to look at, if you are going to implement the service, that people actually get the coverage and the care that they need in Basic 911.

The minister needs to identify his plan as to how local service districts, how unincorporated, unorganized communities and municipalities, and the time line as to how they are going to get the addressing, what the cost associated with it is so that when they dial the Basic 911, people will actually get to their house. Whether it is for a medical emergency, whether it is for fire, or whether it is for criminal activity, or whatever the emergency case will be. That needs to be made clear. If not, you are likely going to get a delayed response, and that is no good for anybody in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is the particular case and the point that I am trying to drive home here around this.

Now, another point that I made – when the minister got up, he talked about a few areas of Canada that have Basic service. Well, how many areas in Canada have the Enhanced service? The majority of Canadians across other provinces – not Newfoundland and Labrador – and across the States and America have a more Enhanced service than what we have. Many of them have already moved and people are moving towards the Next Generation service.

I would like some clarity as well around when I ask the question of when we move from Basic to Enhanced – the minister had said three, three-

and-a-half years, somewhere around there, but he also made the comment that we are not going to Enhanced, that we are going to Next Generation. The clarity is: Are we going to an Enhanced or are we going directly to the Next Generation technology that is there? Just to clarify that for me, I would appreciate it.

I would like to know why people who have multiple devices – I have already raised the double billing issue when it comes to the taxation piece, when it comes to people already paying their cellphone bills, but why would an individual who would have multiple cellphones have to pay the bill multiple times for the service? If somebody is carrying around the two actual phones – to look at the cost, the cost of this could be to a particular business or a particular household, that even if the fee is under \$1, you are looking at increasing a charge. Was there any consideration done to a group bundle or anything like that, looking at the situation? I think that is a point that I would like some further clarification. Maybe there was some information put forward in the POMAX study that was put out there and highlighted from it.

I would like for the minister to clarify – he is throwing out revenue numbers as to this is how much revenue we are going to collect, yet he just made the statement that we do not know what type of fee we are going to be charging. It could be seventy cents, it could be eighty cents, it could be sixty cents, but it is going to be under \$1. Well if you are talking about the revenue that you are going to bring in through these fees, then you need to have some clarification as to what the fee actually is going to be charged based on the current number of land lines and the current number of mobile phones that are here in the Province, and how many contracts you currently have in place to collect those through the regulators, through the actual telecommunication providers.

Because if a telecommunication provider says no, then what option and what alternative do you have to actually go out and collect those fees? We have not seen that the contracts or those agreements are in place and we have not seen the fees that these providers are going to be collecting, what percentage. We do not know if it is going to be 1 per cent, 2 per cent, or 50 per cent of this actual fee.

So we would like, from my point of view as the Innovation, Business and Rural Development critic with the Official Opposition, I think from a consumer perspective that there needs to be accountability and the minister should be very clear as to what particular contracts it has signed or what it has negotiated with the telecommunications providers, what the cap on fees are going to be, and what happens if a telecommunications provider says no that they are not going to remit, then where is the fairness and what does that mean. Will that mean then that people will look to go to other providers because the service – what happens to people who are not paying their actual bills? Does that become a piece that the telecommunications provider is obligated to still remit or not?

There are broader questions that we have around this piece of legislation that really has not been clear. So I will keep asking the questions and hope the minister will – he has been doing his best, certainly, to endeavour to answer questions that I put forward. I look forward to those responses. Further clarity, certainly, helps me, Minister. I appreciate the opportunity to ask those questions. I look forward to the answers.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Once again, I will try and answer as many questions as I can. I would like to address some of the points that the member raised his first time on his feet and he touched on them again his second time up. He raised the question around more bureaucracy and charging for a service that is already available.

This new service will be Province-wide. It will be available to everyone and it will be at a higher standard with redundancy built into the system, which is really important. Next Generation 911 will ultimately be offered a few years from now. We will immediately start the work to get there, which will mean a major improvement in service for the vast majority of people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Municipalities will still need dispatching and service provision. The exact fee, as I have said and he has alluded to, is not decided yet. We have not signed any contracts, to answer the member's question. We will certainly keep the public advised as progress is made. Everything will be extremely transparent and the fee will pay for enhancements as we move forward.

The plan for civic addressing will be initiated by the end of this year. It is not something that we are waiting on, but the reason we have not moved further on it at this point is quite simple. It is not required to implement Basic 911 service. It is just not necessary. It is not required. Is it something that should be in place? Absolutely. Is it something that communities should start working on right away? Absolutely; but it is not necessary to implement Basic 911 at this point in time.

We certainly will be encouraging communities right away, as I have done at several points today, to get civic addressing in place. We will be making a very concerted effort in the months ahead to ensure the civic addressing is in place in every community in the Province; but, right now, we are focused on the legislation, we are focused on building the regulations, we are focused on figuring out board composition, getting the public safety answering points in place. These are the pieces that are necessary now.

I will also point out that there are number of places in the country that do not have even Basic 911 service today: most of the Territories, most of the Yukon, all of the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, some reserves, some parts of British Columbia. So, we are certainly not alone, but that does not make it acceptable. This is an essential service that people need and that people deserve. That is why we are working to advance this legislation.

Enhanced 911 – to answer another one of the member's questions – is in most of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritimes. Most places in Canada do have Enhanced 911 service today, which I think is the point he was trying to make.

For us to get there, there is still greater investment required. For the work that we are going to have to do in terms of civic addressing, digitalized mapping and so on, it makes sense to skip that step, so to speak, and jump right from Basic to the Next Generation 911 because all of those jurisdictions that I just mentioned, they are all striving to get to Next Generation 911. We have done the research, we have done the studies, and we have engaged the experts to determine the approach we should take. In this instance, we are very confident that the approach we are taking is the right approach.

In terms of appointing young people to the board, what an interesting suggestion from the Official Opposition, the folks that pooh-poohed youth involvement in local government but now are interested in seeing young people get appointed to the provincial boards. They now have another MHA who is an expert on being appointed to provincial boards.

It is an interesting suggestion. I welcome the appointment of young people to any boards that they wish to serve on. Having a youthful perspective will be valuable on this board, just as it will be on municipal councils throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: In terms of multiple phones, it is quite simple. I have a phone here, I have another phone here, and I will pay a fee on both because I am receiving the service on both. The service is available to me, will be available to me – well, on my cellphones, it is available to me today, but the service that we are putting in place Province-wide will now be available on every land line and on every cellphone where cell coverage exists. Going forward, Next Generation 911 takes things to an entirely new level. Because the service will be available on multiple devices, it would make sense that the fee would also be charged on multiple devices as well.

I hope I have answered all of the member's questions; I will certainly endeavour to keep answering whatever questions get raised.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am certainly glad to rise today to speak to Bill 14, An Act to Establish and Implement a Province-Wide 911 Telephone Service for the Reporting of Emergencies. Mr. Chair, I listened today to some of the presenters in the debate on 911, and I was glad to hear the Member for Exploits talk about the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador will be able to call 911 from a cellphone from a rural area in our Province. I just heard the minister say that service will be provided to those who have cellphone coverage.

We have been lobbying for cellphone coverage – well, I have been since March of 2012. When you look at emergencies within cellphone range, it does not necessarily have to be in the confines of a community. You set up cell towers and the range broadens to forty miles, fifty miles. In the area that I represent, sometimes most emergencies are from just outside of a community.

I see the minister referring to his BlackBerrys, Mr. Chair, and I have said this many times and I will say it again tonight. Four miles from Makkovik on January 30, I took a BlackBerry from young Burton Winters' pocket. He was within cellphone range. All he had to do was press 911, if we had it, so I am glad that this government is going forward with 911 service, although Basic, with plans to move forward to an Enhanced version and the Next Generation as stated in his reports.

As I went through this bill, Mr. Chair, I looked at section 3 – and with the Chair's permission, I will read this section out. "This Act and the regulations made under this Act shall be read and applied in conjunction with the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act and, where a provision of this Act or the regulations made under this Act is inconsistent or conflicts with a provision, term or condition of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act, the provision, term or condition of the Labrador Inuit Claims Agreement Act shall have

precedence over the provision of this Act or a regulation made under this Act."

Now, one interpretation of this, Mr. Chair, is that maybe in the future the Nunatsiavut Government will create and implement a more localized version of 911 that would serve a purpose; but, until then, at the time of implementation of this act and this service and the board has started its mandate, if this is a provincial-wide mandate then they are obligated to set up 911 services in all areas of this Province. That is where I see some problems arising, Mr. Chair, even with Basic 911.

The mandate of the board, as you go through the overview, is the establishment of a 911 bureau. My first concern is the point of call, or I think the term is: the public safety answering point. I heard the minister talk about some locations. In my district now there are times when calls are made to the local RCMP detachment and the calls are rerouted to Halifax. Now, Mr. Chair, in the event of an emergency and you have a caller with English as a second language talking to a response centre Halifax, there is not a whole lot that is going to get done because of the complications of communication.

With the implementation of 911 service and you have a call point or a service provider point in, let's say, Lab City or Corner Brook, it is just as well as if it was in Sudbury. I have a friend in Nain who lives at 19 Ikajuttauvik Road. Now, Mr. Chair, if someone gets a call and that is the address they give, I can only imagine what is going to happen. If it is a dangerous situation, the situation is only made worse.

There are a lot of issues. If you talk about the board committee members, I am glad to see that at least one shall be from Labrador. My recommendation is that you have a representative from the Nunatsiavut Government on that board, along with another from Labrador, so it would close the gap of setting up 911 service in areas where English is the second language, communities like Nain, Hopedale, Natuashish, Sheshatshiu. These are all people who make calls requesting emergency services.

The response to a 911 call, I am not sure if it is going to be any different than what we have now, Mr. Chair. Calls are made for medevacs,

flights have to fly into these communities and in many, many situations a life depends on seconds, minutes, hours. The whole purpose of 911 is to have it designed to save lives and quick response.

Those are some of the issues I have. I see all kinds of problems but I am happy that this service is going ahead. I know there is a lot of room for improvements. As I said earlier, bills come with the openness for amendments and to strengthen an act such as this. I am certainly looking forward to the day, and I hope it is in my life, Mr. Chair, where if I am in an accident outside of my community, I can pick up my cellphone and call 911.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The member raised a significant number of points, and I will do my best to respond to them as I go here. He referenced the tragedy and the loss of Burton Winters. No words can ever fill the void felt by those who knew Burton best, and our thoughts and prayers will always be with the family and the people of Labrador. The anniversary was not that long ago of the Burton Winters' tragedy and certainly our thoughts and prayers are with his family and with the people of Labrador.

In terms of cellphone service in Labrador and elsewhere, the suggestion the member seemed to be making is that communities and areas without cellphone coverage are going to somehow be left behind when Province-wide 911 is implemented. Well, just the opposite is actually true. Because once Province-wide Basic 911 is implemented the service will be available via land line throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. It is already available on mobile phones wherever a signal is accessible. Those communities that do not have cell access and do not have land line 911 will have access via land line once Basic 911 is implemented.

As I said today in second reading, we are well aware of the lack of cellphone coverage being a concern in certain regions of the Province. We

continue to press the federal government for increased support in this area.

Telecommunications, again, is an area that is of exclusive federal jurisdiction. Through the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development, we continue to discuss matters of cellphone coverage with carriers, with equipment providers. We are exploring options to address the issue of coverage on transportation routes on many of the roads and highways in Newfoundland and Labrador where coverage is still a challenge.

As I said, just in the past month or so, I believe it was early in April, I wrote another letter to the federal government, this time to the hon. James Moore, the federal Minister of Industry Canada, seeking more information specifically on how the federal government, through its policies and through its programs, might be able to encourage greater cell access in rural communities and also along certain highways that do not currently receive cellphone service. So efforts are ongoing.

I would encourage the members opposite, including the Member for Torngat Mountains, to join with me in pressing the federal government for further support, but through our Rural Broadband Initiative we have made incredible progress. Is there more work to be done? Absolutely. We are going to do our part to ensure that more residents of Newfoundland and Labrador have access not only to cellphone service but to broadband Internet as well. So we are lobbying for increased coverage.

To use an example within the members own district, Nain is looking at Link Mobility in their community as a prospective cellphone provider. I think that is positive, and we want to do our part. I know the Minister of Innovation, Business and Rural Development is actively working on this file.

In terms of some of the other specific comments the member raised. The Nunatsiavut Government has lawmaking powers for emergency services they have yet to exercise. We are more than willing to work with the Nunatsiavut Government on this issue and many others. Inuit community governments will participate when it comes to establishing this service. They will have land line 911 service

there. Nain participated in the consultations that took place in Happy Valley-Goose Bay which we were certainly very pleased to see.

The member made a comment about, I think, RCMP calls being routed to Halifax and language issues. To use his example, local responders in Nain will be contacted. They know the streets. They know the locations. They know the geography. They know the landscape. They know the unique names. Emergency responders who respond to police calls, fire calls, and ambulance calls today will continue to be the same people. I hope that provides some comfort to the member.

The member is certainly right that 911 will not speed up response times, as I have already noted. That is not what this is about, but ultimately through various investments we are making, we are doing a great deal to improve response times. Getting to Next Generation 911 I believe will improve response times. So we are absolutely making progress, and I hope through those brief remarks I have addressed some of the member's questions and concerns.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I have a couple of different roads I want to go down, if you will. Given I have ten minutes; I will attempt to go down one and get a question or some commentary on it. Then if I have time I will move forward and if not, I will have to get up again. Anyway, we certainly have lots of time and I am looking forward to the debate.

I just want to speak first of all, Mr. Chair, from personal experience. As I indicated in second reading, I have a couple of years of hands-on experience working with 911 personally a number of years ago. I just want to bring that perspective.

One of the things, Mr. Chair, I experienced is you have to recognize if somebody is calling 911, generally speaking, they are calling for a serious emergency or at least they ought to be. Sometimes there are people who call 911 looking for the police when really they should

be calling 729-8000, or they are calling for some routine medical question. They should be calling directly to the hospital and not calling 911. As a general rule, when people call 911, if they are calling for the right reasons and using it appropriately, they are very much in a very stressful situation at that particular time. It is very much an emergency. It could be a fire emergency, it could be a medical emergency, or it could be a police emergency.

Quite often when people are calling, they are very panicked and they are very upset. I know from personal experience there were many times when I received a call from somebody, and just say, for example, it was a medical emergency, the person generally – and there are exceptions to the rule. You will have the scattered person who is pretty calm, cool, and collected, maybe if it is someone with a medical background who is there and understands the situation, but many times people will call and they are in total panic mode. They are blurting out a message to you. They are saying come here quick, quick, I need an ambulance, my husband has just collapsed on the floor and I do not know what to do. They are very confused in what they are saying. You are trying to say calm down, and quite often they do not calm down. Then they will start blurting out other information. You are trying to get from them, what is your address? Where are you specifically? What is your contact number? What is wrong specifically? You are trying to get all the details of the call so you can dispatch the appropriate response.

That takes time. On many occasions when people are calling in like that, and they are all in a big panic, that can take time. Time in an emergency, time when we are talking about someone who is potentially having a heart attack or a stroke, time when we are talking about somebody's house that might be on fire, time when we are talking about a perpetrator who may be breaking into somebody's house and maybe they have a weapon, time when there is some kind of a physical altercation and somebody is getting beat up, time could mean the difference between life or death. It could mean the difference between saving a home from a fire versus the home burning to the ground. It could be the difference between somebody getting beat up seriously or not, receiving serious personal injury. It could result

in the difference between a perpetrator getting caught and a perpetrator getting away from a serious crime.

Right now, if you are living in an area that is not covered by 911, the person would call their local fire department or local ambulance. That local firefighter, that local ambulance service provider in all likelihood is going to know that person in the community. They may recognize the voice. All he needs to do is say the name or say the victim's name. He might say Uncle Joe is having another heart attack, for argument sake, and that person in that community knows who Uncle Joe is, knows where Uncle Joe lives, and knows the circumstances.

The problem is that right now with this current system being proposed, they are going to call 911, possibly in a big panic. The person who is going to answer that call is not going to know who Uncle Joe is, and is not going to know that he lives in the red house up on the hill or wherever. He is not going to know all of that. They are going to try to get from that person exactly what community is it you are calling from, where are you from, again, bearing in mind this person could be in a very big panic. Now there is going to be that delay trying to figure out who I am even going to transfer the call to begin with.

Then, eventually, all they are going to do is transfer that call to the local ambulance service, transfer that call to the local fire department, which that person would have called anyway. We have just inserted a second step. Instead of the direct call now we are going to call here. They have to figure out what is going on, transfer, and then they are going to have to tell the story all over again. That is going to increase response times.

If we were in a situation whereby the civic addressing was completed first and upfront, that was all done – so we had civic addressing. Right now, if you call the St. John's Regional Fire Department, by way of example, you say I am calling from 28 Pearson Street or whatever the case might be. The dispatcher types in that address on the computer and up comes the response. It tells you exactly which trucks to send from which department – if it is Kent's Pond, or West End, or wherever it is – the type

of apparatus, the number of trucks, and where they are located. The computer automatically tells you where to dispatch that service. You get them there right away. It is like immediate. You type it in and 'bang-o', there you go, and they send that equipment.

When we are to a point where civic addressing is in place and we have a system in place to be able to deal with that – so now if I am receiving a call in St. John's, or a call in Gander for some outlying area, the person can say house fire, 123 Main Road, I can type in 123 Main Road in whatever community and it automatically tells me who to send and there is no delay – it will be great. When we get to that point it will be great and it will work. Until we get to that point all we are simply doing now is adding another step along the way.

I guess the concern overall would be, maybe we put the cart before the horse a little bit. Maybe we should have the civic numbering in place first. Maybe we should have the systems in place first, and then we roll out the next phase so that we can do it properly, for areas that do not already have it.

There are areas that already have 911. I do not know why we cannot start enhancing that today. Why do we need to wait? If we have the infrastructure in the Avalon region, at the St. John's Regional Fire Department, we have the model in place, we have the dispatchers in place, we have the equipment in place, and civic addressing is in place, all of that is already in place – we want to go to Enhanced, let's enhance that now.

Why do we need to wait three years or however long it takes until some of these other outlying areas are to a point to be able to move forward? We can still work on those areas. If we are going to put in an Enhanced system and we are going to pay for an Enhanced system, well I say let's move forward now in the areas that can handle the Enhanced system. Let's do it now.

Maybe that would be a great opportunity actually, to work the bugs out of the new system. Rather than try to do it Province-wide, do it all at once. Then if you run into problems, it is a much bigger problem. Perhaps we could get to a point where we take an area that already has

infrastructure in place, has an established 911 system, and let's enhance that and let's work through that. What we learn from that, we can apply to other areas when we are ready to move into those other areas.

Mr. Chair, I also have some points to raise now. I want to reiterate the issues around cost and who is paying for all of this. Given the fact that I only have ten seconds left, I am going to take my seat. Somebody else can get up and then I will get up again to address those issues.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think I understand where the member is coming from. To address one of his later points first, related to maybe we should have civic numbering in place before we move forward. While a chunk of the Province's population has access to 911 service on land lines today, and everybody has access on cellphones where cell signals exist, we still have many, many communities that do not have access to Basic 911 service. I cannot justify waiting any longer.

We engaged some of the best people in the country with expertise and experience in this field to help us figure out the approach that we should take. Should we move quickly to Enhanced? Should we get civic addressing in place first before we do anything? How quickly should we move to Next Generation? Where should we put public safety answering points? How many of them might we need? What kind of structure would make sense? These are all questions that we have wrestled with for some time. This is not legislation that evolved overnight, as I know the member is aware.

Based on all of the research and based on all of the advice, we concluded quite clearly that this phased approach is the right approach. Get Basic 911 service in place for everybody – and I recognize that it is in place in certain regions right now and that is good, but to get to Next Generation 911, which is ultimately where we should be and need to be, we have to take a systematic approach and we have to take a

logical approach to building that. It does not make sense to do it piecemeal and try to advance to Enhanced or Next Generation in certain areas before others. This is the phased, logical approach that has been recommended to us, that we have researched and validated, and that we are confident is the right approach.

To the member's points around response time and knowing the geography and knowing the location of the caller, in reality, the 911 call taker only needs to know the community. The point is the caller can then choose the emergency provider – sorry, the operator will immediately connect with the emergency response provider in that community.

Now, alternatively, the caller could still chose to call the emergency response provider directly, as they would do today. They could call the seven-digit number that they know for their local fire department or their local police detachment or their local ambulance service, but the beauty of 911 is that it is easy to remember. Particularly in a time of crisis, in an emergency situation, it is easy to recall, it is easy to remember and, above and beyond all that, 911 is a number that will now follow you wherever you go. No matter whether you are phoning from a land line or a cellphone, no matter whether you are in his district or the most remote place in Labrador, you will be able to call 911.

To his specific point: Could it add fifteen, twenty, twenty-five seconds? It could; but I ask you: How do you measure the time that would otherwise be spent, in some cases, looking up a seven-digit number or referring to a card on your fridge or in your phone book or somewhere else to recall that number; or the time that could be lost being unable to locate or remember that emergency provider's direct number.

Getting this Basic service in place for everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador is our priority. We have not made that decision lightly. We believe that the phased approach, getting Basic in place for everybody, will be the necessary building block that allows us to quickly move to Next Generation 911.

Will it take a few years? Yes. Would we love to do it quicker? Absolutely, but that is how much time the experts are telling us it is going to

take. Based on the work that is required in terms of civic addressing, digitized mapping, and technology investments and so on, it will probably take that amount of time.

The work is going to start right away. This is not something that we are going to prolong or take additional time to do. We know it is important. We know it needs to be done. We believe we have an approach and a plan that is going to get us there.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

My question for the minister is on an issue that I raised earlier during my time in second reading. I do not think he answered it. I do not think he actually had time. I know he answered a lot of questions; I do not think he had enough time to get to it. I think he was on his way there.

I am going to put it out there to give him an opportunity to respond. I think he knows where I am going, and that is regarding the community of Grey River, which is one of the six communities that I understand due to technology limitations – I think they have access to Basic 911, but they will not get beyond that.

My fear is that it comes down to paying for a service that they will not be able to access. What I will do is, without belabouring the point – I made it earlier. I know the minister has some thoughts he would like to put out there. I will give him an opportunity to speak to that, if he is ready. I know he has a lot there to go through and that he tried to get to it earlier.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think the key point to make in response to the member's question is that today in Grey River people cannot pick up the phones in their house and call 911. It does not exist. As a result of

what we are doing, through this legislation and through what we are going to put in place in the next number of months, everybody in every house in Newfoundland and Labrador that has a land line, including Grey River and the five other isolated communities where there are some technology limitations, they will all be able to access Basic 911 service.

The challenge comes when we get to Next Generation. He is quite right in pointing that out. There are six communities. We are talking about 230 telephone lines at present. That is the total of the six communities where there are technological limitations that the telephone companies have advised we will not be able to put in the features of Next Generation 911.

Now, we will continue to work with the telephone service providers and we will continue to explore solutions, but we are advised that it would be cost prohibitive today to make those advanced features – not to be confused with Enhanced 911; we are talking about Next Generation 911. It would be cost prohibitive to put those advanced features in place in those communities on those, roughly, 230 lines. We will continue to work towards solutions, but the folks in Grey River, in the member's district, as a result of this move, will absolutely have access to Basic 911 service which is a major improvement over where we are today.

Is it conceivable in the future that we will get to a point where the technology improves and it is less cost prohibitive and would allow us to expand Next Generation 911 service to those communities? I hope so. It is going to take about three years to get it to everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador, with those few exceptions. I hope at some point in the future we can address those exceptions.

Already in this process – we are not even into Next Generation 911 – we have flagged that as an issue and it is one that we are going to continue to monitor and work on with the telephone companies and the technology providers who may be able to help us down the road. It is something that we are very mindful of and we will certainly continue to monitor as we move towards Next Generation 911.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

I appreciate the comments by the minister as it relates to the community of Grey River in my district which, again, it is a very small community, but the primary focus that I have is that everybody be treated fairly.

I guess at this point – I know we are discussing Basic 911 – my concern is that as this is a new piece of legislation and I believe the goal is to move forward to Enhanced and then Next Generation, I do not think, though, at that time that we will need new legislation. There may be an amendment. There may be a change in regulation. I know I am debating right now in 2014, but I have to look at this hopefully. What are things like in 2017? What are things like in 2020? My concern is – and I am putting it on the record now – that if and when that time comes, that anybody who does not have access to Enhanced service should not pay the same as somebody who does have access to an Enhanced service.

I know what the minister is saying about the fact that they will be able to call 911. We know that 911 is essentially useless to the people of Grey River; because, if you look at the emergency service providers, the RNC, RCMP, fire department and ambulance service, Grey River is isolated. There is a helicopter, and there is a boat that is not docked there. So, calling 911, if you alert the local fire department, you could walk outside your door and tell the person that. They are already paying for a service that will not be used, but I do not want to get into that because then I think we are getting into the principle – we are trying to get a service that covers everyone and there are different circumstances, whether it is Corner Brook, Grey River, you name it.

That is my concern, that there be a level of fairness applied. I know it is not applicable today, but there is an amount of money here that is going to be raised. We are hoping the Next Generation and the Enhanced come sooner rather than later. At that time I want it to be noted here that the legislation needs to adapt, to make sure that people who are not getting the

service – I have made my point here, and I do not want to use up too much time. I already feel that a lot of people, in not just my district but in many members' districts on both sides, because of the lack of cell service, we are still paying for it. I do not want to get into that because everybody knows the issue that presents. We have a cellphone but you cannot use it.

I heard a comment somewhere today – it may have been on the media, it may have been here – talking about tourists being happy about 911. Tourists also do not know when they get here that in many areas they cannot use the apps and stuff on their phones, or their smartphones to access these apps. They will not be able to access 911. That is a greater issue. I think it is bigger or different than what the minister is doing here today.

I do not want to go on too far. I think the minister gets the point of what I am trying to do here. I am just hoping when this 911 comes into place, the big point being the cost recovery and that everybody is treated fairly. If people are paying for it, they should get the level of service.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak again to that, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to rise again, not to belabour the point, and I appreciate the member keeping his summary brief as well. I will try and do the same.

Not to belabour the point, but we too want to ensure that everyone is treated fairly, which speaks to the point made by the Member for Mount Pearl South who is suggesting we not do that. If we have the infrastructure in place in certain regions then let's move ahead to at least Enhanced or maybe Next Generation service in those areas. We want to do our best to ensure everybody is treated equitably.

Ultimately, we will strive to ensure that the people in Grey River have the same service as everybody else. That is an admirable and reasonable objective, but there are certain

technological and geographic constraints that we must deal with. It is no different than the discussion we have been having earlier this evening about cell service. It does not exist in every single place in this Province. There are sections of road and there are communities where cell service is a challenge.

For the people of Grey River, for instance, when they go outside of Grey River they will have the opportunity to access that service they will be paying for. They will already have a major improvement as a result of what we are going to do this year in 2014. They will have Basic 911 service on their land lines, which has never before existed in Grey River. That is a huge step forward.

To the fee issue, I do understand the point the member is making. How do we go about starting to split up phone bills based on who gets what or a means test or whatever? We are talking about something that is less than the cost of a cup of coffee a month. I am not diminishing the significance of the fee. The fee is a really important piece of this. It gives us the ability to move this forward. I think we need to certainly keep in mind some of the other points I have raised.

During a discussion offline this evening, the member suggested that I visit Grey River at some point and I would be happy to do so. He said there is a jamboree that happens in the summertime. As a lifelong scout, as members opposite often point out, I enjoy a good jamboree. I would be happy to take him up on that offer at some point in time and experience Grey River myself.

I hope that addresses some of the points further. I want to acknowledge the concern that the member is raising and let him know we will work with the technology providers and with the phone service providers to strive for solutions.

Technology continues to improve. What is available today – three years from now it will be very different. Five years from now it will be very different again. That may bring about solutions for those few exceptions that we have where Next Generation down the road is going to be a challenge. The step towards Basic 911 for all is very fair, long overdue, and a big step

forward for many communities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just a couple of quick points. I know we have talked about the possibilities of the way billing is going to be handled here. We talked about the cellphone user being tagged with – well, it could be anywhere between seventy-five cents and \$1. We have talked about the fact that anybody with a hard line into their home is going to be tagged anywhere between seventy-five cents or \$1 as well. There is probably a business going to be tagged for seventy-five cents to \$1 for every line they have.

The only thing we did not touch I think, Minister, in that particular context is the pay-as-you-go user. I know here in Newfoundland and Labrador, I run into an awful lot of people out there who are using the pay-as-you-go service. In other words, they have a phone number there of sorts but they keep going out and buying minutes, for example, on these cards and loading up the cards into the phone. I would like to see if he has any kind of an explainer as regards how they are going to be billed, because they are also going to be users of the system.

That is one particular point. The other one is, I just want to get an assurance – I guess assurance is the right word – from the minister about the investment into 911 and what is going to happen here. Because I know the user is going to be billed for this and the auspices is that the money is going to be invested directly into 911. I just want to get an assurance from him that the money is not going to be used for other things.

Now, mind you, not to say that if the people of Newfoundland and Labrador wanted to get together and sock in the whole Province with a 100 per cent cellular coverage that this would not be any kind of a proposal they would overlook, because I think if the Newfoundland and Labrador user of a cellphone knew for sure he was going to get coverage in an area where he does not right now, this may be an idea or one way around it. It is just that I think the providers right now out there should be

providing a service if they want to have coverage, but I understand the challenges that a market can be to some companies.

I want to get an explainer from the minister, number one, about the pay-as-you-go system, how they are going to be billed, and an assurance from the minister that the monies collected for 911 will stay for 911. We already have an example of another governmental organization called the Multi-Materials Stewardship Board where an awful lot of money is raised by them but we sometimes see government draw from that and redirect elsewhere when it is supposed to be an arm's-length branch that all of us as taxpayers, consumers if you will, are paying into.

Just a couple of those questions, I guess.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To address the pay-as-you-go issue, first of all. On a pay-as-you-go account or a pay-as-you-go phone, the phone company would still collect the fee. However, if the amount is not sufficient they will not be deemed to refuse to pay. That has been addressed. The fee would be collected but if the amount of the bill is not sufficient then that would not be considered a refusal to pay. We have factored in the pay-as-you-go phones, which are common these days. There are lots of people with those types of phones as well. I see the Chair nodding. Perhaps he has one, I do not know; or perhaps he has bought one for one of his daughters or someone else, I do not know. That is for him to say, perhaps when he is not in the Chair.

Regarding the question of money being used for other things, we answered that earlier today at several points. The money can only be used for the purposes that are set out in the bill. If you look at Section 10 of the bill, I would say to the Member for St. John's East, any excess revenue shall be used for the objects as outlined in the bill. It is impossible; it would be illegal for those funds to be used for any other purpose.

Again, as I have also said today, if we determined at some point that there was a large

surplus of funds building up in our 911 Bureau, then we as Cabinet have the ability to reduce that fee. The Lieutenant-Governor in Council has the ability to reduce the fee so that those funds do not continue to build up.

Based on where we are right now, and the work that is needed over the next few years to get us the Next Generation 911, those funds will be needed and they will be well-spent. There is a great deal of accountability, though. There will be annual reports, there will be full transparency. That is an important piece of this legislation as well.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

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

I have just a couple of follow-up questions from the discussion earlier. I know the minister was listening attentively and has been doing his best to answer questions tonight. We appreciate that.

One of the things that was spoken about earlier was that tourists will benefit from the 911 service, and that would be the case. Just for clarity, though, they will not pay for this service, right?

The second thing was with regards to the residents of Mount Pearl, St. John's, and the Northeast Avalon – locations that currently now have 911 – the minister referred to the benefit of being able to use your cellphone on the highway and accessing 911. I would ask, how does that benefit really come to fruition if the GPS component is not available? If you use your cellphone on the highway and you call 911, if there is no location connected to your phone, how does the benefit of using your cellphone on the highway help you in a 911 situation?

The other question I would have is the fee, plus the admin fee, plus the HST; will that be under \$1? Or will that be between the 75 cent and \$1 range that has been referred to in the last number of hours as we have debated and discussed as well.

With regard to public education, just for clarity, in my comments earlier I wanted to make sure I was clear. Really what we are doing with public

education is managing expectations down. We are going to spend advertising money, communication money, to manage down people's expectations around the service for 911. I just wanted to make sure I was clear in that understanding.

Additionally, concerns and questions – more so questions – around the impact as was referred to earlier, there are an isolated number of small businesses that would use a lot of phone lines. I am thinking about call centres, companies that do a lot of client discussions and have a high volume of phone numbers, and also companies that have high numbers of debit and credit lines. I was not clear earlier, are government phone lines also part of the fee? Will government be paying the fee as well?

My last question, before I make a comment on something another hon. member mentioned, was the minister referred a number of times to the consultant work that was completed, the quality of the consultant's work, and the depth of the consultant's work. I would ask the minister, I would assume, based on this work that we would actually have a cost of what Next Generation 911 would cost. There must be a figure in the consultant's report that specifically identifies what that Next Generation cost is. Really, if we are looking at a three-year implementation phase, again, we are talking about a fee that is being collected that is between \$16.2 million and \$21.6 million. I would be curious to know what the cost of the Next Generation 911 would be.

My last comment would be in the area of test rollout phased-in technology. The hon. Member for Mount Pearl in front of me mentioned the idea of using a smaller location to test Next Generation 911. I understand the minister's desire to be equitable and fair to everyone in our Province. I think that is admirable and I certainly support him in that.

What I am confused about is the lack of equity for those taxpayers on the Northeast Avalon who are paying for this service as it exists now with no additional service; and why the idea of potentially using the Northeast Avalon as a test location for advanced technology to make sure we were implementing it in a way that was efficient, effective, and in the best interests of

the taxpayers – or I correct myself, the fee payers – would not necessarily be something we would consider.

I will leave those questions for the minister.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Those are great questions. I certainly feel like I am earning my pay tonight, which I guess all taxpayers would be pleased to know. I certainly hope the ones in Mount Pearl North are aware, anyway.

In terms of the –

MR. LANE: (Inaudible).

MR. KENT: Thank you. I appreciate the support from the Member for Mount Pearl South. Thank you. It is good to know some things have not changed. A lot of things have changed over the last number of months, but it is good to know some things have not.

To the member's first point, tourists will benefit. They would not pay for the service, of course, unless they had a phone service here, unless they had a cellphone or a land line. If you are a tourist, that is unlikely. If you were calling from a hotel, or if you were calling from nan's house, then the person whose phone you are using, or the business whose phone you are using are certainly paying for that service to exist.

In terms of the highway example, I am going to share a real story with you from the consultations. First, let us say somebody called today. They called the police, they called from their cellphone and they said, I do not know exactly where I am, but I think I am four kilometres west of Whitbourne. Today, by calling the emergency response provider direct, whether you are in an area that has 911, or whether you are not, that is all the emergency response provider would have to go on today, so that does not change.

Let me give you a real example that we have heard through the process of getting ready for this bill. There was a gentleman who was on a

cliff and he was injured. He called 911, but they could not get a good connection. The receiver of the call on the other end could not get a good connection. All the call taker could hear was that he was on a cliff and they knew he was in trouble. During the course of the call they lost the connection with the caller.

The 911 call taker immediately contacted Bell Aliant, and using his cellphone number – when you are dealing with Basic 911, that comes up in the screen for Basic 911 – they found his billing address and the associated land line. They called his wife, found out the area where he went hiking, and therefore were able to send emergency response. Had he called the seven-digit number in the local jurisdiction, he may not have gotten a voice contact and he certainly would not have gotten a call taker with the resources that were needed to take the extra steps needed to find him. So, this is an example of how 911 is a major improvement over where we are today.

The member asked about the under \$1. I believe, even with taxes factored in, the cost would be under \$1, as it presently stands. That is where we expect we will be. Again, I cannot commit to a precise fee at this point because there is still work being done to determine where exactly that fee should be. We do not want it to be any higher than it needs to be to advance the work.

Will government phone lines be charged the fee? Absolutely. Government phone lines will be charged the same fee as business phone lines, as commercial phone lines, as residential phone lines, and as cellphone lines.

The cost of Next Generation 911 – the capital cost, as we understand it today, and again things could change over the next three years as we work toward full implementation, but the capital cost we anticipate is about \$1.5 million specifically for Next Generation 911. The total cost of operating the system, the cost of the full service with Next Generation 911 factored in, is roughly \$5.5 million annually. So those dollars now, in the next few years, will be used to get the system up and running, establish public safety answering points and build all the pieces necessary to get us to Next Generation, but we

anticipate the cost of operating that system on an ongoing basis is about \$5.5 million.

In terms of taxpayers in the Northeast Avalon region, it is important to note that they are getting subsidized now from other taxpayers in Newfoundland and Labrador. When we talk about fairness and equity, just to build on the comments the member made, they are getting subsidy now from other taxpayers because government dollars, through Health and Community Services and the Department of Justice, are supporting the 911 services that exist, for instance, in the Northeast Avalon region today.

I would just sum up by saying that we are trying to ensure that everyone knows what they are getting here. We are trying to be as open as we can be in terms of clarifying what the cost might look like, how the service will work, who will have services, what that service will look like, and where we ultimately hope to get as we move towards Next Generation 911.

CHAIR (Littlejohn): The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

MS C. BENNETT: I just have two quick questions. I ask the minister if he can clarify the dollar value of the subsidy that he referred to and, also, the status of that subsidy after this bill is enacted. Will that subsidy still be in place?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. KENT: I will endeavour to get the precise number. My recollection from working on this for the last number of months is that it is about \$600,000 or \$700,000. I will get a number for the member and provide that information; that is not a problem. I will get the precise number and advise her.

In terms of, will those subsidies continue? No, they would not continue because the 911 service will be put in place through the Newfoundland and Labrador 911 Bureau, and that is the entity that we will fund in delivering the service. I will certainly get those figures and be happy to provide them. Again, there are two sources of that revenue, through the Department of Justice, obviously, for policing, and through Health and

Community Services for ambulance services. That is why those two government entities provide the funds to support the dispatch service and so on in the Northeast Avalon region, for instance. We will get those numbers.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just have a couple of final points to make on this.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. LANE: The member next to me is saying: Can I hold you to that? Maybe, we will see; that is the plan anyway.

Just to reiterate, I suppose, a couple of the points that my colleague made – and I want to make this just so that I am clear and for the record and everything else. There is going to be an impact, obviously, on all the districts in Newfoundland and Labrador, and there will be an impact on my district.

So that we are clear, my understanding – and the minister can confirm it; although I believe he has – is that as it currently sits if you are living in – and I am going to use the District of Mount Pearl South because that is my district, but it applies to other districts in the greater St. John's area. Currently, as it sits, in my district if somebody has an emergency, they dial 911 and they receive that service. Now, whether they dial 911 via their land line or whether they dial 911 via their cellphone if they have an emergency, they dial that number and they are going to get a response to that emergency.

As it currently sits, the people of my district are paying for that service through their municipal taxation system. That is what is paying for the St. John's Regional Fire Department. That is what is paying for the 911 dispatch, which is facilitated by the St. John's Regional Fire Department. If we were to pass this bill tomorrow, or whenever the bill came into effect – I am not sure what the planned date is on it, but once this bill comes into effect, now the person who was receiving a 911 service in the District of Mount Pearl South and already

paying for it through their municipal taxes is now going to also pay for it on their landline, and if they have more than one landline – if they have two, they are going to pay two – and plus they are going to pay for it on all their cellphones as well.

The only benefit I believe the minister indicated to the person in Mount Pearl South that they get out of this under the Basic 911, certainly, is the fact that if a person from my district decided to drive out to the highway, drive out to Clarenville or Rocky Harbour, or wherever they are going to drive, that they will have the benefit of 911 on their cellphone. That is the only benefit –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. LANE: Now, I would ask the members – I have not said a word when you were up speaking.

Mr. Chair, the only benefit that they receive for the money that they are going to pay is the fact that when they go out in some of these areas, if they go out – and a lot of people would argue, well, I do not go outside the overpass, but that is fine. Fair enough. Let us say that some do; let us say that a lot do. If that was the case and they were, then I could understand – you could argue, if you wanted to make that stretch, well, okay, you charged that fee to their cellphone bill because when they are driving on the highway, they are using their cellular telephone.

So, therefore, you could argue that the \$1 fee would go on to their cellphone, which they would use when they are travelling around the Island; but, if somebody is living in the district of Mount Pearl, their land line, as far as their land line goes, there is no applicability to that land line when someone is driving out over the highway. So they are going to pay extra money on their land line phone for service that they are not receiving.

The question becomes – and I am not suggesting, by the way, Mr. Chair –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am not suggesting that is necessarily a bad thing. Perhaps people in my district would say, many of them would say perhaps: That is okay, I do not mind paying. Some people might say: I do not mind paying extra on my land line. I do not mind paying an additional fee on my cellphone, which I do not have to pay for now, in order to provide that service Island wide. I am prepared to pay extra to provide that Island wide. Some might say it. Some people might say, though: No, why should I pay for it? I am already paying my taxes for 911 and I receive 911, so why should I pay an additional fee?

I will leave it up to the individual person in my district to make that determination as to whether they agree with that or whether they do not agree with that. That is up to them, but at least when people ask me that question – and I was asked that question actually this evening by a resident. I was asked that question. At least when I am asked that question I will be able to give them the answer, yes – Mr. Chair, I will be able to say, before this legislation came into play you received the service paying for it with your municipal taxes but since this new bill came into play you are receiving no additional –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am just going to say very quickly, I have points that I am going to make on behalf of the residents of my district. Here is the deal; I can speak to it as long as I need to speak to it. If I am going to be constantly interrupted, and that means I have to sit down without finishing, then I will get up again and again and again. Now, I will stay here until 2:00 o'clock in the morning. If the members want to cut into my time, I will keep them here all night. I do not care, but I am not sitting down and I am not going to stop asking questions on behalf of my district.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: I have not said a word when they have been up speaking.

As I said, Mr. Chair, it will be up to the residents of my district, as it will be in other districts, to determine whether they are okay with that. Maybe they are okay with it. Some people might be okay with paying a fee for something they are not receiving. Some might say: Do you know what? For the big picture, for the good of all, I am prepared to do it. If they are, God love them, but if they are not prepared to do it, well that is up to them as well. At least I can give them the information. At least I can let them know that once this comes into effect, they will be paying \$1 on their cellphones and on their land lines and they are not receiving anything.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. member he cannot use props.

MR. LANE: Mr. Chair, once this comes into effect, they are going to pay fees for service where they are not receiving any additional benefit.

That is the only point. I just want to clarify and make sure so I can tell people in my district when they ask me that question.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On behalf of my colleagues – some of them are a little boisterous and I will speak to them privately shortly – I thank the hon. member for his participation in the debate. I understand the points he is making.

Mr. Chair, our responsibility is to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, all of them. In terms of the benefit to residents of his district, which is very, very close to my district – which is maybe a good thing or a bad thing, it depends on your perspective, I guess. The benefit to those residents is great because we are ultimately going to have Next Generation 911 that these fees will fund, that these fees will pay for, available to the residents of Mount Pearl and St. John's, and virtually every community in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is also important to note that government is subsidizing

the existing service that those residents enjoy now.

To respond again to the Member for Virginia Waters – I am getting tongue-tied, it must be that hour of the night – it is somewhere between \$700,000 and \$800,000. I do not have the precise figure but it is about where I thought it was. It might be slightly higher, it might be closer to \$800,000, but that is about where it is. We are subsidizing an existing service for a select group of residents in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is not ultimately where we should be or where we need to be.

The city does not need to pay for 911 call-taking next year; just the dispatching and fire protection which makes sense, which other taxpayers in other regions of the Province would be paying for as well.

I hope those comments address the member's concern. Some of his other points I have addressed earlier or during the course of debate today. I hope to the specific concern he is illustrating this evening, I hope I have adequately covered that for him and for other members as well. I thank him again for his question.

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

MR. J. BENNETT: Mr. Chair, what I would like to inquire about is there is a service which is proposed by this bill to provide cellphone service, and it is claimed to be for everybody in the Province, a 911 service. It is claimed it will be for the benefit of everybody in the Province because everybody in the Province is going to be forced to pay for it, and I understand that.

What I need to ask the minister about is that 40 per cent of the people in the Province already receive a 911 service. Those services are in place. Those services are being paid for. They are being paid for in St. John's, Mount Pearl, the immediate area, Corner Brook –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. J. BENNETT: I hear the members on the other side claim that they are getting a free ride in these urban municipalities. That may be true, but I do not know that to be the case.

In any event, the amount they are paying, I am told, is paid for through their property taxes. Maybe the minister could set us straight on that. If, in fact, the people of Mount Pearl are getting a free ride then he should tell us that. If they are paying for it themselves – I would like an explanation from the minister. When this new service takes over, does that mean the 40 per cent will be paying twice for a service they are already getting, they could not possibly need? What happens to them?

At some point are they then backed out of the equation? Are they going to be refunded their money, or are we just going to go forward with the 60 per cent? All of the 60 per cent, certainly, will not get the coverage, but what is the explanation to be provided to the people in Mount Pearl North of why they should vote for this minister who is imposing this double taxation on them for something they do not need and have not asked for?

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 33 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 33 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 33 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Establish And Implement A Province-Wide 911 Telephone Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 14 without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

At this time we move forward to have the Committee review our Supply; in particular we

are doing the Estimates. We will start under the Consolidated Fund Services heading.

CHAIR: Order, please!

We are reviewing the Estimates of the Consolidated Fund Services.

The Clerk can call the first subhead.

CLERK: Subhead 1.1.01.

CHAIR: Subhead 1.1.01.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.1.01 carried.

CLERK: Subheads 1.1.02 through 2.1.03 inclusive.

CHAIR: Subheads 1.1.02 to 2.1.03 inclusive.

AN HON. MEMBER: Where is he?

CHAIR: I am on page 1.3. I am going to back up just for a second.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition. I called the first clause, 1.1.01.

MR. BALL: Yes, okay, so I have a question there.

CHAIR: No one stood, and we passed that. Now I am calling 1.1.02 to 2.1.03 inclusive, and I am assuming you are going to stand up now, Sir.

MR. BALL: Right on; so, where are you?

CHAIR: I called all of them from 1.1.02 to 2.1.03 inclusive, so you can start wherever you want in there, Sir.

MR. BALL: Okay.

CHAIR: 1.1.02 Treasury Bills.

MR. BALL: Right on.

CHAIR: Okay. Please stand so I can recognize you.

MR. BALL: Thank you.

We have a question on 1.1.01 and I guess this will be the Minister of Finance I will be asking this to. What I will do, if the minister is okay with this, I will just lay it out there as it is. I know sometimes it gets a little difficult to follow this through in the Estimates.

Really what we have here is a budget last year of \$5.8 million; you actually spent just under \$5 million – but back to \$5 million. I am just looking for an explanation on really the debt expenses here in this particular line.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Thank you.

I have that in my notes as 1.1.02, correct?

MR. BALL: Yes.

MS JOHNSON: Okay. The revised from \$5.8 million down to roughly \$5 million is due to the lower short-term interest rates than were initially forecast. On a go-forward basis you will see it to be \$5 million. That is because short-term interest rates will continue to be at or near current levels.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Mr. Chair, the Estimates we are doing here are a little bit extensive. I do not know, if, with agreement, maybe the members could stay seated and to recognize the speaker, if he simply raised his hand. There is a lot of up and down and I know the minister has a lot of –

MR. BALL: Yes, that has been in the past.

MR. KING: Yes, so if you are comfortable with that maybe we can follow the same pattern.

CHAIR: Fine.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is a lot easier on the eyesight too.

The next line would be 1.1.03. What we saw there last year was a budget of just over \$310 million. There was an extra almost \$15 million from this year, you actually spent and revised to \$313 million. We are at \$328 million this year, so just an explanation of 1.1.03 and the Debt Expenses line item 11.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: I do not have the same numbers he has, so I am just going to check the Estimates book.

CHAIR: 1.1.03, Minister, Debentures.

MS JOHNSON: Okay, you are not looking at the total; you are looking at – there is Paid to Debenture holders, and then there is Paid to Newfoundland and Labrador. Did you want the answer in relation to the total or just the top line?

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair.

What I am looking for is the difference between in Budget of 2013-2014, the revised amount of \$313 million, and this year the Budget amount of \$328,378,000, so an extra \$15 million there.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: The 2013-2014 revised figure reflects a weaker Canadian dollar than was forecasted at the time. On a go-forward basis for 2014-2015, we are using a US-Canadian exchange rate of \$1.11, or ninety cents the other way, based on the borrowings planned for next year.

Basically we have erred on the side of caution. When we are using revenue we use a stronger Canadian dollar to be more conservative. When you are looking at borrowing, you use the weaker Canadian dollar, again to be conservative. It is just the changes in the exchange rates.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you.

The next question for me would be on the Temporary Investments, 1.1.05. I think I know the answer. Last year we budgeted revenue at \$8 million, we actually had revenue at \$12,500,000. First of all the difference there, I have an idea it would be the investment piece. Then this year we are anticipating it to be \$6.5 million. I am assuming that is because the cash balance would be smaller that you are investing. What is the cash balance, if you have it?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Yes, the revised last year reflects the fact that we had more cash balances than originally forecast. Then on a go-forward basis for 2014-2015 that is correct, our average cash balances are expected to be lower in 2014-2015. If he wants to go on to the next question, I will have the answer to the exact dollar amount on hand as we go forward.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am good now, really, until we go over to the servicing of public debt, which is 1.5.01.

CHAIR: Subhead 1.5.01?

MR. BALL: Was that inclusive of your call there, Mr. Chair?

CHAIR: It was, hon. Opposition Leader.

MR. BALL: Thank you.

What we see there is a new line this year. There was nothing in this last year and no line back into 2012-2013, but \$7 million in Professional Services.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: That is for the underwriting commissions and the management fees for when

you borrow. Usually the fee is seventy cents on the 100.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you.

That \$7 million was for how much that we borrowed there? You said –

MS JOHNSON: (Inaudible). Sorry.

CHAIR: Can you just repeat that for the record, Minister, please?

MS JOHNSON: Sure.

The \$7 million in management fees will be on borrowing of \$1 billion.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just a question on what we would get for that. This, as you say, is the underwriting commissions. What would the underwriter do for us?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Well, again, I can get more details, but they get a good rate for us, we hope, and do the work that is required in order to secure these borrowings at the best rate that we can get.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. BALL: I guess for the sake of the information, who do we use as the underwriter for that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: I would have to get the exact name. We may have to go look for underwriters, so we may not have that name at the moment. I can get more information in the next few minutes or so on that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you.

We will move on to the next one, but I think as part of the question on that, it would be an idea if there was an RFP that went out to certain – how that process all unfolded before we actually made a decision to pick a certain underwriter would be part of that if you do not mind, I say to the minister.

The next one would be 2.1.05.

CHAIR: Subhead 2.1.05, page 1.8?

MR. BALL: Page 1.7, pensions, 2.1.01.

CHAIR: Okay, 2.1.01.

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. BALL: We see a revenue line of \$480,000 that was budgeted last year and there is an extra \$2 million in the revision, yet in Estimates this year we have budgeted for \$480,000 again. So I am just wondering about the extra \$2 million.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: That is 2.1.01.02, under Revenue, correct?

The revised is higher than budget mainly due to an anticipated reimbursement of \$2 million from the government money purchase plan. Basically, employees who leave employment before two years are not vested in the program. So, funds that the government would have put into it would stay in the fund and it was decided that \$2 million would be put into general revenue.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. BALL: Okay.

So, a question around the \$480,000: How do we determine that the \$480,000 would be put back in this year?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: The \$480,000 is what we expect typically in any given year, but it is hard to predict if people will stay or leave

employment earlier than anticipated. That is a figure that is generally used, due to historical information.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thanks, because when you look at Estimates in 2012-2013, we did the same thing. Government budgeted \$480,000, yet in 2012-2013 there was \$2,745,000 last year. So, essentially, there was another \$2.3 million last year. This year we see the same thing – not that you are complaining to be able to put the money into revenue, but I am just questioning the budgeting process when, really, you look back over two or three years you have the same thing as existing into the tune of about \$2 million. I am just wondering, if you continue to budget \$480,000, what is the basis for budgeting \$480,000?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: The \$480,000 is based on \$130,000, which is recovered from government personnel costs from the Newfoundland Pooled Pension Fund. That is for employees of the pension division. Theirs are paid for directly to the department, so the cost of operating the division is paid from the fund. The other \$350,000 and that \$480,000 represent revenue from the employee contributions that exceed the maximum amounts permitted under the Income Tax Act.

The extra \$2 million this year is over and above that \$480,000. This is \$480,000 that we budget for every year. It is not every year that you do get money put into general revenue from extras that we have from the government purchase plan. It may have happened, as you said, the year before, but the \$480,000 is what we can bank on.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. BALL: The next question would be 2.1.02, the Employee Benefits. We had budgeted \$70 million last year and the revised amount was for \$12.5 million. First of all, the difference there, and then we are back to \$17.6 million for this year. Can I just have an explanation of that line?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: This line generally is for severance. A lot less severance was paid out than what was budgeted for, as you can see. So we, therefore, decided to take that into consideration and significantly budget less on a go-forward basis for this year.

The 2014-2015 number, though, there is an estimate there for ex-gratia account, which is greater in the prior year due to an adjustment to the allocation of payments between the ex-gratia and the supplementary account. We have decreased what we expect to be paid out in severance and there is some allowance in there for extra ex-gratia payments.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you to the minister.

I know it is getting late in the day, but this year when you are calculating severance, when you look at it, it was like a \$17 million kind of budget allocation that did not occur. If you go back to last year again – because we are just looking for a pattern – it was \$10 million and we used just less than \$3 million. Again, it is something that we saw occur last year and again this year, and now it is back to \$17 million.

So when you look at the three-year history of this, there is really no consistency to it. So maybe at this hour in the night is not the time to try to explain it, unless you have the answer, but it is just not last year that it happened.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: I think that is why you will see we did take that into consideration. Last year the budget was nearly \$70 million and now, this year, we are budgeting \$17 million. So, it is a \$53 million reduction. We have taken the historical information into account. Again, people come and go and people come at various stages in their life, so it is hard one to pinpoint, but staff do the best they can with the information that they have.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. BALL: Yes, I think my point is that back in 2012-2013 it was \$10 million and we used less than \$3 million. Then in 2013-2014 we

suggested it was going to be close to \$70 million, and we only did \$12 million. Then to see a budget of 2014-2015, to see it just under \$18 million, it is really difficult to make sense of how the budgeting occurs. That is what it is, if you are comfortable with it.

For me, that is all the questions I would have in line items for the –

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

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

Maybe the minister could explain – I am going to ask the question differently with regard to the \$69 million. Why was it that the department estimated so high for that figure? Is it that you had a major expectation a lot of people were going to take early retirements and did not do it? What was the reasoning that made your estimate so high?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Not being there at the time, I would have to ask officials to get me that answer. I get it to you in short order, they are listening.

MS MICHAEL: (Inaudible) and going back to 1.4.01.

CHAIR: 1.4.01?

MS MICHAEL: Correct. Revenue, 1.4.01.02.

CHAIR: Revenue.

MS MICHAEL: Revenue.

Under here it is called Guarantee Fees – Non-Statutory. “Appropriations provide for fees charged to private companies which have debt guaranteed by the Province and costs related to the collection of loans and guarantees.”

The budget was \$3,527,000, the revision was \$7,200,000, and this year it is back to \$3.5 million again. First of all, minister, if we could have an explanation of why it was so much higher than estimated.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Yes, typically it is the \$3.5 million. The issue with the revised last year is that the NL Hydro guarantee for 2012-2013 was not received until April, 2013. It came in after the budget year, so we got two years in one.

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

One of the companies is NL Hydro. Minister, could we have a list of all the companies that come under this?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Yes, it is Fogo Island Co-op, Smith Seafoods, Torngat Fish Producers, and NL Hydro.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. BALL: I am good.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.02 to 2.1.03 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.02 through 2.1.03 carried.

CLERK: The total.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, total carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Consolidated Fund Services without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Consolidated Fund Services carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We move forward now to the vote on the Legislature section.

CHAIR: Page 7.3 in the Estimates booklet, ladies and gentlemen.

Page 7.3, the House of Assembly Legislature.

Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.1.01 carried.

CLERK: Subhead 1.1.02 through 6.1.01 inclusive.

CHAIR: Subhead 1.1.02 to 6.1.01 inclusive.

Shall the subheads carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.02 through 6.1.01 carried.

CLERK: The total.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, total carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the House of Assembly without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the House of Assembly carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader – bear with me, pleased.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just for a matter of the record, in case you are confused a little. The Legislature is actually done by the Management Commission. We ratify it here, but all three parties have been a party to do those decisions, if you will. That is why I was looking at you because I did not anticipate questions. We have all been part of those discussions.

We are ready now to move back to section 1.1.01, commencing with the Government House.

Thank you.

CHAIR: We are now at Executive Council, 1.1.01, Government House on page 2.3 of the Estimates book.

CLERK: Subhead 1.1.01.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 carry?

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the House Leader, we did not really think we were going back in the House Management Commission.

Under 1.1.01, Government House, we saw an extra \$112,000 last year in Salaries. I ask the minister for an explanation on the extra salaries last year.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: This was for severance and other costs for two staff who retired there.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. BALL: I guess an explanation, what would severance total versus other?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Paid leave that would have been accumulated, that sort of thing.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you.

So 2.1.01, this is the Premier's Office.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. BALL: We have not called that?

CHAIR: We can continue.

MR. BALL: Okay. If you need to –

CHAIR: Yes, okay.

Shall 1.1.01 –

MS JOHNSON: Does Ms Michael have any questions?

CHAIR: Ms Michael, do you have a question on that?

MS MICHAEL: No.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.1.01 carried.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, total carried.

CLERK: Subhead 2.1.01.

CHAIR: Subhead 2.1.01.

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is the Premier's Office, 2.1.01. This year we have seen a total in the Premier's Office of about an 11.5 per cent increase, from \$1.865 million to \$2 million for the year.

We will start with Salaries. It was \$1.6 million, there was a \$400,000 revision, and it is back to \$1.7 million for this year. So just an explanation on that line.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You may recall, just after the Budget I did a clarification point in the House around the Estimates for this piece. I can provide you with

the new numbers for 2014-2015. I mentioned at the time that funds would be frozen. The only thing they would get is the 2 per cent general increase over the budget from 2013-2014.

In actual fact, the 2014-2015 budget item for Salaries is \$1,640,700. It is 2 per cent above what it was last year for salary increases only. You will see that down in every single line. Basically it is \$179,300 frozen overall

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Mr. Chair, the \$400,000 in last year's budget to the revision, was that all severance related?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Yes, it was all severance, paid leave, and that sort of thing.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: For that \$400,000, how many people would that have included?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: I think it was four, if you could just give me a minute – four.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In Transportation and Communications in the Premier's Office there is a budget increase from the revision this year of about \$88,000. Last year, there was a budget of \$188,000. There was actually \$197,000 spent in Transportation and Communications. We see that number up to \$277,000 this year, so just an explanation on why the variance in the budget and the increase in the budget for this year.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: There was an increased amount of \$8,800 from budget time to revised. That was due to increased travel requirements.

The amount for 2014-2015 will actually be \$189,400. We froze the difference there as that was a mistake in the Estimates. The amount is \$189,400.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Okay. The last one there in this section 2.1.01 would be in Purchased Services, \$34,000 this year versus the \$10,000 that was actually spent last year.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: I get my echo every time that is in my ear.

For Purchased Services, the actual amount for this year is \$14,400. The budgeted amount last year was \$15,000. It was revised to \$10,500, but back down to \$14,400 for this year.

In fact, I will just list off each one of them, and I can provide you a copy: Salaries is \$1,640,700; Employee Benefits is actually \$400, the same as last year's budget; Transportation and Communications, as I said is \$189,400; Supplies is \$27,000, the exact same as last year; Purchased Services is \$14,400, less than budgeted last year; Property, Furnishing and Equipment is \$7,000, the same as last year; and Allowances and Assistance is \$20,000, the same as last year.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you to the minister.

I think for the sake of the vote – one thing as a suggestion – maybe if we just vote on the total amount now. You probably have that number right in front you there now anyway. What we have is it was just over \$2 million, so that is actually going to be substantially lower now anyway.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: It is going to be \$179,300 lower. My understanding is we have to vote on the total amount and then immediately when the Budget is passed they will freeze those funds.

The financial department cannot freeze the funds until the Budget is passed though.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: No, go ahead.

CHAIR: Okay.

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I need clarification on what the minister is saying. Minister, are you saying that you have given us these new figures, but what we are voting on is going to be what is printed in the Budget? Is that what you are saying?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: I can get clarification in a few minutes. My understanding at Budget time when this was explained to me is you would have to vote on the total amount, but then immediately the funds would be frozen after because this is what is printed in the Budget book.

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you.

The total amount that is printed in the Budget book is what will be voted on, not the new figure you have given us?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: That is my understanding. Yes, that is correct. We vote on the total amount. When the Budget is passed, there will be an order given to freeze those funds automatically.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Just for clarification, I guess, we will all get a good understanding of this, would the minister just give us a total on the amount that will be frozen.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: That is the \$179,300 that I referenced.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition are we good?

MR. BALL: We will see.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: What you see right now for 2014-2015 is \$2,078,300. If you take away the amount that is frozen, the \$179,300 the remaining budget for the Premier's Office is \$1,899,900. Is that clear?

CHAIR: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

MS MICHAEL: (Inaudible) but we will be voting on the \$2 million.

CHAIR: Yes.

Shall clause 2.2.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, subhead 2.2.01 carried.

CLERK: The total.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, total carried.

CLERK: 2.2.01 through 2.2.06 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 2.2.01 through 2.2.06 inclusive carry?

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Cabinet Secretariat in Salaries – and of course this is the section that deals with, as the header says, appropriations that “provide for the effective and efficient operation of the Cabinet process...” The Salaries saw an increase of \$322,000 there last year and back down to \$1.4 million for this year's budget, for the extra \$322,000, just an explanation on that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

If I could, I committed to getting answers on the previous questions as I get them. I know it is a separate subheading but you asked for the cash balances. From January to March they ranged from \$755 million to \$1.41 billion and this fluctuates daily. As I get other answers I will give them to you.

On to this one, the revised last year was higher. That was due to severance costs for several staff. The amount this year is slightly less; it is \$51,800 less than budgeted last year. This is removal of one-time funding for a position in Cab Sec. The position is going to be continued to be funded and the position will remain, but they have said they can absorb within their existing allocation. Then the rest would be the 2 per cent increase.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: The same 2.2.01 – Professional Services: \$30,000 last year. There was \$3,400,000 spent, and it is budgeted for \$30,000 again this year.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: That was the spend-analysis contract. That is one of the examples I used the other day for external consultants and that is the one I used that, because of that work, we were able to find \$20 million in savings. That money

would have been in Finance's budget and we transferred it from Finance to Cabinet Secretariat.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: What was that again? Was it \$3 million you said that was spent on a spend analysis? Out of that work, what was the objective for that group?

CHAIR (Verge): The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: It was \$3,373,000 for a spend-analysis contract. We hired a company to do a piece of work. I can get you exactly where they found it in, but I know a lot of savings was found in health care around catheters, bundling of ordering of products, salt, through Transportation and Works. I do have the breakdown here. If you just want to give me a minute or so, I can get you the breakdown of how we got the \$20 million in savings, or I can provide it to you in a few minutes. My pages are sticking together.

MR. BALL: That is fine.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: The next line item would be for Purchased Services. We budgeted for \$30,900, actually spent \$64,000 in the revision last year, and back to \$30,000 this year.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: This would include things like room rentals and meeting costs, copy charges, relocation costs for a position, and audiovisual equipment rental. So the relocation costs were not budgeted for, were not anticipated.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: So the next question for me would be in the Cabinet Secretariat in the Planning Coordination, 2.2.02. Again, in Salaries, \$754,000, you actually spent \$659,000, and back

to \$769,000 this year. It is about \$94,000 or \$96,000 less actually last year.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Just back to the spend analysis for a moment, so it was a lot of equipment in health care, bulk salt, fleet insurance, bulk fuel – and there was news release that went out outlining that, so I can get you a copy of that.

The revised with 2.2.02, it was down because there were some vacancies during the year; and the increase of \$15,100 from last year's budget to this year, there is a transfer of funding from economic and social policy analysis. You will see in 2.2.03, there was a transfer there of \$51,000, and then the rest is salary increases.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: The next question for me would be in Transportation and Communications under 2.2.02; \$71,000 budgeted, and we spent \$18,000 last year. Why back to \$71,000? I guess just a question around transportation and communication within that department.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: There were some vacant positions in this particular division last year. Because they are the planning and co-ordination section they would do a lot of travel around the Province to regions, health boards and that sort of thing. With the vacancies, there were less than anticipated in terms of travel costs; but given that we are back into a planning year for some areas, we anticipate that this money will be spent this year.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I guess the thing, though, is that last year in budget 2012-2013 we saw the same thing which was \$62,000 that was actually budgeted and we only spent \$5,500. It went back to \$71,000 then for last year, and then this year we see it right back \$71,000 again. So, it almost seems that this has been become a line item because it is

not really based on the history, or historical data in the transportation and communications in the department.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

A very good point; a point that I picked up on early in there and I did ask in some of these – not only in the Estimates we are doing today, but all throughout government in other departments, I have asked for the historical picture so I could see how this is trending. We will take the opportunity this year to give a hard look at that and readjust next year where we think we can. Some departments do that on their own; and, others, we will analyze and suggest for them.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Just the next question: Professional Services, \$86,000 budgeted, spent \$10,000, back to \$82,000 again this year. What services will you be planning within the planning and co-ordination of the Cabinet Secretariat?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I can get that for him here very shortly. I do have that information because I asked the same thing myself: What did you have planned that did not get done? I do have that here, if you just want to give me a few moments. I will give you all this in a package shortly.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Subhead 2.2.03, Economic and Social Policy Analysis, in Salaries this year, \$800,000 budgeted; last year was \$734,500 spent and back to \$766,700. Were there vacancies at that office, just for a breakdown?

MS JOHNSON: (Inaudible) and then the amount for 2014, that is for the transfer funding to the planning and co-ordination back in 2.2.02 that we just spoke about a minute ago. That was

the difference of the \$51,000 and then the other is \$16,000 for the 2 per cent salary increase.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you.

The next question – I only have ten seconds left there before I move on to climate change. I can just switch up for the –

CHAIR: Okay. That will be fine. We will come back.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party, we will put ten minutes on the clock for you to question the Minister of Finance.

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

I just want to go back over a couple of the items. Under 2.2.02.10, Grants and Subsidies, there was nothing budgeted – it is a small amount, but still \$6,000 was spent when nothing was budgeted. Could we have a breakdown of that, Minister, please?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: This was for a grant to the Community Sector Council. This was approved in 2012-2013, but the money did not get paid until 2013-2014.

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

MS MICHAEL: Okay, thank you.

CHAIR: I wonder if the Leader of the Third Party maybe could pull her mike down a little bit. I am having a little trouble hearing you.

MS MICHAEL: Okay.

CHAIR: Thank you.

MS MICHAEL: Is that better?

CHAIR: That is better. Thanks.

MS MICHAEL: Okay, great.

Minister, again still on 2.2.02, we know that in 2013 you had the merging in this division of the Provincial Government Programs Office and the Regulatory Reform division from Service Newfoundland and Labrador, and the director of Red Tape Reduction was eliminated. What has happened with regard to the red tape reduction now and who is leading it?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: I would defer that to the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador for red tape reduction.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. CRUMMELL: Yes, the Policy Innovation and Accountability Office is taking that lead with regard to the red tape reduction. They do come under Cabinet Secretariat. I think that is the answer you are looking for.

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

MS MICHAEL: There was an actual position that was eliminated, that is why I am wondering. It was a director. Is there somebody designated or just a division?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. CRUMMELL: No, there is a division. I believe there are four people who work in that division – three or four. I have to get my facts straight on that one, but yes, there is more than one person in that division.

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you.

The division has nobody in charge of it. Is there one position that is in charge?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. CRUMMELL: There is one person in charge.

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

MS MICHAEL: Can we have the details on that, Minister, please? I mean you do not have it now, but can you get it for us?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. CRUMMELL: Yes, I will provide that for you tomorrow.

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Okay, let me move on here now. I guess I will start the climate change stuff because I do not have any more questions on the other sections. I think my questions have been answered.

Coming into 2.2.04, under Professional Services, the budget was \$260,000. It was revised up to \$299,500 and now it is \$360,000 in this current budget. Could we have a breakdown, Minister please, of why the difference as it moves upward under Professional Services?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The \$100,000 increase this year is an announcement in our Budget to promote energy conservation in homes. That was a \$200,000 initiative. Then, there is \$100,000 being backed out for the three-year public awareness campaign which ended last year. It is directly targeted towards energy efficiency in homes.

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Minister.

I am just going to ask a couple of questions now related to that section.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: Related to the Climate Change and Energy Efficiency Action Plans there was an update in November, 2013 which talked about “advancing action to reduce greenhouse gas

emissions by working with large industrial companies in the iron ore and offshore oil sectors.” I am wondering, Minister, what progress has been made with these sectors to reduce emissions?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Mr. Chair, I can speak to the Professional Services in terms of the contracts that were awarded to do a particular piece of work, say, with abatement opportunities for oil refining and that sort of thing. In terms of policy, we are doing Estimates tonight so if there are further questions she can follow up the policy in Question Period.

Things like the study of greenhouse gas abatement opportunities for oil refining, we did do a piece of work with AMEC there. We did do a piece of work with the Bonne Bay Marine Station, a development of a manual on green procurement. There have been many meetings with many oil companies, the refinery, mines, and so on. Again, that is more on the policy side. Strictly to the Estimates piece, there was \$20,900 spent around greenhouse gas abatement.

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

MS MICHAEL: I think my question is Estimates related, Minister, in that just as you have referred to some other lists under expenditures. If for that \$20 million you have a list – was it \$20 million or \$20,000 you said?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Transportation – Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Thankfully I am not Minister of Transportation.

The \$299,500, is that what you want the breakdown on?

MS MICHAEL: Yes.

MS JOHNSON: Development of the manual on green procurement was \$93,700, Turn Back the Tide public awareness campaign was \$79,600, the greenhouse gas abatement study for oil refining was \$20,900, Road Weather Information data was \$8,900, and the Bonne Bay Marine Station kiosk was \$4,700. Then there

was a projection to spend another \$90,000 to the end of the year, which brought it up to \$299,500.

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

MS MICHAEL: Minister, would we be able to have a copy of that list? I mean not now at this moment, but after Estimates please.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Yes, not a problem.

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you very much.

Let me see now where I am. This is a management question, if I may continue. The secretariat consolidates all of the HR functions into a single entity. I am interested in what is now done by departments. We have HR planning, I understand, organizational development, employee relations, workplace health and safety, staffing and recruitment, salaries and pensions. Will departments still hire their own contract staff, or is this something that is managed beyond the departments?

MS JOHNSON: Sorry, Mr. Chair.

Are you still under Cabinet Secretariat?

MS MICHAEL: Yes, I am, under 2.2.04.

No, I am really sorry. I have skipped over to the Human Resource Secretariat.

I am very sorry. I apologize for that.

CHAIR: Does the Leader of the Third Party have any more questions on the Cabinet Secretariat?

MS MICHAEL: One minute, Mr. Chair, please.

Thank you.

Yes, 2.2.05, Protocol. Under line 10 Grants and Subsidies, again nothing was budgeted there, but we have \$1,000 expenditure last budget, last year.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That was for a grant to Ronald McDonald House of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

MS MICHAEL: This is under Protocol. It says, "Appropriations provide for official, diplomatic and royal visits as well as protocol related to official functions and duties of the Premier." Was there something special happening at Ronald McDonald House that involved either the Premier or visitors from outside? Is that what it was?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: It was every province in Canada donated \$1,000 to Ronald McDonald House in honour of the birth of the royal baby.

CHAIR: We will go back to the Leader of the Official Opposition – go back to other members of the Committee.

The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

MS C. BENNETT: I ask the minister with relation to the question or the amount of \$79,000 for the Turn the Tide public awareness campaign if she can describe what the scope of work was and what the targeted outcomes were, please.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Government did commit a total of \$450,000 over three years. Back in 2011-2012 it was \$250,000 to develop the campaign, the concept, the videos, the posters, and the taglines. Then in both 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 it was to roll out the campaign, so this is mainly for the media by print advertising and so on.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

MS C. BENNETT: Just for clarity, what exactly were the key performance indicators from that investment? What exactly was it that government was hoping to accomplish from that investment, please?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Well, the goal of the campaign was certainly to raise awareness – I just had my sheet open here because I did have some information around how many hits we did get to the Web site and what the outreach was. There were over 59,000 visits to the Web site. There were a total of 140,000 pages viewed. The campaign videos were viewed online 1,900 times. The Facebook page had 1,685 followers. On average, it reached 759 Facebook users per day.

The campaign was featured in over twenty-five news articles. The campaign achieved over 10 million impressions through paid advertising and newspaper, Web site, and television; and, through innovative partnerships, the campaign has reached an audience of 75,000.

So, this is some of the work that is being done to do an evaluation of the campaign. The evaluation is not complete yet because it just finished, but these are some initial results to show that the reach we were hoping for, we certainly met that and then some.

Mr. Chair, if I could add. There was a baseline study done to do a survey to establish what level of awareness was out there with people. Then the study would have been followed up with a post-survey after the campaign to see if awareness has been increased. Both surveys had 800 respondents and the results are currently being analyzed. A report will be generated on that when that is complete.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

MS C. BENNETT: I am good.

CHAIR: Any further questions?

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The question would be around carbon emission targets. I am just wondering where we sit now as a Province around the question of carbon emissions and where we are with our targets;

and if, indeed, we are in surplus, what happens and how is that system working now.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Around our targets, there will be a report coming out very soon. I talked to the executive director there and they expect to have that soon, but I did ask are we generally on track. I was very pleased to hear that we are on track. That will be made public in the near future.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Just a question conceptually around how this all works. If we are in a surplus, what happens then? Do we trade that off? Is there a trade-off agreement with some other province? What is the reward for being in such a position?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: The targets that I was referring to was our climate change greenhouse gas reduction targets. I think you are asking more around emissions trading specifically. I do not think all of the work has been – and I am going to look over to my colleague, the Minister of Environment and Conservation, because it has been a while since I have been there. I know work was ongoing to develop a methodology for emissions trading.

My understanding, just from paying attention because I have an interest in the area, is that piece of work is not done yet, but there is a lot of work ongoing on it. I do not know if we were in a position of surplus – the Minister of Environment is going to take it from there.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MS SHEA: When we are talking about the emissions trading and whether we trade with other provinces or not, the federal government is focusing on a regulatory based approach for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the large industrial sector, not the emissions trading system.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you.

Another question was – I think this came up in Estimates with Environment and Conservation around the coastal erosion. At that point I think, in Estimates, the question was directed to the Office of Climate Change so that this particular initiative was actually moved from the Department of Environment and Conservation into the Office of Climate Change. We understood the program was somewhere around \$500,000 or something. I really do not see that anywhere in the budget. So, just a question, I guess, of where the budget allocation for coastal erosion would actually be.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MS SHEA: We have the vulnerability assessment tool for communities, but I do not think that is what you are talking about. That is what our department does – the Department of Environment and Conservation.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: From what I understand, in the Estimates for the Department of Environment and Conservation there was a question asked around coastal erosion. It was suggested that question would be better asked in the Office of Climate Change. I was just wondering where that particular initiative is around coastal erosion. Who is responsible for that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: I can certainly have a look and get an answer for you. I know there was a commitment in the budget for coastal erosion. I just cannot recall if it is Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture, or if it is in the Office of Climate Change. We will find out and then we will get some information for you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: That would be it for Cabinet Secretariat for me. The next questions would be for the Communications Branch, if we are ready to move on there.

CHAIR: I will check with the Leader of the Third Party. Are there no further questions on Cabinet Secretariat?

MS MICHAEL: No, Mr. Chair, I am ready to move to communications as well.

CHAIR: Okay. We will vote the Estimates for Cabinet Secretariat.

CLERK: Subhead 2.2.01 through 2.2.06 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 2.2.01 through 2.2.06 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, 2.2.01 through 2.2.06 carried.

CLERK: The total.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, total carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of the Cabinet Secretariat carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of Cabinet Secretariat carried without amendment.

CLERK: Subhead 2.3.01.

CHAIR: Subhead 2.3.01.

I know the Leader of the Official Opposition had about three minutes left, I do believe.

CLERK: We are going to start again.

CHAIR: We are going to start again, okay.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Subhead 2.3.01 Communications Branch of government. The question would be around Professional Services, \$654,100 budgeted last year, only spent \$295,000, yet we are back to a budget of \$654,100 this year. Why the variance from last year? What was not spent, and why back to \$654,100 this year?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I did find in my notes around the coastal erosion, it was \$100,000 annually, in Natural Resources actually, for three years to continue the vulnerability project. This would help communities make informed land-use decisions, guide development, and identify areas for protection.

On this one, \$295,000 was spent last year. A lot of work was done using internal resources but they do expect to use the full amount next year as there is a plan to promote the Province in the global market. So they do anticipate spending the full amount this year.

Last year it was for the videos, the innovation campaign, which was done through RFP. There was some work done on a social media campaign, but this year it is, again, a targeted effort to promote the Province in the global market.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Just for the historical purposes of the budgeting again because if you go back to 2012-2013 you will find this very line where in 2012-2013 there was actually budgeted \$800,000 and spent \$168,000 in 2012-2013. It was kind of like \$630,000 or so that did not get spent, yet we still budgeted the same amount last year for \$654,000 and only spent \$295,000 and put the same amount in again this year at \$654,000. It seems to me there is almost a line item and it really never gets spent for some reason. I just raise that.

I will go back to Purchased Services. It is the same thing; \$375,000 was budgeted, we actually spent \$432,000 there, and back to \$366,000. I am just wondering why the \$56,000 variance.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: Thank you.

On the Professional Services piece, as I mentioned, we will be having a look at all of these throughout the year. Bearing in mind, though, that – and while we are conscious every year of saving money, last year was especially so due to the deficit. Departments were tasked to save where you could but promoting our Province in a global market is a high priority for our government. So we do want to follow through with that piece of work this year.

Under Purchased Services it was \$56,500 higher due to the design and construction of a new tradeshow booth for the OTC conference, which my understanding is that went over rather large, and back to basically where we were with the budget last year. A little short by \$9,000. This is a reduction of internal printing savings initiative. We found some savings there for internal printing so they could reduce the budget.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That is all the questions I would have for the Communications Branch. I do not know if any of my colleagues or –

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

MS MICHAEL: Mr. Chair, they were my questions as well. That is all I have for that section.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

MS C. BENNETT: I wonder if the minister could explain. There are ten staff I understand in the Communications and consultations branch, and one of these is a director of brand management. I am wondering if you can give me some details on what the accountabilities are for that position, please.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: I will undertake to get that job description for her.

CHAIR: Shall 2.3.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, subhead 2.3.01 carried.

CLERK: The total.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, total carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of the Communications Branch of Executive Council carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Communications Branch of Executive Council carried without amendment?

CHAIR: We will now move on to Financial Administration.

CLERK: Subhead 2.4.01.

CHAIR: Shall 2.4.01 carry?

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Subhead 2.4.01, in Salaries there was an extra \$96,000, I guess, spent from budget and \$945,700 this year. Just a question around the variance that was budgeted last year and what we actually spent in Salaries.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: The overrun last year of \$95,700 was severance that was paid out for two employees. There was also overtime paid out to staff in that division to reduce the overtime liability. The increase for 2014-2015 is solely due to the 2 per cent increase, which is \$42,800.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: That is the only question I have for Financial Administration.

CHAIR: Other members?

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just a simple question with regard to the Revenue – Provincial, \$5,700. There was nothing budgeted but \$5,700 was spent.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: This was recovery that we had received from a prior year. I cannot tell you exactly what it is for right now, but I can get it

for you because I did ask. I do not have it here at the moment.

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

MS MICHAEL: That is fine, Mr. Chair. When the minister gets it that will be fine.

That is my only question for that section.

CHAIR: Shall 2.4.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, subhead 2.4.01 carried.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, total carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of the Financial Administration Branch of the Office of the Executive Council carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Financial Administration Branch of the Office of the Executive Council carried without amendment.

CHAIR: We will now move into Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs.

CLERK: Subhead 2.6.01.

Carried.

CHAIR: Shall 2.6.01 carry?

On motion, subhead 2.6.01 carried.

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party, do you have a question?

CLERK: The total.

MS MICHAEL: Yes. Are you looking at Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs? Because we voted that already.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

CHAIR: I am looking at 2.6. Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs are done, Minister of Municipal Affairs?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

MS MICHAEL: We voted that. That has all been voted.

Carried.

On motion, total carried.

According to our records, the next one we would go to is section 3. Everything in between has been voted.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat carried without amendment?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

All those in favour, 'aye'.

CHAIR: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

Could members please wait to be recognized?

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party, do you have a question?

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat carried without amendment.

MS MICHAEL: Yes. Section 2.5.01, according to our records, right through, including Women's Policy, section 2.7, all of that –

CHAIR: We will now vote the Estimates of the whole of Executive Council.

CHAIR: Yes, maybe I will have some further direction which much clear up your query.

CLERK: Subhead 1.1.01.

MS MICHAEL: All of that has been voted.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

CHAIR: I was just advised that indeed this was voted on, but it was not officially referred out. So we do have to vote it. If members have no questions, it is just a matter of doing the vote.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Shall 2.6.01 carry?

Carried.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

On motion, subhead 1.1.01 carried.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CLERK: Subhead 2.1.01 through 4.1.06 inclusive.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 through 4.1.06 of Executive Council carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 4.1.06 carried.

CLERK: The total.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, total carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of Executive Council carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of Executive Council carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the Committee rise and report Bills 18, 17, 14, and the Committee of Supply report of Estimates on Executive Council.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bills 14, 17, and 18 passed without amendment and the Estimates of the Consolidated Fund Services, the Legislature, and the Executive Council carried without amendment.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): The hon. the Member for the District of Lewisporte.

MR. VERGE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bills 14, 17, and 18 carried without amendment.

Furthermore, the Committee of the Whole have considered the Estimates of the Consolidated Fund Services, the Legislature, and the Estimates of the Executive Council and have directed me they have been passed without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The three bills are 14 –

MR. VERGE: Bills 14, 17, and 18.

MR. SPEAKER: Bills 14, 17, and 18.

The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bills 14, 17, and 18 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. KING: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bills be read a third time?

MR. KING: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

The Chair of the Committee also reports that the Estimates of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report, the report has passed without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. KING: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

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

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time I would like to call from the Order Paper, Order 4, An Act To Amend The Fish Processing Licensing Board Act. (Bill 18)

I move, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, that the said bill be now read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Fish Processing Licensing Board Act. (Bill 18)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Fish Processing Licensing Board Act", read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 18)

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

The House stands adjourned until 2:00 p.m. tomorrow.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 2:00 p.m.