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HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA

Thursday

November 20, 2014

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Today we have with us in the gallery Ms Mary Walsh, Chairperson with the Association of Early Childhood Educators, along with Skye Taylor, Roisin Cowley, Mojca Bas, and Paul Walsh.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: We also have a number of mayors with us today: Mayor Nat Moores from L'Anse au Clair; Mayor Wilson Belbin of Forteau, who is also the MNL Director for Labrador; Mayor Agnes Pike of West St. Modeste; Mayor Wanita Stone of Red Bay; Sheila Chubbs, Vice-President of the Combined Councils of Labrador; and the Mayor of L'Anse au Loup, Hedley Ryland.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Also, we have two volunteers from the Gathering Place with us today, Sister Lois Greene and her guest.

Welcome, again, to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have members' statements from the Member for the District of Mount Pearl South; the Member for the District of Bonavista North; the Member for the District of Port de Grave; the Member for District of Labrador West; the Member for the District of Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi; and the Member for the District of The Straits – White Bay North.

Before I recognize the Member for Mount Pearl South, I do have one other special function that I want to do. In the Speaker's gallery today the Chair would like to recognize an employee of the House of Assembly who retired this past

summer, Mrs. Madeline O'Brien, Manager of Hansard.

Mrs. O'Brien began working with the Hansard office in 1990 and has served in the positions of transcriber, editor, and manager. As members, we all know the value of the Hansard and we often refer to it to remind ourselves what has been said here in the Chamber.

Under Mrs. O'Brien's watch, as manager, we have seen such innovations as the Oral Questions Blues and the posting of the unedited Hansard on the same day of the sitting. These tools are invaluable to members and their staff in preparing for each day's business in the House.

I know that all hon. members will join with me in wishing Mrs. O'Brien a happy and a healthy retirement, and to also thank her for her twenty-three years of faithful and diligent service to the House of Assembly.

Thank you very much, Mrs. O'Brien.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my privilege to stand in this hon. House to recognize the tremendous success which was the twenty-sixth Annual Mount Pearl City Days Celebrations. Once again this year, the festivities included various activities for citizens of all ages and interests, including a Family Outdoor Movie Night, a Pig Roast, Family Fun Day, Milk Carton Boat Races, Show & Shine Car Show, and a Prince and Princess Community Breakfast.

As in past years, the festival culminated with the Mega Birthday Blitz which saw thousands of residents and visitors gather on St. David's Field to participate in fun activities, games of chance, and take in some of the best live entertainment that Newfoundland and Labrador has to offer.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure you can appreciate any festival of this magnitude would not be possible if it were not for the hard work and co-operation of a number of community partners. I would

therefore ask all members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating the City of Mount Pearl, the City Days Advisory Committee, various community groups and organizations, the corporate sponsors, and all of the community-minded volunteers who contributed to the great success story which was City Days 2014.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am proud to rise today, like so many of my colleagues, to recognize the three Electoral Scholarship winners from my district. This year the successful students are, from Lumsden, attending Pearson Academy, Mr. Douglas Gibbons; and from Centreville-Wareham-Trinity, attending Jane Collins Academy, Mr. Bradley Rogers, and Mr. Michael Cutler. Although Jane Collins Academy is at Hare Bay in Terra Nova District, students in the Indian Bay Region of Bonavista North attend there.

The awarding of these scholarships is recognition of the value of the dedication, study, and hard work of the recipient, coupled with the commitment of parents and teachers alike in focusing their child or their student on academic success. What is truly exceptional and speaks well of our education system, the valuable influence of teachers, of school growth and development, and the quality and equality of programming in schools is that the annual winners are generally shared among the five schools throughout the district from year to year.

This year, Douglas, Bradley, and Michael are to be recognized for their achievement as leaders of a very distinguished class of graduates. Our wish is for continued success, and more important than success, contentment in their chosen profession.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Port de Grave.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this hon. House to salute the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 32, Bay Roberts, on the sixtieth anniversary of their charter as a Royal Canadian Legion in Canada.

The Branch still resides in the original building purchased in 1957 from the Seventh Day Adventist School Board. The building has undergone numerous renovations over the years, but is still an integral part of the community. Prior to owning their own building, meetings would take place either at the old courthouse or Thomas Handigan's store.

The building was full to capacity on Saturday, November 8, for the annual Remembrance Day dinner, and this year's theme was: A Salute to Our Veterans. The keynote speaker for the evening was the hon. Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Premier paid tribute to the veterans and thanked them for their service and courage in protecting our freedoms and the freedoms of those around the world.

Branch 32 continues to play an active role in the region through their work with veterans and support for numerous community organizations, including the Avalon North Cadet Corps.

I ask all members to join me today in congratulating Branch 32 on sixty years of dedicated service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to pay tribute to an icon of Labrador West. Alphonse Rudcowsky, one of the region's early

pioneers, community leaders, and a long-time resident of Wabush, passed away on October 16 at the Long-Term Care Home in Happy Valley Goose Bay at the age of eighty-seven.

Born November 20, 1927 in Szarlej, Poland, Alphonse moved to Canada in the early 1950s. After spending twelve years working with the Airlines Inn in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, he accepted a position as manager of the Ashuanipi Club in Labrador West. In 1969 he became manager of the Sir Wilfred Grenfell Hotel in Wabush which he eventually bought.

Alphonse was the first Mayor of Wabush and a very active member of the community. He was also a member of the Chamber of Commerce, a loyal Rotarian, and an executive member of the Navy League of Wabush. He retired at the age of seventy-eight from his career as owner, operator of the Airport Restaurant. Outgoing, outspoken, and very engaging, Alphonse was a household name known to all.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of this hon. House join me in celebrating the life of one of Labrador's pioneers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

On October 29, an innovative community-based centre in my district celebrated twenty years of service by reopening a completely reconstructed building designed with extensive community consultation to give more than 500 people every week access to many things that most of us take for granted.

Let me tell you what the Gathering Place is doing now, besides providing a hot meal to 130 people a day. Guests can get ID, and securely receive mail and messages. They can access government services on computers. People can socialize in a safe environment or sit quietly and read. They can shower, do laundry, and get basic home items like dishes. Nurses and social workers provide various services. There is actually a flu shot clinic going on there today.

Thanks to help from the City of St. John's, the redesigned Gathering Place also has an emergency power generator and is now ready to serve the city's residents as a community warming centre in the event of a major power outage.

Please join me in congratulating the congregations of the Sisters of Mercy and the Presentation Sisters, the staff and hundreds of volunteers who make the Gathering Place such a vital institution.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Canon Richards Memorial Academy for hosting the Provincial Student Leadership Conference 2014 from October 23 to 26. Traditional fiddle music, guitars, and feet stomping opened up the conference, followed by speakers introduced with wit from the drama troupe impersonating Lynn Burry, Buddy Wasiname, Dr. Wilfred Grenfell, Ivy Durley, Kaetlyn Osmond and other notable personalities.

Themed Rootspiration – Let your Roots be your Inspiration showcased keynote speakers, new skills and opportunities to meet new people, while connecting with our culture. Breakout sessions taught people how to play 120s, ugly stick making, homemade bread baking, crocheting, knitting, traditional singing, dancing, motivational and inspirational talks, knowledge share, games, lessons of real life budgeting, and leadership activities.

I am inspired by our team of local leaders, exceptional volunteers and community for hosting an outstanding provincial event, displaying our hospitality and showcasing the Great Northern Peninsula to more than 300 youth.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating organizing committee Ms Marsha Genge, Ms Wendy Cunard-Genge, Ms Emma Genge and Ms Lavinia Beaudoir, as well the minister, administrators, teachers, staff,

volunteers, students and all who participated to make PSLC a resounding success. In the words of Tom Peter, “Leaders don’t create followers, they create more leaders.”

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Before I go to statements by ministers, I want to recognize a group of mayors from Labrador. I am not sure they were actually in the gallery when I made the initial welcome.

We have Mayor Nat Moores from L’Anse au Clair; Mayor Wilson Belbin of Forteau, who is also the MNL director for Labrador; Mayor Agnes Pike of West St. Modeste; Mayor Wanita Stone of Red Bay; Sheila Chubbs, who is the Vice-President of the Combined Councils of Labrador; and the Mayor of L’Anse au Loup, Hedley Ryland.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I will also make mention again that we have with us the members from the Association of Early Childhood Educators, Skye Taylor, Roisin Cowley, Mojca Bas and Paul Walsh.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today in this hon. House to recognize National Child Day, which takes place annually on November 20. National Child Day has been celebrated across Canada since 1993 to commemorate the adoption of two documents focused on children’s rights: the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child* and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the*

Child. Mr. Speaker, this year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the convention.

National Child Day demonstrates Canada’s commitment to ensuring all children are treated with dignity and respect. This commitment includes the opportunity for children to have a voice, be protected from harm and be provided with their basic needs and every opportunity to reach their full potential.

The new Department of Education and Early Childhood Development was created to put more focus on early learning and to provide the best possible start for our children. The provincial government remains committed to ensuring children and youth have the skills they need to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, that commitment is clear in the continued planning and implementation of full-day Kindergarten. Budget 2014 included \$30.6 million to implement universal full-day Kindergarten and \$4.8 million for the continuation and enhancement of other early learning initiatives. This brings our total investment in early learning and K-12 initiatives to \$872 million – a 48 per cent increase since 2003.

Also, to enhance the quality, accessibility, and affordability of regulated child care services for families with young children, Budget 2014 allocated an additional investment of \$11.4 million for child care, bringing that total budget to approximately \$42.5 million. This funding, Mr. Speaker, will focus on continuing to implement the 10-year child care strategy, *Caring For Our Future*. We are excited about the direction child care is taking in our Province. As of June 2014, we had 7,815 regulated child care spaces throughout the Province, which is almost a 70 per cent increase since 2003.

This government is committed to ensuring the health and well-being of all children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask all members of this hon. House to join me in marking National Child Day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: My thanks to the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

Just a technical note for Hansard first, Mr. Speaker. The National Child Day was first instituted twenty-one years ago, not twenty-five. It was instituted in 1993. It is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations declaration by the convention on the rights of the child, which was in 1989, but that is just a technical note.

National Child Day, indeed, it says we should ensure that all children are treated with dignity and respect, that all children deserve to be heard, to be protected, to be cared for, and to be provided with opportunity, and that, of course, is something which we can all agree upon.

I want to remind members that we had quite an extensive discussion here yesterday during Private Members' Day in the House of Assembly on the issue of child protection. Unfortunately, government once again denied bringing in mandatory child protection laws that everyone wants, except for the government.

I also want to remind members that it was just on Monday or Tuesday, just this week in any case, that the Premier boasted about his government's record on early childhood education –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

This National Day of the Child gives us a moment to remember how urgent it is that governments on both levels collaborate on quality child care for all children across the country.

I recently attended a conference of the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Labrador, in Churchill Falls. I heard about their hopes, that with child care located in the new Department of Education and Early Childhood Development there will be a focus on quality programming and a greater recognition of the profession of early childhood educators in this Province, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to recognize World Fisheries Day, an annual celebration that takes place on November 21. Tomorrow, people throughout the world will take this opportunity to reflect on the importance of fishing and aquaculture to our economy, our environment, and culture.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to take a moment this Friday to consider how the provincial seafood sector contributes to prosperity in our Province. In 2013, the total production value of our seafood industry was approximately \$1.1 billion. This economic activity provided direct employment for more than 18,000 people, mostly in rural parts of the Province. In addition to this, the fishing and aquaculture sectors also create significant spin-off employment in areas that include the transportation, industrial supply, and service sectors.

Given the economic significance of the provincial seafood industry, it is important for provincial producers to always remain competitive in global markets. The provincial government made it a priority to support industry in this regard, and created the Fisheries Technology and new Opportunities Program in 2007 to support projects that enhance the harvesting, farming, processing, and marketing of provincial seafood. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to note that to date, more than 270 research and development projects have been

made possible through the provincial government's commitment of \$16 million to this program.

Mr. Speaker, this government is also carefully monitoring and protecting the ocean environment. Since 2010, the provincial government has committed \$15.1 million to the Marine Institute's Centre for Fisheries Ecosystems Research. This centre gives the Province unprecedented insight into trends involving specific species and the marine environments they inhabit. In addition, since 2006 this government has contributed more than \$3.2 million through our Fisheries Research Program, which has supported fifty fisheries science projects involving partnerships with the federal government, academia, and industry.

Mr. Speaker, the people working in our Province's seafood sector have endured dangers at sea, moratoria, and the uncertainty of world markets, and have always shown the resilience and resourcefulness that defines what it means to be a Newfoundlander and Labradorian. On World Fisheries Day, this government would like to remind everyone that we share their commitment to building a fishery that is strong, vibrant, and sustainable for generations to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advanced copy of his statement. As a fisherman and MHA from a fishing district, I am very pleased to join in marking World Fisheries Day. I would like to recognize all our ancestors across the centuries who brought us to this place, as well as those who are currently involved in the industry, including those who fight passionately to keep our industry strong against the many challenges.

The minister spoke of a few of them, but that is not good enough just to acknowledge challenges, Mr. Speaker. We have to do better than that. One of the most pressing issues that have arisen in recent weeks is the proposed

pilotage authority to move a pilot boarding station thirteen nautical miles further into Placentia Bay.

This is a bay that has been called one of the riskiest areas in Canada for an oil spill. This is a bay where 1,000 fish harvesters and plant workers are involved in the fishing industry. This is a bay where there are an abundance of resources, pristine waters, good people, and great communities. We need to protect all those assets against increased risk of a disastrous oil spill, but we have to be proactive.

I call upon government not just to celebrate World Fisheries Day, but to show strong leadership in keeping our fisheries and our ecosystems safe from those who are taking (inaudible) –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his speaking time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. It is all very well for the minister to speak of the more than \$34 million they have spent over the past seven years on the fishery, which they should be spending, but we learned this week \$280 million in federal funds for the fishery we thought we were getting is far from guaranteed.

I remind the minister the \$280 million is in recognition of government's decision to abandon provincial minimum processing requirements for European fish markets, a sticking point in the federal government's CETA negotiations. Over the past few days, the Premier has come short of guaranteeing we will see this federal money.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, today we celebrated the launch of Upopolis, a social network for young patients which will further enhance the care of children and youth here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Upopolis is a safe online networking site designed to provide patients in children's hospitals and treatment centres with a place to connect.

As of today, Upopolis will be available at the Janeway Children's Health and Rehabilitation Centre in St. John's, the Youth Mental Health Treatment Centre in Paradise, and the Provincial Youth Addictions Treatment Centre in Grand Falls-Windsor.

Hospital stays can often be difficult for small children and youth. The goal of Upopolis is to make the overall experience more comfortable, to allow patients to stay connected with family and friends, and to start discussions with other patients in similar situations.

Upopolis provides familiar features of social networking, such as personal profiles, microblogging, newsfeed, instant chat, and photo uploading while giving patients the opportunity to stay up to date with schoolwork, and navigate through child-friendly health and wellness information verified and approved by health care professionals.

Upopolis was developed by the Kids' Health Links Foundation in partnership with Telus. It is the only private, secure, and trusted online social network designed for kids and teens receiving medical care in hospitals and youth treatment centres in Canada.

Our government looks forward to the many benefits this new technology will bring to our health care system and the enhancements in the overall care for children and youth.

Mr. Speaker, we understand how critical a child's support network is while receiving care in our facilities and Upopolis enables that safe connection while empowering our young patients by providing access to medical

information in a format they can easily access and understand.

I encourage all hon. members and members of the public to become familiar with Upopolis and the many benefits it will bring to our young patients.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Upopolis is a private online networking site that allows children and youth to stay connected to families, friends, and school while receiving medical care. This secure online community originated with a teenager named Christina who was hospitalized in 2002 with a life-threatening illness. Her experience inspired her and her family to explore ways to help children stay connected. This family wanted to make a difference in the lives of children staying in the hospital.

Make no mistake, hospital stays are challenging for all of us, but especially so for children. It can be the most challenging time in their lives. Many of my own constituents and their children have to travel hundreds of kilometres to get medical treatment that is not available in our region, so helping these children through such a stressful and challenging time can improve their patient experience. This is obviously a very good thing. Improving the patient experience is especially important, obviously, for children.

I commend government for taking part in this initiative. Our children are going to benefit from it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. It is good news that this social network is coming to young hospital patients in this Province. I am sure that the young patients will love it and will find it a comfort.

I have a few questions about how it will work. When will it be available to children staying in other health facilities throughout the Province for treatment that does not require a stay at the Janeway or the other facilities listed? It is an important question. What protocols will be in place to detect and stop any online bullying that might occur in the system?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday the Premier gave the impression that he had a discussion with the Prime Minister on the CETA fisheries fund. This is what he said: "...I have already had one discussion with the Prime Minister since I took office here. The Prime Minister and I intend to have further discussions on CETA".

I ask the Premier: When did this discussion with the Prime Minister about CETA take place?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, I did say yesterday in the House I had a discussion with the Prime Minister since coming into office. I can tell the hon. member opposite, the members of the House, and the people of the Province that I had another discussion yesterday with the Prime Minister regarding CETA. We had a very good discussion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: I reiterate in the House here today that we had reached an agreement-in-principle with the federal government last year around our participation in CETA and what that would mean to our Province. We had a discussion yesterday again about that, about the fund that we reached an agreement on, the \$400 million Fisheries Innovation Fund for this Province. It was based on five pillars.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said before and I say again, we stand by the agreement that we reached with the government a year ago.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A few days ago, and this was of course after the first discussion with the Prime Minister by the Premier, he still said at that point that he found that the progress was troubling.

After the second discussion he had with the Prime Minister yesterday, I ask the Premier: Are you troubled again today?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, this agreement with the federal government is very important to rural Newfoundland and Labrador. It is very important to the fishing industry in our Province. It is very important to the rural parts of the Province that depend on the fishery for their own sustainability, for the sustainability of those very important communities. It is an important matter for all of our Province, Mr. Speaker.

It is important that we continue to have discussions. As I have said in this House already, ministers in my government are having ongoing discussions with their federal counterparts. I had a direct conversation, as I said yesterday, with the Prime Minister regarding CETA, the importance of us

continuing the discussions and the administration of the fund that was agreed to previously. We fully intend to continue to have those discussions and reach a full conclusion to our agreement with the federal government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the minister said he had met with Minister Moore on this issue in January, and that the government would move forward in the budget in terms of working through this initiative. That certainly sounds like the government has made budget commitments with this money – money that we know has not been locked in yet.

So I ask the Premier: How much of this fund has already been committed, and to what projects?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as part of rolling the fund out, the administration of the fund, obviously the Province, wanted to be proactive to make sure we could certainly be ready when the funds flow. As the original agreement said, it would be within the sixteen or twenty-four months. It is a huge fund, the \$400 million.

In the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture there is the FTNOP, there are other technology programs, and there are research programs. As part of that to be ready, and in this year's Budget – and it was certainly discussed in the Estimates in the prior year, in terms of the Budget, there was \$600,000 that was allocated for staffing to get up and running and to look at the administrative part, which we will work collectively with ACOA officials to bring this to fruition, in terms of the agreement. Those monies were allocated in the Budget, and we are moving forward with those funds.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, just for clarification from the minister: Is the minister saying there is only \$600,000 of that fund committed?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, the monies committed in the DFA budget has nothing to do with the fund. That money has not been spent; there is no amount of monies allocated for that fund. The original agreement was that money would flow once the agreement was reached, and as the Premier has indicated, we have stood by, we have reached an agreement, we negotiated an agreement, and we expect the federal government to meet that. At that point in time, the money would flow, being administered by ACOA and through the Department of DFA.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In his report on the consolidated financial statements, the Auditor General said that the environmental liability in the former Abitibi mill and properties is now estimated to be \$265 million. This is \$165 million more than the previous government's estimates.

So I ask the Premier: After mistakenly expropriating the century-old mill, will you now come clean on what the exact cost of this mistake is?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With regard to the Abitibi mill, it is a matter that has been very important to us. Environmental protection is always important to us as a government. I do not have the most recent numbers and assessments on that for the member opposite, but I will get the information for him.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This AG's report came out a few days ago now. Mr. Speaker, this is a \$265 million bill that we are talking about. This is a \$265 million liability. When we come planning for the Budget of this Province, we do not know the difference in what this liability will cost.

I was expecting a response about assets aside and all of this, but with the assets aside there is a liability. This government mistakenly expropriated hundreds of millions of dollars in environmental liabilities. The AG said that further study is required to assess the human health and ecological risks.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the hon. member to please ask his question.

MR. BALL: Okay.

The question will be to the Premier: When will these studies be completed and at what additional cost to taxpayers?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I reiterate my last comments to the member opposite that the status of the property assets in Grand Falls-Windsor is very important to us. We continue to work on plans to move forward with dealing with that property and with the assets.

Again, if he is asking for me to differentiate, as he did earlier, between figures that were talked

about previously versus what is reflected in the Auditor General's report, I do not have that particular information for him right now; but I will confirm for him that we are working on the file, we are working on the file regarding the property in Grand Falls-Windsor, and we will continue to move that forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the Chief Scientific Officer with the Canadian Diabetes Association stated that there is a significant need for a diabetes screening program and registry in our Province, something that I have advocated for, for a long time.

I ask the Premier: After hearing from the experts, will you now commit to finally implementing a diabetes registry and screening program in our Province, the only Atlantic Province without one?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank colleagues on both sides of the House for participating in an informative event with the Diabetes Association just last evening.

It is important that we gather data and measure outcomes when it comes to diabetes and the prevalence of it in Newfoundland and Labrador. We continue to work with regional health authorities towards a solution. In fact, there has been really good progress made in Western Health.

A database has been created. There are still some details to be worked out before we roll it out across the four regional health authorities. Once we do, hopefully over the next number of months, we are going to be able to monitor trends related to the prevalence of diabetes. We are going to be able to monitor quality of care for those with diabetes, and a number of other

things that will serve people in this Province quite well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is alarming to think of the fact that since this time yesterday we have had ten people in our Province who have been diagnosed with diabetes. Our population is 25 per cent higher than anywhere else in Canada with diabetes. Diabetes is costing this Province \$320 million in just six years.

After eleven years in government, I ask the Premier: Why hasn't your government made implementation of a diabetes prevention and management program a priority?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the rate of chronic disease in Newfoundland and Labrador is alarming, to be quite frank. That is why we do have a comprehensive chronic disease strategy in Newfoundland and Labrador, not just to address one particular illness or disease, but to address chronic disease as a whole.

We have made great strides in supporting people with diabetes, as I outlined yesterday. We have twenty-four clinics. We have improved insulin pump therapy. We have expanded the number of medications available.

It is an issue that we take quite seriously. We will continue to work with the Diabetes Association, with professionals in our regional health authorities to continue to advance care for those suffering from this chronic disease in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, residential ratepayers along the Labrador coast will see an 11.4 per cent increase as a result of Hydro's latest application to the PUB. The Minister of Natural Resources stated in the House on Tuesday that government supports the proposed increases.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs: Do you also support Hydro's latest proposal to the PUB that will see rates increased by 11.4 per cent?

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

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, just for clarification, the conversation and the discussion previously was around basically the viability of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro and the rate of return of 8.8 per cent specifically to the application. It was very clear what I said. This is not a government application.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. DALLEY: There is a process laid out in which Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro submits the application to the PUB. The PUB makes the decision, Mr. Speaker, not the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Thankfully, Mr. Speaker, there is a process for interested parties to be able to submit and have some input on those rate discussions with the PUB and not the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: The Minister for Labrador said in a recent paper we have to be more accessible as a government to Aboriginal groups in Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, not only are residents going to see this increase, commercial businesses will close. A 20 per cent increase; \$6,000 bills now, Mr. Speaker, and they are going to be hit with 20 per cent more.

I ask the Minister of Labrador again: Do you, Minister of Labrador, also support the commercial rates that are proposing to be increased by 20 per cent?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would suspect that all members in this House, and certainly our government, Mr. Speaker, has demonstrated concern for Coastal Labrador, concern for all householders, and particularly seniors who are on fixed incomes, that anytime there is an increase in expenses to their home, it is of great concern.

If we really want to look back, Mr. Speaker, we are developing projects like Muskrat Falls to help protect the increases in their expenses for their home. It is important to recognize as well, as a government we have demonstrated clearly the support for Coastal Labrador in a number of

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. DALLEY: There are a number of initiatives, from the Northern Strategic Plan to the rural deficit ratepayer's subsidies, to the deferral subsidies, Mr. Speaker, to help offset some of the challenges that exist in Coastal Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East.

MR. REID: Mr. Speaker, the Newfoundland T'Railway was announced with much fanfare and potential in 1997. It was trumpeted as an economic generator for the whole Province. Now the trail is in a deteriorated state and in some places the trail is starting to be overgrown and has severe washouts.

I ask the Minister of Environment and Conservation: Why has your government allowed this trail to fall into disrepair?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the T'Railway is an important asset for the people of the Province. I use it on a regular basis when I am out fishing and hunting as well. We do recognize there are challenges with this 1,100 kilometre trail and a linear provincial park that goes from one side of the Province to the other. Last year we spent about \$1 million in upgrades to that trail. We know we need to have another look at that and invest more money.

Mr. Speaker, I had meetings this morning with my officials, talking about what the needs are and doing an assessment of exactly what is required to make sure we get that T'Railway up to where we need it to be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East.

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: What is government's long-term plan for this trail, and can he assure the House that sections of the Newfoundland T'Railway will not close because of this government's neglect?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Again, Mr. Speaker, we are doing an assessment of exactly what is needed to make sure that is a long-term viable park in this Province. It is an important asset to the people of the Province. I take a personal responsibility, Mr. Speaker, to make sure we do the right things going forward.

I will assure the member opposite, and assure the people of the Province, we are going to be

addressing this important asset to make sure it is there for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for generations to come.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, after eleven years government is still only in the planning stages of providing full-day Kindergarten. Now, to find enough space, school district personnel are looking at providing Kindergarten classes in gymnasiums, cafeterias, school libraries, science labs, and classrooms currently designated for music, art, technology, and home economics.

I ask the minister: How many schools will be losing learning spaces and facilities because of your government's failure to plan?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, full-day Kindergarten is something that is very important to the people of this Province. That is why we have responded in the manner in which we have, which is to say that over three years we will invest \$30.6 million in the necessary infrastructure and resources to ensure that full-day Kindergarten will in fact be implemented in 2016.

In some cases, Mr. Speaker, it will be difficult to have infrastructure in place for that particular date. However, we have a plan in place, and that plan to a large extent will revolve around using modular classrooms that will be added on to the schools to ensure there is in fact the space that is required.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: The minister is planning to keep parents in the dark until 2016, Mr. Speaker. Cramming all these students into overcrowded

schools will put more pressure on students, on teachers, and parents. It flies directly in the face of the idea of twenty-first century learning.

I ask the minister: How can you claim you are improving the education system when you are shutting down essential learning spaces? How can students have twenty-first century learning if you are trying to create nineteenth century learning environments?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat perplexed. It sounds as if the member opposite does not want full-day Kindergarten. That seems to be what I am hearing on this side of the House, and others around me are hearing the same thing.

What we have said is that we are working forward to make sure we can provide the best education and the best early learning we can. That involves the implementation of full-day Kindergarten in September of 2016. We will have infrastructure in place. We will meet those demands and those requirements through the installation of modular classrooms in some areas of the Province. In other areas, we already have adequate space, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the plant at Harbour Breton has been closed for over a year, leaving 150 people facing uncertainty. Despite promises by a plant operator that it would open last month, this has not happened and there are fears it could be another year before production starts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. SLADE: I ask the minister: What has he done to ensure this plant reopens as soon as possible? Have you even spoken to the plant owner about this issue?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, I have had a number of conversations with numerous groups associated with the plant in Harbour Breton. I have met with the town just recently here in St. John's. Yesterday or the day before, I spoke to union representatives from the plant and I have a call in to the owner of the plant.

There is nothing more important to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians than the fishery of this Province. It is a fishery that has sustained us for hundreds of years, it is a fishery that this government is committed to, and we are committed to the people of Harbour Breton, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are 7 million pounds of farmed salmon coming out of the water next week. We understand some will be sent to St. Alban's, but 3.5 million pounds will be shipped out to places like New Brunswick.

I ask the minister: How can you justify shipping out 50 per cent of our fish resource to another province while the plant in Harbour Breton remains closed?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, it is an unfortunate circumstance that industry finds itself in, in that particular part of the Province, but it is important to remember that this government is working with the people of

Harbour Breton, that we continue to work with the people of Harbour Breton.

We believe the short-term difficulty they are having down there – and I have had conversations and, again, have a call in to the owner of the fish plant. I am hoping, Mr. Speaker, as the owner of the fish plant speaks to it, we will have some operations taking place down on that particular peninsula in the new year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

According to the 2014 Budget Estimates, this issue is – and I quote – very live and top of mind within the department.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador: What is the current status of payday loan legislation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNETT: Mr. Speaker, I certainly thank the hon. member across the way for standing up again today and asking another question to me. Service NL, after significant research and consideration, is studying the regulation of payday loans companies. It is a complicated area with a number of policy considerations. When we are going to be ready to act on it, I will let him know and let this House know as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Service NL: When will he introduce

amendments to the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNECT: Mr. Speaker, the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act is a very complex, in-depth piece of work. We are doing our due diligence. We are reviewing it. When we are ready to bring it, ready to be introduced in the House of Assembly, the Opposition will be briefed, the House will be briefed, and I will be a proud minister to bring it to the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, over two years ago government held consultations on the Residential Tenancies Act. In March, they said they were doing a jurisdictional and legislative review and they were very close to putting things on paper.

I ask the minister: Have you put it on paper yet? When will you amend this outdated legislation and provide modern protection for tenants and landlords?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNECT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this government is very proud that we held ten consultations across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. One hundred and forty-two individuals attended in-person sessions and we had twenty-eight written submissions.

What we have done is we have put a What We Heard document that was released on our departmental Web site. We are looking at everything. When we are ready to deliver it to the public of the Province of Newfoundland and

Labrador, we will do so with our due diligence done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, when the minister at that time, now the Premier, announced consultations for a new act, he said the act affects so many people in this Province, and it is important to make sure that we are keeping the act up to date with today's housing market.

I ask the minister: Will you introduce legislation in this session of the House of Assembly before the information gathered during those consultations itself is outdated?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNECT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue that affects both the landlords and the tenants. For this reason, we are doing our due diligence necessary for the review of the legislation. We remain committed to bringing this piece of legislation before the House of Assembly. I look forward, Mr. Speaker, when we bring it to the House to a healthy debate here in the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, it has been more than one year-and-a-half since the Central Expressions of Interest was called.

I ask the minister: When will we see a deal to diversify the economy and put the timber resources in Central Newfoundland to productive use?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, the discussions around the development of the resource in Central and to try to benefit the Northern Peninsula has certainly been talked about in the public. I will be very clear that government continues to work with a company, Rentech, to try to secure a deal so we will be able to develop that resource for the full benefit of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, it has taken some time. There are multiple challenges with that, but I can assure you my officials and myself as the minister work very diligently to try to get this deal done. We are not there yet. I look forward to the day to get there and I know the people of Central and certainly the Northern Peninsula are anxious. We are doing all we can in trying to get this deal done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The new St. John's Long-Term Care Facility has thirty empty beds because of a shortage of local LPNs. Among the reasons are that the jobs are temporary and the salary does not match the new duties and responsibilities of LPNs.

I ask the Premier: Why didn't government put incentives in place to attract local LPNs such as making the jobs permanent and offering better wages?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the recruitment and retention of licensed practical nurses in our Province has been a challenge for some time. For that reason we have taken steps to increase the number of licensed practical nurses working in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have offered bursaries, we have offered other incentives, we have expanded online learning, we have a working group, and we are working closely with the association of licensed practical nurses. We are working closely with our Centre for Nursing Studies. We have made more seats available to train licensed practical nurses in our Province, in addition to the international recruitment effort that is ongoing. We have expanded the number of long-term care beds in this region, and it is our hope in the next couple of months we will be able to open the remaining thirty beds.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Yes, I know the seats are there for training, but we also know there is a very low graduation rate for the LPNs at the college, something I heard acknowledged by the minister in the media.

What is government doing to graduate more of the LPNs who are training, fill the labour market gap, and keep LPNs in the Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, while the roughly 185 seats available for licensed practical nurses for training in Newfoundland and Labrador should meet the demand, there is a challenge around the graduation rate. That is why we are working closely with the Centre for Nursing Studies, with regional health authorities, with my department, as well as with College of the North Atlantic, to ensure we address that issue.

There are a number of things we are trying to do to attract more LPNs. There is not one quick fix. That is why we are offering bursaries. That is why we have this working group that is looking at the program and some of the other issues related to recruitment and retention.

I am pleased to say we have expanded the number of long-term care beds in this region, and I look forward to seeing the rest open at our brand new facility in the next couple of months.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Then, I am asking the minister: When are they going to have a solid plan to create long-term care beds to get rid of the serious shortage of long-term care that is coming? When are we going to get people out of the beds in the hospitals?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite raises a very important issue. We do need to increase long-term care in Newfoundland and Labrador, and this government has done exactly that. We have challenges in long-term care in this Province, particularly in the Central Region where we are currently conducting a review. There was funding announced in this year's Budget for that review to ensure we have plans in place for the short and long term to meet long-term care needs.

We also need to keep long-term care patients out of acute care beds. It is one of the reasons why there were changes made to plans for the West Coast hospital, recognizing the need for increased long-term care on the West Coast of the Island as well. So we are making progress, and we recognize there is still work to do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, on October 23, I sent a proposal to the Minister of Justice outlining how the Family Violence Intervention Court could be reinstated and expanded with minimal cost, using existing infrastructure and

personnel. This proposal was developed in consultation with experts in family violence specialty courts.

I ask the Minister of Justice: Will she commit to reinstating the Family Violence Intervention Court in St. John's immediately and commit to a timeline for the expansion of the court to other areas of the Province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am quite pleased to rise and talk about the Family Violence Intervention Court. I believe we have clearly laid out the work we are doing on the Family Violence Intervention Court here in the House of Assembly, and I have clearly articulated how important it is to me as the Premier and also to our government.

We want to see it being available to people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. So it is important, before we just flip a switch, that we do our homework first, that we look at opportunities that exist to expand the services and availability of services throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Can we use technologies that are available to us? Is that a proper way to deliver the services? Does it need to be done face to face, or is there a combination we can do there?

We need to rely on the input from specialists and experts in the field, as well as look at the infrastructure that is available to us. All that work is underway, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask: Who on the other side of this House will stand up for the needs of the women and children, victims of violence in their districts, and insist government reinstate the court immediately? Who on this side of the House will stand up for the people in their districts?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier, for a quick reply.

PREMIER DAVIS: I think, Mr. Speaker, the demonstration by the caucus on this side of the House demonstrates we will all stand up for people. Mr. Speaker, every one of us does.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MS SULLIVAN: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Regulate Child Care Services, Bill 30.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand today, Mr. Speaker, to present a petition on behalf of the people of Western Newfoundland and Labrador concerning the hospital in Corner Brook.

WHEREAS we wish to raise concerns regarding the recent delay on 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 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, once again I stand today on this, because I see the comments by the minister saying that certain information is incorrect. Once again, what was tabled in this House this week was a \$4.8 million pre-commitment for the design of the hospital portion of the facility in Corner Brook. I stated, and I always did say, and the minister said that the hospital portion will start in 2015, as was in Hansard. Mr. Speaker, I have said that it will not be, and we need to inform the people of Western Newfoundland.

Mr. Speaker, the minister mentioned that he is going to go out to Corner Brook this weekend. I guess because of the by-election, he is going out to Corner Brook. I asked if he would have a public meeting. It was denied.

Here is what is going to happen, Mr. Speaker. He is going to contact the health care committee, and instead of meeting with the full committee, I bet he is going to meet with one to two. He will not meet with the full committee. That is my expectation, Mr. Speaker, because he does not want a full group of people to say: here is what was said, here is the commitment, and here are our issues.

You watch, Mr. Speaker, if I do not come back in this House on Monday and say, he met with one, maybe two. If he is pressured, it may be two. I asked for a full public meeting.

This is not about me. This is not about the people opposite. This is about the people who have to travel in for services in St. John's. This is what this is all about.

I was on Open Line this morning. I gave the former Premier, the Member for Humber East,

information. The Leader of the Opposition, we walked over and gave him the information we had. We gave him phone numbers to phone. I have to give him credit; he called to prove that single bunkers were used in Canada. He called. The former Premier called the worker in Sydney and said: boys, I am sorry, the information I was given was incorrect; single bunkers do work.

So let's work together on this. Let's have a public meeting so we can tell everybody the status of it, the time delays. Let's talk about when it is going to start and what is going to be in the hospital. I am willing to bet, Mr. Speaker, there will be one or two from the health care committee.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the time.

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS Labrador's coastal communities already pay extremely high hydro rates; and

WHEREAS small businesses are struggling to stay in operation against rising costs of operation; and

WHEREAS Nalcor, a Crown corporation, is proposing an 11.4 per cent increase to residential hydro rates and a 20 per cent increase to business rates;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to work with Nalcor to establish rates that are fair and consist with the whole Province.

As in duty bound, your petitioners

Mr. Speaker, when I first learned of these rates, I was totally floored. When we joined Confederation in 1949, Labrador was a part of

that union. We are a part of this Province. We are still a part of this Province, and we expect to be treated as a part of this Province.

When I see hydro rates proposed for 1.9 per cent, when I see hydro rates increased from 2.9 per cent, I think that is fair. When I see 11 per cent and 20 per cent –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. EDMUNDS: To hear the Minister of Natural Resources agree with this proposal, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if this proposal had an 11.4 per cent increase and a 20 per cent increase for The Isles of Notre Dame, would he stand up and support it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, we are looking at fairness and equity in Labrador. We have to argue for fairness and equity. With this government, it falls on deaf ears. I would like to think – and I have read it and I would still like to think – that Nalcor is a Crown corporation, and to see the gall of this government to look at the unfairness in this proposal.

Mr. Speaker, this is the first of many petitions that I will be presenting. I will be making my submissions to the PUB. When you look at fairness and equity in this Province, we expect it.

Thank you.

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I am sure, because this petition is representing the people of the Province who are very interested in alleviating the suffering of women and children who are the victims of family violence, that people will want to hear what they have to say.

WHEREAS domestic violence continues to be one of the most serious issues facing our Province today, and the cost of the impact of domestic violence is great, both economically and in human suffering; and

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

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

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, yet again today this feels a little bit like the Mad Hatter's Tea Party here in the House of Assembly. When I hear the Premier respond to my question about the Family Violence Intervention Court, he said we cannot simply turn on a switch and turn it on.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they turned off the switch without any thought. It was absolutely immediate with no thought and no planning whatsoever in terms of what the ramifications were of closing that court, what the ramifications were for victims of domestic violence, but also what the ramifications were

for the entire justice system, because those cases then had to go back to a cumbersome justice system that could not effectively deal with the root causes of domestic violence.

I say, Mr. Speaker, because we know the court was working well – several Ministers of Justice and the past Premier and the current Premier were both saying how well the court worked. So, why not reinstate it immediately? All the elements are in place.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege and the honour of working with experts in the area of the family violence specialty court to come up with a proposal not only on how to reinstate the court, but how to expand it with minimal cost using existing infrastructure.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREAS the applied behavioural analysis, ABA program, for children with autism is funded by the Department of Health and Community Services; and

WHEREAS the program was introduced in 1999 and is in serious need of revision; and

WHEREAS with the advances made in early diagnosis of autism, the number of high functioning children being diagnosed with autism has drastically increased; and

WHEREAS the current ABA program does not take into account that children on the autism spectrum are involved in many educational, recreational, and social activities outside of the home; and

WHEREAS the current ABA program requires that the therapist be accompanied at all times by another adult, which is not only inconvenient but can be quite costly when a parent is unable to be

that second adult due to work or other obligations; and

WHEREAS the current ABA program ends at Grade 3 but autism is a lifelong social disorder;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to implement a review of the ABA program with considerations given to alternate programming options and to extend autism programming beyond Grade 3.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand here today and speak on behalf of residents, especially in my district, members of the Autism Involves Me – AIM committee – who I met with just shortly before coming back to the House of Assembly. They sat down with me and told me that this is what we need. These are parents and advocates for children with autism. The interesting thing is it is not just children, this is a lifelong disorder, yet our ABA program cuts off at Grade 3. Let's forget what age they are diagnosed; once Grade 3 comes they are off, they do not get this therapy, and it is absolutely shameful.

The fact is this therapy was developed well over a decade ago and it needs revision. Again, I am listening to the experts. I am listening to the advocates and the parents who have to live this; they are dealing with it every day. So I am happy to stand here and speak on their behalf.

I know government knows this is a serious issue. We just have to look at the numbers over the last little while: 2007, one in 150 children; 2009, one in ninety-one; 2012, one in eighty-eight; last year, one in sixty-eight children. This is an epidemic, but again, this government is woefully behind and woefully unprepared, as they seem to be with just about everything else. This needs to be done now for the betterment of our children who are going to grow up to be adults on the autism spectrum. We asked for it; let's get it started, and let's work together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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 Labrador's coastal communities already pay extremely high hydro rates; and

WHEREAS small businesses are struggling to stay in operation against rising costs of operation; and

WHEREAS Nalcor, a Crown corporation, is proposing a 11.4 per cent increase to residential hydro rates and a 20 per cent increase to business rates;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to work with Nalcor to establish rates that are fair and consistent to the whole Province.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I was on my feet about this yesterday, on my feet today now for the second time, and I will continue to hammer this. Yesterday, I could not believe it when I heard the minister say – and I will check Hansard and I will bring it back into the House next week to hear him say that he supports this. If he wants to know what businesses right now in my district are paying, I am happy to table this document: a small business in my district, \$6,000 to heat their building and keep the lights on – \$6,000 and we are going to hit those businesses with another 20 per cent on top of that.

I have people sitting in the gallery today, Mr. Speaker, and there are fifty-foot towers going right across their land, a DC transmission line, and we are getting nothing from that. We are being left with dirty diesel, unreliable power. It is not good enough.

Someone has to stand up for these people. In two or three years, Mr. Speaker, Muskrat Falls will be over and done, and these small businesses employing five or six people in the

communities are all that we have left. Not only the small businesses, but non-profit groups are paying this commercial rate.

We are trying to shut down rural communities. More than half our Province is rural. We need to be supporting and doing what we can to help those communities. We are not only closing the doors of the small businesses, but we are dragging down the social programs and fabric of our communities as well, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister to think about, when he goes home over the weekend, what he said he was supporting. Stand up, because the minister for Labrador never stood today. I gave him two opportunities to stand. Stand for the people of Labrador. He said yesterday he was out in my district recently, the beautiful communities of St. Lewis and William's Harbour. I ask him to think about that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: Think about the seniors who have to choose between buying their pills or heating their home this winter, Mr. Speaker. They are going to pay twice, because they are going to pay 11 per cent on their residential increase and they are going to pay on their milk and butter when the businesses have to charge extra to stay in business.

It is an injustice. It is highway robbery. It is something I will continue to bring and do my best to keep the issue front and center here in the House, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: 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 Tordon 101 contains the chemicals 2, 4-D and Picloram; and

WHEREAS the chemical Picloram is a known cancer causing carcinogen; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has banned the cosmetic use of the pesticide 2, 4-D; and

WHEREAS safer alternatives are available to the provincial government for brush clearance such as manual labour, alternative competitive seeding methods, and/or the mechanical removal of brush; and

WHEREAS the provincial government is responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of its citizens;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to cease the use of chemicals covered under its own cosmetic pesticide ban and begin using safer methods of brush clearance that will not place its citizens in harm's way.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I am quite pleased to stand in the House again today – I should not say quite pleased, because it is upsetting when you are talking about dumping chemicals into our perfect environment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: This petition is signed by some of the people from Cavendish, St. John's; I see there are some Labrador signatures, Newtown, Forteau, all the ways back to St. John's again, English Point, and Elliston. We are getting people from all over Newfoundland and Labrador signing this petition and then sending them in.

These people also believe in a clean and pristine environment that they want to see in this Province. They also believe, as we talked about yesterday in this House of Assembly, we talked

about making responsible decisions in this House of Assembly. We were talking about the advent of the fracking panel, of course, and government making the responsible decision to put someone in there to represent the public health interest.

We have a public health interest here that people want the government to address. The simple fact is people do not want to see chemicals put into their environment, if we have other alternatives to address the same problems we are dealing with. Whether it is the Nalcor right-of-way, running about 1,200 kilometres worth of wires and we want to control the brush that is there; whether it is the moose problem in this Province where we want to make sure we are controlling roadside brush clearing.

We have a responsibility to the people to use the cleanest possible method if we are to control brush. Be that either competitive growing methods by introducing another species that would compete with some of the flora and fauna that is there on the side of the road now, or whether it is using a mechanical means of harvesting, of getting rid of the brush on the side of the road. We have other options, and I ask government to do the responsible thing. Pay attention to its own chemical ban here and start adhering to the wishes of the people of this Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that we move to the Orders of the Day.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that we move to Orders of the Day.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, from the Order Paper, I would like to call Order 3, second reading of a bill, An Act Respecting Chartered Professional Accountants And Public Accountants, Bill 27.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member for Baie Verte – Springdale, that Bill 27, the Chartered Professional Accountants And Public Accountants Act, now be given a second reading.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 27, entitled, An Act Respecting Chartered Professional Accountants And Public Accountants, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act Respecting Chartered Professional Accountants And Public Accountants". (Bill 27)

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

MR. CORNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Chartered Professional Accountants and Public Accountants Act will facilitate a merger of the three self-regulating bodies for accounting professions in Newfoundland and Labrador into a single organization, reflective of the newly created national body, Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada. It would also incorporate the Public Accountants Act, so separate legislation is no longer necessary for this designation.

Mr. Speaker, this new legislation and the merging of the accounting professions are consistent with what is being carried out in all other provinces. The merger is strongly supported by all three existing accounting

organizations in this Province. My officials have had meetings with the accounting bodies to facilitate this merger, and it has been a priority for them since they approached government requesting approval to merge in July of last year.

Historically, in Newfoundland and Labrador, there have been three separate professional accounting designations: chartered accountants, certified management accountants, and certified general accountants. To be licensed to practice as a public accountant, one must first be a certified Chartered Accountant, Certified Management Accountant, or Certified General Accountant. Licences to practice public accountancy are issued by the Public Accountants Licensing Board under the Public Accountants Act.

Mr. Speaker, all accounting designations are governed by their own self-regulatory organizations. These organizations are the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Society of Certified Management Accountants of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Certified General Accountants Association of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Of course, along with each of these three self-regulatory organizations come corresponding legislation. They are each governed respectively by the Chartered Accountants Act, 2008, the Certified Management Accountants Act, 2008, and the Certified General Accountants Act, 2008.

The new legislation will align accountants in Newfoundland and Labrador with most of the rest of Canada by creating a single new accounting organization known as the Chartered Professional Accountants of Newfoundland and Labrador. The provincial body representative of the newly created national body of Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the new act will replace the four existing acts governing accountants in the Province; and, as such, the creation of this new legislation requires that all four existing acts be repealed.

Mr. Speaker, it is noteworthy that the single new act has been drafted substantially along the lines

of the four previous separate acts. Slight differences in the new legislation exists primarily to effect the merger and to address minor differences in the previous legislation with respect to fines, board composition, and other administrative areas.

Because the new Association of Chartered Professional Accountants of Newfoundland and Labrador will be a self-regulating organization, they will address education and licensing requirements as did the self-regulatory bodies for the Chartered Accountants, Certified Management Accountants, and Certified General Accountants. These requirements under the new Chartered Professional Accountant designation will largely resemble the previous requirements for each of the three former types of accounting designations. This is the same process under which the three designations carried out their respective organizations in the past. It has worked well since they became self-regulating organizations.

For new Chartered Professional Accountants a very positive piece of this merger includes the new education program developed by CPA Canada. The new program meets or exceeds the rigor of existing programs and also offers advanced and increased training opportunities for members.

Mr. Speaker, Service Newfoundland and Labrador have consulted with the Public Accountants Licensing Board to obtain its position on the merger and the repeal of the Public Accountants Act. The board's position was neutral. The new act will continue to allow for additional education and professional requirements to become a public accountant, which will retain a separate licence and public register to be overseen by the board of the Chartered Professional Accountants.

Historically, accountants of different designations typically performed markedly different types of work. Today, that is no longer the case and, as such, individuals with different accounting designations are often performing similar duties. By combining the three existing accounting designations into one, under a single new governing act, we will ensure that all accountants are subject to the same educational requirements and licensing processes, as well as

the same codes of conduct, enforcement, and disciplinary processes.

All other Canadian provinces are participating in this merger to form the national organization and most have already completed or are in the process of completing this merger within their own jurisdictions. Mr. Speaker, by joining the move across Canada with respect to merging accounting professions, regulatory consistency across the provinces will also make things easier for accountants in this Province who wish to expand their practice into other provinces.

Before I conclude, I want to acknowledge and thank those individuals who have been instrumental in advancing this merger here in Newfoundland and Labrador. That includes all members of the Chartered Professional Accountants Transitional Steering Committee and, in particular, Mr. Jason Hillyard who has played a key co-ordinating role between accountants and government. Their work must be noted, and I commend them for their dedication and diligence.

From time to time, as Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador, I am invited to a number of their functions and graduations. I look forward to being able to address this merger at the next invitation I receive.

I move that the new Chartered Professional Accountants and Public Accountants Act be introduced for the benefit of accountants in Newfoundland and Labrador and to keep our Province's accounting sector in line with what is being done across the rest of Canada.

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 rise in the House today to speak to the bill the minister just spoke to, Bill 27, An Act Respecting Chartered Professional Accountants and Public Accountants. On this side of the House, certainly for the Official Opposition, this is a bill we will be voting to support. I am

surprised, though, when I went to the briefing this morning, that this piece of legislation has taken as long as it has.

If I could take a couple of minutes of the House and the hon. members' time today to go back in history as to why this particular change is happening, many of us will remember back in 2001 the infamous Enron scandal and ultimately what ended up happening with Arthur Andersen, which was the fifth largest audit and accountancy partnership at the time.

Enron's collapse and the subsequent collapse of Arthur Andersen not only created severe losses for shareholders, but in particular for pension programs around the world, more importantly, for pensioners, investors and, quite frankly, average folks who had worked very hard to create a nest egg and invest it. When Enron collapsed and the industry stood back and took a look at what needed to happen, raising accounting standards throughout the world was something many organizations, and particular governments, took the initiative to do.

This House would certainly be very familiar with legislation in the US called Sarbanes-Oxley Act 2002, where it was referred to at the time Public Company Accounting Reform and Investor Protection Act. The bill, which was approved and passed in 2002, contains eleven sections, each of which was enacted as a reaction to a number of major corporate and accounting scandals, including not only Enron but also WorldCom.

Sections of the bill cover responsibilities of public corporations' boards of directors, add criminal penalties for certain misconduct, and require the Securities and Exchange Commission to create regulations to define how public corporations are to comply with the law.

I mentioned I was surprised in the briefing, and the reason I was surprised in the briefing is that government's own Crown Corporation, Nalcor Energy, adopted the practices and accounting policies under Sarbanes-Oxley as part of its accounting processes several years ago.

The destination that the legislation is going to get us to today with the merging of the CMA, CGA, and CA professions was lobbied –

government was lobbied to make those changes, and it was done so because accounting standards needed to rise, not only in the United States as it relates to publically- and globally-traded companies but right here in our own Province with companies just like Nalcor Energy and other large companies like Fortis.

Many of these companies proactively took the responsibility to go ahead and follow the rules that were established by the Sarbanes-Oxley Act. They included things like the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board, things like auditor independence.

The act in the US consists of nine sections and establishes standards for external auditor independence to limit conflicts of interest. It also addresses new auditor approval requirements, audit partner rotation, auditor reporting requirements, and it restricts auditing companies from providing non-audited services for the same client.

One of the reasons this is important is oftentimes audit companies can become very familiar with the management of a particular company. The reason you rotate the auditing companies is to make sure there is a fresh set of eyes on the practices and processes that are followed by that company, so ultimately the shareholders of that organization are protected.

The largest publicly traded companies have adopted the best practices. The organizations that represent the professionals under the CMA, the CGA, and the CA categories have been advocating for this legislation for many years. It is a natural progression of what we saw in the US when Enron, WorldCom, Arthur Andersen, and the other scandals ripped money out of the pockets of poor, hard-working folks because of corporate greed. These are all parts of the accounting improvements that needed to happen.

Some other components of this legislation included corporate responsibility, which mandated that senior executives take individual accountability for accuracy and completeness of corporate financial reports. No longer was it good enough for company CEOs and company CFOs to defer to or deflect to accounting systems and accounting companies, they also were personally liable. It also spoke to

enhanced financial disclosures, describing enhanced reporting requirements for financial transactions, including those important off-balance-sheet transactions. Pro forma figures and stock transactions of corporate officers as well were included.

Another part of the legislation was the analysts' conflicts of interest which clearly identified organizations' behaviour when they were participating in audits of large companies, particularly companies that had public stock. Commission resources and authorities, there are four sections of the act that refer to the SEC's authority. There were a number of sections of the act that also referred to studies and reports, as well as corporate, criminal, and fraud accountability.

It describes specifically criminal penalties for manipulation, destruction or alteration of financial records, and other interference with investigations, while providing certain protection for whistleblowers. This was legislation that the US undertook in 2002 and, subsequently, practices that were then followed by many jurisdictions. The changes in Canada are happening, as the minister indicated, at the request of the professional associations.

It is government's responsibility to act quickly, efficiently, and decisively when there is a chance the population is at risk, and certainly the amalgamation of these three organizations provides an opportunity for a higher standard of professionalism in the industry of accounting. The Canadian Public Accounting Organization has indicated there are a number of things they are trying to achieve in promoting this type of amalgamation happening in all the jurisdictions across Canada.

What they are suggesting is that professionals in the accounting industry are securing their rights to the global designation of choice and the industry is going to be aligning with the most recognized global accounting designation, which would best protect long-term value. Mutual recognition agreements will be maintained and expanded to include the world's most prominent bodies, providing maximum global mobility.

Common regulatory processes will also be a by-product of this amalgamation. It will enhance

the trust and confidence in the profession among employers and the public and provide enhanced mobility for members, allowing them to transition from one jurisdiction to the other with ease.

There will be a new common certification program reflected of the best-in-class standards in accounting. There will be a single set of high ethical and practice standards. There will be a common code of conduct, a common code of practice inspection, and a common code of discipline processes.

Efficiencies and economies of scale will also be achieved. Unification reduces the number of governing bodies in Canada from forty to fourteen, significantly simplifying operations in governance and reducing marketplace confusion.

Marketing spending to support the interests of all the CPA members will be more efficient and gains from increased efficiencies can be reinvested into enhanced members' services, such as post-designation specialty programs and professional development, which is so important in an industry that is fraught with change, particularly change that happens as a result of innovation and technology processes and systems.

It will also allow the national organization to create new products that enhance the members' practices and career goals, and develop communities of interest and networking opportunities so professionals in the industry can share best practices and also share the stories they have learned from the mistakes of the past when accounting happened in a way that did not protect the all-important shareholders.

It also will provide for a more unified voice; a larger cohesive voice representing about 190,000 members will more effectively represent members' interests for domestic policy, legislation, and regulatory issues. It is an industry of professionals that must lobby governments throughout Canada and globally to ensure the best practices in the accounting system are enacted, so transactions in public companies, transactions in government, transactions in private companies, are handled in a way that is ethical, above board, and in the best interests of shareholders.

It will provide for a stronger and more effective way of dealing with global alliances and other international designations. It will also ensure the standards in Canada, and the bar for accounting services, are raised.

As I mentioned earlier when we had the briefing this morning, which, I have to be honest, Mr. Speaker, as a new member to the House of Assembly not having celebrated my first year, it really does surprise me how amazingly ill-prepared government feels it is to have the Opposition members not briefed well in advance of a legislative agenda that is as light and as weak as we have seen this week. It has certainly not been something I had expected and been a surprise and a disappointment, but I digress.

The bill, as the minister referred to, is going to require a merger of three organizations. It is something that has been completed in other jurisdictions. I believe there are three jurisdictions that have already completed it. We have a population of 500,000 people, one of the smallest populated provinces in Canada. The industry, in my understanding, has expected this legislation to be on the Order Paper back in the spring of this year, but it failed to be able to get there. I think when the industry is looking for a better, more comprehensive way to be managed so they can raise the bar of performance and government is slow to do that, that is something that is a worry for all taxpayers.

Also, as I mentioned earlier, many of the accounting practices that are considered best in class, and ones that have been about raising the bar of performance, have been adopted in many corporations that are looking to set the bar high. Whether it is Fortis or other publicly-traded companies, or the government's own Crown corporation of Nalcor, it is not as if the importance of raising accounting practices and standards was not known to government or not known to the bureaucracy. It certainly would have been.

Nobody can argue with the fact that in 2001, when the logo of Enron appeared on many of our TVs and we saw people protesting in the streets, people crying about their pension programs, people crying about the amount of money they lost because corporate greed and inappropriate processes took over, nobody can

misunderstand that this is what took us to today and the need to change this act.

The reason the act is being changed – and I will clarify for the minister who, obviously, is having some difficulty understanding what I am saying. The reason the act has to be changed is that those three designations need to come together to raise the level of accounting process so they can be more globally accountable and follow more standards that are more important. To make sure that, in the end, shareholders of publicly traded companies are protected.

With that said, I thank the Speaker for the time to speak to the bill. As I said earlier, we will certainly be standing in support of this change, and I thank hon. members for listening.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly a pleasure to stand in this House of Assembly this afternoon. It is good to be back and to see all of my colleagues, and everybody is ready to go and have their game face on.

First of all, I simply want to say a great big thank you to the people of the District of Baie Verte – Springdale for their previous and ongoing support. It is certainly an honour and a privilege to serve the people of the region and the Province, to stand in this House and engage in dialogue day-in and day-out. On behalf of the District of Baie Verte – Springdale, it is an honour and a privilege.

We all take our jobs very seriously, Mr. Speaker. It is very humbling to be in this House. No matter if we are here ten years, two years, two months or one day, it is always a humbling experience, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to speak to Bill 27. The title is An Act Respecting Chartered Professional Accountants and Public Accountants. Before I go into it, Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the Service NL department officials and minister's officials for their briefing yesterday. It was

comprehensive and thorough. I really appreciate them taking the time out to brief us.

Mr. Speaker, I will refer to page 2. The bill has fifty-two pages. The language is very tedious and a lot of technical terms. So do not get scared, Mr. Speaker; I am not going to read fifty-two pages. I think I would lose everybody this afternoon if I did that. I will simply read the explanatory notes on page 2.

This is exactly what it says. This is very succinct; it serves as a synopsis of what the bill will do. It says, "This Bill would enact the Chartered Professional Accountants and Public Accountants Act and repeal the Certified General Accountants Act, 2008, Certified Management Accountants Act, Chartered Accountants Act, 2008 and Public Accountants Act."

The bill would do three things, Mr. Speaker. In other words, number one, it would merge the professions of Certified General Accountant, CGA as we know it, Certified Management Accountant, CMA, and Chartered Accountant, CA, into the profession of Chartered Professional Accountant, CPA; two, it would retain the Public Accountant designation, known as the LPA; and number three, it would provide for the governance, membership, and discipline of Chartered Professional Accountants and Public Accountants.

Mr. Speaker, as was pointed out earlier, in Newfoundland and Labrador, historically, we have always had three separate professional accounting designations. Someone mentioned earlier they were Chartered Accountants, CAs, Certified Management Accountants, CMAs, and the Certified General Accountants, CGAs.

At one time, Mr. Speaker, they did different types of work, but today that is not really so. They are all basically doing the same kind of work. Their duties are very similar in nature, so having three separate designations for the same type of work, Mr. Speaker, was rather cumbersome, disjointed, or convoluted. So upon the strong support and the request of industry players, or the three existing accounting organizations, to my understanding in this Province, our government explored the idea of consolidation, or we call merging, whatever, or

combining the three existing designations into just one, known as the CPA. Of course, this would have to be done under a new governing act.

Mr. Speaker, when you think of it, this makes a lot of sense, because all other Canadian provinces are participating in this merger, from my understanding. Basically, this is just a me-too type of legislation. There is nothing sinister that we are doing here, Mr. Speaker. We are just lining ourselves up with the rest of Canada so there could be more uniformity for the industry.

Mr. Speaker, by joining the move across Canada with respect to merging accounting professions, well, there are some advantages to doing this. What are they? Well, regulatory consistency across the provinces will make things easier for the accountants in our Province who wish to grow their business or expand their business into other provinces; they could find it quite easy to do so.

Also, with this harmonization or uniformity, the larger firms may choose to move their employees into the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Speaker, that will be another advantage. In addition to that, it would also provide greater opportunities to attract highly skilled individuals to our Province, Newfoundland and Labrador, if they wish to expand their business or grow their business.

Again, it makes a lot of sense to combine the three existing accounting designations, such as the CA, CMA, CGA, into just one and that will be known as the CPA. It ensures all accountants are subject to the same educational requirements and licensing processes, as well as the same code of conduct, the same enforcement and disciplinary processes.

What we are trying to do, in essence, Mr. Speaker, is the new legislation will align Newfoundland and Labrador accountants with the rest of the country by creating one new accounting organization known as the Chartered Professional Accountants of Newfoundland and Labrador, CPA. This provincial body will be representative of the newly created national body, called the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, this new act will replace the four existing acts that govern Newfoundland and Labrador accountants, and as such the creation of this new legislation will require all four existing acts to be repealed, hence facilitating the merger of this profession in this Province.

Before I clue up, one more point about Bill 27 is this, Mr. Speaker. The new Chartered Professional Accountant's designation, CPA, there is also the Licensed Public Accountant designation known as the LPA, Licensed Public Accountants. They must first be certified as a CPA before applying to the board to become a Licensed Public Accountant. I thought that would be nice to know, Mr. Speaker. There will still be separate educational and licensing requirements for Licensed Public Accountants, or the LPAs.

That concludes my remarks on Bill 27 for today. Mr. Speaker, I exhort everybody in this House and I would expect everybody in this House to support this bill.

Thank you very much, 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 take pleasure in rising in the House of Assembly today to speak to Bill 27, the Chartered Professional Accountants and Public Accountants Act. I have to, first of all, thank the staff at Service NL for what I would call an excellent briefing except for one thing – I could not get there myself – but on behalf of the staff. The staff told me it was a great briefing that they had. There was a lot of information that was exchanged.

I know this is not one of these bills that are going to end up with any life-changing events for some of the people in this House of Assembly. It is a necessary part of the process when you find that an industry out there is modernizing, getting with the times, and conforming to the standards that have been set in other provinces or in other countries sometimes.

Sometimes it does not sound like it is anything significant. If you are a chartered accountant, or if you are a CPA, or if you are falling under one of these designations, this is very important for those people working in the industry, and that there is some sort of uniformity that is going to be happening.

As the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale said, for example, and in my own initial research on this, I did find out that there are actually four acts that are affected and they are rolled into one. I would expect government would be making an announcement soon that this is part of a very effective government Red Tape Reduction strategy measure they have taken here. No doubt they will take credit for it in the future. I see that the Member for Port au Port, the Minister of Service NL, is agreeing with me on that one.

It is one of these things that have to happen because of the modernization of the times. It was a necessity. It was eventually going to happen in this Province anyway. Again, I thank the staff at Service Newfoundland and Labrador for the briefing on the part of my staff. I also thank my own staff as well for the research they have done. They gave me some excellent background besides the stuff that I was doing.

My researcher also found out along the way that the country of Bermuda – and this was a real surprise; it might be a surprise to everybody else in the House, too – is also a part of the Canadian chartered professional association. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bermuda has been affiliated with the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants for almost forty years and is considered a provincial institute of the CICA.

Mr. Speaker, it surprises me, no doubt. I think every member of this House would probably know of an accountant who might be living in Bermuda. I know we have run into one or two ourselves along the way who have been back up here for vacation and they tell us that they are doing chartered accountancy work in Bermuda. It is a great place to be figuring out numbers. Perhaps we will have a session of the House down there one of these days where we can figure out the provincial Budget.

The former titles of these various professionals have been merged into the one title now under this piece of legislation. The changes we have seen in this country, when it comes to the chartered accountancy profession, Mr. Speaker – I had no idea that there are about 190,000 people in this country who are actually working in the profession. That was a bit of a surprise to me when it came to that.

We are talking about changes to the legislation and getting with it with the other provinces, for example, what is happening in the rest of the country. It is already the case in Ontario, Saskatchewan, Quebec, and New Brunswick that this process has already happened within their own jurisdictions. It is a hope that the new combined Canadian accounting profession, built on the strengths of the three legacy designations, Chartered Accountant, Certified Management Accountant, and Certified General Accountant, will be better positioned to represent their own interests in Canada and abroad.

As we have already heard, there are many times in our history where we have noted abuses of the system. Hopefully this will result in better policing overall of the profession as well. Unification will also enhance the influence, relevance, and contribution to the Canadian accounting profession. No doubt, it is going to raise it another bar and everybody is going to be well served by this.

All forty of the accounting bodies, 190,000 members in Canada right now, have now either unified or are participating in discussions to unite under the CPA banner. Jobs evolve. We see changes in various professions. For example, in health care we see the changes in the designations when it comes to PCA, LPN, nurse, that sort of thing. This is all changing with the times.

Here in Newfoundland and Labrador, any decision to unify the profession requires consultation and engagement with many stakeholders. We can appreciate that. This has been done with the three professions. They have approved the merger proposal which has led to the legislation that we are looking at here today.

They wanted to see changes in their future industry. We are agreeable to that. We will be

supporting this legislation. Of course, government are the people responsible for having to come forward with this legislation in the first place. They are representatives of the people and we would vote for this particular legislation in this particular case.

It is consistent with the unification framework that we have seen in other provinces that have already done this, Mr. Speaker. We will be supporting this piece of legislation. We also want to wish the chartered accountancy profession good luck in their future deliberations.

Myself and the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, where she represents finance in our caucus, had a great debate ourselves over who was going to be doing this particular piece of legislation. Even though I ended up with a sore arm out of it, she really twisted my arm to try to get to do it herself. Mr. Speaker, in the end I won out. Hopefully chartered accountants will be winning out when this legislation gets passed.

We wish them all the best. We will be voting yes to this particular piece.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again I would like to thank the constituents of the District of Bonavista South for the continued support in allowing me to represent them in the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to the previous speakers: the Member for Port au Port, the Minister Responsible for Service Newfoundland and Labrador, the member opposite, the member representing Virginia Waters, the member on this side of the House from Baie Verte – Springdale, and the previous speaker, the Member for St. John's East. I got the sense and understanding that we are on the same wavelength on this particular piece of

legislation. That is very positive when a piece of legislation like this is introduced into the House of Assembly for passing.

Mr. Speaker, over the years accountants of different designations typically perform different types of work. Today, that is no longer the case. As such, individuals with different accounting designations are often performing similar duties.

Bill 27, this particular piece of legislation, will support the request of chartered professional accountants. Combining the three existing accounting designations into one under a single new governing act will ensure that all accountants are subject to the same educational requirements and licensing processes, as well as the same codes of conduct, enforcement, and disciplinary processes.

Mr. Speaker, all other Canadian provinces are participating in this particular merger and have already completed this merger within their own jurisdictions, or are actually in the process of doing so. With this important merger, larger firms may also chose to move their employees to Newfoundland and Labrador for work. This piece of legislation will provide greater opportunities to attract highly skilled individuals to this Province if they wish to expand their practices. We are talking Chartered Accountants, Certified Management Accounts, and Certified General Accountants right across the country.

Mr. Speaker, this new piece of legislation, and the merging of the accounting professions, is consistent with what is being carried out in all other provinces, like I said. The merger is strongly supported by all three existing accounting organizations in this Province. This is a very positive piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

The new legislation changes are required to facilitate the merger in this Province. A new governing act has been created and, for the most part, resembles the current acts governing CAs, CMAs, and CGAs.

Mr. Speaker, due to the fact that the previous speakers are in line with this particular piece of legislation, at this present time I would like to thank the officials of Service Newfoundland and

Labrador for their briefing to all of our MHAs on Bill 27. I will certainly support this piece of legislation that will improve the Province's accounting professional sector.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly a pleasure to stand and speak to this piece of legislation. Of course, we are speaking to Bill 27, An Act Respecting Chartered Professional Accountants and Public Accountants. I do not want to belabour it because I think much of the points that need to be made have been made by my colleagues on this side of the House, the other side of the House, the government side, and certainly the Third Party.

If you look through it, it seems like there is quite a bit there. The actual piece of legislation itself is fifty-three pages long. So, it is fairly extensive. To put it in a nutshell, as has been said, really what we are doing here is we are taking what – there used to be three accounting designations, of course. There were Chartered Accountants, Certified Management Accountants, and the CGAs, Certified General Accounts. We are merging them into one designation, the Chartered Professional Accountants, and we are retaining the public accountant role. All this legislation allows that to happen. It also provides legislation around those two entities. Primarily, the biggest change is the merger of the CGAs, the CMAs, and the CAs. They will all be known now as CPAs.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is fair to say that we have support on all sides of the House for this. The big thing for me is the fact that we have the three designations: CGAs, CMAs, and CAs. Each of their respective groups and representatives has come together and they have endorsed this. They are the experts in that particular field.

I am sure, though, that there will be people, no doubt, individuals perhaps in all those groups for various reasons who may not necessarily agree

with this particular move. I had one representation from a gentleman who, in fact, did disagree with this particular move. He had his reasons and I respect those reasons.

He had concerns over the fact that we would now have one organization that would basically, in the terms he used, take him from the cradle to the grave. Right from the point of which somebody now decides they want to be an accountant, there is only one program they can choose as opposed to three programs. Then once you become an accountant, you are basically governed by one body instead of the three separate bodies. You can be disciplined by that one body. In his view, he felt we were creating somewhat of a monopoly, was the terminology he used, and he did have some concerns about that.

At the end of the day, what I see here are three professional groups coming together. They are going to be the highest common denominator in terms of training and in terms of education. There were three organizations and perhaps three different degrees of training and degrees of expertise. At one point in time, I believe you could not do an audit at all unless you were a CA. You had to be a CA in order to even do an audit. Then back around ten or twelve years ago or something there was a piece of legislation that was passed that allowed CGAs and CMAs to also be licensed to actually do audits as well.

So, that was a big change at that point in time, and I am sure I can remember somebody I knew at that point in time back then who were saying – that was a CA, and they were not necessarily happy about that change because they felt it was kind of watering down their profession or what they considered, I guess, a higher designation. I am sure with any change there will be some people in all groups who would have reservations.

There is no doubt there has been some competition between the three groups over the years, but they have gotten beyond that. They have all agreed to come together to form this one designation, this one designation that would also be responsible for the education and training, would be responsible for governance, would be responsible for discipline and licensing or removing of licences, if deemed necessary. It is

going to bring everybody up to the higher standard, as I understand, in terms of training and so on.

Individuals who currently have a CA, a CMA, or a CGA designation certainly for the next ten years, have the opportunity to be considered a CPA, CA; CPA, CMA; or a CPA, CGA. So, in other words, they can keep both sets of credentials, both names, if they so choose.

Certainly with the new graduates of the CPA program in the future, come 2015, I guess everybody will now be considered a CPA; there will be only one designation. That will be the only designation those new people would have.

At the end of the day when you think about the work accountants do, the work they do in terms of auditing, the work they do in terms of managing – because a lot of people who are managers and CEOs and so on have this designation, managing the finances of sometimes smaller organizations, sometimes larger organizations, sometimes being contracted out to do that type of work for organizations, to do financial analysis.

When you look at that perspective and the impact all these businesses and so on have on our economy, on business, which leads to the creation of jobs and wealth and all that stuff, it is important that this work is done professionally, done properly. Not to suggest in any way that some of these designations did not do it in the past, but the fact that we can bring everybody together and agree this is a higher standard which will protect business and ultimately protect people, the public, and everything else, because we have seen some things that have happened in the past in certain large companies and organizations where things were not done properly and so on, and the disastrous impacts of that.

So, anything we can do to enhance the quality of this very important work, of all of the stakeholders and the professionals – and they are all very professional people. If they agree this is the right thing to do and it is going to enhance that, then I think it is something we should support.

As has been said already, Newfoundland is certainly not the first Province to do this. We are not breaking new ground. We have a number of provinces over the last couple of years that have already made this change. I understand there are a number of provinces that are basically in the process, as we are, of making that change, or will be making that change. It is something you are going to see right across the country.

If they all feel it is the beneficial thing to do, and I believe it is, based on the information I have been given and read, and from what I hear from people in the industry and consulting with my colleagues and so on. Bearing in mind, once again, that there will always be some people who will not support change of any kind and have concerns, and perhaps some legitimate concerns, but when you weigh out the pros and cons and so on, I believe this is the way to go.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I will certainly be joining my colleagues – and I believe everybody in the House today – in supporting this particular initiative, Bill 27.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: If the hon. the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador speaks now he will close debate.

The hon. the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. CORNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in closing this debate this afternoon I certainly want to thank the hon. members for Virginia Waters, Bay Verte – Springdale, St. John's East, Bonavista South, and Mount Pearl South for their comments on this very important piece of legislation.

The new Chartered Professional Accountants and Public Accountants Act we are debating here today is a good move to unify the accounting professions in this Province. It will be a great benefit for all accountants in Newfoundland and Labrador, and it will keep our Province's accounting sector in line with what is being done across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, before I conclude my remarks, the hon. Member for Virginia Waters asked a question, or she made the remark that she was surprised in how long it took to bring this bill to the House of Assembly. Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the hon. member that it did not take very long at all. It did not take very long at all for us to bring this piece of legislation forward. In fact, we were only approached by the CPA transitional steering committee just last year. So we developed and brought forward legislation within a year.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to let the hon. Member for Mount Pearl South know as well that we are the fourth jurisdiction in Canada right now to bring this forward. I just wanted to bring it up to clarify that this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, the national body for the Chartered Professional Accountants has been very active in advertising and promoting this merger at a national level. Likewise, the local chapter has been promoting the merger through billboards located around the city. They have also been advertising their education programs on buses, bus shelters, and on the radio, which also raises attention for the merger.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to further debate during the Committee stage.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting Chartered Professional Accountants And Public Accountants. (Bill 27)

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

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting Chartered Professional Accountants And Public Accountants", read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole presently, by leave. (Bill 27)

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 27.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Cross): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 27, An Act Respecting Chartered Professional Accountants And Public Accountants.

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 76 inclusive.

CHAIR: Clauses 2 through 76 inclusive.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 76 carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Government 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: An Act Respecting Chartered Professional Accountants And Public Accountants.

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 Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Chair, I move that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

CHAIR: It is moved that the Committee rise and report Bill 27 without amendment, and ask leave to sit again.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): The hon. the Member for Bonavista North and Deputy Chair of Committees.

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 27 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 27 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. HUTCHINGS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read the third time?

MR. HUTCHINGS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, from the Order Paper, I would like to call Order 4, second reading of a bill, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act, Bill 29.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNETT: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. the Member for Labrador West, that Bill 29, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act, now be given a second reading.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 29 entitled, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act". (Bill 29)

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

MR. CORNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure as the new Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador to stand in this hon. House to bring forward this amendment this afternoon. My department is often seen as the face of government, given the large number of services we provide to the public and business community on a daily basis.

Some of our most widely and regularly used services are through the Motor Registration

Division. This division is responsible for highway safety initiatives in the Province through the Highway Traffic Act and its regulations.

Mr. Speaker, the Highway Traffic Act regulates drivers and the use of vehicles on roadways aiding in the enforcement of vital safety standards that protect the travelling public. The act is a very significant piece of legislation and is amended on a regular basis to improve highway safety and to adapt to changes in our society with respect to driving behaviours. Today we are clarifying the Highway Traffic Act so that drivers understand what their responsibilities are when approaching and entering a roundabout.

Roundabouts, Mr. Speaker, are circular intersections or junctions that are used in many parts of the world to slow and control traffic without requiring the traditional crossing and/or stopping of vehicles. Traffic flows almost continuously around a central island where roads meet. Roundabouts have a number of safety benefits in that they temporarily slow traffic to a safer speed for nearby pedestrians, and traffic flows in a single direction, eliminating the risk of dangerous T-bone collisions that can occur at conventional four-way intersections.

In our Province they are relatively new. Just this fall the Town of Paradise opened their new roundabout at Karwood Drive and Kenmount Road in order to aid traffic flow in this very busy area of town.

MR. JACKMAN: A fine roundabout it is.

MR. CORNETT: As the hon. Member for Burin – Placentia West says, it is a fine roundabout.

The benefits, Mr. Speaker, of roundabouts and how much safer they make conventional four-way intersections are very well known. It is certainly our hope that more municipalities will explore the idea of putting in place roundabouts during the planning stages.

I want to congratulate, Mr. Speaker, the Town of Paradise for putting in place the one at Karwood Drive. Although it is still fairly new, I hope residents in the area are easily getting used to it

and that it is having a positive impact on traffic in that area. Even though we have not traditionally used roundabouts in Newfoundland and Labrador, we do have general provisions in the Highway Traffic Act to guide drivers in their use.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear, the Highway Traffic Act already has provisions to accommodate the use of roundabouts. The amendments we are introducing today are simply to make it clearer for both the public and law enforcement on how drivers must approach, enter, and exit a roundabout. Drivers entering a roundabout must yield to the right-of-way to traffic already in the circle and enter when a safe gap in traffic is available. Drivers in the circle must also yield to vehicles on their left when those vehicles are exiting the roundabout.

When we conducted our research into roundabouts we looked to other Canadian provinces and territories where roundabouts have been more commonly used. These amendments being introduced today will bring Newfoundland and Labrador's laws into line with a number of other jurisdictions in our country.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that despite roundabouts not being regularly constructed and used in this Province previously that their future construction was a very real possibility. Right now we are more familiar with the new roundabout in Paradise, but it is very possible that other municipalities, as they conduct their planning, will determine that roundabouts are the best option to aid traffic flows in high traffic areas. For this reason we have already provided general information on our Service Newfoundland and Labrador Web site about how to properly use a roundabout. The information displayed is for the use of a standard four-point roundabout.

We are also aware that the Town of Paradise has provided detailed information and graphics for the use of their specific roundabout design on their own Web site. As well, Service Newfoundland and Labrador is updating their Road Users Guide to include a section on roundabouts. This will assist driver education schools in teaching students how to approach and enter a roundabout. The information we

have on our Web site has already been submitted to driving schools in the Province to add to their curriculum.

Mr. Speaker, failure to obey the rules of the road when using roundabouts can result in fines ranging from \$100 to \$400, or a period of incarceration from two to fourteen days in default of payment. This is consistent with other similar violations under the act.

In the near future, matching amendments will be made to the Highway Traffic Demerit Point System Regulations to apply two demerit points to driver's licences for offences under the section of this act. As well, the Carrier Safety Regulations, which regulate the operation of commercial vehicles, will apply three compliance indicators to a commercial carrier for violations.

Mr. Speaker, while these amendments will help us improve road safety, I must note that safety is everyone's responsibility. We can put legislation in place, but we all have to follow safe driving practices to avoid collisions, serious injury, or worse. Any incident is one too many.

In conclusion, it is my hope that these amendments being proposed today will result in better driving habits in the use of roundabouts, more effective enforcement of safety legislation, and enhanced protection for road users in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure to be on my feet again and this time to speak to Bill 29, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act. As the minister has already indicated, this is – I guess we can call it housekeeping legislation, to some degree. Basically, it is a piece of legislation where we are making an amendment to allow for roundabouts. Up until the new roundabout in Paradise that was put in there about a year or so

ago, we never had any roundabouts in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As a result of that now, we have to make a couple of changes in the Highway Traffic Act to reference roundabouts, the yielding rules around roundabouts, and, of course, to update the fines section of the act in the event somebody breaches one of those new merging yield sections within the roundabout legislation, if you will.

So, Mr. Speaker, we certainly do not have any issue with this particular piece of legislation. Roundabouts, like I said, we have one in Paradise, so it is now a reality. We are not talking in theory any more; we have one. I suspect, as time goes by, we may see more of these roundabouts.

Certainly, the roundabout in Paradise became necessary due to all of the growth occurring in that town and surrounding areas – all the increasing in traffic. Certainly with that big increase in traffic they found themselves in a situation where there were lot of traffic jams, bottlenecks, and so on, and they had to come up with a creative solution to solve that problem. The roundabout, of course, was that solution.

I think it has worked fairly well. From what I can understand, there have not been a lot of accidents there, which is a good thing. I am glad to hear the minister say that with this new legislation and so on there is going to be information forwarded to the driving schools, which I think is very important. I certainly agree with that particular move so as new drivers are going through the various driving schools and so on they will be taught as to how to actually use a roundabout, how to use it properly, and how to use it safely. I think that is very important.

I think the biggest challenge for us, as we see more of these roundabouts, will not be new drivers because they would have learned it, I would assume, even as they were out practicing with their instructors. I would imagine they will be even practicing using a roundabout. I think the bigger concern would be with some of us who have already been through driving school, or perhaps we did not go to driving school – probably some of us should have gone to driving

school – and are now trying to learn it on the fly, so to speak.

As we see more of them, or if we are in the situation where we are using them more often, I think they will become easier to use. I have to say the first couple of times I encountered the one in Paradise I was a little confused. I was kind of glad at the time there was not a big volume of traffic flowing through there and I had lots of opportunity to weave in and out. It is like anything else: over time you get used to these things.

As the population continues to grow in the Paradise area, and continues to grow in the Town of Conception Bay South, the City of St. John's, Mount Pearl, and other areas in particular, traffic flows are going to continue to grow as well. We are going to see more and more need, I believe, for innovative solutions and perhaps doing things in a different way than we have done it in the past.

Most of our intersections right now have been signalized. They are four-way stops or two-way stops or whatever, or we are into signalization primarily in the larger intersections. A roundabout is new, but I think we are going to see more of them.

It is here and I think it is here to stay. I think there are going to be more as time goes on; therefore, it is important that we have the legislation in place to deal with it. That is what the government has done with this particular piece of legislation, with this particular Bill 29. It is a necessary piece of legislation. It is a timely piece of legislation. I believe we will all support it. I certainly will.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to be able to stand here today and have a few minutes to talk about Bill 29, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act. First of all, I would like to congratulate the staff at Service Newfoundland and Labrador. I know the amount of work they put into this amendment

and this bill, getting it ready. I think it is a good piece of legislation we are bringing forward.

As you heard the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador talk about and also the Member for Mount Pearl South, the reason we have to make these amendments is because of the increase of traffic, the amount of traffic that has increased. That is a good sign because it shows prosperity in the Province.

I, myself, have driven, I think, in most every province certainly in Canada. I have driven through Europe. I have also driven in some of the other countries such as England and Ireland and roundabouts are a common thing throughout Canada, certainly, and certainly in Europe.

I have driven on some of the older ones here in Eastern Canada, and I spoke to some of my colleagues as we were listening to the other speakers that you try to avoid them rather than go through the roundabouts because of the design of them. I look at the roundabout we have built here now in Paradise. It is a state-of-the-art roundabout. It works very efficiently, it works well, and it is signed very well. It is a job, I think, that was well thought out and well done.

The amendments we are making here, as you heard the other speakers say, there are already provisions within the bill now, within the Highway Traffic Act, for roundabouts within the Province even though this is the first roundabout that we have.

What we are trying to do with these amendments is trying to educate the general public and the drivers that will be using this roundabout and more, I am sure, as you heard the other speakers say, in the future there will be others, to learn how to yield the right-of-way within the roundabout once you get in there. Of course, the existing vehicles that are within the circle as we refer to is as, they have the right-of-way, and also in the amendments we want to educate people as to how to exit a roundabout. It is very important that once you get into the roundabout you also know how to safely exit and yield right-of-way to the vehicles that are there before you.

When you enter a roundabout, you go to the right and as you are exiting, or the oncoming

traffic to you, even though going in the same direction, the traffic to your left is what you yield to. It is important that we know that. Speed, of course, is a very important thing; using proper speed when entering or exiting a roundabout is very important, and that is in the amendments there.

The other thing we are putting in the amendments is the introduction of the penalties. As you heard the minister refer to it, the penalties could go anywhere from a \$100 penalty to a \$400 penalty or a time of incarceration from two days to fourteen days. So it is a fairly stringent amendment that is being put in there, and then, of course, grouping all the provisions together so it is easy to understand.

In section 100 of the Highway Traffic Act, we will be repealing subsection (3). Subsection (3) right now reads, "A driver of a vehicle when passing around a rotary traffic island shall drive to the right of the island, except where a sign giving other directions is displayed." That will be taken out of the act right now as it exists, and section 100.1, with four different sections in it, will be put in there. I find with these amendments that are being put in there, it clarifies and makes it very easy to understand what you are supposed to do as you enter into the roundabout or as you are exiting.

This roundabout we have here right now in Paradise – and I certainly congratulate the Town of Paradise on constructing this – is the first, as we said, in our Province. This one only has three exits. A lot of roundabouts have four. This one, to me, is a great opportunity within the Province for the drivers to, for lack of a better word, educate themselves on how they work.

One of the things I like most about the roundabout is, I have been on some intersections, I know there is one intersection – living in Labrador West, quite often I drive to the Island portion of the Province. Up until recently, only a couple of years ago, you had to drive through the Atlantic Provinces to get to the Island portion of our Province.

One of the more common routes to take is you would drive down the North Shore of Quebec and you would cross over into the Edmundston

area, where you can either take the old highway to cut through New Brunswick or you can come down through Fredericton on the TCH. In Edmundston, there is an intersection where there is no roundabout; it is the old traditional intersection. There have been several tragic accidents there. Myself, I have witnessed two over the last twenty years where there were fatalities in both.

That is a prime example of where a roundabout would eliminate that danger of the T-boning incidents. One of the main reasons for roundabouts is to eliminate the T-bone effect you get quite often in either busy intersections or four-way stops, where you have four intersections coming the one way. The roundabout really does make a difference there.

I think the provincial government has done a very good job right now in these amendments with this Bill 29 in educating people and clarifying the purpose of it. The enforcement, we have covered the enforcement parts defining not just for the drivers but also for the law enforcement officers on how they can enforce the law.

There are two other things I really like about the amendments here in this bill. Number one is in the new driver program. It will be incorporated in the driver's program how to use roundabouts. The education piece will be there for the new drivers. The other part I really like is the application of the demerit points. Getting two demerit points here is very important. Quite often a lot of vehicle drivers misunderstand or misrepresent the demerit point system. They think, well, I have twelve points, I can lose some. That is not the way it works. You actually start out with zero points, and you hope to stay at zero points.

When you are given points in this particular case, it is not a good thing, the demerit points you accumulate. Accumulating two points for misusing or abusing the system of the roundabout, they can add up fairly quickly. A lot of people misunderstand that, how the demerit point system works. I am glad to see the act will also be changed to represent the demerit point system in this particular piece of infrastructure.

I am not going to belabour this too long. As I said, I think a wonderful job is being done. In the amendment we have covered the purpose of what the roundabout is all about, how it works. The safety aspects are covered. As I said, this is the first one in the Province.

Before I do close, I know that on the Service Newfoundland and Labrador site – again, I certainly commend the staff within the department. You can go on the site now and get information. The information is already on the site where you can get information that will educate you more as to how a roundabout works. It can be intimidating the first time you go on to it, because instead of going from point A to point B in a straight line, you are now deferring your line of traffic to go around it.

I would advise and suggest to people, go on the Web site, Service NL, and just have a look at the information there. It is great information. I have copies of it and I have looked through it. I also recommend that if you are going to the roundabout, just to go for a drive on the roundabout for the experience, do not do it at 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon in the middle of the week. Do it on a slower period, because it can be, as I said, a little bit intimidating.

This is the way of the future. It is a safety measure within the traffic system that we are seeing right across the country. We have certainly followed other jurisdictions to see how they have done it through construction, as well as enforcement. I think it is a great thing and it is a sign of advancement.

I congratulate and commend the Town of Paradise. I commend the Department of Service Newfoundland and Labrador and the government. I will be supporting this, and I am sure everybody else will.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It is a pleasure again to stand up in the House and talk about Bill 29. In a roundabout way we have come back. We have a Bill 29 on our hands, albeit a completely different topic this time, but no doubt of concern to many, particularly the motorists of the Province.

Just to quantify my remarks, Mr. Speaker, just to lead off, I did do something a little bit different this time when it came to consultation on this particular piece of legislation. Besides going outside and doing my own research, I talked to people I used to work with – I guess you could say the commercial driving industry, this particular time around. All the taxi drivers I talked to, truckers I also talked to on this, long-distance drivers who deal with this type of highway that they would run into on their way in their daily travels in other regions of the country where they would be using roundabouts. Then I went to Twitter as well, and got some comments from people and what they have been finding as regards to the roundabout, particularly as they use it in the area of Paradise.

It is not the only roundabout, by the way, that is in the Province. We also have a roundabout up on Hebron Way, up off Stavanger Drive now. I do not know if the minister knew that, but that is only a new area too, to some extent. Even I have not been on that particular roundabout yet. I have been out to the one in Paradise.

What I did find, a personal experience first off when it came to the roundabout, the Member for Labrador West already said that – and I think he is right when you say this, that when you first come upon a roundabout it can be intimidating. It brings up a point I want to make about education. I also received a lot of comments on Twitter about the need to educate our drivers out there, particularly our student drivers who are there and people about to enter into our highways, that there is a strong need for education.

We learned about that yesterday, too, particularly when it comes to the Move Over legislation on how much education is going to be needed on our highways to teach the drivers how to use these roundabouts. It is kind of neat to see that government is, as well, starting to look a little bit in the future on this and to know they are finally going to be catching up with the

times as they already have been in other regions of North America when it comes to the use of roundabouts.

This is a tool, by the way, that the government should have been using a long time ago and I will get into that a little bit later. Let me read to you some of the comments I did get off Twitter when it comes to the use of the roundabout. I think the practical experience from anybody who is out there using the hashtag #nltraffic, that these people would know particularly what government needs to hear.

One comment that I had says, “until someone gets killed or maimed. They need to educate on a large scale! News, papers, whatever it takes” to get the message out. It is like I said with the Move Over law; you have to launch a public relations campaign here and incorporate all these changes. They could probably merge the two, as a matter of fact, speaking of highway traffic and using a term – merge the simple fact of having to get out some sort of video production on the proper use of the Move Over law, the proper use of a rotary and a roundabout in this Province.

Another comment: they have educated people about the roundabout in Paradise. Obviously there are accolades to the Paradise council out there on the use of it, but still, people are driving clockwise on the rotary. Some people are still going the wrong way. The question here is, and what this person is saying is while people are still driving clockwise, is it the fact that maybe the directions around some of these rotaries, these roundabouts, are not quite clear? Maybe we need some better signage and some better indicators of exactly where to be going and what direction certainly to be going on some of these roundabouts.

Brenda Smith wrote, “All new drivers must have knowledge and be tested. Space, proper construction, and education are key.” Here is what I want to get to and the point that Brenda Smith makes. In areas of Paradise, for example, where the roundabout is right now, they had plenty of space to deal with that, they could actually construct this roundabout. Some of these roundabouts could take a considerably large area.

If you look at the City of St. John's, for example, how much money could you as a consumer, for example, save if you did not have to stop at one of the traffic lights in the city? One of the plans, for example, for the old crosstown arterial years ago was to have an underpass and overpass so you would not have to stop at traffic lights. The addition of a rotary, for example, might save municipalities a fortune when it comes to the movement of traffic.

Still, you have a problem here now where the highways are there and all of a sudden the use of them suddenly explodes to the point where the acquisition of other properties, for example, if a municipality were to expropriate – it is a bit late now to deal with that particular solution. It is probably not too late to put in an underpass or overpass and smaller turning lanes, that sort of thing, in order to get off them. Still, it is a problem for the future that municipalities would have to deal with. Perhaps they would be dealing with the future heavy traffic load and how to deal with their traffic in the future.

The other suggestion I want to hand to government, too, at this particular point, for the Minister of Transportation is that we know the Auditor General has already commented on the lack of bridge repairs and the amount of –

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the hon. member we are speaking to Bill 29. It is an amendment speaking specifically about rotaries.

MR. MURPHY: I am, Mr. Speaker. I think that government will get my point about the use of rotaries if they use it in their own particular means.

The use of rotaries could probably save the provincial taxpayers a fortune in bridge and road construction at the same time, and bridge maintenance. The Auditor General commented on the simple fact that we have a lot of bridge problems in this Province. Perhaps if government looked at it and looked at the possibility of putting rotaries in some of these areas where bridges are – most of them are underpass or overpass where you have highways that are intersecting. Perhaps they can solve the problem about having to deal with bridges in the future by making changes to the road. I say that to government too because, again, this is a

problem we have to deal with in the future, and perhaps the rotary itself might be an answer.

Another comment, Mr. Speaker, and I guess I will make this one the last one. This is from another user obviously who uses the rotary in the Town of Paradise. It “is working great... except the other day I saw a lady go the opposite way”. Again, we have an indication possibly about signage here and people's understanding of how a rotary works. There is a strong indication that I received. I want to thank all these people, by the way, on #nltraffic and on Twitter who sent these comments along when I threw it out yesterday. It was a spur of the moment thing.

Just to carry on with the simple aspect of rotaries and the benefits of them. Of course, you get better traffic flow. We know that because nobody has to stop at a red light and release harmful emissions. There is also a green component too, and I did get that off Twitter as well, that this has huge green benefits. We also know, by listening to the radio every morning, how much of an inconvenience it is out there when you are stopped at red lights and the traffic build up that can occur. If you have the smooth flow of traffic that a rotary can give you, or a roundabout can give you, well then we are doing something a little bit more positive to the environment.

The only other thing I will suggest to government is that while they come out with rules about roundabouts, this is not the only piece where they have to modernize on the Highway Traffic Act. I also have to bring out the point, too, about the citing regulations when it comes to entranceways and exit ways on roundabouts. The citing regulations within Canada keep on changing. I encourage government to have a look at those regulations too, and make sure that the roundabouts themselves are going to have enough space to be put into it.

We will be supporting this legislation. We look at this as not only a positive idea the municipalities have been putting through, in particular, the Town of Paradise and the Town of St. John's. We also think government can institute rotaries that can be a cost-saving measure to the Newfoundland and Labrador

taxpayer as well, and what is happening with their money particularly when it comes to roads and bridges. We look at that as a viable option. We ask government to consider that as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a great honour today to stand as always in place to speak about legislation that comes to this hon. House. Today we are talking about Bill 29.

I just want to take a few short minutes. I am not going to belabour the point. I am going to try not to repeat much of what others have said because we are all in agreement. There are a few points I can make that will add a little extra information to it from a different point of view.

As has been said, there are two or three sources on the Web sites where you can actually get this information. On the government Service Newfoundland and Labrador Web site you can find many diagrams that would talk about the four-way roundabouts, some with two lanes in a circle and some with three lanes.

As our constituents listen today, and as our hon. members here listen today, we also talk about traffic circles, roundabouts, and rotaries. They all mean basically the same thing. It is a mechanism whereby traffic flow can move safely and at a slower pace, so when you do enter into the roundabout if you think safety first then you will watch the flow of traffic as it is there.

There are two or three things I distinctly want to add to this. It comes from a point of view I have gathered. At one other point, in a former life, I spent almost a year living in another province, Mr. Speaker. At that time, I had a Class 3 driver's licence. Part of what we did there in the training is there was a huge component about rotaries because in Edmonton, Calgary, and

other places if you were driving your truck, you would have to encounter these. That gives you a distinct, different feeling than entering a rotary in a motor car.

There are a couple of components I just want to build into that, so drivers now who may listen to a little tiny bit of advice I have to say today maybe would avoid what the Member for Labrador West and the minister alluded to about the points and the penalties. A few little common sense ideas, if you can take it as advice, can get you through the rotaries, through the traffic circles, or these traffic islands safely and comfortably.

Even though everyone alludes to it, the first time you encounter a rotary, a traffic island, or a traffic circle you do so with a little bit of trepidation. The first thing you have to think about when you approach is you are going to slow down your speed. The very first thought you have to make – and I say this to everyone out there because we have one in Paradise right now. I am going to say, Mr. Speaker, not everybody in Newfoundland lives in Paradise. There are quite a few people who live outside of Paradise who are actually going to go there and encounter the traffic circle that is there, and also, if they are up near the Hebron place. You are going to find that we all need to be educated on this.

When you come to the rotary the first thing you have to have come in your mind: every bit of traffic proceeds to the right. As you drive off the one, two lanes in the highway you are in, traffic proceeds to the right. The Member for St. John's East referred to one of his Twitter pals who said there was a lady going in the opposite direction. Maybe if she is listening today she will know now that always, on every one of these, traffic veers to the right as you enter into the rotary or the traffic island.

Then if there are one or two lanes going around the circle, that intimidates everyone too, Mr. Speaker, because there are two lanes. Now which one do I take? If you are coming into the outside lane, you should stay in that lane because you should not be transferring from one lane to the other. Although if you are a bit timid and you are not sure where your intersection is coming that you want to leave at, you move into

the inside circle, the safe part of the circle. You can drive around that for twenty-five minutes until you get comfortable enough to proceed to the right lane to take your exit. One thing about this is that there is a comfort there when you get there.

The other thing, other than turning to the right, is that the car that is to your left always has the right-of-way. If there is someone on the inside part of the circle or someone in the circle already and you are coming into it, the person who is there first always have that right-of-way. If you are in your car and you are driving and the vehicle is to your left, they have the right-of-way, which means you have to give away the road to them. That is a very important point.

A couple of other points that might help drivers if they encounter a rotary, no one else have mentioned today, there are tips for drivers. If you encounter a rotary and there is a larger vehicle in there already, the larger vehicles are allowed to take both lanes that go around because the turning access of the vehicle may need that space for movement. So, anybody going into a rotary or a traffic island needs to pay attention to that.

Probably the final thing I would like to say to add to this because it has not been said already, before we conclude, is if you are in a rotary or you are just about to approach the traffic circle and there is an emergency vehicle coming, then you should pull off before you get inside the circle. If you are actually engaged in going around the circle, you do not stop in the middle. You do not freeze and pause and stop and say I have to stop my car and get out of the way. You are really becoming more of a hazard than anything else. You have to proceed around, take your exit and as soon as you pass the little splitter island on the side of the rotary, you pull off, when you are just outside. That is a very important point for someone because it may help prevent an accident.

Everyone else has spoken about the energy saving. The fact that now we do not need these big costly traffic lights. The infrastructure under the ground is not the same if you have to do highways repairs. There are no wires and pipes and everything under the ground, as well as the pollution, all of the green measures members

opposite talked about. Through all of this, it is the way of the future. These other points to help someone, like I said, avoid getting demerit points and to avoid accidents and being safe is what this whole debate is all about.

I commend Paradise for what they are doing. I commend the legislation as brought forward. I am sure we are all supporting it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: If the hon. the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador speaks now, he will close debate.

The hon. the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to start off my closing remarks this afternoon by thanking the hon. Members for Mount Pearl South, St. John's East, and Bonavista North for their debate in support of this piece of legislation, Bill 29.

This amendment to the Highway Traffic Act demonstrates our continued commitment to ensure this important act remains current with common practices, as well as emerging needs. Although the use of roundabouts has not been the norm in this Province, they are constructed and used more regularly in other parts of the country and around the world. I hope they do become more common here because the benefits of roundabouts are tremendous, as we heard from my colleagues in the House in their debate. Mr. Speaker, they are safer and they help ease traffic congestion.

We will be issuing a news release of this amendment today; however, we have already posted information on our Web site on how to correctly use roundabouts. We have also shared information with driving schools so they could add this information to their curriculum. We will also be active on our Service Newfoundland and Labrador Twitter account over the coming weeks providing tips on how to use roundabouts.

I also want to again reinforce that the Highway Traffic Act always had provisions for roundabouts. This amendment today only clarifies the roles and responsibilities of drivers and law enforcement.

Mr. Speaker, again, thank you and I look forward to further debate in Committee stage.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act. (Bill 29)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a second time. When shall this bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole?

MR. HUTCHINGS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act", read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole presently, by leave. (Bill 29)

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 29.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Cross): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 29, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act". (Bill 29)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

I recognize the Member for St. John's East.

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will not be very long here. I just want to ask the minister if there was a possibility that he might be able to explain some of the public relations measures they will be undertaking in the next little while, how they are going to get the word out now that this legislation is coming through the House, what sort of public relations measures they will be undertaking in the next little while just to educate drivers and future drivers out there.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. CORNETT: Mr. Chair, as I said earlier in my closing remarks, we will be putting a press release out this evening on the amendments we passed here today in the House. We have included the information to the driving schools across the Province, so that it is included in their curriculum as well. Also, Mr. Chair, we will be active on our Service NL Twitter account to put the information out there on how to properly use roundabouts.

I understand, Mr. Chair, that the Town of Paradise also has information on their Web site on how to use the roundabout properly.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 to 4 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 to 4 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 4 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic 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 Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: I move, Mr. Chair, the Committee rise and report Bill 29.

CHAIR: It is moved that the Committee rise and report Bill 29.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): The hon. the Member for Bonavista North.

MR. CROSS: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 29 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 29 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. HUTCHINGS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MR. HUTCHINGS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to call from the Order Paper, Order 1, Address in Reply.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the opportunity to finish up my time on Address in Reply. There are a number of areas with the department that I have and the resources for the Province, as well a very busy district, but I do want to take an opportunity to speak about an issue that has come up in the past couple of days. It has come up from the Opposition around focus on Labrador. I also want to reference the issue around rates and how it is done, so the people of the Province understand the process.

Mr. Speaker, firstly, I want to speak about the needs, because the members opposite, particularly for coastal Labrador, I think it is Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair and Torngat Mountains, they are elected to represent their constituents and talk about their concerns. I would agree there are many challenges and they would know much better than I do, but on this side of the House, and certainly our government, we recognize the challenges along coastal Labrador. I certainly want to acknowledge that, but there are other challenges as well when we are looking at our electrical system around this

Province. A lot of us are connected. In Labrador, the Western part of Labrador is connected to the Churchill Falls power system, and of course we are connected here in the Province as well, whether it is through Holyrood or other hydroelectric.

We have twenty-one diesel systems operating in communities around the Province. They are isolated communities, not connected, and they pay much more for their electricity. Coastal Labrador is no different. They have a diesel system up there; it is much more expensive to operate than hydroelectric or Holyrood. So, number one, that is part of the reason why their costs are high.

Having said that, in Labrador they have the lowest rates in the country – not in the Province, in the country. They are connected in Western Labrador – because of the investments in Churchill Falls and you pay off that asset and you are able to control your rates, then you can keep the rates down, not unlike what we intend to do with Muskrat Falls. So they enjoyed the lowest rates in the country, and that is okay, Mr. Speaker. When we get into the coastal areas on the diesel systems it is more expensive, but again, their rates are the lowest – I think it is the lowest in the country, certainly the lowest in the Province.

Mr. Speaker, I do not say that to make slight of it. I think we have to respect the challenges with weather and the other costs of living on coastal Labrador. I think that is important for us to recognize. We do that as a government, understanding the rates and then understanding how the rates are set.

There was some reference pushing back towards me as minister or government, that we set the rates, when in fact we do not set the rates, Mr. Speaker. It is important to understand that there is a process. As minister, I support the process.

There is reference that I support the big increase for Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro. To make that analogy, Mr. Speaker, to say that because I support the increase I do not care about the people of Labrador is no different than we passed a Budget over here that includes millions of dollars for coastal Labrador and the

members opposite sit and do not approve the Budget; they do not support the Budget.

We approve millions of dollars for Labrador and they do not get out and support the Budget. When I approve of a process, Mr. Speaker, as a minister, or government approves a process, that is not to say we do not care about the needs of seniors, whether it is in coastal Labrador, or in Ramea, or on Fogo Island, or Change Islands, or anywhere else. It is not right to make that conclusion.

Mr. Speaker, what I do support is a process. To help explain the process a little bit, so people understand, Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro belongs to the people of the Province. It is not the PC Party, or the Liberal Party, or the NDP; it is government. Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro was here when we took over government in 2003. Sometime in late 2020 or later when we may give up government it will be here then. It is important for people to understand it belongs to the people, it belongs to the Province. It is a Crown corporation.

I think without question, whether it is in this House or around the Province, there is a huge increase in expectation around reliability, and that Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro deliver power to the people of the Province, Mr. Speaker. We all do, especially with what transpired last January. It is important for people to understand it is the people's company, our company, but they have a responsibility to deliver power throughout this Province, and work with Newfoundland Power or the other utility in this Province, to make sure people can turn the lights on. They do that and they have been doing it for years.

Within that there are costs. They have not applied for a general rate application in eight years. In the past eight years I can challenge anybody in their own home about the escalating costs. We have seen fuel costs go up. We know the labour costs have gone up. We know from reports, we know from the expectation from government and the Province that investment around reliability and equipment has been extensive and it has been necessary. An aging asset, forty-odd years old, you have to put money into it.

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, our Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro is a company that we have high expectations for and they have to be able to operate. The viability of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro is extremely important to all of us. In order for them to be viable, they have to have revenue. The way it works, whether it is this utility, Newfoundland Power, or anywhere else, the electricity rates you pay reflect the cost of the service. So whatever the cost of the service is, the ratepayers pay.

Now, Mr. Speaker, government does not decide that. It is the Public Utilities Board. They provide an application, the Public Utilities Board evaluates it, and because of the process, whether it is the members opposite, the public, or commercial interests, they can go and make representation to the PUB to argue that those rates are not fair, here is why. The costs are not legitimate, here is why. That process allows for input, but it also provides information to the PUB to make the decision as to what the rates are going to be. It is not the Minister of Natural Resources, and it is not the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is the Public Utilities Board, the regulator for utilities in the Province.

The needs we understand. The reason it is there we understand, fuel costs, labour costs and so on, but there is opportunity to argue that. I understand the arguments. I understand it is a challenge to pay your bills, but do you know what? The member opposite from Torngat challenged me. If this was in the Isles of Notre Dame, would I stand up and support it?

I say to the member opposite, there are people in the Isles of Notre Dame who struggle to pay their light bill. There are people all over this Province who struggle to pay their light bill. It is not just on coastal Labrador. They are not the only ones with needs. Granted, as I said earlier, they have some greater needs, but I have people in my district, I have seniors in my district who struggle to pay their light bill.

I say to the member opposite, because he talked about what is government going to do? What do we do as a government? To be fair and put the right information out, the utility costs in Labrador, although the lowest in the country, are heavily subsidized by government.

When we voted our Budget and voted to put money in the Northern Strategic Plan to help support Coastal Labrador, Mr. Speaker, they did not support the Budget, but we felt, and we still feel, we have to help offset those rates. It is very important to do it for the people of Coastal Labrador, but it is important to put the information out. It is subsidized, whether it is through the rural deficit ratepayer subsidy, where all the other ratepayers of the Province pay a little more to help offset the costs of those isolated communities – not just Coastal Labrador, but the communities that are on the twenty-one diesel systems.

That is subsidized, Mr. Speaker, otherwise they would not be able to live there. It is just too enormous. There is some \$18 million that went into that, and there is \$2 million from the rural rate subsidy, there is \$400,000 from another subsidy. There is the residential energy subsidy. The entire Province gets a break on the 8 per cent on their bill. There is also a Home Heating Rebate to help support the customers in the Province, including Coastal Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about costs, it is important to understand there is a lot of money and a lot of effort and attention that goes in to support that. I will agree with the members opposite. That does not discount the fact it is still tough for the people of Coastal Labrador. We are not saying we are doing this and there are no problems. We are doing it and there are still challenges, but I think it is important to acknowledge it.

When a member says to me, would I stand and support this if it was in The Isles of Notre Dame? Well, Mr. Speaker, the reality is they do not put out there, the residential electrical service in Coastal Labrador in 2013 cost \$21.4 million – \$21.4 million in 2013, Mr. Speaker.

What he needs to put out there as well, in understanding the challenges, the customers pay \$2.9 million, or basically 13.5 per cent of the cost for electricity is what they pay. If we back that up and understand the principle of utilities is that you pay the electricity rates based on the cost of service, well the cost of service is enormous in Coastal Labrador, particularly in these diesel communities, but they are paying 13.5 per cent of that cost. The rest of that cost is

being subsidized by other ratepayers and taxpayers.

When the member puts that to me about The Isles of Notre Dame, I can tell you, if the people in my district were only paying 13.5 per cent of their light bill, absolutely I would stand and support it – but that is not the case. I am not pointing that out, Mr. Speaker, because I am saying they do not deserve it. That is a different debate, but if we are going to have the discussion, it is important to put the facts out and understand that the residents of coastal Labrador, with all their challenges, pay 13.5 per cent of their bill. The rest of it is paid by ratepayers who are connected in Labrador and the Island, as well as government subsidies, that basically is taxpayers' money.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to do that. We will continue to work. What have we done? What have we done, Mr. Speaker? We are spending millions of dollars doing studies to try and find out, there has to be a better way to support the Coast of Labrador, there has to be a better way to support the diesel communities, and we are doing that. We are doing studies on hydro and wind, and looking at other options. Newfoundland Hydro is doing that study. We need to do that study to find a better way and a cheaper way, and we are committed to doing it.

When we talk about these kinds of things, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important. It is important that we have all of the information out, acknowledge the challenges, but acknowledge what we are doing as a government and a people of the Province, and the support we received, and ensure the support continues; but we have to allow a process, a process where everybody can have input, a process where the Public Utilities Board can look at all of this and make that decision.

Mr. Speaker, beyond all of that, and I will say again, as I did the other day, our government had a plan and a vision knowing that one of the major problems we have coming in this Province is the cost of our power. The bills are going to go up. We are proving it. It is going up now, fuel costs, labour costs, the cost to repair equipment. As the costs are going up, we are going to pay for that. Whether you are in coastal Labrador, Fogo Island, Change Islands, Port aux

Basques – I do not care where you are, we have to pay for it.

Our government decided we have to do something big that allows us to control the rates, to get away from these systems. That is still not figured out for coastal Labrador, absolutely, but we have to figure out a way to control that escalation. Mr. Speaker, the way we figured out to do that is Muskrat Falls.

They did not support it. Although the Liberal Leader stood in this House on March 30 last year, and stood up this year and said they do support it. After five years of bantering back and forth, they support Muskrat Falls. They support the development of Churchill Falls. Mr. Speaker, we need to because we need to deal with the rates, whether it is on the Island or in coastal Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for his explanation, flawed as it may be.

We talk about increases in power rates, Mr. Speaker. I brought up the Isles of Notre Dame, and I brought it up for a reason. You talk about discrepancies in changing rates, we are looking at three different rates. We are looking at 1.9 per cent. I can accept that. We are looking at 2.9 per cent, I think with the increase for the minister's district 2.9 per cent, but what I am talking about is 11.4 per cent.

We talk about the ratepayers of the Province helping out everybody else in the Province, that the ratepayers in the whole Province are offsetting the costs in Labrador. I tell you what, Mr. Speaker, I just heard the minister talk about: how do we attack that problem? How do we stop that escalation? I heard him reference Muskrat Falls. I saw the Minister for Labrador support that. My question, Mr. Speaker, is how much power from Muskrat Falls is going to residents in Labrador?

The Minister of Health a couple of years ago on Twitter argued with me, Mr. Speaker. He said the prices would not go up. He lied. He lied to me. He lied to the people of the Province. Listened to it on VOXM the next day, they played it.

He said the prices would not go up, Mr. Speaker. That is what he said; the prices would not go up. Here we are looking at an increase –

MR. DALLEY: Point of order.

MR. SPEAKER (Cross): Point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, in my comments the other day I outlined there has been no increase as a result of a general rate application. I did not say there were no increases; I said no increases as a result of a general rate application.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will go back to the minister's comments just before I got up, Mr. Speaker, talking about how we stop the escalation. He talked about the rising cost of fuel. Guess what? Fuel prices are going down. Fuel is under \$75 a barrel now. This government was smart enough to budget at \$105 a barrel. How can you incur the cost for an increase in hydro rates based on the cost of fuel when the cost of fuel is going down? It does not make any sense.

If we look at problems that cost the Province money, Mr. Speaker, a few years ago there was a big snow storm in St. John's and it caused a lot of oil spills in homes. Guess what? The whole Province had to go out and get new tanks. What happened in my district then was a farce. There was no need of it. It was a money-maker for the Province. It originated from a problem here in St. John's. The whole Province paid the cost.

Mr. Speaker, I have no problem if Nalcor were to go to the PUB and say we would like to propose a 2.9 per cent hydro increase rate to the Province. We are part of the Province, we would accept that. As much as subsidies come in, we are having trouble with a 9.75 per cent

increase for one region above another. There is a big difference between 2.9 per cent and 11.4 per cent.

We are subsidized, yes, Mr. Speaker. We certainly appreciate that. There is no subsidy – and I will say again so the members across the way can hear me, there is no subsidy for businesses. We have businesses up there like my colleague the Member for Cartwright – L’Anse au Clair said, a \$6,000 power bill. You imagine adding 20 per cent onto that.

I heard the minister reference that we are being carried by the rest of the Province. Mr. Speaker, if you look at the revenue that is coming from resources in our Province without Muskrat Falls, iron ore in Labrador West, it contributes to the royalties to our Treasury. Vale, Voisey’s Bay 11.2 miles from Nain. They contribute to our Treasury.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at Muskrat Falls, the government says at some point in time there are going to be a lot of royalties coming out. There is going to be revenue. Right now there is none. When the minister talks about stopping the escalating cost of diesel generators and he mentions Muskrat Falls, that does not help us.

My colleague had a question for the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs today. The Minister of Natural Resources stood up and Hansard says – and this was the day before yesterday in this House. He was asked by our leader does he support this Nalcor-proposed increased rate. He said, “Yes we do support that, Mr. Speaker”. That is in Hansard. If he wants to see it, I have it right here.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at increased rates around the Province, we believe in fairness and equity, we really do, but what we are seeing here is not fairness and equity. This is a Crown corporation. It is run by the Crown. I repeat that for the minister to hear – this is a Crown corporation. Yes, all submissions go to the PUB, but the minister has already stated in Hansard that he supports it.

Mr. Speaker, we will all make our submissions to the PUB. Certainly my colleague has indicated many, many a time the cost of living in Northern Labrador. I think we have stood up so

many times in this House about the cost of living that the government has to get it by now, even if it is within the last three years. Even if it is within the last three years they should have gotten it by now.

Mr. Speaker, we see the costs continuing when we see the issues continuing to pile without being addressed. I have heard many ministers over there talk about the unique problems. After eleven years, how unique can a problem be? It is unique because it has not been addressed.

Mr. Speaker, those are just a few words that –

MR. KENT: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do not like to interrupt the member while he is speaking, but earlier in his remarks he accused me of lying. Beyond it being untrue, it is also unparliamentary. I would ask the hon. member to withdraw the remarks.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

At this point I will take it under advisement to review the tape. If the member wishes to withdraw that comment, that is fine, but I will take the effort to review the tapes and come back with a comment.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Okay, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the comment.

Just to go on, I will be speaking more to the issue of the Nalcor-proposed rates. I certainly will because it is unfounded and it is unfair. We look at a government that has bragged about its fairness and its equity. This is one classic example where I fail to see the fairness. I fail to see the fairness, Mr. Speaker. I will come back to this. I am sure I will, whether it is through petitions or some future address to this hon. House.

Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of other issues I would like to talk about. I think it was a couple of years ago or maybe last year the Minister of Transportation and Works at the time announced there would be new vessels coming to the Province. I was glad to see the keel being laid. I saw pictures of it. I think it was for Fogo Island. It was a nice picture of the keel being laid for a brand new vessel. Or was it the Strait of Belle Isle? I am not sure, but certainly we appreciate that there is safety involved. Our Province is getting new vessels, Mr. Speaker. At the same time those announcements were made, the Minister of Transportation and Works at the time stood up and said there will be a new vessel for Northern Labrador out by 2016.

Mr. Speaker, I am a mariner by trade. If you are going to supply a vessel in a year and a half, the work should have begun by now. We are still waiting. I am hopeful the current Minister of Transportation and Works will make an announcement shortly. I would love to see the pictures being laid of the keel for that vessel as well.

We have had issues with our marine service for the last number of years. We have tried some new things. Government has tried some new things. It backfired to the point that we are going backwards.

Even with the new vessels, Mr. Speaker, I looked at the specifications for the new vessel. It has a capability of taking nineteen passengers more than the motor vessel *Northern Ranger*. It has a capacity for taking twelve containers more than the *Astron*. I said in my response that I was cautiously optimistic.

The reason I say that, Mr. Speaker, is because I see the volume of freight that is moving. I see the number of passengers who are wait-listed on the dock in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, as high as sixty and seventy, who are trying to get passage on board the vessel we have now. I would assume that by the time this vessel is up and running, if in fact it is as the government committed to, a reality, that by the time it is in service it could very well be too small, and we are back to the problem we have now.

There was very little consultation in the design of this vessel other than the fact that it would be

a roll-on/roll-off vessel. Will it fit the needs? I am certainly optimistic and hopeful that it will. In any case, when you get a new vessel, Mr. Speaker, you are very appreciative. In my case the keyword is when.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to take too much time, but I would like to bring up one issue. It is one that is near and dear to the hearts of everybody in Labrador, and that is the current situation with the George River caribou herd and the Torngat Mountains caribou herd. It was only three years ago that the government – or four years ago – actually recognized and agreed with us that there was a separate herd called the Torngat Mountains herd that did not mix with the George River herd. Certainly, in my time served on the Torngat Wildlife and Plants Co-Management Board we had to tell the Province representative that yes, there is in fact another herd.

What the problem is, Mr. Speaker, is that this herd is in decline. In the mid-eighties, early nineties, this herd was 750,000 animals strong. There was no reason to worry, but the warning lights should have gone off, I think, for all of us when by 1999-2000 that herd was down to 350,000. It was half the size it was and continued to decline.

Mr. Speaker, when you speak to our elders who have been harvesting for many, many years in the 1950s that herd dropped down to maybe 5,000 or 6,000 animals, but it rebounded. I am optimistic that it will continue to happen to the point that there can be a sustainable level of harvest.

The Province is implementing a five-year ban to be revisited in two years. Well, it is two years; actually it is going into the third year, so I am hopeful that the Minister of Environment and Conservation will revisit it. I know the Nunatsiavut Government is pushing strongly to form a management group throughout the Ungava Peninsula where the herd migrates with stakeholders from Nunavik, from the Crees, from Quebec, and this would be the Ungava Aboriginal Round Table to complete a management plan in a very firm timeline.

This is off from the Province, but the Province says zero harvest, but there is open harvests

going on. If you are not going to lift the ban to accommodate the Aboriginal harvest, Mr. Speaker, then it has to be enforced fairly. We would much rather that the stakeholders would come together and have consensus on management regulations. I cannot see this Province doing anything contrary to what the stakeholders would agree upon.

I am certainly looking forward to meeting with the Minister of Environment and Conservation to talk about these issues. Hopefully, we can work together on a management plan that would carry forward, at least to the point where we can watch the herd rebound.

I am very thankful for the agreement that was worked out with Wildlife to allow for a harvest of, I think, forty-seven moose at Gros Morne National Park, Mr. Speaker. It is certainly appreciated by the people who are not used to consuming moose, but certainly it is something that could offset the cost of living, and very much appreciated and will be consumed. It is not a sports hunt. It is a subsistence hunt, Mr. Speaker. To all of the organizations that have been involved in allowing this to go ahead, we certainly do appreciate and we thank you.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about before I take my seat, and I do not know if it is a form of a question, but it is something I will throw out there. When we look at the cost of fuel and home heating oil, up in Northern Labrador – I do not know if there is anywhere in the Province, but there is a time of the year when the fuel prices are frozen; they are frozen for the winter.

Now, Mr. Speaker, generally that price comes into effect as soon as the tanker leaves the area and is gone and will not return any more until the following spring, where the price would be readjusted. For some reason this year, Mr. Speaker, and I submit it is because of the falling price of fuel, that the price of fuel is frozen already and the tanker is still in operation. I think if the situation were reversed and the price was rising, the price would not be frozen until the tanker leaves the area.

It is something I throw out there. I certainly hope the Minister of Natural Resources is looking into it. I am trying to find out who I can

address it to. I am assuming it is the PUB. When we are looking at fairness, if it is fairness in one way, it should be fairness in the other way.

I guess my speech today, Mr. Speaker, in Address in Reply is looking at fairness. It is certainly something we have to go out and we have to look for and we have to fight for, when the reality is, Mr. Speaker, it is something we should be taking for granted, like everyone else in the Province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a delight to be able to rise and speak in this hon. House today. I would like to speak on some positive notes in relation to what our government has rolled out in the last number of years in relation to some great news for rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In Budget 2014, there was an announcement of \$3 billion that was allocated to improve health care for all residents of our Province, each and every community in Newfoundland and Labrador. This represents approximately 39 per cent of the total provincial Budget. The point is, I am going to identify some of the funding and investments that were rolled out to my district, the District of Bonavista South.

In that particular Budget, there were some discussions around dialysis. I just want to roll out some figures in relation to what has been done throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Approximately \$254 million has been allocated for dialysis since 2004, doubling the number of dialysis sites from seven to fourteen, with a new site open in my colleague's district, actually, in Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, Harbour Breton. That was a beautiful site. I had many discussions with my colleague during that period, as the process of the new site

was open in that particular part of the rural Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I have had a number of discussions with previous ministers in the Health and Community Services field. Particularly, most recently I give a lot of credit to the present Minister of Health and Community Services who took time out of his busy schedule and came to my district and met with community council, dialysis committees, a number of people who were really concerned about dialysis services for the community and region that I come from.

To be honest, that was a very emotional meeting, Mr. Speaker, a meeting that took place at the town hall in Bonavista. The minister at the time actually rolled out the plan of action in relation to the dialysis site that will be up and running in the Town of Bonavista, that will service the region of the Bonavista Peninsula. That was some very positive news.

That same day, actually, the minister, department officials from Eastern Health, and community leaders did a ribbon cutting in a new building that was opened recently. I tell you, there was a large turnout in that community event. People really appreciated the opening of a new dementia protective care residence unit in Bonavista. This government played an important role in the process. That particular building cost \$2.6 million. That is the investment that is rolled out to the rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Our government continues to listen to what the people are saying out in the rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador. We always do and we always will. The people in Bonavista South were delighted to see those two great announcements in health and community services, Mr. Speaker.

The provincial government also invests more than \$8 million annually to promote healthy living and disease prevention. This includes wellness grants that support local community groups to promote healthy eating, physical activity, and living smoke free. Some of those grants actually roll out to the rural parts of the

Province as well, which is very important to people living in districts like Bonavista South.

Mr. Speaker, as I stand here today, I commend some of the action that has been put in place by this government, and in particular, some of the major investments that have taken place in the Department of Health and Community Services. Health care is universal. It is a universal need. It is a need that our government strongly listens to. A need that we have to continue to promote healthy living lifestyles, a need that we have to, as a government, continue to invest in our seniors, in some of our vulnerable people living in our society.

Our government is committed to continually investing in important investments in health care, in health and community services, in healthy lifestyles, investments that will improve the quality of life for residents in all parts of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. This provincial government is committed to ensuring residents share fully and equally in the prosperity from the Province's unprecedented growth that we have experienced. We will continue to focus our attention on having a balanced approach to supporting continued economic and social prosperity. This government continues to make investments for communities, education, health care, business, and innovation.

I would like to speak a little bit more on what this government has done in the District of Bonavista South in relation to tourism, innovation, and what we plan on doing in the future. We are working community groups, and I will identify the groups in my district that we are working with. We are working with community councils, the Bonavista Historic Society. If you come to the beautiful, historic District of Bonavista South, you will see first-hand the harbour front property, the Church Street Development Plan, the Sir William Ford Coaker Foundation investment that was made by the Province, the federal government, and community leaders in the District of Bonavista South.

Most recently, the announcement that was made in the Town of Elliston, the Sealers Memorial, one project that everyone in this Province and country can be proud of.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: One that represents what happened in the sealing industry, and one that will support the needs of the sealing industry of the future.

Mr. Speaker, our government continually invests in tourism projects, such as the Matthew Legacy site in Bonavista, a beautiful site that is visited by people all over the world; a site that many of my colleagues visiting the District of Bonavista South actually took a tour and knew first-hand how important the tourism industry ties into our heritage and culture and the well-being of the economic spinoffs that come from our tourism industry.

Last year there was \$1 billion – a record: \$1 billion – actually spent in the tourism industry. That is a massive amount of money. Districts like Bonavista South and other rural districts in Newfoundland and Labrador certainly contribute to the tourism industry. We are really proud of what we do as a people out in the rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador. This government has played an important role to make sure that our tourism industry will continue to grow in the future, Mr. Speaker.

We have partnered, as a government, with local committees and with community councils. We have listened to what community councils have to say about the future of economic development and the tourism industry and how important it ties into the future of rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

The tourism industry is a growing industry throughout the country of Canada. So we are into a very competitive industry, Mr. Speaker. It is good to know that our government will continue to support initiatives in the tourism industry.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Mr. Speaker, our government, when it comes to the fishery, we continue to invest in the fishery. We listen to what our fisherpeople have to say and we continue to roll out programs in the fishery that are very beneficial to the future of the fishery.

Programs in relation to the fisheries research program – since 2006, Mr. Speaker, our government has definitely invested in a long-term, strategic direction for the management of the Province's coastal areas. We will continue to look at the jurisdictions in relation to marine stewardship. That is very important to the future of the fishery in the Province.

We have invested \$50 million in the Marine Institute Centre for Fisheries Ecosystems Research. That ecosystems research is certainly going to tie in and it is an important investment in relations to the future of the fishery, Mr. Speaker. CETA negotiations that occurred – it is very important, because we now have access to the world's richest seafood markets. This will definitely tie in to the future of the fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Markets are very important. We are opening up markets in the European Union. We are opening up markets not only in the United States and Japan, places that we always had markets, but now we are opening up new markets for the future of the fishery. This will certainly help us and put us in a more global competitive stage where we can compete with other people in the fishery around the world.

Our government definitely sees the importance of a \$40 million federal-provincial fund that will definitely support, enhance, and help the fishery become more viable as we lead into the future, Mr. Speaker. Our government has made investments in the tourism industry, in the fishing industry, and in the health care sector. Our government continues to invest funding in rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador.

This is what I wanted to rise here today and speak on, and how important our government's investments and Budget 2014 is to the District of Bonavista South and other districts similar in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. We as a Province will grow and prosper if we continually, in the future, roll out initiatives like this into the rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We will strengthen the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador. We need to continually try to come up with ways to diversify the economy. We have proven as a

government that we can make things happen out in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

You hear some negative comments coming from different government officials in this House. I can rise on my feet and say that Bonavista South is certainly prospering from some of the investments that this provincial government has made in the past number of years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: I definitely can stand here today and make that announcement and say that the people living in the rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador appreciate what we do. Are we on the right track? Yes, we are, Mr. Speaker. We are on the right track.

This government is doing some wonderful work out in the rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador, and our economy is growing. If you look at the vibrancy, when you look at small business growing because of some of the initiatives that different departments of this government have put out there over the past number of years, you can easily see the economic development gains and you can easily see new business creation because of some of the investments that we as a government made, and we will continually make in the rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador.

As a government we know the needs of the people, because we consult with the people. We talk to the people. We listen to what the people say and we deliver on some of the programs. Through our consultative process, we do deliver, and we will continually deliver in the future. We will as a government.

Under the leadership of our government, and some of the visitations of some of the members, some the Cabinet ministers who visited my district, people are saying, you are a government who actually come out, consult with the people, and listen to what the people are saying. Look at what we are doing as a people. Together, we can all make a difference. That is one comment I have heard coming from people in my district, that this government are on the ground, they are going to make a difference. They continually work with the people, community councils and so forth.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: I must say, I am very delighted to be part of this great government. Some great things have happened since 2003, and they will continue to occur, Mr. Speaker.

Before I sit down, there is one topic I would like to touch on, because I know for a fact this government cannot do it alone. It takes co-operation, and my district is proof. Bonavista South is proof that volunteers can make it happen with the supports of this government, community councils, provincial, federal government.

I would like to extend a sincere thank you to all volunteers, not only in my district but throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I think volunteers should be recognized more often, Mr. Speaker. Volunteers are the backbone to our communities and organizations. Your tireless efforts contribute to the well-being and prosperity of what is happening in our Province today. You make a difference in our communities, and you are going to continue to make a difference in our communities, right throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

I commend each and every volunteer. I know you are committed, and I know you will continue to be committed to help out organizations. Some of the projects I touched on earlier would not have existed, Mr. Speaker, without volunteers. That is the final point I wanted to make here today in this House, Mr. Speaker, because volunteers, believe me, can make a difference. They have made a difference in Bonavista South.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: They have made a difference throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Speaker, they are the backbone, in some cases, to the economy. I certainly appreciate that, and I can speak for all government members in this House of Assembly who would definitely back me up and say volunteers are the backbone to the economy, to the Province, and to our country.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Works, that the House now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that this House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

The House stands adjourned until Monday, at 1:30 o'clock.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, at 1:30 p.m.