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*Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA*

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**MR. SPEAKER (Verge):** Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we start proceedings, I would like to welcome to the public gallery today Councillor Vince Burton from the Town of Paradise.

Welcome 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 Baie Verte – Springdale; the Member for the District of St. George's – Stephenville East; the Member for the District of St. John's Centre; the Member for the District of Mount Pearl South; the Member for the District of Humber Valley; the Member for the District of Virginia Waters; and, if the House approves with leave, the Member for the District of St. John's South.

The hon. the Member for the District of Baie Verte – Springdale.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. POLLARD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate an outstanding teacher-coach. School Sports Newfoundland and Labrador recognizes outstanding contributions to the development and delivery of athletics with the Honour Award.

The recipient of this annual award has a long and distinguished involvement with school sports. From Indian River High, Springdale Roger Jacobs has captured this title for 2013-2014. For the past twenty-eight years Roger has been a physical education teacher and has coached numerous sports such as volleyball, basketball, soccer, badminton, table tennis, ball hockey, ice hockey, and slo pitch.

He has taught in Englee, La Scie, King's Point, and now in Springdale. In every school Roger has developed young, talented individuals into

top-notch athletes. His team has won provincial championships and has captured an incredible ten team sportsmanship awards.

His willingness to serve or to give of his time, talent, and tireless energy has been simply incredible. As an athletic director at Indian River High, Roger has developed a well-rounded athletic program which has achieved the gold star status for seven consecutive years.

I ask all hon. members to help me convey congratulations to Roger Jacobs, a teacher-coach who indeed made a difference.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. REID:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate a team of MUN Alumni who took top prize in the 2014 G20 Global Business Challenge, a prestigious international graduate business competition which took place in Australia earlier this month.

The G20 Global Business Challenge is a unique and highly innovative competition that attracts top graduate students from leading business schools and universities. Teams were challenged to develop an innovative solution to use, recycle, and/or manage water to achieve large-scale impact.

Earlier this year, the team passed the preliminary round of the challenge, where they competed against forty other groups from eighteen countries before being chosen as one of the six top finalists. The team consisted of Dave Winsor, Dan Goossens, Janine Brophy, Lica Christensen and the team coach, Professor Peggy Coady, an associate Dean in the Faculty of Business Administration.

Professor Coady said winning the competition is a testament to Memorial's high caliber students, graduates, and programming.

I ask all members to join with me in congratulating the MUN team on winning the G20 Global Business Challenge competition and taking the top prize of \$100,000.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS ROGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, I am happy to congratulate Jenny Wright and all incredible feminists who worked tirelessly to improve our society through Status of Women councils across the Province.

Jenny and her sisters at the St. John's Status of Women Council recently hosted women from across the Province for Building Allies in Dangerous Times, a gathering that saw feminist activists discuss issues affecting women in their communities. They found a great deal of common ground. They talked about housing, mental health and addictions, violence, lack of access to health care and child care, and the Family Violence Intervention Court. They shared advice and they made plans for how to proceed in the future.

These strong women are fearless as well as tireless. They do a gargantuan job with resources that have not increased in several years. They are setting their own agendas, based on the needs of their own communities and slowly but surely they – I should say “we” because I share their struggles, feel their frustrations and celebrate their triumphs – they are getting things done.

Brava, Jenny Wright and sisters. Thank you for all you do for the women of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. LANE:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the accomplishments of an amazing individual in my community. Ed Moyst has dedicated himself to the sport of soccer since 1958 and has excelled as a player, a coach, an official and as a builder of the sport. He is a founding member of the Mount Pearl Soccer Association, was elected as first chairperson and has been on the executive committee of the association ever since; twice as chairperson, twice as director, once as vice-chairperson, and the remaining years thereafter as administrator.

He holds a Level 3 technical coaching certificate, a Class 2 certificate as an official, and has officiated soccer games for over thirty years. His many accomplishments have not gone unnoticed, as he has been inducted into the St. John's, Mount Pearl, and Newfoundland and Labrador Soccer Halls of Fame.

This past September, I was honoured to attend an event at the Team Gushue Complex in which the Upper Smallwood Soccer Field was appropriately renamed the Ed Moyst Soccer Field.

I would ask all members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating Ed Moyst on his accomplishments and for his ongoing contribution to the sport of soccer in the City of Mount Pearl.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Humber Valley.

**MR. BALL:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate thirteen students from Elwood Regional High School in Deer Lake who recently attended We Day events in Waterloo, Ontario.

We Day is an annual series of stadium-sized events that brings together world-renowned speakers and youth to encourage participants to find their passion and strive to create the change they want to see. Tickets for We Day events cannot be purchased, they have to be earned by taking on a local and a global action.

This event included over 7,000 students along with several guest speakers and musicians. The group from Elwood High School stated they were overwhelmed by the empowering and inspiring message that was delivered by all those in attendance at the event.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Elwood students: Dylan Cross, Daniel Williams, Andrew Lodge, William Chubbs, Kyle Hiscock, Becky Maher, Sydney Park, Emily Finlay, Catlin Giles, Sophia Hewitt, Shania Turnbull, Kate Compton, and Jenna Langdon who, along with their Principal Peter Burt, and teacher Jillian Cross, earned the privilege to attend this tremendous event.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating these students and teachers of Elwood Regional High School in Deer Lake on this great accomplishment.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Jack Goldsworthy, a Grade 6 student at Roncalli Elementary School in Virginia Waters district. He is one of twenty-two students from across Canada selected to attend Canada's History for Kids, Young Citizen's Forum in Ottawa this fall.

This program focuses on citizenship and is a complementary component to the school's annual heritage fair. Jack's video, *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: The Original Way of Life* looked at how people in the past wasted nothing, reused what they could and used recycling as a necessary way of life.

In October, Jack toured our Nation's capital in which he was joined by fellow winners from across Canada to explore Ottawa which included museum and walking tours, and many other cultural activities. Jack also participated in a brainstorming session to identify as many important people, events and moments in history that could be commemorated as part of Canada's birthday in 2017.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in recognizing Jack on his achievement as an ambassador of the program and epitomizing the youth of our Province as curious in Canada's history and what it means to be a Canadian citizen.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**AN HON. MEMBER:** By leave.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Leave.

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to recognize the Community Food Sharing Association and the work they do throughout the year to help ensure that those in need receive a little extra help.

With the Christmas season approaching and the extra spending demands on families, the need for donations at the food bank are greater than that of any other time of the year. The Community Food Sharing Association serves 27,000 people every month, 38 per cent of those are children.

This year, there is a shortfall of almost 60,000 pounds of food. There are thirty empty cages that are usually full by the end of November. There will be a challenge to fill the need.

I urge people who can afford to share even one item of food to help those who cannot afford it. Help make Christmas a little less stressful for the families who need it. Please donate.

In consultation with the Community Food Sharing Association, there is a one-hour food drive at 5:20 on Wednesday, December 3, here at Confederation Building, starting at the rear parking lot of the East Block. I encourage anyone interested in helping to get involved.

The Community Food Sharing Association will help provide pick up of the food.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

**Statements by Ministers**

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. WISEMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise in this House today to advise hon. members on the progress of this year's Home Heating Rebate program. The Home Heating Rebate program helps thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians each winter.

This year, the Home Heating Rebate, along with the Residential Energy Rebate, will see a combined total investment of \$62 million. The Home Heating Rebate is available to residents of the Province who directly incur costs to heat their home.

Eligible households with an adjusted family income of \$35,000 or less qualify for a maximum rebate of \$250 – with a maximum rebate of \$500 for coastal Labrador.

The Residential Energy Rebate is available to all households in Newfoundland and Labrador and provides a point-of-sale rebate equivalent to the 8 per cent provincial portion of the 13 per cent Harmonized Sales Tax charged on the consumption of energy for residential purposes.

Mr. Speaker, as a government, we are extremely proud of both the Home Heating Rebate and the Residential Energy Rebate. These important programs put cash back into the hands of individuals and families, helping them meet the costs of staying warm.

I am pleased to inform hon. members that since launching this year's program, applications have been received are on par with last year and staff

at the Department of Finance are now approving the applications and sending out the rebates.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to ensure that several avenues are available for people to access applications for the Home Heating Rebate. Details and application forms can be found on the Department of Finance Web site, or they can call toll-free 1-855-223-7432, or they can email [homeheatprogram@gov.nl.ca](mailto:homeheatprogram@gov.nl.ca).

Application forms have also appeared in newspapers, at regional offices of Department of Advanced Education and Skills, at Service NL Centres across the Province, and at the Seniors Resource Centre here in St. John's.

Mr. Speaker, last year, approximately 58,000 households received rebates from the Home Heating Rebate program. Once again, this program is helping people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador meet the cost of heating their homes and staying warm.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement today. Mr. Speaker, this time of year presents extra hardships for many families with Christmas on the horizon and rising heating costs to protect against the winter cold. Providing such rebates help low-income families and seniors manage a little better.

I am sure, as MHAs, we all receive calls from constituents wondering when the rebate will be announced. Last year, Mr. Speaker, the Home Heating Rebate was announced on October 24. The year before, it was announced on December 3. This year, it is November 25.

I would encourage government to commit to a fixed date each year when the rebate is announced so people relying on the rebate are not left waiting, wondering, and worrying even more.

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. Once again, I ask government to remove the yearly uncertainty and anxiety the public suffers because this government refuses to make the Home Heating Rebate a permanent annual program with a fixed date.

Our offices get calls starting early in the fall from people anxious to know if they can count on the rebate, which they increasingly depend upon with the rising costs of heating. In addition, government refuses even to respond to our call for people whose heat is included in their rent to also qualify for the rebate. Government needs to get in touch with the people of this Province and address these two pressing concerns.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. CRUMMELL:** Mr. Speaker, as 2014 draws to a close, I rise in this hon. House to acknowledge a tremendous milestone that was celebrated this year – the sixtieth anniversary of this Province's provincial parks.

Throughout this past summer, we celebrated with visitors to our parks during special events for Canada Day, Parks Day, and a Parks Proud launch to celebrate this significant achievement in our Province. I am told all of these activities were successful and a wonderful time was had by all.

Employees of the Parks and Natural Areas Division of the Department of Environment and Conversation promoted this sixty-year achievement by wearing Parks Proud

anniversary shirts and encouraging visitors to join and to celebrate sixty incredible years.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial government continues to establish, protect, and manage our parks as natural habitats for future generations while offering unique nature experiences like hiking, camping, and outdoor activities for everyone to enjoy.

The provincial parks system was established in 1954 with the creation of Sir Richard Squires Memorial Provincial Park near Cormack, and has expanded to a network of thirteen camping parks, seven day use parks, the T'Railway Provincial Park, Main River Waterway Provincial Park, and ten park reserves. The Province also has two wilderness reserves and eighteen ecological reserves that protect significant seabird colonies, rare plants, and significant fossil sites.

Mr. Speaker, again, I would like to thank all the parks staff in the Parks and Natural Areas Division who worked every day to protect, preserve and promote our natural heritage, while providing a diverse range of outdoor recreational opportunities Province-wide.

As an outdoor enthusiast myself, I encourage every visitor to celebrate, discover, explore, understand and appreciate our Province and all it has to offer.

You can learn more about our provincial parks on the provincial government Web site.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. REID:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the minister in celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the provincial park system in this Province. We have a well-developed park system in our Province and it is more extensive than in most other provinces, and it is something we should be very proud of.

I would like to congratulate the staff who work at these parks over the years and the fine job

they have done over that period. The parks are an important part of our heritage and quality of life in this Province and we should not allow them to deteriorate. In this regard we should ensure that the Newfoundland T' Railway park is not allowed to fall in disrepair. I am hearing that government may be considering closing sections of this park. I hope that is not the case, Mr. Speaker, but I heard that it is a possibility that is being considered.

We need to continue to innovate in the way we highlight our areas of natural beauty. In this regard, government is three years late in releasing the natural areas systems plan that they promised in 2011.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations on sixty years of the parks.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement here today. Congratulations to our parks staff who sometimes do so much with little resources that have been cut to the bone from past Budgets. We also cannot forget that over the years past governments have chosen to close a lot of the provincial parks in our system, dump them from our inventory, and they also privatized others.

Other ideas government had have been forgotten. When do we get to see the promised protected area strategy, for example? Mr. Speaker, let us not forget that government is falling down in recognizing development over ecology and the environment. Why the minister is intent (inaudible) –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. RUSSELL:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the thirty-ninth Annual Labrador

Creative Arts Festival. Taking centre stage at the Lawrence O'Brien Arts Centre from November 19 to November 25, the festival is a celebration of the arts that brings together young Labradorians from all regions and all cultures.

Inclusive and innovative, this event showcases plays written and performed by Labrador students. The festival also features visiting artists, from many different disciplines, who venture to the Big Land every year to share their talents and to pass on their creative knowledge to the youth through workshops and hands-on training.

I am pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that this year's students visiting from Villanova Junior High in Conception Bay South are also participating in this year's event.

Aside from helping young people develop their artistic abilities, the Labrador Creative Arts Festival fosters creativity, self-confidence, teamwork and leadership. Mr. Speaker, these characteristics serve as a foundation upon which young men and women can build future achievements and become leaders in their communities, future fields of study and in their careers.

A shining example of how this festival helps develop our young people is Ms Mckenzie Hutchings of North West River who has been a regular participant in the Labrador Creative Arts Festival. Recently, Ms Hutchings was crowned Miss Achievement Newfoundland and Labrador and credits her involvement in the festival with giving her the confidence and experience to participate in the pageant and to succeed in her many, many endeavours.

As a proud Labradorian, it is always a pleasure to highlight Labrador and the accomplishments and vision of its people, especially its young people, Mr. Speaker. Staging the Labrador Creative Arts Festival each year is a massive undertaking and it is because of the students, teachers, parents, and organizers involved that this annual event is possible.

This festival is a wonderful celebration of young people and the arts and, as this year's festival draws to a close, I ask all hon. members of this



House to join me in congratulating Ms Mckenzie Hutchings and all of this year's participants.

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 an advance copy of his statement. It is good to see him rise. I would like to see that happen in Question Period.

Mr. Speaker, the Labrador Creative Arts Festival is Canada's longest running children's festival. I think that is a statement worth mentioning here today. The artistic version of the Labrador Creative Arts Festival is to provide a forum allowing young people in Labrador to write, produce, and direct plays about issues that affect their communities and their region.

I think over the last thirty-nine years there has been some 500 plays that have been written. There have been over 530 visiting artists from every province and territory in Canada, as well as the United States and Europe. This year, as the hon. member mentioned, I am proud to welcome the students from Villanova Junior High from my hon. colleague, the Member for Conception Bay South, who are attending the Labrador Creative Arts Festival.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS ROGERS:** I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Congratulations to all the visionaries involved in the Labrador Creative Arts Festival. It is indeed a massive undertaking by students, teachers, parents, and other organizers. It is often through the arts where we can dare to envision a better world, better and more egalitarian communities where everyone has what they need to fully live.

Bravo, Mckenzie Hutchings; you make us all proud. Bravo, Labrador Creative Arts Festival visionaries. Lead us on; help us envision a future where no one is left behind.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, the Premier stated that he did not have the information on the cost of the environmental liabilities at the former Abitibi mill and properties in Central Newfoundland. The AG pegged the cost at \$265 million. That was \$165 million more than the previous government estimates.

I ask the Premier: Now that you have had the chance to look for the information and get briefed, can you update the House today on the exact cost of the government's mistaken expropriation?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. member opposite for bringing this up again. There have been a variety of estimates looked at with regard to the environmental cost.

I would like to point out to the member opposite, while this House unanimously approved the expropriation of the assets, I would like to point out first and foremost that there were significant assets that returned to the Province as a result of that expropriation. We retained timber rights for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We also retained the power generation rights for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, Mr. Speaker. That was significant for us as a Province.

I can also tell the member opposite, that there is a significant piece of work underway with regard to the remediation of the former mill site. We hope to have an announcement on that in the very near future.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I remind the Premier, even though it was unanimous, no one in this House, when they were given that briefing, expected that the building itself was part of that expropriation.

Mr. Speaker, last spring government admitted that the old Abitibi mill was on the list to be demolished. At that point they had to establish the priorities. We know the RFP for the demolition closed in August, but we have not heard much about that since.

I ask the Premier: When will the old mill that you expropriated be demolished, and at what cost to taxpayers?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The removal of the former mill property is an important matter that is continuing to be worked by our government. It is an active file. It is under active review.

As I said in my first answer, we hope to be in a position in the very near future to make an announcement in regard to that removal of the property.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, six years is a long time to be active, when the people in Central Newfoundland have been asking for this demolition to occur.

Mr. Speaker, government announced last April that they were dealing with Rentech on Central and Northern Peninsula fibre resources but we have heard very little about that since.

I ask the Premier: It has been six years since the expropriation, and seven months since potential with Rentech was announced. What is the status of this proposal?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. DALLEY:** Mr. Speaker, following the expropriation and the protection of the timber rights for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly for the Central region, government engaged in an Expression of Interest. We went through three EOIs. Through that process, Mr. Speaker, very challenging issues, I guess, with the industry right now and over the past number of years.

We did have a proponent come forward in Rentech. We are working with them. As I indicated last week in the House, Mr. Speaker, we are not there yet. They have multiple challenges as well they are working on. It is suffice to say we are still working together and trying to find a way through so we can ensure that we are able to utilize the resources, but also to make sure, Mr. Speaker, our commitment, that we will make sure the resource benefits the people of Newfoundland and Labrador first and foremost.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The community of Wabush has experienced a hard time with the closure of the Scully Mine and the potential closure of the Bloom Lake operation. Alderon was supposed to help offset some of the effects of the Wabush mine closure,

but it is becoming clear that this project is delayed, at least for the foreseeable future.

I ask the Premier: Without another mining operation ready to replace Wabush mines, what are the plans for the community of Wabush?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What is happening in Wabush and what is happening with commodity prices that is having a significant impact on those operations is a matter that is being watched very closely by our government.

I can tell you that a variety of ministers are engaged in what is taking place in Wabush, including the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, which has been having discussions with the Town of Wabush. As well, the Minister of Natural Resources, who is engaged with business partners who have rights and ownership rights and operating responsibilities in the area.

I can tell the member opposite, and tell the members of the House of Assembly, we are having constant communications. We are tracking and following what is happening. We are having communications with people within the community. As well, Mr. Speaker, I point out that officials from Advanced Education and Skills and the minister have been engaged with partners in the Wabush area and we will continue to do that work as we move forward.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With the closure of Wabush Mines, the Town of Wabush itself is losing \$2.4 million in tax revenue. When Abitibi closed in Grand Falls-Windsor and in Stephenville, government covered some of the lost tax revenue for the town for up to three years.

I ask the Premier: Will you commit to a similar arrangement for the Town of Wabush?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again as I pointed out in my first answer to this topic, the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs has been having discussions with the town, with the mayor. I can tell you that there is a plan underway for the continuation of those discussions in face-to-face meetings. I think \$2.1 million actually is the number – I could be corrected on that, but we are having a discussion on that. We are aware of what has happened in the past in other types of circumstances.

This is about supporting the community. This is about supporting the Town of Wabush so they can continue as a town, they can continue to function, they can live up to their obligations, and they can continue to provide the services within a municipality that the residents demand from the town.

As pointed out by the member opposite, we understand the potential significant impacts on their budgets for the coming year. We are continuing to work with the town, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** I remind the Premier it is about generating and creating a budget, too. This decision is something that this community is relying on and waiting on from this government. Nalcor has admitted that the dome being built over the Muskrat Falls Project is not ready and there is no date set for its completion, this despite the fact the winter season has begun in Labrador.

I ask the Premier: Why has the construction of this dome been delayed? Will it affect the overall project schedule?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. DALLEY:** Mr. Speaker, there has been some discussion this week and certainly in the media as well around the dome as we call it, the cover that is to help with the scheduling and the work throughout the winter. It is partially done on generation Units 1 and 2. It is not yet completed.

The focus of the work right now is on the spillway, but we have been reassured by Nalcor officials that there is no anticipation of scheduled delays at this point. They are continuing to work, as I said, on a spillway, and they continue to work on the dome, particularly around generation Units 1 and 2. Phase 2 of that will be obviously for generation Units 3 and 4.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At Decision Gate 3, which was in October 2012, the starting reference point for Muskrat Falls power was for 2017; that is when power would be available. Nalcor's own documents now, as of August this year, show that power for Muskrat Falls will not be available until 2018.

I ask the Premier: With this delay in the project, or if there is no delay, how is this now affecting 2018's schedule affecting the overall cost of the project?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. DALLEY:** Mr. Speaker, there is extensive oversight on the progress of the Muskrat Falls Project. An independent engineer provides reports to the federal government as well as to us. We will make that public, as we have done with so much information around Muskrat Falls. Certainly the schedule of Muskrat Falls has been a topic of debate, but it has been clear in what

has been conveyed so far to the public, without question, it is on schedule for power in late 2017, Mr. Speaker.

We have no indication that schedule has changed. If we do, Mr. Speaker, we will gladly make it public. Beyond that, I know there are thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians working in Labrador, working in Muskrat Falls; they are doing a good job. By all accounts, there is good work happening, and it is progressing so that we will reap the benefits of that river for many generations to come.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, with the recent allegations of negligence against management and staff of HMP, I ask the Minister of Justice: Has the Department of Justice reached out to private solicitors to provide advice and representation in this matter?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The member opposite raises a very important question. As many people would know, there is a very significant trial ongoing right now at the courthouse. Many very serious allegations have been made against a number of employees. I can confirm there are allegations against four senior people within the correction system. Two attorneys have been retained; one is representing three management employees and one attorney is representing the interests of a unionized employee.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Justice: Can they confirm who these two attorneys are? I guess, obviously, whether

they are outside of the Department of Justice. Can they table their contracts?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KING:** Mr. Speaker, thank you again for the opportunity to respond.

As I said a few months ago, very serious allegations have been made and one of the roles that government finds itself in from time to time is ensuring the rights of our employees are protected until such a time as there is resolution brought forward.

In this particular case, I can confirm that the two attorneys have been retained. Erin Breen is representing three management employees and Jerome Kennedy is representing a unionized employee. The terms of their employment, Mr. Speaker, for members opposite, would be a standard agreement, standard retainer rates that government uses from time to time on a regular basis when we use outside legal advice.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Justice confirm why the department went outside their own solicitors in this particular case, and will they confirm that these two contracts will be tabled for the House of Assembly?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KING:** I am actually responding in my capacity as Government House Leader, Mr. Speaker, for the record, not as a minister of that particular department.

I will say to the member opposite that I will endeavour to see if there are, in actual fact,

contracts available to individuals and if there are particular contracts signed, then I will be prepared to table them.

I can also say, though, that this is not unusual. I could probably provide a list of hundreds of instances where the Department of Justice, on occasion, reaches outside into the community for representation on any number of files. It happens almost on a daily basis and this particular circumstance is no different than many instances in the past.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, government is spending over \$1 million every year on schools that are vacant and no longer in use. While these funds are being wasted on empty schools, students with special education needs are going without supports, school guidance is under resourced, and the list goes on and on and on.

I ask the minister: When do you plan to stop running these vacant schools and spend that \$1 million on educating and supporting our students instead?

**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, disposition of school properties is not an easy matter. It is not as simple as the member opposite makes it out to be, but it certainly is something that we have turned our attention to and it is certainly a file that we are moving forward on.

Some of the factors that impact disposition have to do with clear title to the land, clear title to the buildings and so on, whether or not it is Crown land on which the building happens to have been erected and so on. Mr. Speaker, whether there is a Crown grant applicable is another point of interest here that we have to look at and, of course, environmental factors.

Whilst we share his view that we would like to expedite the disposition of these buildings, it takes more time than he would imagine.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this government is spending over \$100,000 alone at the former St. Anthony Elementary School site. Now, that is a school building which is slated to be demolished all together. So that is very simple. Clearly, that \$100,000 a year could be far better spent.

I ask the minister: Why are you wasting this money on empty buildings instead of investing it in programs, supports, and services in schools where the money should be spent?

**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, we share his concern. We would like, as I said earlier, to be able to expedite these processes, but we have to be responsible in how it is that we go about it. We cannot simply take insurance off buildings, Mr. Speaker. We cannot create those situations in community. We have at this point in time, Mr. Speaker, in process, fourteen former schools which are being removed. We have four regional board offices that are being removed, and we will continue to advance this file as quickly as we can possibly do it.

He is right about the St. Anthony school. We intend to have that school removed so we can make way for a softball field. That has always been our plan, it will continue to be our plan, and we will do that as quickly as possible.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In 2009, government budgeted \$20 million to outfit the Confederation Building with blue windows. They said the project would conclude in late 2012. In May of this year, the minister said the budget had ballooned to \$56 million.

I ask the minister: What has been spent on this project to date, and when will the repairs be complete?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is an ongoing project. As was noted in this House over the last number of months, this was a project that was started to be a certain thing in replacing the windows. Once we got into the construction phase, we realized there was a lot of extra work that needed to be done. Obviously, the costing related to that became more costly.

We are investing in a piece of infrastructure and an asset for the people in this Province that will be around for the next fifty to a hundred years. We are assessing exactly what else has to be done here, and we will have the final numbers in the next number of months when this job is completed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, it is the same answer over and over again, the same as they announce projects over and over again, and the same money over and over again.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind the minister that this department engaged external architects and engineers and began extensive daily inspections of the windows and brickwork in preparation of this renovation.

I ask the minister: How can the public have any confidence in government's ability to manage

projects when you have already let this project triple in price, and you have already let it go two years beyond its completion date?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have an obligation to make sure that the employees and the people who use this building do it in a safe manner and that it is up to standards for people to be able to work in a good environment. This is about engagement here, Mr. Speaker. It is about offering service to the people.

I do not know what my hon. member across would like to do. Maybe they would have the windows falling out of the building. Maybe they would not have people in a safe environment. We do not do that, Mr. Speaker. We provide a safe environment and a good asset for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

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

The minister is right, there are absolutely obligations that government has. Today is the UN's International Day of the Elimination of Violence Against Women. This government cut the Family Violence Intervention Court to save \$500,000. Meanwhile, they have overspent on Confederation Building, and have buildings in St. Anthony that are being lit and not demolished.

I ask the Premier: Don't you see how poor planning trickles down to the most vulnerable who have to be pay for it?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, I have heard a lot in my day, but to take the planning that is done on building and construction projects and equate it to the very serious matter of family violence in this Province, I say to the member opposite, she should not do it.

I also have to say, Mr. Speaker, I read her release today as well. I found it upsetting when I read her release today, that in any way, shape, or form is to take issue with the very good work that volunteers do around this Province in consultation with government, with their own agencies, and partner organizations in the community to fight family violence and violence throughout our Province; groups such as Transition House, which do very good work around this Province.

**MR. O'BRIEN:** The John Howard Society.

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Groups like the John Howard Society, Mr. Speaker, provide great service and partner with a variety of government departments, here in our government, in order to provide the best services it can to the people of the Province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, if the Premier was listening to front-line staff, he would know. If he was listening to front-line workers, then why isn't he willing –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS C. BENNETT:** I ask his minister, Minister Manning: If it is important to raise awareness around violence against women, why are they not releasing the report on sexual exploitation that your own government commissioned?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that not releasing that report was to protect the

best interests of people of our Province, the people who are identified, who are known throughout that report. It is about protecting the people who are very vulnerable in this Province. That is what we need to do.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, if bringing the Family Violence Intervention Court – if I thought for a minute that bringing that back was going to stop violence, violence against women, violence in relationships, if I thought for a second it was going to stop violence, I would have brought it back by now, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that.

I can tell you, it takes a variety and a suite of programs, it takes a variety of services, it takes a community, it takes a number of stakeholders working together in order to protect the best interests of those most vulnerable in our Province, Mr. Speaker, and we are going to continue to work with all of those stakeholders to protect women and children and families in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, as the Premier knows, in other jurisdictions that report, and reports like it, are released to the front-line workers who are asking for it.

The estimated cost of family violence to the Canadian economy is \$220 per person; 220 times more expensive than the \$1 per person to operate the Family Violence Intervention Court that was in place in this Province and saving women and children from abuse.

I ask the Premier: Will you properly observe the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and commit here and now to reinstate that court?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is very well aware of my position on the Family Violence Intervention Court. That is why officials in the Department of Justice are doing their due diligence to look at the Family Violence Intervention Court as it used to exist and how it could potentially exist in the future, because the Family Violence Intervention Court serviced people of St. John's, and the greater St. John's area only. It did not provide services to the people of Port aux Basques.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** It did not provide services to the people of St. Anthony. It did not provide services to the people of Labrador West, to Happy Valley-Goose Bay, to coastal Labrador. Mr. Speaker, it did not provide services to anyone outside of the greater St. John's area.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** I believe the Family Violence Intervention Court has the potential to provide services beyond the greater St. John's area. That is what I have asked the department to look at. That is the work they are doing, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you, through my lifetime I have seen my share of family violence and the effects of it, Mr. Speaker, and nobody in this House of Assembly feels more strongly about protecting the people of Newfoundland and Labrador than I do.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. EDMUNDS:** Mr. Speaker, it has been over two years since this government implemented



the ban on all harvesting of the George River caribou herd. A five-year ban was implemented in 2012 and would be revisited in 2014.

I ask the minister: Now that it is almost 2015, what is the status of government's update regarding harvesting of the George River caribou?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. CRUMMELL:** Mr. Speaker, our government has been very proactive when it comes to the George River caribou herd. The five-year ban on hunting came in place in 2013. We have allocated \$1 million in last year's Budget to monitor the herd, to do a census of the herd to see where it is to.

Mr. Speaker, there were fifty-seven populations across Canada that are undergoing similar stresses as the George River caribou herd. It is a mystery to many people, but we are gathering information. We are making sure we are doing the right work around that and understanding what is happening.

We are going to continue with that ban, and we are going to be diligent about that.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. EDMUNDS:** Mr. Speaker, no one has been able to identify the reason for the decline, but those involved with monitoring the George River caribou herd, including the Ungava Peninsula Caribou Aboriginal Roundtable, clearly define that there is much more work that is needed to be done to find out what caused the decline.

I ask the minister: Outside of current investments that have failed to find out the decline of the George River caribou herd, what is his department prepared to do to find out the reasons for the decline in the George River caribou herd – one of our most valuable resources?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. CRUMMELL:** Mr. Speaker, we agree with the member opposite. It is a valuable resource; we need to find a solution and an answer to exactly what is going on. This is a global phenomenon in a lot of respects. Research is ongoing. We have allocated \$1 million in this year's Budget to study the herd going forward, collared animal tracking, that sort of thing, Mr. Speaker.

We are taking the situation very seriously. It is a very complex issue. It looks like preliminary information shows there are cycles 100 years ago that caribou were about at this population as well.

There is a long history. We have a lot of information. We have to analyze that information and have a strategy to move forward. We are working on that, 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.

Ontario has agreed to a federal-provincial public child care program. Canadian provinces have been waiting twenty years for a national child care program.

I ask the Premier: What is this government prepared to do to make a cost-shared public child care program a reality?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Child care is being used more in Newfoundland and Labrador today than ever was before. I can tell you that we, as a government, have

implemented a suite of programs that were designed to improve child care opportunities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador for the families who want to avail of those services and the benefits that come with availing of such services.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, since 2011 to 2014 there has been talk in this House, I should point out, in the last week or so since the fall sitting, about early childhood education and the recent report that came out. I can tell you, of all the provinces in Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador made more gains than any other province in Canada in child care. That speaks to the commitment of our government in improving child care services for the people of the Province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Canadian studies have proven for every dollar spent on early childhood education, the benefits can be as high as \$2.78.

So I ask the Premier: Why will this government not follow the model of Quebec and fund a program proven to make economic sense?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the debates continue with the model that has been followed by Quebec. Some would say that it created economic challenges and difficulties for the Province of Quebec, and great economic challenges for the province itself.

So, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that we have made great gains in early childhood education. Just recently, as I mentioned yesterday in the House, when I created our new departments, I took Early Childhood Education and moved it into what was previously the Department of

Education – a move that has been praised by industry experts and industry stakeholders throughout the Province and outside of the Province and throughout Canada, Mr. Speaker. They are the kind of steps, a step-by-step approach, to make improvements to early childhood education.

We have made good improvements – we have made better improvements than any other Province in Canada, Mr. Speaker, and we still have work to do.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS MICHAEL:** Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Why is his government stopping short of creating a public child care service for the families of this Province?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the suite of programs we have created, we have created financial supports and assistance to not-for-profit organizations around Newfoundland and Labrador who see a child care need in their own communities, and we provided assistance to them financially and also expert supports to them so they can create child care spaces and opportunities in communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is proving to be a very successful program, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you, as I said earlier, as we continue to make those improvements – the biggest improvements amongst provinces in Canada between 2011 and 2014 – we still have work to do, and we are going to still do that.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, every member on this side of the House supports the immediate reinstatement of the Family Violence Intervention Court, and last Thursday at least thirteen government members, including the Premier, stood to support my call for the immediate reinstatement of the court – a majority of the members of this House, representing a majority of the people of this Province.

I ask the Premier: Will he carry out the will of this House and immediately reinstate the Family Violence Intervention Court, a court that worked, and a court that did prevent violence against women and children?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the member opposite for bringing this matter to the floor of the House again. We just had a discussion about it and I have already articulated to the House, but I will repeat it again. The Department of Justice and Public Safety is doing work around the Family Violence Intervention Court, or a similar model that used to exist, versus what could exist. We are looking at what is the potential for broadening the aspects of the Family Violence Intervention Court so it can benefit people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

What members are asking for is to reinstate what used to exist. What we are looking at is finding a better way forward, Mr. Speaker, to find the best opportunities for families who live with family violence. The impacts on families, on women and children, are too great to do anything else.

Mr. Speaker, we have to work to find the best that we can have, find the best programs available, and that is what we are working to find.

**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 Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**MR. WISEMAN:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will move that the House Resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider a resolution relating to the advancing or guaranteeing of certain loans made under the Loan and Guarantee Act, 1957. (Bill 31)

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

**MR. LANE:** 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 there are many individuals within our Province who have mobility issues; and

WHEREAS it is extremely important as an inclusive society to ensure appropriate access to both public and private facilities and institutions; and

WHEREAS a key component in the provision of access for persons with mobility issues is the provision of regulated blue zones; and

WHEREAS our provincial government implemented new blue zone regulations two years ago but it failed to adequately enforce them; and

WHEREAS this failure of our government to adequately enforce blue zone regulations has resulted in the continued denial of appropriate access for persons with disabilities to many public and private facilities;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to start enforcing its blue zone regulations in order to provide appropriate access for persons with mobility issues.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is an issue which I brought up in the last sitting of the House of Assembly. I will continue to do so.

I do want to acknowledge, though, that I did have a meeting with the former Minister of Service NL a few months back now. We had a good discussion on this. He made some commitments to try to improve things, and I thank him for that.

We actually did see an announcement a while back where there was some funding provided to the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities to do basically an awareness and education program for businesses as to what their requirements are for blue zones. I view that as a very positive thing. I certainly thank the former minister for doing that.

That being said though, Mr. Speaker, it is one thing to educate the public, it is one thing to educate business; it is quite another to actually enforce the regulations as they exist. We still have a number of government-owned facilities, schools, and so on which are not in compliance with blue zone regulations. There are still a ton of businesses out there that are not in compliance either.

Part of the role of the government in this regard is enforcement. I encourage the government to be more diligent in enforcing these regulations in order to provide access to persons with disabilities to sustain facilities that we can all avail of.

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 Route 510 from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay is in deplorable condition and requires immediate upgrading; and

WHEREAS the condition of the highway is causing undue damage to vehicles using the highway, and has now become a safety hazard for the travelling public; and

WHEREAS both residential and commercial traffic has increased dramatically with the opening of the Trans-Labrador Highway and increased development in Labrador; and

WHEREAS cold patching is no longer adequate as a means of repair;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately allocate resources to Route 510 from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay that allows for permanent resurfacing of the highway.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is about a seventy-six kilometre stretch of highway that is in a very dilapidated condition. I have been standing on my feet. This is my third sitting in the House now calling attention to this stretch of highway.

Every year we seem to get inundated with a lot of cold patch, Mr. Speaker. It is just a band-aid solution. I know there are a lot of requests that go in for roadwork around the Province, but I believe we need to allocate resources based on need. If that is being done, there is no doubt about it, that this section of the highway will be very high on the radar. Mr. Speaker, not only do

we have residents and commercial traffic, but we have ambulances that are driving that stretch of road every day. We have school children from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay who are driving on this bus every day.

I have met with the current Minister of Transportation and Works, and I have met with the other two ministers, Mr. Speaker, and I will continue. I hope when the Budget is being put together this fall that they will look at the serious condition of this road. We have heavy traffic, Mr. Speaker, with all of the work going on in Muskrat Falls, and the contractors and subcontractors driving on this road making it much worse.

It is a very serious, serious safety issue, Mr. Speaker, and we are all fortunate that we have not seen loss of lives yet on this stretch of road. That is what I fear will happen if we do not give immediate attention to this section of the road in the near future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS Route 430, the Viking Trail, is the primary highway on the Great Northern Peninsula; and

WHEREAS the current road condition of approximately sixty kilometres between Plum Point and Eddies Cove East have sections that are in dire need of resurfacing and/or repaving; and

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

WHEREAS an improved road network on a primary highway is needed to enhance road

safety and help with local commerce as well as deal with increasing passenger traffic levels in this section of the highway;

We the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge the government to allocate funds under the Provincial Roads Program to pave this section of Route 430.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this section of road has seen robust activity and increasing passenger traffic, especially with the Strait of Belle Isle ferry crossing at St. Barbe, when you look at that section of the highway with the high level of volume of heavy equipment going into Southern Labrador, as well as going to St. Anthony, the amount of international shipping that is taking place in the region, and you look at the hub of commerce that is happening around Flower's Cove and Plum Point. There are two schools there. There is the regional hospital. There are a number of regional services that are offered in this region.

Government has invested building a four-lane highway in the area around the Strait of Belle Isle Health Centre, the newly constructed facility, multi-million dollars there. As well as looking at the residential and commercial district of Flower's Cove.

We have Muskrat Falls; the generating station is coming across with the cable crossing in Shoal Cove. There has been a lot of activity happening there, but the road has been eroded based on the activity. What has been laid is one strip of pavement, basically, right in the middle of the road. No way is that going to be safe throughout the year. We need to actually put down pavement, and when we do it – that section of the highway has not been replaced in decades.

Mr. Speaker, we certainly need to see some investment made in our primary highways if we are going to retain the tens of thousands of tourists who travel through, and the commuters who use that highway on a regional basis. It is something that must happen. It has to remain a priority. It is a main highway. We are not even talking about a trunk road or a side road on any

level. This is the primary artery on the Great Northern Peninsula. It covers off three districts, Mr. Speaker, that I am talking about when it comes to servicing transportation needs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS ROGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREAS the Family Violence Intervention Court was welcomed and endorsed by all aspects of the Justice system including the police, the courts, the 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, I have hundreds of these. They keep arriving in my office. People want the court reinstated. That has been established loudly and clearly.

It was interesting to hear the Premier today stand up in the House and say, he said directly: if I think that the court prevented violence against women and children, I would have opened it right away.

Mr. Speaker, we know that it does. We know that it did. The recidivism rate was 10 per cent rather than 40 per cent. That meant that it did reduce violence against women and children. I do not know why this government is not reinstating the court immediately. First of all, I do not know why they closed it. Obviously, it was a mistake.

When we look at today, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, I cannot help but wonder: is this government more interested in saving face than they are in saving lives? Maybe that is what is at play here. I do not know, because it makes no sense whatsoever for this government (a) to have closed the court; and, (b) not to have reopened it. They say it was a budgetary consideration. Then they said it was not serving enough people. Now no one is getting served.

Mr. Speaker, it has been almost two years since this court was closed. How many lives has that affected? How many lives of women and children who have been victims of violence have been affected by the closure of this court?

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS cellphone service is essential for business development;

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, maybe the government is not as aware, maybe the entire members of the House are not as aware of where Gros Morne National Park is and the major financial contribution that it makes to the Province as a whole and that it is probably the singular, signature attraction in the Province that people internationally look to visit, more so than many of our other very fine attractions.

Mr. Speaker, imagine if you are coming from New York City, Germany, London, Toronto, anywhere all over the world where people are accustomed to having cellphone service. You have been attracted to Gros Morne National Park by the advertising of all of the amenities, the nice ads that the Province put on, the view that you can see from the top of Gros Morne, the boat ride through Western Brook Gulch, the car ride out through Trout River Gulch, the boat ride up through Trout River Pond, all of these things that tourists can come and see.

You come and you expect modern, contemporary amenities. You come here and

you find out that for the most part it really is up to grade. It really is up to snuff. There are some very nice restaurants, world-renowned restaurants in Trout River and Woody Point. The Writers at Woody Point festival every year, which is only a handful of kilometres from the Town of Trout River; yet, when you come in to Gros Morne National Park, the first thing you lose is cellphone service. Then as you progress from Wiltondale further into the park, the cellphone service still is not available. When you come into Bonne Bay there is cellphone service until you get to Trout River, where there is no cellphone service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. KIRBY:** 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 oral health is intrinsically linked to overall health and health care is universally covered in our Province; and

WHEREAS Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have been forced to wait for a year or longer for much needed oral surgeries; and

WHEREAS residents with emergency cases and others who need oral surgery must seek medical attention in other provinces; and

WHEREAS the cost of access to oral surgery outside the Province is prohibitively expensive for many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador covers only 50 per cent of travel costs and requires a \$400 deductible; and

WHEREAS this financial burden and the lack of adequate oral surgery services in Newfoundland and Labrador is creating a two-tier system within the health care system;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to ensure that a more adequate level of access to specialist primary care based oral surgery and oral surgical procedures is provided in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We further urge government to review the level of financial assistance currently provided through the Medical Transportation Assistance Program to residents who leave the Province for oral surgeries.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, we present a lot of petitions in the House of Assembly. Sometimes government listens, like they did with the school transportation review, the full-day Kindergarten petition, and a number of other petitions that Opposition members have presented in the House of Assembly.

In this case, Mr. Speaker, government listened a little bit. We were happy to see in Budget 2014 rather modest changes – I say to the Member for The Isles of Notre Dame, who is listening very intently over there. Rather modest changes were made to the medical transportation assistance act. Government, in fact, increased the level of assistance to 75 per cent of expenses over \$3,000; but still, when I did contact a constituent of mine who is the originator of this petition, that really did not help her situation.

We know there are still lots of other people out there who have to go out of Province. Primarily, they are going to Halifax, I believe, Mr. Speaker, to have oral surgical procedures performed and they are paying significant amounts of money out of their own pocket. It is contrary to the notion of having a universal health care system, that people have to pay to that extent.

With government in its planning stages for the Budget next year, another thing to make another modest improvement and eventually we will get there.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. KIRBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. KING:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that we move to 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 Government House Leader.

**MR. KING:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, with leave, I would like to introduce a motion regarding the Public Accounts Committee that I overlooked a little earlier.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Does the minister have leave?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Leave.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Leave.

**MR. KING:** Thank you.

On behalf of the Striking Committee of the House of Assembly, and in accordance with Standing Order 65(1), I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, that the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor – Green Bay South replace the Member for Lake Melville as a member of the Public Accounts Committee.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Shall the motion pass?

All those in favour, 'aye'.



**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**MR. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank members opposite for leave.

At this time I would like to move to Order 2, third reading of a bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 3, Bill 26. So moved by me, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, that the said bill be now read the third time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 3. (Bill 26)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 3", read a third time, ordered passed and title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 26)

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

**MR. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time I would like to move to Order 3, second reading of a bill, An Act To Regulate Child Care Services, Bill 30.

**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 move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, Bill 30, An Act To Regulate Child Care Services.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to bring this bill to the House of Assembly today.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

It is moved and seconded that Bill 30 be now read a second time.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Regulate Child Care Services". (Bill 30).

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

**MS SULLIVAN:** Thank you very much.

I am very pleased to bring Bill 30 to the House of Assembly today, An Act to Regulate Child Care Services. The last full review of child care legislation in this Province was more than fifteen years ago, and I am really happy to introduce a new piece of legislation today.

The current Child Care Services Act was proclaimed in 1999. This new legislation will modernize the current legislation governing child care services in Newfoundland and Labrador, while ensuring the safety and protection of our children remains paramount.

Our government is focused on providing regulated child care services throughout the Province that are built on three key pillars. Those pillars are: quality, sufficiency, and affordability. Those are the building blocks of our 10-Year Child Care Strategy that we launched in 2013 and which I will outline in a few moments.

I believe the most recent development in child care in this Province is the best place to begin when we are talking about new child care legislation. On September 30, 2014, our Premier announced the creation of a new department: the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Premier Davis recognized that the best education systems integrate early learning activities and the formal education system. I was privileged to be asked to lead this new department which is responsible for the complete continuum of learning from infancy through high school.

In this Province, integration of regulated child care services and family resource centres with education at the governance level to form the new department will, in turn, enhance service delivery at the community and grassroots levels through development and implementation of common policies and procedures.

The ultimate goal of integration is enhanced service delivery for children and families that will promote improved outcomes across a variety of indicators. Focusing on integrated services and enhanced quality early learning opportunities in a child's formative years, when children's brain development is most open to learning and growing, will build a stronger foundation for children's transition to school, for lifelong learning, and career development, which in turn is vital for a sustainable economic future for this Province.

Our government has been recognized and applauded in the media for this move. Kathy LeGrow, Chair of the Pratt Foundation, a foundation based in St. John's that advocates for early childhood programming, said, "This is a critical step to enhancing early childhood education and care (ECE) in our province".

She went on to say, "Integrating early child education into the Department of Education is significant because it streamlines program planning and delivery but, more importantly, it legitimizes the early years as being critical to education and human development. It affords the sharing of information among educators...". It ensures a continuum of learning, and it provides smooth transitions between each learning stage. The Pratt Foundation also

recognized our commitment to full-day Kindergarten, citing both as commendable steps.

Through the creation of my new department, our government's commitment to creating a child care system that provides quality, accessible, and affordable regulated child care spaces to parents with young children throughout Newfoundland and Labrador has never been clearer. In February 2013, our government officially launched the 10-Year Child Care Strategy, Caring for our Future: Provincial Strategy for Quality, Sufficient and Affordable Child Care in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Caring for our Future presents a vision for a planned systematic approach for the growth and enhancement of regulated child care services throughout the Province from 2012 through to 2022. The strategy builds on, as I mentioned earlier, three key pillars and those are: quality, sufficiency, and affordability. These pillars help to ensure that parents who choose regulated child care in Newfoundland and Labrador will have access to high-quality, affordable services.

We are currently in year three of our strategy and our government has implemented or continued many initiatives under the strategy such as Child Care Capacity Initiative, which supports community and not-for-profit groups to promote space creation in under-served areas. As well, the new early childhood education post-secondary program standards which allow students to achieve Level I certification after successful completion of year one of the two-year diploma program, and revised Early Learning and Child Care Supplement for early childhood educators working in licensed child care centres based on positions held in addition to qualifications.

These initiatives, Mr. Speaker, lauded by early childhood educators, coupled with the outstanding array of existing programs and services from birth, aimed at supporting child development, supporting and engaging families, and enhancing the transition to school illustrate our commitment to our children and our families.

Services and programs include regulated child care. As of June 20, 2014 we had 7,815 regulated child care spaces throughout the

Province, which is almost a 70 per cent increase since 2003. From birth to age three, in terms of early childhood learning initiatives, we have programs such as early literacy programming through partnership with public libraries; we have parent resource kits through child health clinics; and if you have been watching TV or listening to the radio at all, you would have noticed the Power of Play promotional campaign focusing on the importance of play for children's learning and development.

Mr. Speaker, we also have the KinderStart program, which provides a transition to school programs for four-year-olds. With the provincial government investment of \$30.6 million, we will see the implementation of full-day Kindergarten in September of 2016. We have family resource centres which government funds and which help to provide play groups, parenting support, and healthy baby clubs.

We are by no means done, Mr. Speaker. We have other upcoming initiatives which we committed to in our ten-year strategy. They include – and these will be specific initiatives around which I will give additional information in the coming weeks as we roll out these two new programs, the first of which is a voluntary operating grant program which will provide operational funding to child care centres choosing to become involved. It will require those centres to meet specific accountability criteria, including the setting of child care rates at provincial daily subsidy rates, and a Web-based child care registry which will provide parents with an effective way to find regulated care and make available improved data to determine supply and demand of child care spaces.

Quality programming in both centre-based and family child care is fundamental to an effective system of regulated child care. The program must be supported through an appropriate legislative framework, which is why a legislative review is a key component of this strategy, and why we are here today to introduce Bill 30, An Act to Regulate Child Care Services.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador regulates child care services through the Child Care Services Act and Regulations which establishes health, safety, and program

standards. Provincial government officials are responsible for monitoring and enforcing compliance with the legislation and regulations. The act and regulations were reviewed with a focus on ensuring positive practices are used when providing child care services throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

This new bill is proposed based on extensive public consultation and the review of academic research and jurisdictional analysis. The first round of consultations provided the general public, key stakeholders, and representatives of the child care sector with an opportunity to share their thoughts and perspectives on the current child care legislation and regulations, and to discuss changes required to ensure a strong framework for the healthy growth and development of children in the child care sector in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Focus groups were held in June 2013 and written submissions and feedback was encouraged from the general public. A total of seventeen written submissions were received through this process. Focus group sessions were held in St. John's, Corner Brook, Grand Falls-Windsor, and Happy Valley-Goose Bay. A cross-section of stakeholders were invited to these sessions representing owners and operators of small and large child care centres, early childhood educators working in both centre-based and family-based child care, parents, and organizations related to the child care sector. A follow-up focus group was held with stakeholder organizations and key individuals in October 2013 to provide more discussion time around issues raised at the public consultations.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I had the pleasure of participating in a news conference with the President of AECENL – AECENL is the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Newfoundland and Labrador. The president of that organization sat with me at the table. When asked questions around this particular act and this new piece of legislation, one of her comments – among many that were exceptionally positive around this act – was that she was so happy to see that (a) government had consulted but, more importantly, that government had listened to what was said through those stakeholder consultations, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS SULLIVAN:** Mr. Speaker, we are very proud to have the support of AECENL as we bring forward this new act here in the House of Assembly.

Recommended changes were also discussed with other government departments in an interdepartmental focus group, which included Advanced Education and Skills, Intergovernmental Affairs, Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, Health and Community Services, and Education and Early Childhood Development.

A second round of consultations intended to build on the preliminary round of targeted consultations occurred in January and February past. Those consultations specifically encouraged parents to participate. Focus groups there were held in Corner Brook, Gander, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and St. John's, with a primary focus on parents. We listened to the feedback we received through those extensive consultation processes.

What you will see in the key changes here are the culmination of recommendations that came from our stakeholders, that came from the people who worked with our children, that came from the parents of those particular children, that came as well from departments like Health and Community Services, and that came from jurisdictional scans across this country. As a result, the new bill has been restructured and modernized to reflect current knowledge in the child care field, streamline policies and processes, and to provide flexibility for licensees and transparency.

So, what I would like to do now is to outline briefly the six changes that we are proposing in this bill. The first one has to do with exemptions to licensing. Exemptions to licensing have been clarified and strengthened by stronger definitions of what a child care service is and what a child care service provider is and, of course, what they are not. The clarity will result in consistent interpretation of the need for a service to be licensed.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind those at home and those in the House who are

paying attention, these particular changes came to us based on what our consultations told us, based on what we learned from studying literature, based on what we have seen happening successfully in other jurisdictions.

In the current act, exemptions have been opened to broad interpretation which resulted in inconsistency for licensing. The definitions of a child care service and a child care service provider have been clarified and strengthened in the proposed bill. In each of these definitions, specific exemptions are included related to the definition.

Firstly, a child care service means an activity or other arrangement that provides temporary care or supervision of a child, but it does not include KinderStart, which is offered by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. It does not include artistic instruction, tutoring, or sports for children who are enrolled full-time in school. It does not include day camps offered during school breaks for children who are enrolled full-time in school.

A child care service provider means a person who or an organization that operates a child care service, but it does not include schools operating under the Schools Act, 1997. It does not include hospitals that provide child care services, playrooms, and school to in-patient children. It does not include parents and relatives providing child care to a child who is related to them. It does not include a nanny hired to provide child care in the child's home.

Unregulated child care remains unchanged at a maximum of four children, with no more than two children of the four under age two, or if there are three children under two, they are limited to that number. They are exempt under regulations. All other jurisdictions have exemption clauses and the exemptions we are proposing are similar in scope to other jurisdictions across this country.

The second change, Mr. Speaker, is focused on a capacity limit on the licence. It will remove the current cap set on child care centre licences. Licences in this Province are currently limited to a maximum of sixty spaces. This limits the flexibility of a licensee to determine the scope of their service. Our change will allow providers

more flexibility and reduce redundancies, while not impacting the safety of children or the quality of the service they receive.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind those listening, that these changes have come to us through our stakeholder consultations and through best practices that we have researched and informed ourselves on. What is most important to us in all of these changes, and is particularly important to us in terms of the capacity limit on a licence, is the quality of service to our children.

Quality of service is determined by a number of factors, otherwise known as the iron triangle of quality: the three iron sides of the triangle of quality, iron meaning that we are not moving on these. We are steadfast in these particular factors. The three sides of that triangle are staff-child ratio, maximum group size in a homeroom, and staff qualifications. There are also requirements for the amount of indoor and outdoor space per child which ensure quality. The new act does not change any of those factors. Our staff-to-child ratio and the maximum group size will remain the same, and the amount of indoor and outdoor space per child will be unchanged.

As well as committed to in the Caring For Our Future strategy, a new trainee certification level for child care staff will be introduced, replacing the current entry level certification. Our requirements in these areas are within recommended guidelines in research and best practice, including the guidelines recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. However, the current capacity limit impacts the ability of licensees to determine the scope of their services.

Let me perhaps illustrate this best by giving a couple of examples. If you have a building with five rooms of sufficient size to accommodate sixteen preschool-aged children, you would need to be licensed for eighteen spaces. However, under the current act this is not possible.

A second example. If a licensee wished to offer a child care service for children from birth through to age thirteen with one homeroom for each age group, then you would require five homerooms. They would need eighty-six

spaces. That would be six infants, ten toddlers, sixteen pre-schoolers, twenty-four kinder care, and thirty after school. Again, this is not possible in the current act.

There are currently child care owners in the Province with more than sixty children in one building, through holding more than one licence in that same building. For example, the Campus Childcare at MUN has four licences for 191 spaces. Little People's Workshop on Mundy Pond Road has three licences for 102 spaces. Kidcorp on Ricketts Road has two licences for 113 spaces.

This situation imposes redundancies on the service providers, and red tape such as more than one application and renewal process being required, difficulties transitioning children from one age group to another, where the next age group is under a different licence and often located in a different place, Mr. Speaker. That is one of the pieces that we heard loudly from our parent groups in particular.

If you have two children and you are transitioning them, or even if you have one child and you are transitioning from one age group to another, and you actually have to take them out of one building and bring them to somewhere else in your town or city, that is often very disruptive to the child and certainly to the parent, Mr. Speaker. If we can manage to have a number of different homerooms co-located in one building, while still ensuring quality through those child-staff ratios, through the quality and the qualifications of the early childhood educators, and through the space requirements being met, then everyone is better served.

Most provincial and territorial jurisdictions in Canada do not limit the capacity of a licence. Removing the capacity limit on a licence will not impact – and I am going to say it again, it will not impact the quality of care that the child receives. In fact, the child and parent may not even notice the change, but licensees will get more flexibility as they provide care.

The third change in this act, Mr. Speaker, has to do with an appeal process. It will see a process for licensing decisions being defined. The current Child Care Services Act does not have a defined appeal process. Adding an appeal

process provides transparency. Currently, there is no defined appeal process for a licensing decision, such as refusal to issue or renew a licence, or a decision to issue a violation order. Defining an appeal process gives transparency to the process and it outlines obligations and expectations for both parties.

The proposed appeal process is similar to other provincial legislation. Currently, eight of the provinces and territories describe an appeal process in their child care legislation, including New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

In the current act, the provincial director must be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Our fourth key change in the new act allows the minister to appoint the provincial director. Public service competition would still apply, as the appointee would be a provincial government employee. This change will not impact service delivery and will bring this legislation in line with other provincial legislation which speaks to the appointment of a provincial director.

Change number five will improve the transparency and accountability of the inspection process. The new act requires that a manager is not to be appointed as an inspector. This safeguards the inspection process by separating the inspection from the person receiving the inspection report and making decisions based on those inspections. This change, I am sure all my hon. colleagues will agree, just makes good sense and it ensures accountability which is paramount when dealing with our children.

Finally, the sixth change in this new act concerns the statutory review bringing this act in line with most recent provincial legislation. A review of the legislation is required every five years. This review must include public consultation which supports transparency.

You will recall that when I started speaking, Mr. Speaker, I said this was the first time in fifteen years that we reviewed the act. So bringing in the statutory review to ensure a review every five years has been applauded and will be welcomed by all groups and all stakeholders.

This act introduces six key changes that will help modernize our legislation and bring it in

line with best practices throughout the country with a clear focus on providing safe quality care to our children. Our government recognizes the importance of providing that care, which supports the healthy growth and development of children and their families.

Research over the past ten years has underscored the importance of the early years in terms of brain development and the lasting effects that early experiences have on children's later success. Quality early learning and child care is provided by qualified staff in properly established environments, including regulated child care centres and family child care homes which promote early learning using well-researched, positive practices.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will take my seat now and I look forward to a very healthy debate here this afternoon on this legislation. Through the course of the debate, I am sure I will be asked to answer several questions from members on the other side of the House. I will certainly be happy to do that. Again, in terms of this legislation, our overall goal is to modernize, to strengthen, and to clarify this current legislation, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much for the time.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn):** The hon. the Member for St. John's North.

**MR. KIRBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure for me to get up and speak to Bill 30, An Act to Regulate Child Care Services. We have had quite a lot of discussion and debate about the provision of early learning and child care in Newfoundland and Labrador and how we relate to other jurisdictions and what is happening on the international scene. We have had quite a lot of discussion and debate about that since I first was elected in 2011.

It is good to have an opportunity to address some of the issues, to respond to some of the things the minister has said, and to discuss some of the things that are in the legislation and then some of the things that we would have liked to have seen in the legislation – and maybe, if it not

too late, we could see some of those things changed even.

When the minister stood up, initially she spoke about the recent report that was issued by the Pratt Foundation. The Jimmy Pratt Foundation is a local group that was founded to bring issues associated with early learning and child care to the fore, and to make sure that early learning and child care was an issue for the current government but also to ensure that it is going to be an issue in the next election campaign, which we all know is more or less around the corner.

The Pratt Foundation really started to gather steam around this time in 2011. That is when the Atkinson Foundation, based out of Toronto, issued the report that the minister referenced and we have discussed a number of times. That report has a checklist and they issued a revised checklist this year, which the minister talked about because she was talking about how the Pratt Foundation complimented government on improving government standing.

Now, there was an improved standing in that, but it is not really all what we are led to believe because in the 2011 report, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador received a 1.5 out of – I am not sure what it was –

**MS SULLIVAN:** Fifteen.

**MR. KIRBY:** I think it is more than fifteen. Yes, it is certainly more than fifteen, I say to the minister. I think it is actually –

**MS SULLIVAN:** Fifteen.

**MR. KIRBY:** – nineteen, I say to the minister because Quebec would have had – oh, it is fifteen. I apologize for that; you are right. The minister is right, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for that. The minister is absolutely right; it is fifteen.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KIRBY:** In any case, I draw the minister's attention to two areas in the ranking in the metric because in 2011 we received overall 1.5 out of fifteen. This year, three years later, we received six out of fifteen. We still have a total

of zero in the area of funding. We still have a total of zero in the area of access.

As the minister knows, within the ranking there are three areas under funding. One is at least two-thirds of child care funding goes to program operations. So, we have a zero again this year, as we did in 2011. The next one is that there is a mandated salary and fee scale. That one we got a zero on again this year. The third one is at least 3 per cent of the budget is devoted to early childhood education and we have a zero on that. So, we still have a zero out of three in the area of funding.

The other one in access – of course, that is the affordability angle. The other part we always hear people talk about is accessibility. It is whether you can afford child care or not and whether you can access it or not. In the area of access, one was that full-day Kindergarten is offered. We have a zero in that, but we do know, as the minister said; government has announced that in 2016 they are going to introduce full-day kindergarten.

As we have already discussed, that may very well involve classes in temporary portable classrooms and a variety of other learning spaces and facilities and school areas that are not currently designated for learning, so gyms, cafeterias, art rooms, science labs, and music rooms. I say to the minister, I have heard from a number of different teachers and administrators in schools across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador who have had officials in from the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District who are sizing up and saying well, that music room, that is a good spot to put two classes of Kindergartens; that cafeteria, that is a good spot to put three classes of Kindergartens; and that learning resources centre or that school library is a good spot to put a number of classes. So that is going on.

**MR. LANE:** They must have adopted the Mount Pearl model.

**MR. KIRBY:** My colleague, the Member for Mount Pearl South, he calls that the Mount Pearl model, where you take spaces and classes in learning spaces in schools and turn them into something other than what they were initially designed for. In any case, the next time this is

done, three years from now, please God, we are actually going to see a one in there and not a zero.

There are two other areas, Mr. Speaker, and I will not belabour this, but 50 per cent – under access – of two to four-year-olds regularly attend an ECE program. So we do not have that right now, and that is a structured learning program. We have a zero in that this year, and then the final one under here in funding is conditional on including children with special needs. This is really important, so remember that I said that. I am going to come back to that later on, because it is extremely important as it relates to what the minister was talking about, their commitment to a ten-year child care program. So, I am going to come back to that.

In the area of funding and in the area of access, whether you can afford child care and whether you can regularly access child care, those areas in the report that was done this year, we still got a zero – a zero out of three, and a zero out of three. We are still at a zero, but full-day Kindergarten is going to change that, we hope.

Now, there are a number of other areas, but I do not want to use up any more of my time on that because I think I have said enough about that. That is the early year's three report and the update to that that came this year.

Again, if I have not said it, I just want to say congratulations and thank you to Kathy LeGrow and Dr. David Philpott with the Jimmy Pratt Foundation because they have been doing a phenomenal job. In the last year, I have gone to, I believe, four different events where they have had a keynote speaker from somewhere else in Canada or somewhere else in the world to come in and talk about different aspects of early learning.

I know the minister's office has provided great help, and the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services office has been a great help in ensuring that all sorts of people across the broad spectrum of child care and early learning, people in our communities are able to access those meetings and events, and keynote speakers, and to learn from national and international experts on this stuff. It is extremely important.

When the minister said, I believe it was last week, or I think it was the day we were talking about: Oops, we fooled up calling the two by-elections act. I do not think it was called that, but it was the amendment to. The minister said during that week, in any case, that this government did have an aggressive legislative agenda and part of this government's aggressive agenda was to introduce this particular act.

I was thinking to myself that ideally this piece of legislation would do a variety of different things, as it does in other provinces in Canada. It would foster the learning, development, health, and well-being of children and enhance their safety. It would make sure we have an enriched learning environment where children can develop and learn, that their health and well-being is looked out for and they are provided with a safe environment for that to happen so we do not have to worry about accidents and these sorts of things. That it would also provide a framework for the regulation of child care. In part, this does do that to some extent, but there is still a lot that is in regulation and not necessarily in the legislation.

It should also provide a framework for the operation of early learning and child care programs and services, a framework for operating child care centres, home-based child care, and delivering those services to our kids; also, to establish a system of licensing and compliance for early learning and child care programs and services, a process for licensing them; also, for ensuring the rules that go along with licensing are adhered to and complied with, and that we have people who carry out that function, much in the same way Occupational Health and Safety is achieved through officers who deal with compliance and so on, which I will speak to a little later on.

It should also set out, as far as I am concerned, Mr. Speaker – and based on what we have heard from the minister, I cannot see how she would disagree. It should set out really the basic requirements for funding and for resourcing of early learning and child care programs and services. Also, it should help to guide parents and guardians of children to enable them to evaluate early learning and care programs, and to make choices about which programs are appropriate for them, which work best for them,



which provide the best learning environment, which foster development, which provide for health and well-being of their children, and provide a safe learning environment for their children to develop.

They should also reflect our increased understanding of child development. As the Atkinson Foundation has shown, as the Jimmy Pratt Foundation has shown in all those reports, all those talks, keynote speakers and events we have all attended over the past year, we know that our understanding of child development has really changed significantly over the past decade.

It should also improve government's ability to evaluate the effectiveness of early learning and child care programs so we can really see all those investments that the minister talked about, and the ones that she has promised, not just here in the House of Assembly today, but has been promised by her predecessor. Also, the things she addressed in her press conference this morning where she announced these amendments to the Child Care Services Act.

This piece of legislation ideally should also detail the supports and the help that would co-ordinate planning and policy development as it relates to early learning and child care programs and services. That is really an overview of what I think we should be able to achieve.

If you look, if you have a cursory examination of the other legislation, whether that is in British Columbia, or in Alberta, or in Ontario, or in – I know the Member for Exploits is listening intently. I say to the Member for Exploits, I will not list all the provinces but you know what I am saying. It is more or less best practices as we have heard here in the House of Assembly on many different occasions. We certainly do not need to reinvent the wheel.

Many provinces are ahead of us and we look to those reports, the Early Years 3 and the update that was provided this year. Last year we were last; this year we are second to last. We know there are a lot of provinces in Canada that have a lot of legislation and regulations in this area that we can learn from.

To get more into the bill, Mr. Speaker – and I am just noting my time is ticking away here – really, what is going on here, rather than simply amend this act, we were told at the briefing that the minister's staff kindly provided to us the other day, we were told that rather than amending the current act, Legislative Counsel recommended that the best thing to do would be to just repeal the existing act and replace it with the one we have before us in the form of Bill 30.

The minister said it has been fifteen years since that previous piece of legislation was introduced. So this is the first major overhaul. There have been a series of amendments that have been made over time, over the course of that fifteen years because if there were not, the first thing you would say, Mr. Speaker, is well, what has the government been doing in the eleven or so years they have been in power? They have done a few minor things, as the minister will readily admit. They have not entirely ignored the legislation, but this is really meant to replace what was there before.

As you can imagine, when you are amending legislation in a piecemeal manner over a decade, really you end up with hodgepodge changes, languages are not consistent, and so on. Legislative Counsel is able to provide guidance in how to craft a bill and make sure the legislation reads consistently and so on and all the definitions are adhered to, there is no redundancy or duplication, which really complicates people's understanding of the legislation.

Prior to this, child care centres and family regulated child care homes were regulated and were compelled to operate in accordance with the Child Care Services Regulations 2005 and within the confines of the Child Care Services Act. I will not go into detail on that because it is a relatively comprehensive piece of legislation itself. The last amendment that was made to this was actually in 2005, so it has been almost ten years since we have seen any substantive changes to this.

In February, 2013, as the minister pointed out, this government introduced a 10-Year Child Care Strategy they called Caring For Our Future, a provincial strategy for quality, sufficient, and affordable child care in Newfoundland and

Labrador. I have often remarked that is in some ways like a grandchild care plan because so many children will age out of the system and will not qualify for what this government intends to have in place after the full ten years is through.

For example, my son was born in May of 2011; he is three and a half now. You imagine that you add another nine years on top of that; by the time we get to the end of the road on this he will not qualify for many of the things that the minister has indicated.

The review of the act, we understand, was done in consultation with experts in the field. I think the minister said they consulted the academic research. I did not hear the minister say whether or not they had actually gone to the Pratt Foundation and asked them to review the legislation. I am not certain that the experts we have at Memorial University of Newfoundland and also those who are experts in the area of early childhood education at the College of the North Atlantic – because we do have quite a good child care facility here in the city that is affiliated with the College of the North Atlantic and also one at a Corner Brook campus of the College of the North Atlantic.

We have significant programs, expertise, human resources, and people with the know-how in the area of early learning and care that provide those programs and services and also are training the next generation of early childhood educators. I was not entirely certain of whether all of those folks had been consulted, although there was some indication that there were a number of rounds of consultations that had been carried out so far.

I do understand, although the minister might want to clarify this at some point as well, that the old act, the old piece of legislation, that would be the Child Care Services Act, is going to remain in force until the new piece of legislation comes fully into force.

One of the things I think that has been done – again, as I said yesterday and a number of other days, I am certainly the first one to compliment government and to point out when things are done right. As the Premier said in Question Period today and the minister also said when she

was up giving her speech, one of the things the government has done quite recently is moved child care in with early learning in the Department of Education to form the new Department of Education and Early Childhood Development of which the minister is responsible and, of course, that is an extremely important move.

That is something the Atkinson Foundation, the Jimmy Pratt Foundation, experts in early learning and care in Newfoundland and Labrador and all across the country have been calling for for some time. Now, it was not exactly the hardest thing in the world to do; it was probably one of the easiest things you could have done in that metrics.

It was interesting, one day I was preparing to come down to ask the minister a question in Question Period and I noted that the child care business of government, if you will, I believe is still under the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services Web site. Then I panicked. I actually had to call the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development's department and confirm that the child care stuff is still under the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services Web site and that I was not wrong. I was going to suggest to the Member for St. Barbe, who is the critic for Child, Youth and Family Services, that he had his facts wrong and he was going to ask that question in Question Period, but it did not turn out that way in any case. I digress frequently, Mr. Speaker.

That was a good move. We all applauded that. We all asked for that. As I said in debate before, I do not think anybody would disagree with that.

In June 2013, there were a number of focus groups held by government on a regional basis. There was a discussion guide put on the Web site by government about this, to ask people what they thought. That is an important public engagement process that was undertaken. There were additional regional roundtables or focus groups held as well. There was also an attempt made to reach out to parents, which is extremely important.

One day, I went down to take my own child to child care – I drop my son off every morning – and I was invited to participate in one of those

roundtables myself. I did not, but I did have the opportunity and I was pleased to see that everybody at my son's child care centre was invited to participate in that because it is really important. Parents have things that they want to raise, all sorts of issues.

I had a constituent approach me recently for clarification around a number of different issues she is facing with a home-based child care centre in my district, located in Kenmount Terrace. That is a subdivision off Kenmount Road.

We had to go to the minister's office to try to get clarification on some of those issues; they range from ratios to qualifications and substitutes and all those sort of things that will happen when we are dealing with early childhood educators. Because in a lot of instances early childhood educators are women – it is a female-dominated field – a lot of people having their own children themselves and need to take time away from providing child care and have a substitute come in then when those sorts of things happen. So, it is extremely complicated and that is why we need solid legislation and decent, comprehensive legislation to cover a lot of these things.

We are told that the legislation we have before us today in the form of Bill 30 is intended to modernize and strengthen the legislation. It is also intended to streamline policies and processes.

The minister talked about there being a limitation previously on a licence. So, previously a licence would cover sixty children. That did not mean the child care centre was limited to sixty children because when they met that, they would merely issue another licence. In some cases, one child care would have to apply for multiple licences. I am not really sure, but that sounds like multiple fees to me. I am not sure if those were waived or what happened, but it just creates more red tape, more bureaucracy, and makes it more difficult for child care operators to do the important work they have to do. As I alluded to earlier, there is so much going on in early learning and care that we do not need those sorts of obstacles.

That is a good thing to eliminate that and to ensure that these things are dealt with

differently. It was interesting when I spoke to the media about this, this morning, after the minister's press conference. They asked if this would mean that we sort of would have these monstrosities of child care centres with hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of students and so on. I have not heard about anyone planning that and I am not sure that would be manageable in any case, but that was one of the concerns that was raised there. I do not really see the situation with this legislation being a whole lot different than what was in place previously and I really do not see those concerns.

We do hear occasionally concerns about international, multinational companies that provide child care encroaching onto the Canadian scene – Australia, in particular, but I have not heard a whole lot about that in recent times.

The new piece of legislation is also intended to improve transparency in the area of child care services – and I just want to make sure I have not lost my bill here – when it comes to agencies, licensing, and so on, and also to improve flexibility for providers and those who provide early learning, child care programs, and services.

There are a number of new changes that have been included. Again, as I suggested earlier, if this is representative of the heavy legislative agenda that government has this fall, then the House of Assembly is probably not going to have lights on for a whole lot longer. There is not a whole lot really to these changes. They are rather modest I would say.

One of these changes is the proposed exemption to licensing. The department wants to clarify, as I suggested, the style and wording throughout the act and make sure there is no ambiguity in the legislation. A lot of what is in here, just going and looking at some of the other provinces, has been taken from other jurisdictions, from other Canadian provinces or territories. Those jurisdictions have clauses that are similar to the ones that are proposed here. It is intended also to provide some clarity for the public and for groups that are seeking exemptions. Those are exemptions for recreational programs and for children who are full-time school-aged students.

The act speaks primarily to child care services and providers. It does not refer to those who are not licensed now like daycare camps and KinderStart programs. It is not for tutoring or sports for kids who are in school full time. There are a number of programs children participate in that are sports oriented and activity oriented that you might enrol your child in and they can take part in on a Saturday or a Sunday. Even if they are not school-aged children, my understanding is that this legislation also would not apply to those activity programs that children would participate in at the cost of parents.

Unregulated child care is not being changed. There is no impact on unregulated child care. Anything that exists in the way of unregulated child care is staying the same. There is nothing here that is going to impact that.

The second area that the legislation proposes to change is this whole issue of capacity. I will not go into that in significant detail, because I have also sort of addressed it. The current act does not allow for a whole lot of flexibility for licensing in determining the scope of the services of child care providers. For example, if they wanted to care for infants and have different mixes of children in their care in their centres and so on, the provision of child care, as members well know, at least when it comes to early childhood educators, providers of child care, is based on ratio.

There is a certain number of ECEs who have to be present for a child from such and such an age to such and such an age. That will be different based on how old the children are. That can create a quandary. It can create confusion if that is not explicitly laid out, if the legislation is not sufficiently flexible to accommodate different sorts.

What we want to do is not to overly restrict the child care environment. We want to ensure that we have a variety of different child care providers, operators, and different programs so parents will have a lot of different programs to choose from. Hopefully they can afford them, because as I said earlier, we have a long ways to go when it comes to funding.

It was noted in the briefing that was provided by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development that there are a number of licensees who have had one building but hold more than one licence. As the minister referenced, the child care centre over on Mundy Pond Road had, I believe it was, three licences.

None of these factors are recommended to change. Group size, the space per child, homeroom group sizes, the qualifications of early childhood educators, the extent and needed space for indoor and outdoor spaces – none of that, we are told, is going to be impacted adversely or is going to be changed by this legislation. We are not improving that in any way, so I guess what we have at the moment is deemed to be sufficient when it comes to indoor and outdoor recreation space. It is also important to note that when the staff in the department looked at all of this, it was found that most jurisdictions do not have a capacity assigned to particular licences so, again, this is best practices as per what is going on in other Canadian provinces and territories.

There is also a new appeals process that is included in here. This component of the act that will be enforced will ensure that there is an appeal process to enable any licensee to appeal the revoking of a licence that they hold, the denial of a licence that they hold, or a suspension of a licence that they hold to provide child care programs.

There are parameters and there are responsibilities, if you will, on both sides of the coin. That will be ensured through the appeal process and through the licensing process. We understand as well that is also consistent and mirrored by comparable legislation that we find in other provinces and territories in Canada.

The next change the minister discussed will ensure for smoother running of this area of government's business. This deals with the appointment of the provincial director. This must be an artifact of days gone by, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker. The Lieutenant Governor in Council currently appoints the provincial director. That will no longer be the case now. In the new act, the minister will be the person who appoints the provincial director to that role. It just streamlines the process a bit more. We

understand that is also consistent with other legislation in other provinces and territories.

The appointment of inspectors; that is another change in the act we will see, assuming we pass Bill 30. That is a change, but it is also a rather minor change, and not really any significant ground being broken there. Child care facilities inspections are, as I understand, conducted once a month. Sometimes the visit is announced and other times the visit is unannounced.

If we want to provide for all those things I talked about upfront – a decent learning environment where we can have development and assurances of health and well-being, and safety and security for children – then the whole process of inspection, having inspectors show up either for announced visits, for example, a tour of the facility that is planned, or showing up unannounced to do a spot check to ensure that all the regulations are being held to, are being followed, that is another useful thing to do.

The previous legislation did not state that the manager is not an inspector. Now it is going to state that the inspector, the person who does the inspecting, is a different person altogether. That is consistent with a lot of the things that are going on in other jurisdictions across Canada.

There is no requirement, interestingly enough, in this act for a statutory review. For people following along at home, that statutory review is a review of the legislation that we are going to be passing that is required as a result of a clause in the particular piece of legislation. If I go to, normally at the back – is it just my luck that it is not at the back? Either way, there is a requirement for a statutory review.

There is no requirement in the current act for a statutory review. As I was saying, the last amendment was made in 2005. This one will have a statutory review clause. It is important, if we are going to have a statutory review of this in five years that we actually do something with it.

The workers' compensation act has a statutory review clause, as I understand. There was a statutory review that was carried out for that. After the statutory review, government produced a series of recommendations and none of that has been followed up on. You get all sorts of

questions about the workers' compensation system and all that, and we have had a statutory review in the last year, but unfortunately the things that were recommended as a result of it have not been followed through on. We want to make sure if we have a statutory review of this piece of legislation that it is actually followed through on.

I do not know. The other thing about it is that things happen rather quickly in the area of early learning and child care. As I pointed out before, there have been massive changes when it comes to our understanding of early child development in recent years. So maybe it would make sense to have a statutory review that is not five years; maybe have it every three years. Do it more frequently so we can keep up with the times, because as we know it has been a significant period of time, almost ten years, since we have had any sort of amendment to this as well.

There are also some important questions around here about how this legislation relates to the Province's 10-Year Child Care Strategy. There were a number of different promises made that is part of the strategy. The minister outlined some of it. I have a letter here on my desk from the previous minister saying the registry, the minister referenced this part of their plan, that this registry – I just want to try and locate it here, because one of the problems as it relates to accessibility is actually being able to know where spaces are.

In Budget 2013, there was \$20,000 that was allocated to develop and maintain a centralized child care registry that would assist in determining and addressing the ongoing and future need for child care throughout the Province.

I have a letter from the Minister of Education dated June 2014 that says the department's centralized child care registry is in the final stages of development and in partnership with the Office of the Chief Information Officer. I believe that comes under the Minister of Health's portfolio. It is anticipated that the registry will be launched this summer; that is last summer now.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** What?

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes. Well, we are almost into December now. We are well out of the summer. Anybody who is over working on the by-election in Humber East, I was over there –

**MR. SPEAKER:** I want to remind the hon. member we are discussing child care.

**MR. KIRBY:** Yes. We know it is getting colder so it is not summer anymore, Mr. Speaker. That is one thing, and I know the minister said in her press conference that it was going to be coming before Christmas. Hopefully, we do not have to wait until Santa comes to see the registry.

Now, there is another –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Santa already came.

**MR. KIRBY:** Santa already came. I think the member is wrong about that. The minister is quite mistaken.

There is another important aspect of this 10-Year Child Care Strategy that the minister actually did not even mention this morning, and that is the review of the inclusion support program. We have the inclusion support program to ensure that children with special education needs are able to access early learning and care.

If I go back to the Atkinson Foundation Report that the minister referenced, one of the metrics in here, as I said earlier, around access, says that you score a point if funding is conditional on including children with special education needs. Well, that is not accomplished through this piece of legislation, nor has the minister mentioned when we are going to see the results of the review of the inclusion support program.

I have heard all sorts of complaints from operators and providers of early learning and care about accessing funding through the inclusion supports program. It says here in the letter from the minister dated June 12, 2014 that our review of the inclusion supports program is in progress and will be completed this year. So that is sort of after Santa Claus, but very shortly after. We need to see this before the end of the year. It is only a couple of more weeks that we will be in the House of Assembly. It is a vital

piece of the ten-year plan, and it is a vital piece of the provision of child care in Canada and in the Province.

There is one final thing I wanted to mention as well, as the minister did not raise this. I just want to make sure we put it on here, because when the Atkinson Foundation released that report recently, they talked a lot about accountability. Now, this legislation is supposed to improve transparency, and include accountability in some ways when it comes to licensing and inspections and those sorts of things, but we need to have more accountability for money spent.

We cannot continue just to talk about, as the minister did, these investments, and this many millions of dollars and so on, without really having some sort of publicly transparent reporting in the Province. We need to make sure there is transparent reporting to the public for all of the investments and all of the results of our investments in early learning and child care programs.

This could be in this bill. This could really be in this bill, or an aspect of that could be in this bill, whereby progress is monitored. Any progress we make from investments in early learning and care are monitored and then provided transparently to the public through an annual reporting process. It is an essential component of any program. This legislation deals with probably one of the most important programs that government offers.

When I spoke in Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne yesterday, I spoke at length. I am not going to go back over all those things again, but I believe I spoke for twenty minutes. I say to the Minister for Child, Youth and Family Services, mostly I spoke about the importance of the provision of early learning and care and all of the benefits that we accrue as a society, as a Province, whether it is social or economic benefits that come from investments in early learning and care.

We have to make sure it is monitored and there is regular reporting as a result. The decisions regarding everything from administration, the very things that are dealt with in this piece of legislation, all of those things relates to

monitoring, compliance, licensing, inspections, all of those decisions that relate to those particular aspects of administration, everything from that to what the minister spoke about in terms of resource allocation, all those things from administration to resource allocation, right to goal achievement.

We are passing this legislation for a reason. Government has a 10-Year Child Care Strategy for a reason. At the end of the road, where is it we want to be? Over the course of the ten years, there should be annual monitoring to make sure that we are getting the outputs that government intended when this was conceived of in the beginning.

Information can come from multiple sources of data. It is unfortunate that really is not part of the legislation or any of the enforcement or regulation as it relates to child care services because there are all sorts of proven areas, proven data, that can be pooled together to better identify what children's needs are, whether they are being met or to what extent they are being met.

One of these is the Early Development Instrument, which is something people would know a lot about in the child care industry. It is a standardized population-level research tool that provides a snapshot, a snapshot in time of overall student performance. It supports the identification of at-risk children. Remember yesterday I was talking about those children who are at the margins, most at risk, in the most challenging circumstances, low socioeconomic status, difficult family situations, et cetera; it supports those children. It looks at outcomes in one or more domains. It looks at their physical health. It looks at their well-being in terms of physical health. It looks at language development.

We have learned much over the years now about the language acquisition that goes on in early childhood development and also in the cognitive domain, cognitive development. We know a lot more about that and EDI would access that and we would be able to stack that data up year after year, in the first year of your plan, the second year of your plan, all the way up to the ten-year plan. You would see at the end whether or not you are making gains.

I think you probably would be. I think we would. I think we would see a return, but the thing is we are missing out on an opportunity. I say to the members opposite, I say to the government, I say to the minister: you are missing out on an opportunity to show this because you could easily do this. You could bring it in with this piece of legislation, with revised regulations and you would get a one in your chart here, you would get a one in the Atkinson Foundation report. That would be good. It would improve our standing. You would move up probably maybe to fourth place in Canada next year and we could see the result of our investments.

All this data is really needed to contextualize all the programming that we are offering and to make sure we have the right resources that we need, to make sure the qualifications that we are requiring of early childhood educators, make sure all of those licensing requirements we are including here, all of the things that are in the associated regulations are going the distance that we need it to go to achieve the outcomes that we want to see from millions and millions of dollars of public investment. We want to make sure those meet local needs because there are differences in local needs across the Province. They are not that different but they are different.

We have much more need for larger centres here on the Northeast Avalon than we do, say, on the North Coast of Labrador. The needs are different so the nature of the centres will be different.

There are a variety of things that can be done in terms of accountability. You could also, in addition to this particular data – and I have a lot more here I could say about that, but I will leave that there. You could use social economic data, income data, family education data, levels of parental educational obtainment, and data around gender. There is a vast amount of data that you can get. You can harvest from just looking at people's postal codes because all of that information is kept by Statistics Canada; you can go back and judge just from which neighbourhoods children come from, the extent to which they are achieving or not, and compare their outcomes to others, all those sorts of demographic data, and then you can take all of

that information and compare it to all of the program data.

What are different child care centres doing across Newfoundland and Labrador? We have heard anecdotally that the quality of child care in some centres is superior to others, but we only know that anecdotally in a lot of instances. For example, we know – and I think it is okay to say it here – that the quality of the child care provided at the Confederation Building child care centre is one of the best in the Province. We know that.

Why do we know that? It is a very good question because we know it is the case. We hear it so much. There is a long, lengthy wait-list to get in there, but that is probably one of the few metrics we really have to judge the quality. I think that is a poor judge of quality when we have all these other sources of data that we could access to judge inputs into child care.

To go on to some of the more technical aspects of the bill, Mr. Speaker, if I could just for a little bit longer. I know I am running out of time very quickly here.

**MR. JOYCE:** They will give you leave.

**MR. KIRBY:** Maybe I will get leave, the Member for Bay of Islands says.

One of the things that was raised – I will start with the definition section. Maybe we can speed things up so I can raise these now. One of the things is the definition.

If you look here in the legislation, we have a variety of different definitions around a parent and guardian and so on. I guess really the question is whether or not those definitions are harmonized across the legislation that government has in force now as it relates to children, definitions of parent, guardian, foster parent, and so on and so forth. If this has not been compared to the other legislation, those sorts of confusions will continue to exist.

Another question really boils down to the appeals process that the minister was talking about. This would certainly be a positive aspect of the legislation, a positive change. There are a number of questions that arise. For example,

will the act include details of how this appeals process will work? There are not a whole lot of details here. People will be interested to know what sorts of time frames are involved.

The legislation talks about suspensions, but it does not give a whole lot of detail with respect to time limits to make the decision. It says in Clause 25.(1) “A licensee who receives a violation order may request a review of the violation order.” It goes on to say that it shall be in writing and it shall be made to the minister within thirty days from the date the licensee receives the violation order. So, that is fairly straightforward.

Then it says, “A review shall be performed within 60 days of the receipt of the written request and a written decision including reasons shall be sent by regular mail to the person who requested the review within 5 business days of being decided.” Now, what is the length of time? It is not entirely clear then that they have to decide.

**MS SULLIVAN:** (Inaudible) sixty days.

**MR. KIRBY:** They have the maximum time, so maybe it should say that. I raise that because again as we said earlier about the workers’ compensation legislation there are a number of days laid out in that too. That was in the news recently about the number of days that the workers’ compensation review division has to make decisions about appeals and that can go on for far, far more time. So even when it is written in the legislation as it relates to workers’ compensation, it goes on anyways.

People can be hung on and on and on, waiting and waiting and waiting for an appeal. There was one appeals commissioner had nineteen or something racked up and never ever made a decision. They made that person Minister of Justice, Mr. Speaker.

I think there are a lot of questions around timing in this because you can put it in there. I think if it is not explicit enough, if we do not have assurances that it is going to be adhered to, it is not worth the paper it is written on. I think that is extremely important to point out as well.

**MR. SPEAKER (Cross):** Order, please!



I would like to remind the member to bring it back.

**MR. KIRBY:** I will not go on a whole lot longer here. I just had a few other things I wanted to highlight. When it comes to the number of spaces – and again, the registry that the minister has promised on a number of occasions and her predecessor minister, in fact, wrote that in a letter to me earlier the year. Actually it was not to me, it was for the Member for Burgeo – La Poile; but the registry would really make clear, make much more transparent. If really the agenda here is to make this process more transparent, getting this registry done would go a far distance to achieving that.

We know that as of June of this year there were 7,800 regulated child care spaces in Newfoundland and Labrador, but we know that the shortage is acute. How do we know that? Because when you were scored, earlier last month, you got a zero in access. So there is an acute shortage of child care spaces, regulated child care spaces, in the Province.

The government has claimed on occasion that it has increased the number of regulated spaces by 70 per cent, but who really is to say because we do not have the data to provide that. You do not have a monitoring compliance system that backs any of that up. If you did, then we could say yes, we could look at it, we could read it, you would put it out every year. We would say okay, absolutely you do. We would have the registry. We would have it up online. We would be able to see some of that data stack up, but the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives was down here earlier this year and could not even figure out how much it was for toddler care. You could not even figure out how much it was for toddler care, how much it costs in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I think somebody said today that they did not know what they were talking about. They showed that in the City of St. John's, of all the cities in Canada, we have the second-highest infant child care fees in all the country. So they could find that but they could not find out – it is like those reports with the OECD internationally. That is an international embarrassment because all the data is showing

as an X because we do not know what the numbers are; we cannot show what they are.

I say to the minister, you cannot go and call around, as it has been suggested somehow, to a few centres and try to figure out what it is from that because it is not really that uniform. The fees vary. We have some not-for-profit, some for-profit. There is a whole mix out there of child care providers and we cannot really assess.

So, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which is a national research outfit, they have some reputation, and they could not come to any conclusion on what it was. Part of that is we do not have sufficient monitoring compliance system. We do not know what the average fees are. We do not know how many seats we really have and so on and so forth.

We do know that there are 63,800 children in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador aged up to twelve, and of these 39,600 have working mothers. That is a significant number of those who have working mothers, but that also means that only about 18 per cent, the data shows, of the demand is actually being met. That is below the 20 per cent nationally.

There are a variety of other issues. If I had another hour to speak, I could go on about a variety of other issues. When it comes to early childhood educators, they will be the first to tell you they are the lowest paid in the country. There are things we want to achieve associated with, for example, how their salaries relate to that of teachers, of Kindergarten teachers. There is a whole lot we want to achieve in that way. We want to ensure that eventually we have a system that truly does meet the need of working families in the Province.

I think I will leave it at that, but it has been a pleasure for me to address a variety of different aspects of Bill 30. Again, it is needed legislation; there is no question about that. No one would argue that it is doing any harm, but these are modest changes that really resemble housekeeping.

I would not say, as the minister over there said the other day, much ado about nothing – it is not that bad, but there is not a whole lot there.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. KIRBY:** If this is your legislative agenda, there is not a whole lot to it.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I remind the hon. member that his time is expired.

**MR. KIRBY:** Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. A. PARSONS:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker, if I may.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, on a point of order.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I waited until now because I wanted to receive the official copy of Hansard from yesterday's proceedings, but now that I have it in my possession, I felt that the most expedient time to bring this up, and this is in relation to comments uttered yesterday in the House by the Member for Fortune Bay – La Hune, which I believe were unparliamentary in nature.

Again, what we have here were the comments, and I can read them directly here. It was during yesterday's Address in Reply. The member said, "I, for one, when I place my vote in this House of Assembly and when I have my discussions with my colleagues about what the priorities would be in the Budget, it will be about the people and what the people need most, Mr. Speaker. It certainly will not be asking for, my first priority for the Budget – and another thing I was appalled to hear in listening to the news coverage shortly after the CBS election, we will not be buying red Helly Hansen rain gear for members of the Liberal Opposition Party. To hear that asked for in the Budget, I could not believe it, and I thought, wow, where has the Green Report gone? Are there people reading the Green Report any more? The priorities of government are long past taking care of members..."

Now, Mr. Speaker, again, Standing Order 49 references offensive language, and there are plenty of rulings in the past, whether you are

looking at O'Brien and Bosc or looking at Montpetit, when it comes to making allegations or alluding to certain behaviour by members. I think we all know, and I do not need to go into explanation here, about what the Green report was about and why that was brought in.

Again, it had to do with some serious issues in this House of Assembly when it came to spending. That is why we found it quite offensive yesterday when the member made accusations that members of the Official Opposition would use public funds to buy things for people – and that is quite offensive, and not only that, it is untrue. Again, referencing the Green report, we found that quite offensive and unparliamentary. At this point what we would ask for is that the member withdraw the comments and apologize.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS PERRY:** I withdraw the comments, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

I have waited quite some time today to stand on my feet and speak to this particular piece of legislation we are discussing here today. It is odd that the Member for St. John's North said there were not many changes and it was not anything of much significance. He took an hour to explain it.

I remember as a child, David Suzuki on *The Nature of Things* explained all human civilization to me in an hour. Whatever the case, it was time well spent. Considering how long the Opposition spoke about roundabouts the other day, it is not surprising. It is good that the member is engaged. He says it is not significant and I would argue that. We reference the fact that it has not had huge modifications in the last number of years. That is true. There have been small changes made.

Child care has changed quite significantly in the last decade and a half and we are all very aware of that. As things change on the ground, we obviously have to react to that change. That is what we are here today to discuss.

I, for one, am very happy to be able to get up and speak to this legislation. I am particularly happy, not only us as government, but that MHAs are happy with it. AECENL has expressed their pleasure with it as well. It is one thing for us to be pleased with it and us to be happy with something we develop, but we did it in consultation with others. If you look at key stakeholders as I said, AECENL, they are very pleased as well so certainly that speaks volumes. Obviously it speaks to the importance of this and how well it was done.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, I am a little bit sad that I am not the minister introducing this today. As many of us know, this was legislation that was formerly under the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services. It is a great group of individuals who helped develop this and people who I had worked with for a number of weeks. It was not too long. I was sad to see them go, but their good work continues under the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

I think it was a great move by the Premier to consolidate those two pieces. There has always been an inherent disconnect, I think, when you look at early childhood education in the traditional school system, and the traditional K-12. It is nice now to have that all under one umbrella group, all in one room. I think some great work is going to happen there, as it has in the past. When you have all the players on the one team in the one room I think that will only benefit the process itself.

I will speak only a short time. For people at home wondering how this all works, the House of Assembly – because sometimes it can seem a little bit confusing. Even some days to me, Mr. Speaker, it is confusing. The fact is, in second reading the minister would have an hour to introduce, and then the first speaker on the opposite side would have an hour, an hour that the member took and I am glad he did. He went through quite a bit in that hour.

As a follow-up speaker I would have twenty minutes. I probably will not take my whole twenty minutes, but I will take a few moments to go through some of the changes. Maybe they are not significant changes. There are pieces I believe that are significant. Holistically, the whole piece – you have to look at this whole thing as a total package. There has been some great work done on it. These things cannot be done overnight.

It is reacting to ground changes, if you will, with regard to child care. It has changed. As I had said, more people are working than ever before in this Province. We have, obviously, a change in demographics and we have to respond to those changes. It is very important.

We wanted to strengthen and clarify, as has been said before, and streamline the process. That is always important. We wanted to improve transparency, particularly around the appeals process and statutory reviews. Both are very important, as the member had pointed out. We also wanted to improve flexibility, not only for parents who are looking for child care, but also for the operators as well. We have spoken at length here in this House over the last number of years with trying to encourage operators and we have had great success in the past. Through strengthening legislation I think we can have further benefits in the future.

In any process when you have consultation, it is always a great thing. I was pleased at the extensive consultation that went on during this process. We had good old fashioned face to face, which we always need. We had written submissions, and included in that were stakeholders as well as the general public. It was mentioned by the member opposite, with regard to CNA, he was not sure if they were part of the process. I can assure him they were invited to both rounds. The first round was by invitation only, and then the second round of consultation was open to the public for written submissions and whatnot. They certainly were part of that

As I had said before, you had key stakeholders. I bring up AECENL again and the great work being done by that organization. When they put their stamp of approval on this, I think that

speaks volumes. It is very important to recognize that.

Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to creating a child care system that provides quality, accessibility, and affordable regulated child care spaces. It is a three-pronged approach and the minister had spoken about the pillars. That is certainly how we look at it. All of those are equally as important because they all have to be good in order for it to work

As a parent I look at quality. I think all of us parents would say quality has to be the most important. Sufficiency has to play a role as well and you have to be able to afford it. There are all of those pieces. Are we where we need to be? We are absolutely not. I do not think anybody over on this side would say we have made all the changes necessary and we live in a utopia because we do not.

As a parent of young children I have already lived this with my child in daycare. I know the challenges that exist. I do not want to sugar-coat anything, but I think it is important to recognize where we are versus where we were. It is a very different place where we sit today.

When we speak to this legislation and the state of child care in this Province, I am proud of the changes that have happened previously through my department and now through the new Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. They are some great changes, but again, recognizing the fact there is a ways to go. This, Mr. Speaker, obviously is a piece of that.

I had spoken about September 30, 2014 when Premier Davis recognized that need to put these two entities in the same room, if you will. It was a great move. To tell you the truth, I did not really see it coming and it was one of those things I reflected on afterwards. I said, you know what, it really makes sense and hindsight is 20/20. You think, we probably should have done it before, but things are always evolving and you know hindsight is 20/20. I think the Premier in his wisdom made the right choice, and I think you are going to see the benefits come from it. I believe it is great because there was that inherent disconnect between Child, Youth and Family Services having the early

education, childhood education and education in the traditional sense.

In addition to bringing together units with similar educational responsibilities, it enables CYFS to enhance its focus. Our focus, as we all know, is child protection. While I was sad to see that group of individuals or that arm of the department moving over with education, it allows CYFS to really refocus on child protection. That is our mandate. It is so important and a very sensitive topic obviously. To allow our staff – and we have a great staff – to be able to focus on child protection, not to say that our focus was not with it, but now we can focus all of our energies. I just think it makes sense all the way around. It makes sense for Child, Youth and Family Services. It makes sense for the Department of Education. Again, a great move.

Children and their protection and safety are a key focus of our government, Mr. Speaker. In February 2013, our government officially launched a 10-Year Child Care Strategy. As we know, that is entitled Caring For Our Future: Provincial Strategy for Quality, Sufficient and Affordable Regulated Child Care in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is a great document. I encourage all members on both sides of the House, and the general public for that matter, to take a look at that document. It may be very enlightening.

It speaks to the three pillars and talking about those three pieces of quality, accessibility and affordability. Those are so very important. It is probably one of the first documents I read when coming into the department. I think everybody needs to take the opportunity, so we can have an informed discussion, to make sure you read that document. I think you would be very pleased with what you see within it.

Our government continues to strengthen regulated child care services throughout the Province with the introduction of new initiatives and improvements to existing programs and services under Caring For Our Future. Mr. Speaker, that includes a few things that I have noted here: announcing revisions to the Early Learning and Child Care Supplement in order to attract a great number of qualified individuals to work in regulated child care settings with

increases to the supplement for Level I or higher ECEs, and Level II or higher program operators. That was effective April 1, 2013. Again, we go back to the fact you have to have accessibility and you have to have the individuals who are working there to be able to provide the service, but you need the quality as well.

That is something else that has changed in this industry in the last decade, decade and a half, if you want to look at, is the level of professionalism amongst the child care staff, or the early childhood educators. I think that industry has completely transformed in the last number of years. It is great to see that level of professionalism there. Their heart was always in it, but now we have been able to bring up standards, and they are the ones who push it, Mr. Speaker. They want to be recognized as professionals because they are, and the services they provide are so vitally important to our children. So, it is important to note that as well.

We have revised the Early Childhood Education or the ECE, as we refer to it, post-secondary program standards. That certificate was available effective September 2012 at the College of the North Atlantic.

Mr. Speaker, we have also developed an ECE workplace training model to support upgrading the qualifications of early childhood educators working in regulated child care services. Again, I talk about bringing up the level of professionalism. I cannot say it enough, where they are today is so very different from where they were in the past, and I think it speaks volumes to the individuals they have working in that industry.

As of June 2012, we had 7,815 regulated child care spaces throughout our Province, which is almost a 70 per cent increase since 2003. Since the strategy started, over 1,000 spaces have been created – so, from 6,709 to 7,815. Again, huge leaps, and it is not easy to simply create a space. They just do not appear out of nowhere. A lot of planning and strategy has to go into that and the uptake from the private sector and public sector. A lot of work has to go into that. I think the fruits of our labour show in the numbers with that 70 per cent increase, which is fantastic.

I say, have we arrived where we need to be? No, we still have much work to do. That is why it is a ten-year strategy that we developed; it is not a one-year strategy. Issues do not arise one year. They arise over a time period. Certainly, to be able to address those changes you have to take a long-term approach, and that is what we have done.

Our government recognized the importance of supporting the health, safety, and well-being of our children and families. There is no doubt about that, and I am sure we all agree on both sides of the House.

Research over the past ten years has spoken to the importance of early years in terms of brain development and the lasting effects that early experiences have on children's later successes. I echo the remarks from the Member for St. John's North; he recognizes that as well. That is why it is great. You look at a number of initiatives that various departments have undertaken in the last number of months and years, and you look at the great work being done by family resource centres, the parent resource kits.

When I stand, I speak as the minister, but I also speak as a parent of two young children. So I have seen firsthand exactly those resources. I know when I am here in St. John's there are many times when my wife and children will be out to the family resource centres. I have seen the parent resource bags. They are fantastic resources. They are provided to all new parents. That is something we did not have in years past. I think it is a great initiative. I have seen it firsthand, and I commend the department for implementing that. They certainly are great.

We talk about full-day Kindergarten. I am happy to say my daughter will be in the inaugural class in 2016. She will be in the first class, which is fantastic. I do not know how I feel about it yet. I cannot even imagine her going for half a day, let alone a full day. Anyway, there have been such a number of things done for children in their earliest years.

I talked about the parent resource kits. You talk about the Power of Play. You talk about KinderStart. You talk about the family resource centres and the different programs and initiatives

they have and sponsor. Then you look at full-day Kindergarten. There has been so much done in this field. Again, I want to commend the department.

I will not take too much time, Mr. Speaker. I am just over thirteen minutes. I do not think I need to take an hour to talk about what the minister has already said, or regurgitate what the member opposite has said, but I think it is important to recognize the fact that we have made changes to the legislation. It has been a long time in the making.

The changes we have made were done in consultation with stakeholders, with parents, with the public. I think the feedback we are going to hear from these changes, as we have already heard a little bit about it from, as I had said, AECENL and others, that they are happy with this. I think when you can bring forward a piece of legislation and the stakeholders are happy, I think that is a good thing. That is a good place to start.

I suspect we will have a few more speakers on this, and that is good because it is nice to be able to debate it. It is an important subject matter.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to stand and speak to it. I look forward to hearing others comment.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Speaker, yesterday morning the Member for St. John's North and I were given a briefing on this bill. The briefing started at 11:30 a.m. It was scheduled from 11:30 until 12:00 o'clock. We were scheduled to have a thirty minute briefing the day before the bill was to be introduced. If it seems obvious to some of our viewers that we are not completely in support of all the clauses and paragraphs of the bill, then maybe viewers will understand that if the Opposition was given a briefing, which was no more than thirty minutes long and it was the day

before the bill was to be introduced in the House, even though we have been sitting here now, this is the second week, then maybe people will understand that this is how the government tries to push through legislation in a hurry.

There is no doubt that regulated child care is necessary. I am not disputing the intent of the bill. The intent of the bill is noteworthy, it is needed, and it is a potentially useful bill. I am not certain as yet, until the Opposition has fully digested it and we have debated back and forth as to whether it will be supported or not. However, I am more inclined to support it than not to support it, not because it is so great but because it is one small step. It is like a baby step for child care, if that does not sound too strange; the first baby step that this government has decided to take toward child care.

Child care is really important in a number of ways. Just by way of example, if you take even in the major centres, I would not even say the smaller communities because I do not think the smaller communities will have much need for this legislation. The type of child care centres that seem to be envisioned are for bigger communities, towns, and cities like St. John's.

Proper child care, reasonably priced, not the second highest in Canada, which was the cost of infant child care that we see in St. John's by the regional report. Reasonably priced, high-quality child care can mean that – if I am not running the risk of not being politically correct, I will assume that families who require child care may well be two-parent families, although they may equally be a one-parent family.

The cost of child care, when compared to the amount of income that somebody can earn, is quite prohibitive, unless the person is earning at a very high level. We know, and it has been forecast regularly, there is a significant labour shortage in our Province. We see the signs all the time. How would child care help that?

Mr. Speaker, it would mean the second person in the family could go to work and earn a second income, help support the economy, and generate more revenue, while at the same time providing employment for the person who took care of the child. That is as far reaching in some of the areas as the child care legislation should go. We

should have properly regulated high-quality child care.

One of the concerns I have and given that the minister who last spoke was the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services, I am sure that I may be forgiven if I express some –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. J. BENNETT:** – reservations about when you have a government that has a Child, Youth and Family Services department and they have managed to have more than thirty children die while in their care in the last five years, and they want to regulate somebody else taking care of the children. That seems to be a bit incongruous to me if they have fallen so far short of the mark in the children who have actually been in their care, and then not to even know that some of them had died is pretty dismal.

However, Mr. Speaker, the first concern I have with this bill is the date on the bill. I remember in the fall of 2011 when this government in this Legislature was elected and hearing from the government they would not bother to open the House that fall because there was no legislation worthwhile introducing. I am certain this legislation could have been introduced three years ago.

So, the date on this, which says November 20, 2014, realistically could have said November 20, 2011 and we would have benefitted from this legislation then for the past three years instead of waiting for the last three years, and now this government is in a situation where it seems they have to throw together whatever legislation they can find in order to justify what this supposedly new government – which really is an old government – is doing for the people.

We are faced with a series of bills. We have the roundabout bill, and we have this bill and that bill. Yesterday, it was the one on getting certificates, tax lien certificates. It seems like somebody in the planning stages of the government tried to figure out what can we introduce, a bill that may or may not be necessary, that would make us look good.

This is clearly a bill that, done properly, would make the government look good. However, in going through it and – in my case, it was only a twenty-five minute briefing because they did not start until five minutes after and our research assistant stayed behind and I would say benefitted, but I am not sure if she did benefit from much in the briefing. I took some notes in the first part of the briefing and the type of things that I was told in the notes that I took in the briefing said there is no defined appeal route in the current legislation. The appeal route in this legislation has got some real serious shortcomings.

Mr. Speaker, I am going start at the beginning of the bill and go clause by clause to point out some of the issues and concerns that I have. I realize that government, and particularly the minister, will not want to hear that because they do not like to listen to criticism, even though they surely earned lot of criticism.

In section two in the definitions they say that a parent means one of the following, it gives a list, and includes a foster parent as defined in the Children and Youth Care and Protection Act. Mr. Speaker, that is a good thing. It is a good thing to define a foster parent as a parent for the purpose of the act; but when you go further down and you look at relative, then it says a relative means a parent, sibling, niece or nephew of a parent. Now if a parent is a foster parent then I take it that they mean they want a grandparent to be considered a relative, and that is a good thing, but why should the parent of a foster parent be considered a relative?

Mr. Speaker, I do not see why the parent of a foster parent who may not have any connection with this family whatsoever should be considered a relative. That is what the legislation says. That is just one of the early shortcomings.

Now under Administration, under section four, it seems like the minister is attempting to delegate policy making to somebody else. It is my understanding and I think that people elect government so that government can establish policy, but what the minister wants to do with this act is to “appoint a person to be the Provincial Director of Child Care who shall be responsible for (a) establishing province-wide

policies and standards for child care services including licensing and facilities”.

Well, Mr. Speaker, shouldn't the department, shouldn't the minister and the deputy ministers, establish the policy and standards and then shouldn't the director actually apply the policies and standards? Is this government so given up on governing the Province that now they want to hire somebody who can do the policy making for them in a paid position as a provincial director? That seems to me to be a complete abdication of the obligation to govern and they have an obligation to govern, not just a right to govern; it is an obligation to govern.

They want to delegate Province-wide policies and standards. How can that be delegated? It cannot properly be delegated in my view, Mr. Speaker.

Further in second six, they say, “The minister shall appoint one or more inspectors who shall exercise the powers and perform the duties and functions that are conferred or imposed on them by this Act and the regulations.” It goes on to say, “Inspectors appointed under this Act shall have the qualifications and experience set out in the regulations.”

Mr. Speaker, when I asked the question about whether there would be specific inspectors, a specific inspector under this act, there may or may not be and it may be for applying the standards of this act. When I asked about a question such as what about health and safety – well, that would be to somebody else who would inspect the building and the premises for fire and other hazards. When I inquired about what about health standards and cleanliness, like any sort of a Department of Health inspection, I was told that would be the Department of Health that would do that. So, who is actually going to be doing the inspections on what basis?

So, when I pursued that line of questioning, and it is easy to see why I just simply gave up on being briefed before we had gone quite thirty minutes is because it was clear that the people who were sent by the minister only had a perfunctory interest in showing up. They were just basically passing time to be able to say that they had actually provided a briefing.

So, it is –

**MS SULLIVAN:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, on a point of order.

**MS SULLIVAN:** Mr. Speaker, the people who work in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development are very professional. They did not show up on a perfunctory basis; they were there to do whatever briefings were needed, and they would have stayed there until the end of the day had he had enough information to ask questions about.

**MR. SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

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

I heard the minister say earlier today that a manager shall not be appointed as an inspector under this act. I said: Well why not? Oh well, because of a potential conflict of interest. Well, I do not see why a manager would not be competent to be an inspector. If a manager is already qualified and competent to be an inspector and let us say the manager is on site with a junior employee, maybe showing the person around from the department and notices something, doesn't the manager have the ability to be able to call an inspection? The manager clearly should be qualified.

If, in fact, the minister had a legitimate concern – and a lot of this is just filler that they put into the legislation to try to get something to stick – about whether the manager was in a conflict or not, then simply say, well, if one manager is the inspector, they have already said they can have multiple managers under the act. The manager on site can do the inspection, simply pass it over to another manager and say I inspected this place, I do not think it is fit for the kids to be in, I think you better get over to do something about it. I am the witness, but I am the manager, I am also the inspector, so take it off my hands to do it. It would be very simple to work this out in the legislation or in the regulations, if in fact



they had paid much attention to what they were doing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, at this point I would like to move an amendment. I would like to propose an amendment to Bill 30 that in clause 33(1) that 5 be deleted and be replaced by 3.

That is, “The minister shall, every 5 years, conduct a review of this Act and the regulations and consider the areas which may be improved.”

Mr. Speaker, the amendment proposes to shorten this period of time from five years down to three years.

Mr. Speaker, I have a written copy.

**MR. SPEAKER:** We will take a brief recess to review what the member is suggesting.

### Recess

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The amendment has been considered and it is not in order.

I would like to remind members that we are debating the principle of the bill here in second reading and to come back to that at this point.

The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

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

Mr. Speaker, in any piece of legislation, definitions are really important. Every statute tends to contain its own definitions. You cannot transfer them from one to the other. When I look at agency – because this government is trying to set up agencies to be able to handle child care, which in my view makes very good sense, but agency is not properly defined.

If you looked in section 2 under the definitions, section 2(b) says, “‘agency’ means an agency referred to in subsection 9(2)”. Then if you go to section 9(2) it says, “An agency shall”. It does not say an agency is. It does not say what it is. It says an agency shall – what it is supposed to do. An agency shall approve affiliated child care; supervise affiliated child care; provide supports to affiliated child care;

appointment monitors to exercise powers. It does not say what the agency is. It just says what it does.

Mr. Speaker, to sort of bring the point home, it is almost like saying if you have something: well, what is this thing? This thing has four legs and fur. Well, it must be a dog. Well, no, it could be a cat. It could not be a horse – but if you get it. This does not say what the agency is; it says what the agency shall do. It is simply not an adequate definition to know the agency. We need to know exactly what it is.

Another shortcoming in the bill, and I think this one is quite staggering, in response to a question today the Premier referred to all of the – I think he may have said good work, because I think that is the word he likes to use – good work being done by non-profit agencies in child care. Then when I read section 13, it says, “A manager may refuse to issue, renew or vary a licence where”, and subsection 13(b) says, “the applicant is applying for an agency licence and the applicant is not a not-for-profit corporation or a corporation without share capital”.

Mr. Speaker, that seems to say that simply because the applicant is a not-for-profit corporation, a licence can be refused. To me, that seems to be inconsistent with what the Premier said earlier today. It seems to be inconsistent with the intent of the act, unless the act simply does not want non-profits to be involved in child care. It would make as much sense, or maybe in some people’s view, more sense that a non-profit organization should have every right to set up child care organizations. Why shouldn’t they?

The clause immediately before it, 13(1)(a), is equally as troubling. It says, “A manager may refuse to issue, renew or vary a licence where (a) the applicant is a person who is younger than 19 years old”. Isn’t that discriminatory? A person at eighteen years old is deemed to be an adult and able to vote.

Now, I know that one of the pieces of legislation our government has not gotten around to changing in the last eleven years is they have not lowered the age of majority from nineteen down to eighteen years. I know that because quite often nineteen year olds are looking for

employment. They are looking for employment in businesses that serve alcohol or sell tobacco products, and legally they cannot be hired at age eighteen, under the age of nineteen, where they are licensed to sell alcohol or tobacco products.

This was really brought home when I represented an eighteen year old some years ago who had won quite a substantial lottery. The company he had won the lottery from took the position that he was ineligible to accept the prize, even though the lotteries act and the age of majority say that anybody under the age of nineteen can have a trustee accept the prize for them.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Speaker has given the member quite a bit of latitude, and there will be an opportunity to debate the clause by clause aspects of this bill. In second reading we should be getting to the principle of the bill, the general principle of the bill, so I would like for the member to come to that.

**MR. J. BENNETT:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

In my view, to say that a person who is eighteen years of age, it is unlawful for them to have a child care licence, to me it is quite discriminatory. I do not think this section of this bill, if it turns into an act, would survive a charter challenge. I think an eighteen-year-old person could easily challenge this part of this bill and say, this is a violation of my rights. I am eighteen years old; why are you discriminating against me?

This government is pretending to be interested in young people throughout the Province, and they would put this in a piece of legislation as important as this. It shows either a disregard for young people, or they simply have not thought the legislation through.

Mr. Speaker, another section that is also problematic is, and this talks about reviews. Now granted, there is a right to review, which in this case means an appeal. It says, "A request for review under subsection (3)" – which is the earlier section in section 13 – "shall be in writing and made to the minister within 30 days

after the applicant receives the written reasons for refusal." That is good.

It says, "A review shall be performed within 60 days of the receipt of the written request and a written decision including reasons shall be sent by regular mail to the person who requested the review..." So why are we dragging this out? Why are we making it thirty days, sixty days, or five days?

Clearly, if a person feels they are infringed against under this piece of legislation, because now they were up and good to go or they were on a renewal. We know that child care spaces are in short supply in this Province and desperately needed. We are dragging out this process, so now this person who just got the clock stopped on them just lost at least ninety-five days. When there are people standing by saying we need a place to send our children, you have a problem with your licence.

Why wouldn't this be expedited? Why doesn't this show more consideration to how people work in the real world, and give people more realistic and shorter times if this is the intent of the legislation? I will have more to say in Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS PERRY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly a pleasure for me to rise in this hon. House today, Mr. Speaker, and discuss this very important piece of legislation. It is a very proactive piece of legislation, I would say to you. I think the minister has demonstrated exceptional leadership once again in bringing this bill forward to the House.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS PERRY:** The changes to this piece of legislation from the current act, as had been discussed, are going to accomplish four main

goals. This new legislation will modernize, strengthen, and clarify the current legislation. It has been fifteen years since the last full review of this legislation. Just as child care has changed and modernized over the last decade, so too does our provincial legislation need to grow.

The current Child Care Services Act was proclaimed in 1999. With the changes outlined today, the new bill has been restructured to reflect current knowledge in the child care field. By providing stronger and clearer definitions of a child care service and a child care provider, we are lessening the misinterpretation and providing consistence for licensees. The new legislation, Mr. Speaker, is going to streamline policies and processes, enhancing our overall efficiencies in this regard.

Policies are currently found throughout a number of standards and other documents. This legislation will bring all of these policies under the one umbrella. The changes in our legislation will support the consolidation and reorganization of this information for ease of use.

Mr. Speaker, this new legislation will also improve transparency and accountability, which is very, very important to our government. An appeals process is clearly outlined in the new legislation. It was not in the current act. This definition gives transparency to the process, and outlines obligations and expectations for both parties.

Currently, eight provinces and territories have an appeals process described in their legislation, including New Brunswick and PEI. Another change will improve the transparency and accountability of the inspection process. This new act requires that a manager is not to be appointed as an inspector for the reasons outlined by our minister.

Also, a mandatory five-year review of the legislation has been added, including a public consultation which will also improve accountability.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister outlined earlier, this legislation we are producing here today has been developed in consultation with all of the key stakeholders including the experts, the officials, and the parents. We are very confident in this legislation. We feel it is very important to

mandate that this legislation is reviewed every five years so we do not see ourselves in a situation where there is a long gap in between seeing how society changes are adapting to the legislative change.

The new legislation improves flexibility as well, Mr. Speaker, for service providers. By removing the capacity limit on the licence, we are allowing owners to be more flexible when determining the service they will provide, while ensuring quality service with requirements including ratios, group sizes, staff qualifications, and physical space requirements.

Mr. Speaker, I do know that daycare is becoming increasingly important as we see more and more women entering the workforce and we have more dual-income families. I, for one, am very confident that we have greatly strengthened the legislation here today in the House. I look forward to support from all members of this hon. House on these fantastic new improvements that we are outlining here today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER (Verge):** The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

I, too, am happy to get the opportunity to stand and to speak to Bill 30, the Child Care Services Act. I do not think there is anything more important that we could be discussing here in this House of Assembly than the issue of child care. It is something I have been looking forward to, something I have been anticipating, and wanting to be able to speak to.

It is rather interesting, we were presented with the act and we were told that this is a substantive act and a brand new act, modernizing the former one. In actual fact, it is a lot of paper. It is the act modernizing the former one, but very little of it is new, as was explained to us in the briefing we had yesterday.

I do thank the members of the department who briefed us yesterday. As they explained, most of

the bill was a restructuring of the old bill and modernizing of some parts of it, clarifications of some parts, and then outlined the things that were new. They have been outlined by the minister and by others.

I would like to point out that the key differences in this act from the existing legislation are all basically technical and bureaucratic. Those things need to be done. Let us not kid ourselves; yes, it facilitates child care happening, but the act itself does not have content around child care in it. The act, as I said, is basically technical and bureaucratic. Making sure there are clear definitions of what a child care service is and what is a child care provider is important. Those definitions are there and they are clear. Making sure one understands what a regulated child care licence is, and what constitutes a regulated child care licence is important, and that has been done.

You also have something in here that is not in the old act, and that is an appeals process for a licensing decision. That is important. If somebody has a licence removed and they think that it is an incorrect decision, obviously there should be an appeals process, but once again a technical, bureaucratic thing. It is important. I am not saying it is not important.

Then we have the fact that now instead of the Lieutenant Governor in Council appointing the Provincial Director of Child Care, the minister will appoint the Provincial Director of Child Care. I agree with that. It is a normal practice in the public service sector, and I do not know why it was not like that before. It is important, but once again it is a technical thing.

The number five point, which is new, is the fact that regional managers will now not be appointed as inspectors. They should not have been because a regional manager is at the heart of the delivery of the services. They are, in a way, where you would have a conflict of interest if regional managers are also acting as inspectors. I think it is very good.

As the minister pointed out in her notes – and I am using the minister's notes on this one – this will provide greater transparency in the inspection process. That is definitely true. I am really glad to see this happen. If you had

regional managers of the program also doing the inspection, I think transparency would be just about non-existent. I think it is an important change, but once again not a change that has to do with the content of child care delivery. It is technical and it is bureaucratic.

The sixth one is more than that and it is extremely important. That is the call for the statutory review that will be required every five years, and the fact that there has to be a public consultation as part of that statutory review. I think that is very important. I am glad to see it is in the new act. The act is important, but the act does not deal with the content of the actual child care program itself.

The minister talks about, and again I agree with it, the fact that in the new department that has been created – and I am delighted that we have the new Department of Education and Early Childhood Development – we now will have a complete continuum of learning from infancy to high school. I want to talk about that a bit, Mr. Speaker, because that certainly is something that we want to see, and that is that we have a continuum of learning from the time a child is born right through.

Up to now, we have had two very separate pieces. We have had our educational system under the Schools Act from K-12, and then we had everything that happened before that under the Child Care Act. This separation into those two places meant for a couple of things, Mr. Speaker. It meant for a break even in the way in which we saw the development of the child. The treatment of the child from infancy, say, to Kindergarten, just before going into Kindergarten, was a different reality than from Kindergarten on.

One of the concerns I want to express – and it is a concern I have heard from early childhood educators. I attended a meeting in Labrador some five or six weeks ago and this issue came up where the early childhood educators are delighted about the fact that the department has come together. They would be delighted, I am sure, if they heard the minister say yesterday or this morning, as she did, that this will allow for a complete continuum of learning from infancy to high school.

Their concern is will the new department recognize that what happens in the first five years, let's say, is just as important as what happens afterwards, yet it is different than what happens afterwards, so that the model that may be used in the educational system beginning in Kindergarten may not be the model for the development of the child prior to that. By that, I mean that the development of the child prior to going into Kindergarten is educational, but the model for that development is a totally different model. When one sits with early childhood educators and listens to them, one understands what could be the difference in the two places.

When I was there at the workshops that they held in Labrador, I remember saying to them the principles of the development of the child prior to five that they follow really should be the principles of the whole educational system. I think what they would like to see happen is that the educational system would become informed by the principles of early childhood development rather than the other way around.

I am not mocking our educational system. I have been part of that educational system, but very often as we get into the more structured educational process and the more structured classroom kind of situation it is possible to forget how important it is that the education centers on the child.

The early childhood educators are really looking forward to the new department and the fact that child care is now part of the educational system, looking forward to that really, really meaning that there is a continuum, and that there are changes along that continuum but that the whole flow is one.

What I am sorry about is that the Child Care Act, the Child Care Services Act, that we are discussing today does not have anything in it referring to that. One can say well, the purpose of it is to be exactly what it is, a technical document and a bureaucratic document, and one could say that the Schools Act is that as well.

I note if we go to the Schools Act, which should be related to this act since now both of these areas are under the one department, in the Schools Act care is taken – and we actually made these amendments not too long ago.

While we do not talk about what the curriculum is in the school system and we do not talk about the details of the content of what happens, care is taken in the Schools Act in recent amendments – I cannot remember if we made them last spring or the year before, but to put in, for example, when talking about the responsibility of students and what the responsibility is within school, there is in section 11 the statement that students should be concerned about creating a safe and caring learning environment. That is a really important statement. When you go to section 24 of the Schools Act it talks about principals and they have to promote a safe and caring learning environment, and they have to promote co-operation between school and communities that the school serves.

It is disappointing to me that this Child Care Services Act does not have some statements like that about what the responsibility of child care providers is with regard to the atmosphere that is created. We have it in the Schools Act; I am sorry that it is not in here. I think that putting the child care in the context of the values that we want to have in child care facilities and the values of the quality of the services that are provided is extremely important.

I did ask during the briefing about section 4 of the act where it says, “The minister shall appoint a person to be the Provincial Director of Child Care who shall be responsible for (a) establishing province-wide policies and standards for child care services including licensing and facilities”. I asked about that.

In (b) as well it says, “establishing province-wide policies and standard for persons involved in operating a child care service”. I asked: Does that include everything about the program itself? Does it include the content and the type of program that is being offered for the development of children in child care? The answer was yes, but I am sorry that in this section there was not something put in that got at that, just like in the Schools Act we have the statement about promoting a safe and caring learning environment. It would be a different kind of statement in here, but I think it would have been good to have something in here to give a sense of what we value in our child care, and it is missing. I see the minister nodding and

as an educator herself, I think she knows what I am talking about.

What we have is a technical document that does not seem to have a heart in it. The Schools Act, too, is pretty technical, but that piece in the Schools Act makes a difference. So I would ask the minister to consider that. It may be too late to get it changed, but maybe not, and maybe we can talk about that. Maybe something could go in by the time we get into Committee that could get a statement in there that would get a sense of what it is we value, what it is we want the development to be. What are the principles, what are the values on which it is going to be based? We probably have that. It is probably there in the quality statement that goes with the regulations, but is there something there that could go in the act as well to make the connection? I put that out to the minister to think about.

I cannot right now on my feet come up with that, but I think we have time to think about that and see if that could happen. Then it would sort of mirror or echo something that we did put in the Schools Act, which was an amendment that was added fairly recently actually in the Schools Act. So, from that perspective I ask the minister to consider that.

I have a couple of other points I do want to make, Mr. Speaker, before sitting down, but I want to get my notes carefully together here.

The government is making steps, there is no doubt about it. We are moving ahead slowly, very slowly with regard to our child care. I think that government needs to get more involved in consultations, especially with the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Newfoundland and Labrador. I know that government works closely with them; however, when I read the submission they made in consultations, and I read what they are talking about, I say, well, I do not think government has totally heard yet some of the things that they are saying. In the submission they made to government during consultations, they had a lot to say about licensing and what the minimum licensing should be.

They also had a lot to say about the issue of the professionalism, how we recognize the need for

the professionalism and the status of the early childhood educators. I think the challenge for government and for the minister is going to be that we have two different pieces of work now in one department with real conflicts. In the department now we have a department that deals with education, with teachers that have a very high standard.

I want to get my correct section here now. When we look at teachers in our school system, for example, let's look first at the annual salaries. According to this document which I have in my hand, the teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador, the average wage is \$67,000, whereas for early childhood educators it is \$29,785. The salary of an ECE, an early childhood educator, is 45 per cent that of teachers.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS MICHAEL:** Are we saying that a child, before entering Kindergarten, the development of that child and the qualifications that are needed for that child are less than the day the child goes into Kindergarten? This is a real issue.

I just came actually from having been at a gathering last night down at the Sheraton Hotel held by the Federation of Labour on child care. We had six specialists there presenting on child care last night at that workshop. This is one of the concerns they have.

Why is it that we have this box of K-12, and what happens before it is outside of the box? I think the challenge for the minister is going to be opening up that box, opening up the end at the beginning, and making sure that everything we say from K on is just as important as what happens before that.

Helping the early childhood educators, maybe, who are not beyond Level 2 to get beyond Level 2, and giving them what they need to be able to do that. Raising the salary of early childhood educators is not going to be enough to have this act and to have everything now under the department, unless we look at the fact that we have this terrible discrepancy between teachers

from Kindergarten on and early childhood educators.

What I am looking forward to, while we are making strides in this Province, we have a lot more to do than just put everything together under one ministry. The amount of work that has to be done is extensive. I am wondering if we will get to the point where we will not have a Child Care Act here and a Schools Act there, but we will have an act that brings everything together under one umbrella so that we even have an act that will reflect the continuum of learning and development that the minister talked about.

I put these ideas out, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to pursuing them further when we are in Committee. I look forward to maybe looking at that possibility of getting some kind of a statement about, what are the values and principles we want to have for child care?

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a wonderful opportunity to get up today and to, first of all, speak in support of Bill 30, An Act To Regulate Child Care Services. As well, I am very pleased to stand up and talk about this government's commitment to child care in this Province.

I have been around here, not as long as some people but pretty close to it. The person I am looking at is a lot grayer than I am. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, it is a – when we talk about children, and we have heard some horrendous stories in this House about what has happened to children in this Province. It is nice to come in to see a bill presented and all speakers, but one, who stood up today really spoke in support of this bill and were very respectful, I say to the minister.

**MR. J. BENNETT:** (Inaudible).

**MR. HEDDERSON:** No, I am not laughing, I say to the member from up on the Northern Peninsula, St. Barbe, because this is a very serious bill. One that after fifteen years, and certainly another Administration brought in the initial bill and it has worked. As we have all said, except for one, it is very important that we do restructure it, that we do bring it forward to the House so all can look at what has happened in the past and move forward. This bill fits the bill. It really does.

The minister clearly outlined today what it is all about. It is all about quality for the children of this Province, for their parents and guardians, for all of the people of this Province. Because the first thing we have to do in any jurisdiction, we have to make sure we take care of our children. There is nobody, I think, in this House who does not think that.

This bill is more than housekeeping, because it does set the tone certainly for the next five years until there is an automatic review. I doubt when they have that review that there will be much in the way of amendments because there have been significant changes in this Province in the last fifteen years. This bill will cater to that, and we will make sure that we are on the right road.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be respectful of the people who are going to carry out the intent of this bill. We have to have trust. We have to have faith. Now, you can send out inspectors, and some will say, well they will only go out and they will not do their job. How can anyone say that? They do not know who these inspectors are. They do not know who they are or where they came from and so on. To just get up in the House and say no, that is foolishness, that is not going to happen – inspectors. Then, talked about managers, and one manager will somehow connive with another manager and this sort of thing. That has no place in this House; that is speculation. You think someone who is in a court of law would be able to distinguish between speculation and fact.

There are people out there listening who have the care of their children in their hands. How would you think they would feel today of I got up and said you do not know how to do your job and I do not trust you to do your job? This bill clearly outlines – because it is all about quality –

the space, the numbers, to make sure that it is safe.

Then, to talk about officials from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, to talk about them as if they do not know what they are talking about. The work that has gone into this bill, many of us in this House would never know. I tell you from my experience of sixteen years dealing with the public servants of this Province, I have trust in the people who brought forth this bill.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HEDDERSON:** I will stand on my feet, Mr. Speaker, and I will defend them to the utmost, and anyone, and anyone, and anyone –

**MR. J. BENNETT:** (Inaudible).

**MR. HEDDERSON:** Again, the Member for St. Barbe cannot even bite his tongue for ten seconds – because you do not see it. I say to the Member for St. Barbe: You have a history of this.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I ask the member to direct his comments to the Chair.

**MR. HEDDERSON:** Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. Barbe has a history of this. We know, because we dealt with it here in this House. What I am saying is that we –

**MR. J. BENNETT:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member for St. Barbe, on a point of order.

**MR. J. BENNETT:** Could the member from tick tock clarify his comments please, Mr. Speaker? The member from – I forget where his district is now, somewhere out around the bay. I would ask him to clarify what he just said.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main, to continue.

**MR. HEDDERSON:** Mr. Speaker, I hate to leave anything hanging but with the lateness of the hour, I would ask for adjournment of debate and let me get another chance perhaps to come back at another time. As the clock is counting down, I ask for an adjournment.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Does the member want to make a motion and name a seconder?

**MR. HEDDERSON:** I move that we adjourn debate, seconded by the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It has been moved and seconded that debate now be adjourned.

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, debate adjourned.

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

**MR. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, that the House do now adjourn.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It has been moved and seconded that this House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

The House stands adjourned until 2:00 o’clock tomorrow, Wednesday, Private Members’ Day.



On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 2:00 p.m.