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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.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have members' statements from the Member for the District of Exploits; the Member for the District of Harbour Main; the Member for the District of Conception Bay South; the Member for the District of Baie Verte – Springdale; the Member for the District of Bay of Islands; and the Member for the District of St. John's North.

The hon. the Member for the District of Exploits.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on November 2, 2014 Natasha Penney completed a twenty-year educational journey with a Political Science Degree from Mount Allison University; however, this was no ordinary journey.

Natasha was two weeks of age when she was diagnosed with congenital kidney disease. Born in Bishop's Falls, she first enrolled at Mount Allison's Applied Human Nutrition Program in 1994. Less than two months into the degree she had to leave to undergo her second kidney transplant – her first lasted six years, and the donor had been her father.

Mr. Speaker, with much support from her family, Natasha enrolled again at Mount Allison in 2008 in Political Studies, while still undergoing dialysis treatment. However, her studies were interrupted by four more operations in 2010-2012, and again in 2013 she underwent her third kidney transplant. It took eight weeks for the kidney to work and more surgery to correct a complication, but she never felt she had to discontinue her studies.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating a woman with tenacity and determination, on completing an

unwavering twenty-year educational journey, Natasha Penney.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate two siblings, Captain Ashley Robyn FitzPatrick and Master Corporal Jamie FitzPatrick of a community in the District of Harbour Main, Roaches Line. Both these siblings received military commendations for their services, dubbed "beyond the demands of normal duty".

While deployed to Italy in support of NATO operations in Libya, then Lieutenant FitzPatrick witnessed a civilian fall from a work vehicle. After rushing to his aid in the middle of a four-lane highway, she realized he was not breathing and had no pulse. She directed a bystander to call emergency services and began performing CPR until the paramedics arrived. Lieutenant FitzPatrick's selfless and decisive actions contributed to saving that person's life.

Her brother, Master Corporal Jamie Fitzpatrick's contributions were in another part of the world, and his contributions led to the successful implementation of Tactical Common Data Links network and Remote Optically Viewed Enhanced Receiver system in support of the G8 and G20 summits, and again his contribution have led to greater security for all involved in those events.

As a side note, Mr. Speaker, both are the children of Tom and Dale Russell Fitzpatrick of Roaches Line and great-grandchildren, I might add, of our first former Premier Joseph R. Smallwood.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Captain Ashley Robyn FitzPatrick and her brother Master Corporal

Jamie FitzPatrick on receiving these very distinguished military commendations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HILLIER: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Royal Canadian Legion Branch 50, Kelligrews. This marks the forty-third anniversary of the branch and I am pleased to say that in attendance at the recent anniversary dinner were three of the founders: Mr. Gerald Greenslade, Mr. Gerry Kelly, and Ms Ida Leonard.

During the evening the branch dedicated a new Veteran's Centre. With pictures, memorabilia, and comfortable furniture this room is designed as a quiet area for veterans.

Kristyn Chaffey, a student at Queen Elizabeth High School, was the guest speaker. She talked about her visit to Beaumont Hamel and her feelings about how veterans are currently being treated in Canada. She also told us that she had left the National War Memorial just moments before Corporal Nathan Cirillo had been shot. She would have been one of the last people to have seen him alive, in uniform, standing guard.

Branch President Robert Hillier presented executive pins, anniversary pins, and certificates of appreciation. The branch made a presentation of a cheque to the Special Olympics.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this hon. House to please join with me in recognizing the work of Royal Canadian Legion Branch 50, Kelligrews.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was a milestone for the Baie Verte Volunteer Fire Department. On Saturday, November 8, they celebrated their fiftieth anniversary.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the dedicated firefighters and the Town of Baie Verte for their unselfish volunteer years of service, not only to their community but to the entire region.

The Minister of Justice and Public Safety brought greetings, along with Provincial Fire Chief Vince MacKenzie.

Numerous certificates were presented, along with the 2014 firefighter of the year, which was captured by Craig Furey. Fire Chief Lorne Head and past chiefs are to be commended for their leadership, and Mayor Clar Brown and his council and past mayors and councils are also to be applauded for their strong, generous support.

Fifty years of service is a tremendous feat. The region has reaped the benefits of unselfish efforts of the dedicated firefighters.

Also, the spouses and partners are to be recognized as well because they too make sacrifices to enable the firefighters to carry out their responsibilities.

Honourable members, please join me in extending hearty congratulations to the Baie Verte volunteer firefighters upon their fiftieth anniversary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the girls volleyball team from St. James All Grade School in Lark Harbour.

Earlier this fall, the team competed in the VolleyCentral competition winning silver and earning the right to compete in the Division A Regional Volleyball championship which was held last weekend at Grandy River Collegiate in Burnt Islands. This team won gold and will now

be travelling this weekend to Musgrave Harbour to compete against nine other teams in the Girls A Provincial Volleyball championship

Mr. Speaker, the twelve-member team, comprised of Grade 10, 11, and 12 girls, included Riley Pennell, Olivia Perry, Chloe Connolly, Leslie Lushman, Crystal Sheppard, Sarah Sheppard, Brianna Murrin, Joanna Sheppard, Jessie Youden, Leah Callfas, Courtney Pennell, and Kennedy Sheppard. The team, under the guidance of their coaches, Suzanne Gilbert and Heather Oates, have worked hard and are very committed to their team. These young athletes exemplify true sportsmanship and are great representatives of St. James All Grade School.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in extending congratulations to the St. James Girls Volleyball team and wish them every success as they compete this weekend in the provincial championships.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand in the House today to recognize Chrissy Young and Faith Purcell, who were both awarded the Volunteer of the Year Award by the Rabbittown Community Centre last month. Both individuals are exemplary community volunteers.

Chrissy Young is a member of the Rabbittown Community Centre's Board of Directors, and the neighbourhood Tennant Association. She is also involved in all aspects of programming at the community centre and is always eager to lend a hand whenever it is needed.

The second recipient, Faith Purcell, is a student at Prince of Wales Collegiate and an active participant in Rabbittown's youth programs. Over the past two years, she has taken on a leadership role as a junior youth mentor to the children enrolled in the centre's summer day

camp. She also volunteers weekly with the after school program.

Both Chrissy and Faith regularly help out with the Rabbittown Community Centre's special events and annual celebrations. The staff at the centre have told me they look forward to Faith and Chrissy's continued service to the Rabbittown community over the years to come.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Chrissy Young and Faith Purcell on being recognized for their exceptional volunteer work.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise today in this hon. House to acknowledge November as National Crohn's and Colitis Month.

National Crohn's and Colitis Month provides a valuable opportunity to raise awareness of the challenges faced by individuals and families dealing with these diseases. It also creates an avenue for greater discussion about how we can support and educate those who have been newly diagnosed, as well as inform the general public who interact with those suffering on a daily basis.

Mr. Speaker, chronic diseases impact the health of the population as a whole and place significant demands on the health care system. As a department, we have put a significant focus on chronic disease management and have supported the introduction of medications and programs to help those living with these diseases lead healthier lives. While a cure has yet to be discovered, Crohn's and colitis research can lead

to better treatment options and support programs for people living with this chronic disease.

The Department of Health and Community Services works closely with organizations such as Crohn's and Colitis Canada and other community partners that provide support to people living with chronic diseases in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, Crohn's and Colitis Canada has embarked on a new national awareness and fundraising campaign this month. The *Make it Stop. For Life* campaign aims to educate by providing a glimpse into the realities of living with these diseases. The campaign also helps affected individuals learn new ways they can cope more effectively with their diseases and thrive.

Twenty-eight Canadians are diagnosed with Crohn's or colitis every day. Approximately 129,000 have Crohn's disease and 140,000 have ulcerative colitis. One in every 150 Canadians suffers from these diseases.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Crohn's and Colitis Canada for its continued support and awareness efforts on behalf of Canadians living with these diseases. I encourage everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador to visit the awareness campaign's Web site at www.crohnsandcolitis.ca to gain deeper understanding of the challenges faced by so many across our country.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I, too, want to commend Crohn's and Colitis Canada for its support and awareness efforts on behalf of people of Newfoundland and Labrador living with these diseases. They have a devastating impact on the overall health of one in 150 Canadians, and there is no cure.

A 2012 report indicates they are on the rise and are costing Canada about \$2.8 billion annually. Some people mistakenly think that they only affect our older population; however, this is not the case. It is affecting children as well as adults. In fact, a new study just released in October has seen a steep increase in the rise of this disease in children diagnosed before ten years of age.

The number of new cases in Canadian children has almost doubled since 1995. A lot of research has been done in understanding this; however, much more needs to be done in order to find a cure and to improve the quality of life for those living with it.

We should continue to support Crohn's and Colitis Canada, and their provincial division, and help ensure that people living with the disease are provided the necessary care and treatment they require.

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 an advance copy of his statement. I also commend Crohn's and Colitis Canada for their hard work raising awareness and support for people living with these diseases, but I am sure the people they represent are awaiting to see what government itself will do to help people with their disease.

Government covers only colostomy supplies for people with very low fixed incomes, leaving others to pay for these costly supplies on their own. I continually get calls from people who say that they lack of support is causing them real hardship and they do wish that government would take up the cause and cover colostomy supplies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to highlight the agricultural research symposium: Our Food, Our Future: Research that Feeds Newfoundland and Labrador which was held recently in Corner Brook.

The symposium was organized by the Department of Natural Resources and Grenfell Campus, Memorial University, and brought together 120 farmers, educators, agricultural professionals and others interested in Newfoundland and Labrador agriculture. It was an opportunity for these groups to hear about current research, to network, and to identify gaps and opportunities in research.

The comments we received after the symposium certainly expressed the positive work being undertaken to grow this industry. Attendees said they were impressed with the event and by what is happening in the provincial industry. Organizers were told the information coming out of the symposium will “help move the industry forward” and that we “are leading in so many ways!”

The work accomplished at the symposium is helping the agriculture industry meet its potential. A provincial agriculture research strategy will be developed based on comments heard at the past two agricultural research symposia, as well as the strategic directions established by the Agricultural Research Advisory Committee. This committee comprises representatives from government, commodity boards, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture, Agriculture and Agri-Foods Canada, Memorial University of Newfoundland, and the Institute of Agrologists.

The value of production from the rapidly expanding agriculture industry is approximately \$500 million per year. The industry is a significant economic generator, employing 6,500 people.

The provincial government is a strong supporter of Newfoundland and Labrador’s agriculture industry. We recently announced a new \$7 million initiative with the federal government to further grow the cranberry industry in this

Province. Through Growing Forward 2, \$6 million will be allocated for ninety-five projects in Newfoundland and Labrador during 2014.

Mr. Speaker, there is tremendous opportunity and interest in expanding research in agriculture and agrifoods. As stewards of this industry, the provincial government allocates \$1 million annually to support agriculture research and development. Priorities identified by the industry are being addressed on such topics as grain production, crop diversification, and soil improvement. We look forward to furthering the provincial agriculture research strategy, as well as other research and development efforts, in the months to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. REID: I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Agriculture is a big industry in the district I represent and I want to congratulate the Department of Natural Resources and Grenfell Campus for hosting the agricultural symposium.

Unfortunately, the agriculture industry is following much the same pattern as our fishing industry. While the value of industry is increasing, the number of farmers in this Province is declining. The average age of a Newfoundland and Labrador farmer is steadily rising. According to the 2011 Census, the average age was fifty-five years, up from fifty-two in 2006.

While we have improved production of some products like cranberries, we continue to be in a difficult position if we are unable to bring fruits and vegetables into this Province for a prolonged period of time. More must be done to encourage the younger generation to get involved in the agricultural industry. More must be done to protect our agricultural lands.

Most agriculture today is limited to the areas around Goulds, Deer Lake, the Heatherton and the Highlands area, and the Codroy Valley.

Although the farming industry is expected to post modest gains in 2014 it is –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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. The NDP strongly supports the Province's growing and sustainable agriculture industry and agree with the minister about its tremendous potential.

The minister lists priorities identified by the industry and I would like to suggest a few more to the minister: a provincial food security plan; promotion of local markets and bolstering food security by creating an agency linking small producers with restaurants, stores, and consumers; encouraging farmers co-operators to share facilities and marketing; legislation ensuring we do not lose any more of our valuable developed agricultural land; and, more value-added processing of our agricultural products to name a few. I hope the minister has taken notes.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to update this hon. House on a provincial government investment which are providing more physical activity opportunities for children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The provincial government, in partnership with School Sports Newfoundland and Labrador, recently announced a \$300,000 investment in Participation Nation Unplugged.

This is an after-school physical activity program designed to help provide inclusive, non-competitive opportunities to increase physical activity and promote healthy, active lifestyles in the after-school time period. This program works with participating schools to help identify and remove barriers to increasing physical activity.

As the Minister responsible for wellness, I recognize the need to encourage youth to decrease their screen time and to get up and start moving towards a more active lifestyle. It might be a good practice for some in this House too, Mr. Speaker.

The provincial government's investment in Participation Nation Unplugged came about as the result of the After-School Physical Activity Pilot Initiative, which was implemented at twenty-five sites from 2011-2014, Mr. Speaker. The pilot results indicated a positive impact from increasing opportunities for students to participate in after-school physical activities. As such, the twenty-five pilot sites will be invited to become a part of the Participation Nation Unplugged program, and existing programs will have the opportunity to expand their activities from one day to two days a week.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the provincial government continues to support recreation, sport, and physical activity through various programs, such as the Community Recreation Development Program, Community Capital Grants, Physical Activity Equipment funding, and the Premier's Athletic Awards.

Mr. Speaker, with the support of the provincial government, community partners and, most importantly, parents, I believe we can encourage young people to develop active, healthy lifestyles and habits that will serve them well throughout their lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. As with the private member's motion yesterday, we all in this House support active living by the kids in sports in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, Participation Nation Unplugged is a great activity. I encourage the government and I support this initiative – anything we can do to get our youth moving. Congratulations to the parents and the sites that have been selected and to the volunteers who will help to go from one day to two days a week, the parents and the kids.

I just say to the minister if you are in to a school like you did in Bay of Islands in Sacred Heart, I would love to come along to one of your programs. It would be nothing more than introduce the program to all the kids who are there and help the kids promote it as you are in the school.

Mr. Speaker, as a side note, it would be much nicer to see the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture doing Zumba down at Sacred Heart school.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, \$300,000 for the whole Province for an inclusive program to increase physical activity and promote healthy lifestyles is a mere drop in the bucket. As a matter of fact, it barely pays for the bucket – really.

Really, Mr. Speaker, kids need more regular, frequent gym classes in school and more after-school programs for all kids in all schools. After a three-year pilot program, this initiative should be a permanent fully funded program in all 264 schools across the Province. Shame on this government for trying to show this as something wonderful and innovative – shame on them!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last November the Minister of Transportation confirmed at the announcement of a new ferry vessel that tariffs were included in the \$51 million cost. He reconfirmed that in this House on December 2, less than a month later; today, it is a different story.

I ask the minister: Will you now confirm that if the federal government does not waive the \$25 million in tariffs that the contract bid for the two new ferries was not, in fact, the lowest bid?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have a responsibility, this Administration does, to provide vessels that provide the service to the people in this Province – safe, reliable vessels that are state of the art. Mr. Speaker, it was this Administration that put in the first ferry replacement strategy in this Province's history.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: We have done that: two vessels built servicing the great people of this Province, two more months away to service other islands in this Province, Mr. Speaker; weeks away from announcing an RFP to replace vessels and a service for the people of Labrador; and in the near future also to replace services to the coast parts of this Province.

We are the Province that took the lead. We are the Administration that did that, Mr. Speaker, and we are going to service the people here with the best provided service possible.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, that did not in any way answer the question that I asked, so I will ask it again.

If the federal government does not waive the \$25 million in tariffs on these two new vessels, will he confirm that the awarded contract is not, in fact, the lowest bids on these two vessels?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member is right; it did not answer the question there. What it did outline is the commitment of this Administration to provide services. What I will say to the hon. member is we announced that we would pay \$100 million to Damen Shipyards because they have an expertise second to none in this world to be able to provide services, and that is what we have contracted.

Mr. Speaker, also in response to the question, we are going through a process. We are going through a process with the federal government. We are confident that tariff will be waived. There is a precedent already set. My officials and the officials in other departments are working with the federal officials. If I feel that is not moving fast enough, I will intercede with the federal minister. If then it is still felt that it is not moving fast enough, the Premier will intercede, Mr. Speaker. We will provide that service that will be affordable to the taxpayers of this Province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask this again. If the tariffs are not waived will the minister confirm that these two contracts are not, in fact, the lowest bids?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as the previous Administration put in place the *Nonia*, it might have got them the lowest price; it did not get them the best service. We are about service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: We are going to provide the service to the people of this Province. We have one of the best shipyards in the world supplying vessels to us and we are confident that tariff will be waived.

The contracted amount, Mr. Speaker, is what we will pay Damen; that is what the taxpayers of this Province will be on the hook for. The people of this Province will get the service they deserve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, with the \$25 million tariff included, the price of the ferry contracts is higher than some of the other bids. We know that; the minister knows it as well.

The minister stated that the cost is not the only factor and quality product is more important to the taxpayers. I ask the minister: Are you saying that the other bidders were not capable of providing new vessels that are quality for this Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I am saying is that we have a process. There was an RFP put out across the world and

we had a number of respondents, Mr. Speaker. We had a process in place, very competent individuals within my department who assessed the best service that we could provide to the people of this Province, and we did that.

The component that will supply the services for us is Damen Shipyards. They will supply – for \$100 million – two state-of-the-art vessels that will service the great people of Fogo Island – Change Islands and the people of Bell Island, Mr. Speaker. We are very proud of that contract that will be put in place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, tariffs have only been waived in one exceptional circumstance by the federal government, and that was to purchase an existing vessel quickly to replace a vessel that sunk, never for a new build. The same province has budgeted for tariffs on their new builds.

I will ask the minister: Why does he believe that the federal government are going to waive the tariffs on these two new vessels when they have never done it on new vessels of the same calibre, same size?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, my officials have been working very closely with the federal officials. There is an application process that we are putting in place. We are going through the process itself. There is no reason to believe that the federal government would not accept this as an exemption through tariffs. There has already been a precedent set; BC Ferries have done it. We feel we are in the same category, even a little bit stronger in our argument to do that.

Mr. Speaker, we are very confident this will be done and we will only charge the taxpayers of this Province for the ships that are being delivered.

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

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is very sad in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Town of Harbour Grace. Kodiak shoes, after decades of operations in Harbour Grace, is closing its doors for the last time today. Eighty people are losing their jobs.

I ask the minister: What plans have government put into place to help the displaced employees of this company as they see their long-term employment come to an end?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the member for raising that very important issue. Just this morning I actually had a discussion with a couple of media outlets on it – and it is very disappointing, I say to the member opposite. For us, as a government, we are the government that brought the company to the community. So we have been there from day one. We recognize the value and the contribution that company has made to the community.

We have been engaged with not only the company, but the community, and officials in my department have been working hard to look at other alternatives. I pledge to the member that if there is any way whatsoever that we can bring another company to the Town of Harbour Grace – who has been a great community to work in, by the way, as the company tells – then we will do everything we can.

In the meantime, my colleague, through the Department of Advanced Education and Skills, has a number of funding programs that we are going to make available, if employees would like to avail of some retraining opportunities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SLADE: Mr. Speaker, the Town of Harbour Grace also loses today. The tax benefits of having a major employer like Kodiak operating in the town meant some \$50,000 annual business tax to the community. This, too, will come to an end today.

I ask the minister: How will government work with the Town of Harbour Grace to help replace these lost revenues?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will just continue for a moment. As I said to the member opposite, we do have funding programs available, and I am sure he is aware, but I would remind people through Advanced Education and Skills to those who would want to avail of an opportunity to retrain. We have counselling services. We were on the ground the day the announcement was made, by the way. If the member becomes aware of a need to have further consultations, we will make ourselves available.

With respect to the community, we are not aware at this point that any request or any opportunity has been exercised by the community to reach out to the minister. If there is a discussion that is required, if the town is having some challenges as a result of the tax loss or they want to talk about going forward what their challenges are, we are more than willing to sit down and have a chat with them. I invite them to open up a dialogue with us, or write a letter, send an e-mail, or something like that. We are certainly there to help out.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, today marks the end of an era for Terra Nova Shoes.

In the media, the minister said the Department of Business is actively pursuing initiatives to attract new business.

Given the poor track record of the Business Attraction Fund in the past, leaving 87 per cent of the funds on the table last year, I ask the minister what leads he has for new business in Harbour Grace that matches the skills of the displaced workers?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the opportunity. It is an interesting question coming from the member who only yesterday was raising concerns and questions with an announcement that we put forward to support the business community and support opportunities like Harbour Grace has with a venture capital fund, I say to the member opposite.

I eagerly await a clear position from members opposite so that there is not a contradiction between the leader and that member and Mr. Antle, the candidate for St. John's East, as to where they stand with respect to venture capital, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KING: This is a very serious issue. We are talking about –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KING: We are talking about –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask members for their co-operation. I ask the minister to finish his answer.

The hon. the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a very serious issue and I appreciate the question. I just want to remind the member of some of the commentary he made yesterday.

We are pursuing all kinds of opportunities for Terra Nova Shoes and the community of Harbour Grace, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to pursue those opportunities. I mentioned the venture capital fund as one avenue we have to lure business to the community. We have many others, and if I have a follow-up question I would be more than happy to elaborate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, I certainly support venture capital. It is the contradiction in the amount of funding that is available in the fund that they are putting forward.

Mr. Speaker, the minister committed to also speak to representatives to find new occupants for the facility.

Given the competitive nature of the industry and the loss of equipment, I ask the minister: Does he have a commitment from the company or will we see that building mothballed?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, the difference between where I stand as a minister and where my critic stands is that I am prepared to lay my vision out on what we stand for in economic development and economic diversification in this Province. I invite the member at some point in time to share his view, but our view of it is that it is our role, and it is my role as minister, to create an environment that is conducive to economic growth.

We have to support entrepreneurs. It is not the role of government to create business. There is not one business I can think of created by this government or any other government in the history of this Province that has succeeded. It is the businesses that have been created by entrepreneurs in communities that are locally driven and locally developed, Mr. Speaker.

We will work with the community. My previous colleague in this department had officials from the town in. We have invited them to share ideas. If they have local ideas they want to pursue, we have funding opportunities, funding programs, venture capital, all kinds of ways to support them if they have the interest to move forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, government based their budget on \$105 oil. The price, as of a few minutes ago, as a result of OPEC not reducing production, was \$72.77 per barrel. That is a difference of over \$32 a barrel. Government's own budget document says that a \$1 drop equals a \$26 million loss. Simple math is, that is a potential loss of \$832 million.

I ask the minister: Based on today's announcement, how much larger will this year's deficit be?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, I acknowledge today, and I have said in the past, we would wait until OPEC had their meeting today to be able to inform us as to what that might mean and what kind of impact it may have on our budget.

Today, what we had confirmed for us is that there is a tremendous amount of volatility. We are going to see that volatility continue for the

next little while. It is one of the things that has become very apparent now, and all the analysts are saying that we have a structural problem, both on the supply and the demand side in the oil industry.

What we are going to see in the next little while, I suspect – she just quoted \$72, analysts are saying for the next week to ten days we are going to see a lot of movement. A lot of changes are going to occur very quickly over the next seven to ten days. Until that time, we will have a better feel for how this is going to settle out and really impact our bottom line by March 31.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, last week I asked the minister for the exact weighted average impact on the Province's finances of the falling oil price, falling production, and Canadian dollar. I understand what a weighted average is, and I am sure he does as well. The people of the Province deserve to know if government will borrow money, increasing the deficit, or cut programs and services.

I ask the Premier: What is it?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WISEMAN: What the people of Newfoundland and Labrador truly deserve, Mr. Speaker, is clear leadership, clear understanding of the impact. People of Newfoundland and Labrador do not need fear mongering. They do not need speculation about what might or might not happen.

We have a responsibility to the people of this Province. We have a responsibility to govern responsibly, to provide good, sound fiscal management. Speculating about what might or might not happen because changes occur in oil prices or exchange rates would be somewhat irresponsible to the investment community.

What we are going to do, Mr. Speaker, we are going to take a prudent approach. When we see the volatilities start to change and a bit of settling occur over the next week to ten days, we will tell the people of the Province very clearly what we know and what we understand will be the impact on this Province's fiscal performance and what our outlook will be for March 31, 2015 and into the next fiscal year, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, what the people of the Province deserve is the facts. They want to know today what the financial impact of the current oil price is on the provincial revenue. They absolutely want to have a government they can trust to make decisions and not expropriate things that end up costing us over \$250 million in environmental fees.

What we have to do is to provide the facts to the people of the Province, and I ask the minister to provide that information today.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you that the volatility of oil prices has a significant impact, a potentially significant impact to our Province and to our government, and we are quite aware of that. Members opposite are quite aware of that.

I remind the member opposite, I remind the members of the House, and I remind the people of the Province that in the last two weeks we have been in the House, Opposition members, knowing all of that and the potential impacts of the volatility of oil prices, have day after day after day rose in their place in this House and have asked us as a government to spend millions and millions of dollars. Day after day after day, Mr. Speaker, we have heard it from members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that effective today, and we have only had a very short period of time to see the outcome and the results of the OPEC, is that we have taken a position that we are adding a new layer of approval for all hiring for government departments and agencies, and that government departments hiring will only be based on critical need for those departments. As well, discretionary spending is being ceased effective immediately, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's answer leads nicely into my question. With regard to the hiring of Ms Breen and Mr. Kennedy, government is now agreeable that government employees who potentially may have a legal issue can choose their own lawyer and have the taxpayer foot the bill. This is what the minister said yesterday.

I ask the Premier: Is this indeed your new policy?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I said quite clearly and publicly when this matter arose earlier this week that the circumstances are that. I have to be very careful as well, I should say, because there is a matter before the courts and I have to respect that process. We all should respect that process.

We have a circumstance where employees, who, as a result of the execution of their duties as employees of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, require legal advice. They require legal advice. A union person, three management people at Her Majesty's Penitentiary require union advice. The union person has specifically asked to be represented by a specific lawyer. We have granted that request. The three management people have asked for a specific lawyer and we have granted that request.

As I said to the hon. member – sorry, as I have said publicly before, not directly to the hon. member – if they ask for a particular person, I would be hard pressed not to grant them the person they want to represent their own interests.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Will other employees, as a result of the execution of their duties, also get Mr. Kennedy as their lawyer if they ask, and will it be paid for by the government?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This happens from time to time where individuals require legal advice. This is not a unique circumstance. I have seen it in the past. I have seen it happen over the years. It happens from time to time, especially those who are engaged in their duties such as people in policing and corrections. It happens from time to time that this requirement exists, where they require legal advice as an individual employee of government. They need that advice and they have asked for that. So we have granted their wishes, Mr. Speaker.

We assess them on an individual basis, based on circumstances and the needs of employees. We are here to protect our employees, Mr. Speaker, and that is what we are doing in this case. We have employees who require legal advice. It is part of an ongoing court case, and we are protecting the best interests of our own staff.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: I thank the Premier, Mr. Speaker, for elaborating on this new government policy. In the House yesterday, we asked about this list of hundreds of instances that happen on

an almost daily basis where this has been done in the past and the Minister of Tourism refused.

I ask the Premier: Given that you have just discussed it, will you release that list to us?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just to be clear, the Premier has not announced a new policy. The member's preamble to the question indicates a new policy. There is no new policy with respect to outside counsel representing government workers.

There are two particular occasions in 2013 and 2014. Officials with Transportation and Works and wildlife officers also had outside counsel for similar instances where there were some allegations of criminal conduct and criminal wrongdoing, Mr. Speaker. We have an obligation when that happens to support our employees. I would hope the member is not suggesting that we should do otherwise and not support our employees.

To his question, I will gladly table the document, Mr. Speaker. It is right here and the Clerk can come and accept it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, our office made an ATIPP request to determine the sequence of events that led to Ms Manning's appointment to be a review commissioner for workers' comp. We were shut down by the Cabinet confidence section of Bill 29.

I ask the minister: Can you please explain to us why Cabinet is involved in the selection of review commissioners?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The member opposite would know that using Bill 29 as an excuse for every single question that comes before this House is absolutely ludicrous. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that there are any number of boards, agencies, commissioners, and appointments that happen on a regular basis that are appointments of Cabinet.

I would add, Mr. Speaker, that 95 per cent of those we inherited from the Liberal government who established the protocol before we came to power. There is nothing untoward about the fact that an appointment for this government would have to go before Cabinet. That is normal process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, our Cabinet is not involved in the selection of judges in this Province yet. Our Cabinet is using a secretive process to determine review commissioners. Again, we have serious issue in the backlog of cases.

I ask the minister: What criteria have you been following, and why is this process not transparent?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, there is nothing that is untoward about this process. There is nothing out of the ordinary, there is nothing unusual. From time to time we go seeking members to serve on boards, commissions, and agencies. Mr. Speaker, it is a normal part of doing business.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KING: The member would know that, Mr. Speaker, because it is the same process that governments before us used. There is always criteria. In most cases – by the way, I say to the member, you might want to check the legislation of the particular board or agency because the process for these appointments is actually enshrined in legislation in the Province right now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, last week when I asked about the backlog of 150 reviews at the workers' comp review division all I heard is that government is working on the issue and we have fewer unacceptable backlogs this year than last year.

I ask the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador: Instead of we are working on the problem, what specific steps are you taking to address the backlog?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNECT: Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to thank the hon. member across the way for his question. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I have held meetings just this morning, had discussions just this morning, Mr. Speaker, on how we move forward to find solutions to the backlog.

The Premier stated last week as well that he wants a solution found to the backlog, Mr. Speaker. I say to the hon. member that I am speaking with the chief review commissioner, and we will find a solution and a way forward, Mr. Speaker, to relieving the backlog. That I can assure the injured workers and employers of this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, once again we are hearing about how government is working on the problem, no specifics.

I ask the minister: Given the fact that the workers' comp review division is funded by workers' comp and requires no public expenditure, will you provide direction to the review division to ensure proper resources are allocated in order to provide justice for these injured workers?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNECT: Mr. Speaker, thank you again for the question.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, we are moving forward. We are going to find a solution to the benefit of employers and injured workers of the people of this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Service NL: Why weren't audited statements collected from 43 per cent of funeral homes which sold prepaid funerals in 2013?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL for a quick reply.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNECT: Again, Mr. Speaker, Service NL is a very large department with over 180 pieces of legislation. We have competent staff in the department, and, Mr. Speaker, I am sure they are doing their due diligence to carry out this work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Once again, it is the season of food drives for low-income families. Food banks are reporting minimum wage earners whose paycheques do not last two weeks, forcing them to the food bank. Government and the Official Opposition both voted against the NDP motion to follow the recommendations of the minimum wage review committee.

I ask the Premier: Why won't this government follow its own committee's recommendations, which would keep people from having to go to food banks?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, this government has invested in a poverty reduction plan that has been applauded by people from across this country. Since 2006, we have invested \$1.6 billion. Just this morning I was at an event where we announced \$678,000 through more initiatives to support people who find themselves in difficult situations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I say to the minister, people need money in their hands, therefore I ask the Premier: Why government will not raise the minimum wage to catch up with inflation and index it every year so working parents can feed their families?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, again, I would ask the member if she would take a look at all the initiatives that have been implemented over the years, the things we are putting into home repair programs, the things we are piloting now to define initiatives to support people, seniors as they find transportation. All the initiatives that have been applauded by so many under our

poverty reduction plan are, in fact, putting money into pockets of people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, a media report today tells us that taxpayers in this Province may be dinged by a \$25 million federal tariff for ferries that are being built outside the country, specifically in Romania. This government claims openness and transparency.

Why won't the minister release the unsuccessful bids to prove that government made a good deal for the taxpayer of this Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned earlier, we have a process in place that outlines exactly getting the best service for the people in this Province. The RFP process we used ensured we did that. We are contracting Damen for \$100 million to supply two vessels, state of the art, for the people of this Province, Mr. Speaker.

Damen has outlined all the amenities they will provide in that, the services, and the skill set that will be associated with that. We are very confident this is what the people of this Province want. We are getting a good bang for our dollar.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, that \$25 million probably cost this Province part of a shipbuilding industry here.

Does the minister have written confirmation from the federal government saying that this tariff is going to be waived?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, for somebody who spent thirty-five years fighting for a better ferry service in this Province, I can guarantee you what we are receiving now for the people of this Province is second to none in this country and second to none in this world.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: I will guarantee you the money that is being spent is in the best interest of the taxpayers of this Province. Mr. Speaker, the tariffs that are being levied on this will be removed. There will be no tariffs coming here; we are confident in that.

We are working very closely with the federal government, Mr. Speaker. The people will get the return on the investment. The people serviced by ferries in this Province will benefit from that and that means people in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. As this Administration has done for the last number of years, we will benefit from our investments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to know something. We are talking about an extra \$25 million on top of the taxpayer.

Why doesn't this government get it when it comes to a shipbuilding policy in this Province and job creation?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: We want to know why this money is being thrown away on the part of the taxpayer and why the federal government is taking a piece of us.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have committed to providing a valued service to the people of this Province. We are continuing to do that. Our \$100 million investment this year alone will show that. The investments prior to that show that. The future investments are going to show that also, Mr. Speaker.

We have contracted a \$100 million contract with Damen Shipyards to provide those two vessels. That is what it will cost the taxpayers of this Province, Mr. Speaker, and they will get the return on that investment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

MR. KIRBY: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's North, on a point of order.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During Question Period, the Leader of the Third Party stated that Members of the House of Assembly, the other parties, had voted against the recommendations of the Minimum Wage Review Panel that somehow that Third Party had put forward.

The Minimum Wage Review Panel recommended that six months' notice be given to small businesses before any minimum wage increase –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I would ask the member to state his point of order.

MR. KIRBY: I am getting to it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

Presenting Report by Standing and Select Committees.

MR. KIRBY: (Inaudible) give me an opportunity to finish.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I say to the hon. member, even though you were not recognized to speak, the Speaker can still hear what you say from the floor. What you just did was challenge the Speaker's ruling. I would ask the member to apologize and to apologize unequivocally.

MR. KIRBY: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I apologize unequivocally.

MR. SPEAKER: Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, in a back and forth between myself and the Opposition House Leader, we had a discussion around contracts, contract templates that government often uses when it employs outside counsel.

First of all, I would like to table a document. This one would be a retention letter as we call it. It is a short version that is often used in a case where counsel is provided to support employees, as is the case we have been discussing in the Legislature for a few days now. If the Clerk would like to accept, I would like to table that document.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I also have a second, much longer document. Similar, it is a retention letter intended to confirm the retention and provide confirmation of government's liability for fees incurred. This document I would also like to table, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, to be clear for the record, these are templates that I referenced yesterday in Question Period that I am now tabling before the House.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Pursuant to section 8 and section 10 of the Public Tender Act, I hereby table reports of Public Tender Act exceptions for the months of July, August, and September 2014, as presented by the Chief Operating Officer of the Government Purchasing Agency.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Registered Nurses Act, 2008, Bill 32.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MR. WISEMAN: I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting The Atlantic Provinces Harness Racing Commission, Bill 33.

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

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today on the petition concerning the hospital in Corner Brook.

WHEREAS we wish to raise concerns regarding the recent delay of the construction of the new hospital in Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador;

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

Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Minister of Health and Community Services met with the health care committee this weekend. They mentioned that the meeting was very positive, that there was an open dialogue back and forth, that there will be information shared from the minister and there will be information from the health care committee.

I encourage that dialogue. That is one of the things that the health care committee was pushing for was information sharing so they can inform the people of Western Newfoundland and Labrador, the people who are working as volunteers, as citizens, that they could help to provide information.

Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged by the meeting. As I said to the health care committee if there is information coming back and forth, the commitment was that the long-term care building will start in 2015, that the actual acute care hospital will start in 2016, if there are any changes to that the committee will be notified.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to stand here today to inform the people of Western Newfoundland and Labrador that according to the health care committee the meeting was positive. I just want to offer if there is anything that I can do to help and facilitate this process, I will certainly do. I will help in whatever way I can to help this process along.

As I told the health care committee, I will work with the committee and the people of Western Newfoundland to ensure we get the facility we

were committed to and get the facility in a timely manner. I just wanted to recognize that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. SLADE: 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 the local service district of Freshwater, Carbonear is expressing ongoing concern regarding the need to make repairs to the beach breakwater which has been severely damaged by storm waves and this has caused major concerns for the local service district of Freshwater as it pertains to fire protection and safety; and

WHEREAS this lack of repair by government constitutes a fire and safety hazard to the community since the residents will be trapped in if a fire ever took place; and

WHEREAS this damaged breakwater roadway is also creating an environmental concern as the Atlantic Ocean has washed in over the roadway and out into the fresh water pond where the fish are in the pond; and

WHEREAS this area serves as a capelin run area each year which attracts a great many locals and tourists to the site; and

WHEREAS the federal government refuses to assist with this repair as they deem there is no associated fishing activity to justify investment;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to respond to the pleas from the community residents and their legislative representative to have this breakwater structure repaired so it can once again properly protect the road infrastructure from being more severely damaged and once done, to call upon government to repair the road.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I am after bringing this here quite a few times. I did speak with the Minister of the Department of Transportation yesterday and he assured me that he is going to be out in the area within the next week or two and have a look at that. I would certainly appreciate the minister doing that.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, my biggest concern as the MHA for the Carbonear – Harbour Grace district is the safety of the people at all times. Mr. Speaker, this is a real safety concern. It is one that I am going to stand in the House and speak about day after day until something gets done here. We are forty-eight districts in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, forty-eight districts, and one district should not be treated any different than the other. I will tell you, what is going on here is absolute neglect to the people of that community and also the people in the community of Bristol's Hope.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak.

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

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

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

WHEREAS the 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, 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 of 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 am yet standing again in this House to talk about this petition. Petitions keep coming to my office day after day after day. As well as the petitions, I get copies of letters that different groups across the Province have written to the Premier, or have written to the Minister of Justice, again urging government to reinstate the Family Violence Intervention Court immediately, as well as to expand it.

Mr. Speaker, I am beginning to wonder, who is responsible at this point? Who is responsible for the pain and the suffering of families who would have used the Family Violence Intervention Court, but who have not been able to because it was closed so rashly in the Budget of 2013-2014. Who is going to take responsibility for that?

Mr. Speaker, we can talk theoretically about the court. We can talk philosophically about the court. We can talk politically about the court. We can try and understand why it was closed. We can try and understand why it is not open, why it has not been opened immediately when there has been such an incredible lobby to government to open that court. Who is going to take responsibility for the fallout to the families who have not been able to use the court, and particularly because the court was closed for no

good reason? Who is going to take that responsibility?

Mr. Speaker, I have a letter here from the Canadian Federation of University Women. The Canadian Federation of University Women are also urging for the court to be reinstated.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We, the citizens serviced by Curtis Hospital located in St. Anthony, Newfoundland and Labrador, petition the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and Labrador Grenfell Health to retain midwives and allow them to continue to perform all of their duties at Curtis Hospital.

Our midwives offer services that cannot be duplicated and which cannot be replaced. The level of care they offer and the knowledge and training they have in the area of obstetrics is immense. It will be a great disservice to the people of this area if our midwives are no longer available to care for the people here. Privatizing midwifery or waiting five to seven years for regulation, as stated by government, is unacceptable. We have an operational model of midwifery here in St. Anthony that has been delivering outstanding care for over ninety years.

We implore upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and Labrador Grenfell Health to preserve midwifery services at Curtis Memorial Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, this is something that has been working quite well for decades. In terms of providing good continuity of care, all of the other services that provide a relationship with the mother or family members while they are going through the process of having a baby, through delivery and then after.

We have many situations and circumstances in Newfoundland and Labrador where midwives

could be utilized. For example, like Stephenville and that whole Port au Port area, if somebody needs to have a baby then they are going to be sent on an ambulance to Corner Brook, but if we had midwives and the profession was regulated, this is a way in which we could provide better health care services to people by having midwives in a regulated profession.

I say, Mr. Speaker, the announcement that the former Minister of Health made shows where this government is in putting privatization of midwifery ahead of offering midwifery in a publicly funded atmosphere which has been working functionally at Labrador Grenfell Health for quite some time. It is time to go back to the drawing board and move forward on this issue, Mr. Speaker.

I urge the House to support this because it is something that certainly can provide better health outcomes for people, especially in rural areas. My district in particular, and in Southern Labrador, has seen the benefits of what midwives can deliver. They are a very vital part of the health care team.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KIRBY: 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 lack of services and supports in the school system is a serious obstacle to learning for children and youth with autism spectrum disorder; and

WHEREAS long wait-lists for pediatric assessment and diagnostic services are preventing many children with autism spectrum disorder from receiving needed early diagnosis; and

WHEREAS the Intensive Applied Behavioural Analysis Program is currently not available for children after Grade 3; and

WHEREAS applied behavioural analysis has been shown to be effective for many adults beyond Grade 3; and

WHEREAS there is a lack of supports and services for children and youth with autism spectrum disorder after they age out of the Intensive Applied Behavioural Analysis Program; and

WHEREAS it is unacceptable to expect parents in Newfoundland and Labrador to pay thousands of dollars out of their own pockets to cover the cost of privately delivered applied behavioural analysis after Grade 3;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to extend eligibility for Intensive Applied Behavioural Analysis Program beyond Grade 3 in consultation with parents, advocates, educators, health care providers, and experts in the autism community.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, today the Premier got up in the House of Assembly and somehow implied that it is a great burden on government to ask for a basic health or educational service such as this to be covered. No one would be recommending – I would be very surprised if I heard the Premier out calling for people to pay for their children to go to Grade 1 and go to school. I would be very surprised if I heard the Premier out saying that people who need a medically necessary procedure done should have to pay that out of their own pockets.

The Premier has no problem allowing this to continue to go on. As I said a number of times I have constituents, and other Members of the House of Assembly have constituents, who have to pay out of their own pockets just because their children go on to Grade 4. They are not allowed to have intensive applied behavioural analysis covered after Grade 3.

It is a completely arbitrary cut off. There is absolutely no academic, medical, or scientific evidence to suggest that actually makes any sense. Somebody just said at some point, look,

we are being pressured to provide this so let's extend it out to Grade 3. It is completely wrong.

If you cannot have a universal system, then why not try having a means-tested system so that people who are on Income Support, people who are below the poverty line, people who have children and cannot afford to have that ABA therapy, can get it. Maybe some people can, I do not know, but let's try to do something to help the most vulnerable people in our communities ensure their children can get this. This is really the difference between having a job, being able to complete school or not.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his speaking time has expired.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. EDMUNDS: 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 Labrador's coastal communities already pay extremely high hydro rates; and

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

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke on this petition last week and I had some forwarding comments from the Minister of Natural Resources. It made for a healthy debate, and I respect the minister for his comments. I would like to go on with a couple of topics that I did not talk about last week. We look at the hydro rate proposals that are going to the PUB. In some areas in our Province it is 1.9 per cent. Some areas in our Province, it goes as high as 2.9 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

In coastal Labrador, which I said as I started out this petition, communities are already paying extremely high hydro rates. The proposed increase is 11.4 per cent for residential customers and a staggering 20 per cent for commercial operations. You look at some of the reasons why these costs have been going up; the price of oil is one of the reasons why this increase is going to the PUB, as proposed by Nalcor.

As I said last week, Mr. Speaker, prices have gone down. As a matter of fact they have gone down even more. So I fail to see where the argument is, but what I am seeing is you have the generation station out in Holyrood that is millions of dollars potentially and months potentially behind schedule. You have \$800 million cost overrun at Muskrat Falls in the first quarter and we are looking at more.

We look at where some of these costs are coming from, but I maintain by the petitioners that this government work with Nalcor to establish rates that are fairer and across the board as opposed to regionalized, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 2, second reading of a bill, An Act To Regulate Child Care Services, Bill 30.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess I will pick up where I left off the last legislative day as we were discussing this bill. Members on both sides of the House have gotten up and we have gone through. I guess before I go any further, we need to do a little bit of recap. I am speaking on Bill 30, An Act to Regulate Child Care Services. It is a bill to replace or repeal a bill that was brought forward in 1999, as a matter of fact, fifteen years ago.

The previous speakers – the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development had spoken and clearly outlined basically what was in the bill. She certainly referred to the enhanced quality this bill would ensure and made the distinction that this bill was about one of the three pillars, the three pillars in child care, being quality, sufficiency, and affordability. This bill certainly hits on the quality piece and making sure that what is happening in the child care spaces throughout Newfoundland and Labrador are indeed in the best interests of the children which these spaces will serve.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, and we look at the quality piece, this bill still goes hand in hand with the 10-Year Child Care Strategy, that was also described, and Caring For Our Future: Provincial Strategy for Quality, Sufficient and Affordable Child Care in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, that strategy was released some three years ago. That really set the course in child care for the next ten years with – not an expiry date, but a date of 2022 whereby we feel, as a government, this strategy will bring us up to the needs that are certainly evident as we have gone around the Province and touched base with the people who are most involved in child care spaces in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, these are regulated child care spaces. Of course, there were six major changes to the bill, the bill being repealed. We are almost starting from scratch, Mr. Speaker, but just to go down through those as well, the

exemptions were, point number 1, to licensing, and it certainly looked at the capacity, an appeals process, provincial director of child care, an inspection process, and a statutory review every five years.

Mr. Speaker, the bill is pretty well straightforward, but a very important piece of legislation. I am probably the fourth speaker up, and I will say there was a lively debate as the various members in the House stood up and talked about the bill. I feel there is great acceptance on both sides of the House of the intent of this bill and how it is laid out. Naturally, Mr. Speaker, when you open a bill that talks about the quality of the child care spaces, you will get some discussion and discourse as well on the sufficient number of child care spaces that are required, the sufficiency, and also the affordability and accessibility.

Mr. Speaker, I will pick up there and just go back over some of the comments that were made. I do not want to duplicate the comments, but I must say, I feel very comfortable knowing that the speakers were very knowledgeable about the bill, what changes were brought about, and I might add very, very supportive. That support is absolutely necessary.

The Member for St. John's North, for example, went down through the bill in a very critical style, going through every piece of it. I just stood on this side and looked down through it, and I found he was ticking off a lot of the same things that I had ticked off.

First of all, the repeal of the act itself. There was general agreement of all speakers, Mr. Speaker, that the bill needed to be repealed, and that it was simply repealing an act. Many agreed that the act of 1999, Mr. Speaker, was a good act. It suited the times. It made acknowledgement of how important it was to ensure that the children in anyone's charge was indeed quality spaces, that the people who were taking care of our children had some degree of training. There has been tremendous changes in this Province over the last fifteen years, especially over the last decade. The Province has literally turned around.

Mr. Speaker, I just speak from my own experience in my own District of Harbour Main, that I have seen now – back when I entered this House as a member back in 1999, there was a concern that there was a generation that had been lost in the 1990s as people had moved away. The number of children who were being born in this Province had drastically dropped.

There was a danger that some of our schools were not surviving simply because the numbers were not there, some of these small schools in some of our rural areas and some of our more urban areas, but things have turned around. I notice now in my own district that our schools are bursting at the seams; whereas, like I said, fifteen years ago it was the complete opposite. I have now in my district young couples, families moving back into the district. Not only are they moving back in, but they are getting really great employment in the immediate area.

When we look at this bill, we know the demand for regulated child care is continuing to rise and will continue to rise. It is very, very important that we allow the providers of child care – and that is a second aspect of the bill. It was to make sure that when it came to the facilities that are available, the situations that our regulators find themselves in, that they can have the capacity, and not only have the capacity, but be able to build on perhaps the capacity they have right now.

There was a cap, I believe, of sixty that you could have under any one particular licence. We found in some of the places here in St. John's, like over at the MUN campus, that in actual fact the building was supporting I think something like four licences when, in actual fact, it would probably make more sense if it was all under the one licence.

During the consultations – and there were extensive consultations – we got a good response from the people we needed to get a response from, whether they were service providers, whether they were parents, whether they were just interested parties. One of the things they said is that capacity is important. Already you see where people have really stretched the regulations to make sure they could have capacity. As well, the aspect of when you have any sort of bill coming forward, providing

for inspections and so on and so forth, which we did not have before.

We have a provincial director now who is going to be appointed by the minister, which allows that to be facilitated very, very quickly rather than an Order in Council. We have inspectors who are going to be totally independent, which is absolutely necessary, and we have an appeals process. That was not there before.

The appeals process; I know some of the members brought it up saying, well, it is all right to put it on paper but is it actually going to happen? They cited some other examples, perhaps in the courts or some other departments. Remember, when we are talking about this particular bill and we are talking about the quality of the spaces, it is very obvious to all that it is pretty well straightforward. You are over capacity, you do not have the right areas, you do not have the right type of buildings, and that sort of thing. The appeals process would be pretty straightforward. It can be done very quickly, and a response gone back.

If you are dealing with some other matters, such as criminal offences or injuries and that sort of thing, those are much more complex and oftentimes get bogged down simply because of different aspects of it, reports not in and so forth, but this is about our child care and inspectors going in, looking at the child care spaces, and can very quickly point out whether or not they are in compliance. If they are not in compliance, for the protection of the children and everything it – so the appeal process should work fine.

The others I believe – the statutory review. That is a common thing in legislation, as you know. The statutory review was put in there because it was not in the original one, and really went fifteen years without a formal review. We all know, and we have seen – as a matter of fact, if we see something that needs to be changed, whether it is us in government or anyone in government, whether it is our stakeholders or parents or whatever, we can make amendments and bring it back into this House and change it.

I am to understand that you may very well see an amendment upcoming that may indeed point to the fact that we are always ready, as a government, to make any necessary changes, to

put in place regulations or whatever that is necessary to ensure our child care spaces are indeed adequate.

My time is ticking away there, but I will say, as well, these are regulated child care spaces. We also have to take into account the culture here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I am very pleased to say that in my district I still see a lot of family involvement in child care. As a recent grandparent, I realize there are many, many grandparents in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador who are very much involved in taking care of their grandchildren.

So when we talk about the numbers and that sort of thing, I still believe there are a lot of child care spaces where children are protected, beyond a shadow of a doubt, but again, it is taking place in their very own homes.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will sit down and give others an opportunity to speak on this very important bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am very happy to stand and speak to Bill 30, the Child Care Services Act. Mr. Speaker, part of that also is I cannot believe in 2014 that I need to stand and speak, yet again, on a child care issue.

In 1975, that is almost forty years ago, thirty-nine years ago, we had the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and one of the issues we identified as crucial in the lives of working families in the country was the issue of child care. This is what we are speaking about again today.

We presented why child care, why public child care, why affordable, universal, accessible, high-quality child care was so important for the working families of the Province. We did the research. We spoke about it and we thought all we had to do was be reasonable. We presented it in a very reasonable and very clear and

concise manner. Here we are, almost forty years later, and we are still talking about trying to have a public, affordable, accessible, high-quality child care program. Here we are almost forty years later.

So in some ways I am happy to be able to be in this House, as a woman, to stand and talk about this issue, but I am also incredibly dismayed that almost forty years later we are still talking about it. Maybe we have made a few gains, but, Mr. Speaker, we are nowhere near where we need to be.

If we look at some of the issues of child care in the country, child care is one of the social determinants – affordable housing and child care are each really fundamental social determinants of whether or not a working family get pushed into poverty.

In Quebec, for instance, 6 per cent of a woman's wage is spent on child care; in Winnipeg, 15 per cent of a woman's wage is spent on child care; in Calgary, 26 per cent of a woman's wage, a working mom, is spent on child care; in St. John's, Newfoundland, in our Province, 32 per cent of a working woman's wage is spent on child care.

Mr. Speaker, I was in Stephenville a few months ago and I was going door to door. Within a period of two days, I encountered three young working moms who each had left work, who had to quit work within that period of a week – three within a period of a week had quit their employment because they could not afford child care.

What does that mean to us as a society? It means that these young working moms had to rely on social safety nets; it means that these young working moms who wanted to be in the workforce could not. What does that mean for them down the road? It means that they suffer in terms of lack of seniority in their workplace; it means also they suffer in terms of financial well-being for their families because we know that Income Support is not enough to live on. Child care is such a fundamental issue in terms of keeping people out of poverty.

The Quebec model, as we have seen it, has been the most affordable for working families at

about \$7.30 a day and serves 70 per cent of children under the school age in their province. Quebec built a huge infrastructure, a child care infrastructure that was absolutely resilient and it was able to serve 70 per cent of the children. Their child care program was top of the line in terms of quality. It was part of their educational system and it still is.

It also provided emergency services for children up to twelve years old. If a child had to leave school early for some reason, then that child was able to avail of the child care services. Or if a parent was not able to pick up the child after school, then that child could avail of the child care services. It was extremely flexible because it met the needs of the modern-day family. That is what we need to look at here, Mr. Speaker, in our own Province. What are the needs of our working families?

One of the members across the floor talked about how grandparents are involved in child care. That is fabulous. That is absolutely fabulous if you have that option, if you have that luxury. However, I have also spoken to grandparents who are worn out. Their working children cannot afford child care because we know in Newfoundland and Labrador for the most part child care is approximately \$1,000 a month per child. That is a heck of a lot of money. If you have two children, that is probably \$2,000, or maybe, if you get a bit of a discount, it is \$1600.

If you are a young working family with young children, you have a mortgage or rent – and we know that the housing costs have skyrocketed in our Province. You have your rent which is at least \$1,200 a month minimum or maybe you have a mortgage of \$2,000 a month minimum. Then you have your heat and light on top of that and phone and cable, probably a car payment. When you have children, your expenses rise. Then you have child care costs of \$1,000 to \$2,000 a month. It is not sustainable.

We know, the research has shown us, that our children are losing ground financially. A lot of our young people or a lot of our young working people are living on credit cards. They also maybe have a car payment because you have to get around. You have kids; you need to be able to move those kids around as well. It is really

tough. Child care is one of the fundamental pieces that are able to keep families out of poverty, and able to keep families working.

When we look at the Quebec model, and there has been some discussion about whether the Quebec model will be sustainable, for the most part the people of Quebec believe it will be and that it is absolutely necessary, and we have seen the economic benefits of the Quebec model. We know that what has happened, the aims of the Quebec model were to make their children more successful in their education through better quality of care, through better educational opportunities.

School tests were done before their universal, accessible, affordable child care program. Children in Quebec before 1976 used to have the lowest school marks in the country, and now they have the highest scores in the whole country. That is an incredible shift, Mr. Speaker.

That shift then also translates into not the fact that they have better school marks, but it also means they have a higher percentage of young women going into post-secondary education. They have, as a result of this, an increased number of women in the paid labour market. Another interesting thing, which I think is vital here for us in Newfoundland and Labrador, because how much have we looked at the whole issue of our zero population growth, that a true population growth strategy for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador would be national child care –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I would ask the member to make her comments relevant to the principle of the bill. I know the member is talking about child care generally, but the piece of legislation we are debating today is about the regulation of child care services, and I would ask her to confine her comments to the principle of the bill.

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

So, speaking to the bill and the Child Care Services Act, it is about how we are able to make our child care services more accessible,

more inclusive, and more affordable, that we ensure there is also enough spaces, because we know we do not have enough spaces for the number of children who need child care for the number of working families we have.

We know – Mr. Speaker, I do have to try to sneak this one in – that one of the benefits, one of the absolute benefits that Quebec had was because of their great child care, because people can afford child care –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I will ask again that the member would make her comments relevant to the principle of the bill which we are debating now. That is a second warning, and if the member continues to be irrelevant, I will have no other choice but to not recognize her any longer.

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

We know in the bill that a legislative review was stipulated in the Child Care Strategy from 2012-2022, under the pillar of quality. The other pillars in our bill are sufficiency and affordability. We know that if our families have accessible, quality, and sufficient number of spaces that it enables our young working families to be assured that their children are cared for, which enables them to get about the business of working, of being productive in our society.

We know, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the whole issue of affordability that – I was speaking to one woman who said that in her working career she paid out \$96,000 for child care. The whole pillar of affordability is so important and one that we have to look at and one that is very important in this bill.

With the processes that are outlined in here, again, we are trying to ensure that we have enough spaces, that the spaces are inclusive, that all children have access – all children – and that the legislation as well looks at: What are the services that are needed? How can government most ensure child care providers have the guidelines they need in order to provide the service, that they have the services they need in order to provide those services, and that we

know exactly what is needed in order to provide a comprehensive service that is affordable, sufficient, and quality for the people of the Province and for the children of the Province?

One of the reasons, Mr. Speaker, is that we need that clarity and we need that transparency so our families are not scrambling because what we have seen is that people scramble. Obtaining affordable, quality child care is so difficult for families and there are not enough places.

Hopefully what this bill will do is make it possible for more providers because we know that we need more providers. At this point, a lot of the providers are private. We do have more community-based providers. We want to ensure with this bill that the services are all delivered in the same way, that any parent going to any child care facility, whether it is a home-based child care facility, whether it is a community-based child care facility, whether at this point it is a for-profit child care facility, that families want to know that their children are getting the best of care, quality care, that they can go to work with a sense of confidence because of the type of legislation we have, because of the foundation of what our child care system is based on, they can go to work knowing their children are well taken care of; knowing their children are not just warehoused but, in fact, this is part of an early childhood education process.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out perhaps one of the groups most influential in our Province around the area of helping government come to a strategy for child care is the Jimmy Pratt Foundation. They wrote a report I know the minister is very familiar with. I know there has been a really good working relationship between government and the Jimmy Pratt Foundation, coming up with the types of guidelines and legislation that will ensure we have that type of quality child care. Their report was *The Early Years Last A Lifetime*.

I tell you, Mr. Speaker, for so many families trying to access affordable, quality child care, the early years sure seem to last a lifetime. Not only does it last a lifetime in terms of what they are saying, how it affects our children, but it feels like it is lasting a lifetime because it is so difficult, it is so expensive, and it is so

inaccessible. Again, families have to scramble to get affordable quality child care.

Mr. Speaker, I am glad government is moving forward on some of these issues and the commitment to review legislation every five years because I sure hope that we will be moving even further than where we are in our child care strategy here in the Province because it is not far enough. We know we need a fully public child care program that is an extension of our education system, that it is about our early childhood education, and we need that. This is just another stepping stone in reaching that. Mr. Speaker, I have every confidence we are going to be able to get there as a Province. We know we need the federal government on board.

I was just slipped a little note and told that, in fact, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women was 1970. It was not 1975 as I had thought. That adds on another five years. That is almost forty-five years that we have been talking in a solid, comprehensive way about child care. That is what we need to continue to do. We need to continue to talk about this issue in our Province. We have to know that although there are some very good elements here in this bill that we can support, it is only a halfway measure. We have to.

We have to have a model similar to Quebec so that our young families are no longer scrambling for child care. Grandparents cannot do it, and a lot of people do not have grandparents to do it. We do need these types of child care services that are outlined here in this bill.

We know that it is a better outcome for our children. We know that it is a better outcome for our working families. We know it is on the right road, but we are not there. We have only just begun that journey here in this Province. We do not yet even know what our full-day Kindergarten is going to look like.

The term that the early years lasts a lifetime, for working families who are just able to meet their bills because of the high cost of housing, the high cost of child care, student loans, car payments, it feels like a lifetime to them. It feels like a lifetime to them because it is so tough.

How unfortunate in this time of prosperity in our Province, how many young working families have said to me, I cannot have another child. I can only afford one. We simply cannot. How unfortunate is that, Mr. Speaker? I do not think anybody in this House does not want to see another child not born because people cannot afford it.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is about that. This bill is so intricately connected to our whole issue of population growth. It is about providing services. It is about providing quality, affordable child care to every working family who needs it and every child who needs it. That is what we are talking about today.

I hope that government will acknowledge that this is just a step in the right direction, but we have not arrived. We so need to arrive. This would be the best Population Growth Strategy that this Province could ever come up with to ensure that we have a national child care program where there is a space for every child of every working family, and also, even families who do not have paid employment – but there is a space for every child in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to have access to quality child care.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very happy to be able to speak to this bill.

MR. SPEAKER (Cross): The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to stand in this hon. House today and speak to Bill 30, An Act To Regulate Child Care Services.

As we know, this bill – I have listened to many of the speakers who have already stood and debated this – is all about enhancing the regulated child care system that we are dealing with. I heard some of the speakers talk about when the original act was brought in, and it is fifteen years old. When you look at the demographics of what has happened in our Province in the last fifteen years and how that affects child care – I myself coming from a very

large family of eleven children, we did not have to worry about babysitters. They were built in the family.

Today, as you heard some of the speakers comment on, families are much smaller. Also, today it is not uncommon at all in two-parent families to see both parents in professional fields. A very common thing today is single-parent families. Twenty years ago to see a single-parent family was an uncommon thing. It is not uncommon today at all. This all has an effect on the child care system that we deal with. This bill is all about enhancing that child care system to come up to what the needs are for today.

I think in the bill it is very self-explanatory. There are six key differences in the new act that we are suggesting. First of all, there are the definitions of child care service and child care provider. This is clarified and strengthened in the new regulations, or the new act. The capacity limit on the regulated child care licence, that is being removed now and licensees to determine the scope of their service. That will impact the quality of the service for the children.

The third one is the appeals process for a licensing decision. That is being defined now where there are time limits put on it also. You get thirty days to put in an appeal, and then it has to be responded to within sixty days. We would like to see the responses much faster, but having that time limit on there I think is an improvement.

The minister now, rather than the Cabinet, will appoint the provincial director of child care. The regional managers will not be appointed as inspectors. Before, the regional managers, I do not know if they were appointed as inspectors but there certainly was an anticipation there that it was, or a perception. This will provide some transparency in the inspection process.

Also, the statutory review, which I think every speaker who has been up so far has commended on the fact that now a statutory review will be required every five years. That will also include public consultation. Now what we are doing is every five years this will go under review. The part of the public consultation I think is very

important because then you are finding out exactly what the general public are looking for in the child care regulations. Their comments, I feel through public consultation, will only strengthen the regulations and the act from that.

The changes to this piece of legislation from the current act, there are four main goals we are hoping to achieve. The first one, the new legislation will modernize, strengthen, and clarify the current legislation. The second one is that it will streamline policies and processes. Thirdly, it will improve transparency and accountability. The fourth one is it will improve flexibility for service providers. I would just like to elaborate a little bit on those.

First of all, modernization, strengthening, and clarification of the current legislation; as I stated earlier, it has been fifteen years since the last review of the legislation. This here now, we were hoping to see some changes that would modernize it over the last decade and a half, to go along with the changes that the economy has brought over the last decade and a half. Over the last fifteen years we have seen a lot of changes in the way our economy has moved ahead and in the working habits of the general populace of Newfoundland and Labrador.

For example, in my district, I will use my district as an example. We have recently seen one child care centre close down. We have another one that was actually subsidized by one of the larger industries in the area, and we cannot get it open. Hopefully, the changes that are being made here may see some subsidies and changes that will bring to light the opportunities to get these centres up and running again, or the one that did not get the opportunity to open, now with the changes we may be able to see that be able to be opened.

In many districts throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, jurisdictions and the municipalities, you are seeing parents – as I stated earlier, normally both parents are working, and they are not working just eight-hour shifts now. A normal shift in today's world, with the economy the way it is, is a twelve-hour shift. As we know, and I know it is a big issue in my district when it comes to child care, an employer can force an employee to work consecutively sixteen hours. That causes a lot of issues when it comes

to child care. Some of these changes we are going to see hopefully will reflect on that.

The current Child Care Services Act was proclaimed in 1999. I mentioned that earlier. The new bill is being restructured to reflect current knowledge in the child care field. Basically bringing people and making them more knowledgeable as to what child care is all about today will enhance the type of child care we are going to provide throughout the jurisdictions.

I see quite often that the child care providers are restricted on getting employees in their centres quite often. As you have heard other speakers talk about, we do not have the large families any more. We are having smaller families. A large family in today's world is four children. Quite often those four children are spaced, so finding the in-house child care is very difficult today. Being able to increase the knowledge when it comes to child care in the field today is what the first goal, or part of the first main goal in this new act, will be.

The second one is streamlined policies and processes. The policies that we currently find today are a number of standards and other documents. What we are going to try to do is bring it all under one so it will be simplified. There will be much more clarity into it, and easier to understand. When you have policies and procedures that are easier to understand, they are also easier to implement into your business.

If we can bring all of them under one umbrella, that will make a big difference there. The changes in our legislation will support the consolidation and the reorganization of all this information making it much easier for use. For example, if you are in the child care provider system and you are doing the different levels of courses that can be done to move you forward, we are going to try to simplify the regulations, bring them all together so that it is easier to implement out in the field today.

Thirdly, improving transparency and accountability, an appeals process is clearly outlined; I spoke of that earlier. This was not in the current act, so putting that appeals process in there and the statute of times on that, the thirty

days and the sixty days, I think is a positive step forward.

Transparency to the process and the obligations and expectations for both parties – defining those transparencies in the process is very important and understanding the definitions of the transparencies. I think we need to be able to understand what the processes are all about and what the obligations and expectations on both sides, both the parents and the child care givers, and making that clear.

Currently, eight provinces and territories have an appeals process so we have certainly studied and looked at other jurisdictions across the country. There are eight other provinces that already have an appeals process in place; some of those being New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, which we have looked very closely at. We will take their processes and their appeals process and help that to strengthen the appeals process that we will put in place.

Another change will be to improve the transparency and the accountability of the inspection process. The new act will require that a manager is not appointed as an inspector. This is important so you have an arm's-length inspector rather than the manager being the inspector, which I think puts a safeguard onto the child care establishments.

Also, as you heard many of the other speakers talk about, the five-year review of the legislation. If you have a piece of legislation that is fifteen years old and it has not been changed, has not been reviewed, but the demographics and the economy have changed, as we have certainly seen here in our Province, so a piece of legislation that is fifteen years old when it comes to child care certainly needs to be reviewed. I think that putting the five-year automatic review on it is a very good step. That gives you an opportunity then that every five years you modernize what has been happening.

The fourth one is improving the flexibility for the service providers. By removing the capacity limit on a licence, what we are allowing is for the owners to be more flexible when it comes to the service they will provide. They can now have much more flexibility in determining what type of service they are going to provide. It will

also ensure quality service with the requirements when it comes to the ratios that are used, the sizes of the different groups, staff qualifications and certainly the physical space requirements.

I mentioned earlier that there was one facility in my district, which was a child care provider, that had to close. This fourth piece, change and a goal that we are hoping to accomplish here – that one in itself, had that been there and you could obtain that goal alone, that particular child care service centre would still be open in my district just in that one alone. I am very glad to see the four main goals that we are hoping we will be able to accomplish by making the changes to this particular act.

There are also some key differences in the new act from the existing piece of legislation that we have. Mainly there are six key differences and I would like to just touch on those. The definitions of a child care service and a child care provider have been clarified. It has also been strengthened. That will outline some of the specific exemptions to each definition.

There is a difference between a child care service and a child care provider. I spoke with the minister earlier today talking about child care providers and some of the certification and courses that they have to do, and the different levels in being a child care provider.

The type of services in child care providers – they all offer different types of child care services. One of the key differences in the new piece of legislation to the existing piece of legislation will be the definitions between the two, between the service and the provider.

One of the second key differences is the capacity limited that is for the regulated child care licence. We have removed that capacity limited. That allows the licensee to determine the scope of the service they are now going to provide. It will be able to do this, but it will not impact the quality of service.

Now a child care provider can decide what type of service they are going to provide. The quality of service, I feel, will be enhanced because they can now decide the type of service they are going to provide in their particular care centre.

We talked about the appeals process for a licensing decision. That is being defined. We did not have an appeals process in the existing piece of legislation. Having that appeals process in there now, you have thirty days to file an appeal and then you have to receive a response to that within sixty days. I think that is a very important addition to the piece of legislation.

One of the other key differences is the minister of the department will appoint the provincial director of child care, whereas in the existing piece of legislation the Cabinet makes that decision; it is a Cabinet decision. Now that will be the decision of the minister who is responsible for the department. The normal public service competition process will apply to that position. It will follow in with other pieces of legislation, but it will be the minister who will make the decision and not the Cabinet themselves.

Regional managers; we talked about regional managers will not be appointed as inspectors. The whole purpose of this is to provide transparency in the inspection process, because if the regional managers are the inspectors, sometimes people feel well, there are some shaded things that are happening there. So now the regional managers will not be appointed as inspectors. The inspectors will be outside of the regional managers.

Of course, the statutory review, the sixth and final major difference in the two pieces of legislation, the old legislation, or existing legislation, and the new act is that this statutory review will be mandatory every five years. What I really like about the statutory review is the public consultation piece. With the public consultation, I have been involved certainly as an MHA in the House of Assembly in the provincial government, but even before that as a councillor in my municipality, and also as a business person.

I have been involved in many public consultations when it came to pieces of legislation being changed. I feel it is a very important process to have the public's opinion, to listen to the public, to have them help us in how a piece of legislation will be enacted, how a piece of legislation will be written. I think it is important that we listen. That is something that

certainly this government does. When it comes to child care, I do not think you can have too much consultation.

As I stated early, it has been fifteen years since there has been a review, since there has been a change in this piece of legislation. I think that is too long. You look at the demographics, the changes that have been made over the last fifteen years, certainly in our economy and in the style of living that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have today compared to what it was fifteen years ago. There have been major changes in the style of life that we live as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I think fifteen years is too long. The five-year process will work much better and having the public consultation.

This is not a complicated piece of legislation, but it is a very important piece of legislation. It is a piece of legislation that I think addresses the lifestyle of our future. In saying that, I talk about the children.

In my own family there are two or three educators. One of my siblings actually is an early childhood educator and has been all her life, or all of her professional life. For the past forty years she has been an early childhood educator living in Prince Edward Island. They, at one time, had private schools when it came to early childhood education. So she actually had her own school for about twenty, twenty-five years until they brought in the Kindergarten system.

It was amazing to see. I think every time I went to visit her she was always upgrading. That is so important. When you look at the quality that the early childhood educators give to our young children, realizing they are our future, I think this is a very important issue.

I am certainly going to be supporting this bill. I hope everybody else, all of my hon. colleagues in the House, will also support it. I look forward to this bill being implemented.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: If the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development speaks now she will close debate.

The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say it has certainly been a lively debate. That is not surprising when we are talking about our children. It is something that is near and dear to everybody's hearts, I truly believe. So everybody needs and wants to have some opportunity to speak. I am very pleased by that as well because it is something we ought to recognize.

I would like to start out by thanking the speakers. We had the Member for St. John's North, the Member for Terra Nova, the Member for St. Barbe, the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, the Member for Harbour Main, the Member for St. John's Centre, and the Member for Labrador West. Mr. Speaker, obviously a big degree of interest shown in the House of Assembly around this particular bill.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to belabour too much of what that debate already encompassed and entailed, except to say that quite often it strayed outside the boundaries of the act itself. Just for the sake of clarification, I want to ensure that everyone in the House and everyone at home know what it was that this bill was to do.

The bill is to repeal and replace the Child Care Services Act. The bill would require child care services and agencies to be licensed unless exempt. It would establish licensing processes. The bill will appoint inspectors and establish the powers of inspectors to carry out inspections of child care services and agencies, and establish the process for issuing orders when a child care service or agency violates the act or the regulations.

Mr. Speaker, that is what this bill is meant to do. It is strayed into – when people were speaking – many of the things that would be covered under regulation and under programs. When we talk about affordability, for example, that is something that would be addressed under

programs. When we talk about sufficient number of child care spaces – because I could stand here and wax eloquent about all of those particular issues, but that is not the spirit of this particular bill.

We are introducing six only key changes. One is an exemption to licensing. I do not intend to outline all of that again, but just for the sake of those who are at home and listening, we looked at exemptions to licensing, in other words what would be clearly classified and defined as a child care service and what would not; what a child care service provider is and what a child care service provider is not, because in the old act those exemptions were very much open to broad interpretations. We wanted to clarify that. We wanted to ensure that it was strengthened.

The second change this bill is looking at is the capacity limit on a licence. We are looking at lifting the cap on simply having centres that could accommodate only sixty children in a child care centre. We lifted the cap, or that is what the bill is proposing to do here. That really allows flexibility for licensees in determining the scope of the services they can offer. It is something that parents are looking for. It is something that child care centres are looking for and so on.

The third was around the appeals process. If, in fact, a violation after an inspector has gone in, has found a violation and has issued a violation order, or in fact has revoked or suspended a licence, then there ought to be an appeals process. That did not exist before, so to provide transparency and clarity we are ensuring an appeals process.

The appointment of a provincial director to mirror other provincial legislation, Mr. Speaker, for example, the Statistics Agency Act, or the Children and Youth Care and Protection Act, or the Adoptions Act. So, it is simply mirroring what happens in other acts.

Appointment of inspectors, again, to ensure that we knew exactly what we were talking about and to clarify that, to make sure it was very clear as to who could be an inspector, who was not an inspector. Then finally we added into this act as well the piece around statutory review to assure there is regular transparent and legislative

review processes in place, and that would be every five years.

Mr. Speaker, again, that clarity around what the act was, what we intended to do in the act, and again, a thank you to those people who spoke to this act, and I look forward to taking this into Committee next.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Regulate Child Care Services. (Bill 30)

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

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

MR. KING: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Regulate Child Care Services", read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 30)

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to debate Bill 30.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair and that the House

resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the said bill.

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Littlejohn): Order, please!

We are considering Bill 30, An Act To Regulate Child Care Services.

A bill, "An Act To Regulate Child Care Services". (Bill 30)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Chair, I have a number of amendments, but it was my understanding that the government was going to make an amendment. So maybe –

MR. KING: It has to be with each clause.

MR. KIRBY: Oh, okay, good. I understand now.

So you are on clause 1.

CHAIR: Clause 1.

MR. KIRBY: Okay.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clause 2.

CHAIR: Shall clause 2 carry?

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wanted to get up and make a suggestion for an amendment to clause 2. Clause 2 is the definitions section of this bill. I think it is important to try to be as inclusive as possible when it comes to all of our legislation as it relates to education.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: Whether that is education at the preschool level, the primary, the elementary, the secondary, or post-secondary, and so on. I believe that government's intent over the past number of years has been to try to move to a more inclusive model in education.

Yesterday I asked a question in Question Period about the inclusion supports program review that government has promised as part of its 10-Year Child Care Strategy. I think we need to be explicit about inclusion of people who have been excluded in the education system at all levels over the past number of years. We do not want to go back to the days of Exon House and times when people were not included in the education system and were not included in their community by virtue of the fact.

I think what we ought to be doing with this bill is ensuring that the Child Care Act reflects that intent. I think in order to do that we need to be explicit, as I say.

I am going to suggest an amendment here to clause 2. I am going to move this, seconded by the Member for Mount Pearl South, that the bill

is amended at clause 2.(e) by adding immediately after the word "old" the words "and a child with special needs".

CHAIR: Thank you.

We will recess to consider the amendment.

This House stands in recess.

Recess

CHAIR: Order, please!

After consideration of the amendment, the amendment is not in order.

Shall clause 2 carry?

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I sort of alluded to the last time I was speaking, I hear from parents all of the time who are concerned and pointing out deficiencies in the child care system because they believe their children are not being included in child care. That is their concern.

We know when children with special needs, with exceptionalities of one sort or another, when parents are looking for an opportunity to place them in the child care system, they are often excluded because the level of support is not there.

So, my intention with the following amendment – I have an additional amendment – is to ensure that we are explicit, that children with special needs do not fall through the cracks, that they are provided with an opportunity for child care. That is not happening right now, and we need to change that.

The only way, I feel, and based on discussions I have had with advocates in the community over the past three years, the only way we can make that happen is to be explicit about what we intend. It is fine to say we include children and by that, we mean whatever. Well, I do not think there is a sufficient amount of specificity in any of that.

I will put forward the following amendment to clause 2. I move, seconded by the Member for Mount Pearl South, the bill is amended by adding immediately after clause 2.(g) the following clause (g) –

CHAIR: Clause 2.(g), is that what the hon. member is saying?

MR. KIRBY: I think there was a typo in what was provided to me by somebody who I will not – clause 2.(g) –

CHAIR: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: The following clause 2.(g), so the rest of the section would need to be renumbered accordingly.

It would read: “‘child with special needs’ means a person under the age of majority who suffers from a developmental, learning or behavioural disability or has been recognized as a person requiring a specialized program or specialized supervision”. That would be added there.

I apologize if it is not explicitly clear. I did provide these amendments for review ahead of time. I think maybe when they were reprinted, they might have added the number one here.

The bill is amended by adding immediately –

CHAIR: The bill is amended by adding immediately after clause 2.(g) the following clause.

MR. KIRBY: That is correct. Yes, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Okay. Thank you.

MR. KIRBY: You do not need me to read it out again, do you?

CHAIR: No, I have it here in front of me, Sir.

MR. KIRBY: Okay, thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Yes, I am just looking for clarification here. Is the intent that this

amendment would become the new (g) and all of (g) becomes (h)?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John’s North, for clarification.

MR. KIRBY: Yes, that is what I had intended. It did not come out like this in this version of it. That is what my intent was, yes. This would be (g) and the other one that is in there that is currently (g) would become (h).

CHAIR: It would become (h).

Thank you, hon. member.

This House will be recessed to consider the following amendment.

Thank you.

Recess

CHAIR: Order, please!

After consideration of the amendment, the amendment is not in order.

Shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, clause 2 carried.

CHAIR: Clause 3.

The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I realize this debate is very important, and, of course, everybody in this House is concerned about children. We are concerned to see that the best is done, particularly about our youngest children, and those are the children we are referring to when we are talking about this

particular act, An Act To Regulate Child Care Services.

While I appreciate what the members opposite are trying to accomplish, I want to ensure the people of the Province that we, too, are concerned about all children. That is why we looked at the previous two amendments that were brought forward very carefully and tried to have some discussion around them as well.

With clause 3, I listened very carefully yesterday, or the last legislative day when we discussed, and the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi and the Leader of the Third Party brought up a very good point when she spoke about having the continuum of care looked at with regard to early childhood development in the same way as we are looking at the Schools Act because that was the intent, in fact, back when we brought together the two departments of Early Childhood Development and Education.

She made reference to the Schools Act of 1997, and talked about the fact that there was reference in the Schools Act to safe and caring schools and about creating environments where learning can happen, and questioned why that was not included in this act. I thought that a very good point. We had some further discussion, and together with the drafters and Legislative Counsel, we then worked up an amendment, which I would like to present here today.

I will move, seconded by the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, that the bill is amended by adding immediately after clause 3 the following:

“3.1 The following persons shall promote a safe and nurturing environment for learning for children participating in child care services: (a) licensees; (b) child care service providers; (c) administrators; (d) caregivers; and (e) employees, students and volunteers who assist or provide services in the operation of a child care service or agency.”

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

This House will recess to consider the amendment.

Recess

CHAIR: Order, please!

After consideration, the amendment is not in order.

Shall clause 3 carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I am wondering if we can have some clarification or explanation as to why that was not in order.

CHAIR: Shall clause 3 carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, clause 3 carried.

CHAIR: Shall clause 4 carry?

The hon. the Member for St. Johns’ North.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I previously tried to make two amendments to the bill and it was not successful. What I am trying to point out, through my attempted amendments to the legislation, is to shine a light on a very sad, sad part of child care in Newfoundland –

CHAIR: I remind the hon. member, are you making an amendment to clause 4?

MR. KIRBY: I am.

CHAIR: Okay.

MR. KIRBY: It is consistent with the other two that I entered. The reason why I think – I am wondering I can motivate it, can I?

CHAIR: Yes, I am fine, hon. member. I was just trying to make sure that you were proposing an amendment.

MR. KIRBY: Okay, so I was just trying to motivate, but thanks for the leeway.

I am just trying to shine a light on more or less what I have learned through my study of this, through my discussion of this, and through my visits to child care centres. All the calls I have gotten from parents, from stakeholders, associations over the past number of years is that children are excluded oftentimes from child care and too often because of their special exceptionalities. They have different challenges and different needs from the bulk of students in the school system. I just think that is patently unfair.

We can say that this speaks to everyone, but it is not. It is not working right now. It is not working so we have to do something different. I think by singling out that children are excluded and are not receiving the same services as other children, I think that is really important. If anybody disagrees, you can go out and do a poll of all the associations in Newfoundland and Labrador if you like. Go out and do a poll of all the child care centres in Newfoundland and Labrador. You can go out and do a poll of all the parents, even those who do not have children with exceptionalities, and I think you will find that people will agree that children with special education needs deserve to have the same educational opportunities as other children in Newfoundland and Labrador from birth right on through. That is my intent, Mr. Chair. I wanted to clarify that.

I am going to make the following amendment, seconded by the Member for Mount Pearl South. The bill is amended at clause (4) by deleting the word “and” at the end of clause 4.(c), by deleting the period at the end of clause 4.(d) and substituting a semicolon and the word “and” and by adding immediately after that clause the following: “(e) establishing province-wide

policies and standards respecting the provision of services to children with special needs in child care settings.”

I just want to clarify what that would do because the beginning of that – that is part Part I, Administration, and it is the responsibility of the provincial director, because remember we talked about the provincial director is no longer going to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council; it is going to be the minister. This would read: the minister shall appoint a person – this is what it would logically mean – “The minister shall appoint a person to be the Provincial Director of Child Care who shall be responsible for” – and then you go down to (e) – “establishing province-wide policies and standards respecting the provision of services to children with special needs in child care settings.” That is what it would be, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The House will take a brief recess to consider the amendment.

This House is in recess.

Recess

CHAIR: Order, please!

We considered the amendment; the amendment is not in order.

Shall clause 4 carry?

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate you considering the amendment. We could propose further amendments, but as we have said already in the debate, we are certainly all in favour of passage of this legislation because it is something that we need. I think we should all be cognizant of the fact that children with special education needs and exceptionalities are not currently being accommodated in the child care system, and we have to try and put our heads together and find ways to change that because it is really not twenty-first century thinking, learning, or anything else.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I understand the intent of what the member opposite was trying to do with the amendments. Being concerned about children with special needs and trying to ensure inclusion for children with special needs is something that is exceptionally important to this government. That is why we have worked in a number of different areas with a number of different partners and a number of different groups; however, I would point out that the act itself was a legislative statute.

When the regulations are finished and he gets a chance to see the regulations, I want to assure him, the Member for St. John's North, and the people of the Province, that they will see much reference to inclusion, much reference to children with special needs, and how it is they are to be accommodated within our child care environments in Newfoundland and Labrador. That will be in the regulations, which is the right place for them to be.

I just want to assure any of the parents who are watching, there is no intent on the part of government to exclude that. The act is a legislative statute that had particular sections of it that needed looking at, nothing more. Looking at children with special needs is certainly very much part of what we will see in the regulations.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Shall clause 4 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, clause 4 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 5 through 42 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 5 to 42 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, clauses 5 through 42 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Regulate Child Care Services.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, that the Committee rise and report the bill.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 30.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

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

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

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 30 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole says that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 30 carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. KING: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to call from the Orders of the Day, Address in Reply.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to take a few minutes. I started to speak earlier this week on the Address in Reply and I want to take the last few minutes I have this afternoon to continue with that. It is good to stand here in the House to speak to that bill here this afternoon.

I just want to pick up on something that the Member for Bay of Islands talked about earlier today with regard to the meeting that took place last week in Corner Brook. I, too, was at that hospital committee meeting. Mr. Speaker, I too am supportive of the achievements and the advancement of the hospital in Corner Brook.

As the minister said in the House this week, it is a new facility, Mr. Speaker, that will continue to offer a high level of services currently available at Western Memorial, but we are going to move it forward even more than that in new program offerings, such as radiation therapy. It will give residents of the region access to radiation services closer to home, and that is always very important. I think members of both sides of the House all understand that and appreciate that. That is something that is going to take place and we are going to do.

Without having to travel to St. John's and keeping close to their families and supportive environments – numerous ministers in this House and the former Premier of the Province spoke to that when he was in this House. We are all very supportive of that. Just to commit to what was discussed in the meeting last week, and I know what the Member for Bay of Islands said today – we talked about the long-term care facility, which is budgeted in the House, will start in 2015, and the acute care and the rest of the buildings will start in 2016. So I know that we need to work together to ensure that takes place.

My commitment is there, and the commitment of this government is there for the long-term care facility to begin in 2015, and the acute care facility to begin in 2016 to provide the state-of-the-art, the best equipment, and the best possible health care that we can provide for the residents of Corner Brook, Mr. Speaker – not only the residents of Corner Brook, but it is a regional hospital and a regional facility with long-term care and acute care facilities for the entire people of the Western part of the Province.

I spoke at length to that last spring, and again I thought I would just put that in there again today. We can equate it to, Mr. Speaker, this particular work of the committee that is taking place in Corner Brook, and we worked with another committee in Corner Brook, this government did, and I know members opposite as well, when we were going through the months leading up to the mill announcement that we did just earlier this year. I spoke to that earlier on this week.

I know there was a concerned citizens group at that particular point in time that met with us and met with members opposite and we were in agreement about the value and the importance of the mill in Corner Brook. Not only for the current workers, not only for past workers, but for widows and widowers, and families of widows and widowers who worked with former Bowater and Kruger. We committed \$110 million to the mill in Corner Brook, not only for that particular region but for numerous communities throughout the Province.

It was a commitment, Mr. Speaker, for the industry – a commitment that took a number of months. I was a part of the group and others as well, opposite, we sat down and negotiated and spoke about it and dealt with it over a number of months, and made a commitment, and spent hours and hours and hours. I was the Parliamentary Secretary in Natural Resources – Agrifoods, at the time, with former Minister Kennedy, former Minister Marshall, he was with Natural Resources, and the current Minister of Natural Resources.

We worked with the people, we worked with the community, we worked with the unions, we worked with the former workers of the mill, we worked with management of the mill, and we

worked with the mother company in Montreal. It took fourteen or fifteen months, Mr. Speaker – perhaps a little longer than that. There are times when you are in negotiations, big negotiations – \$110 million – when you know what is taking place on the inside, and you just cannot talk about it publicly, but you know that along the rail or along the road that progress is taking place. You know along the way certain things you can say and certain things you cannot say. Along that journey, Mr. Speaker, we all had information and we tried to make as much information possible as you can, yet you do not want to jeopardize what might be transpiring, especially when you are dealing with private companies.

I really feel strong about the commitment we made to the mill in Corner Brook. I look opposite, as well, to the Member for Bay of Islands, and we had the support of them during that entire process. It is the same thing with the hospital, Mr. Speaker. When I say hospital, I am talking about the entire facility, all of the buildings that we are going to build in Corner Brook for the entire region. We need to work together and we need to commit together, such that the health of the people of Corner Brook and the entire region is second to none.

That is the commitment you have from me, as the Member for Humber West, and I know the member opposite and from this government, from the Premier of the Province, from the former Premier, from the Minister of Health, and the former ministers in this government, we talk about providing the very best possible services we can provide for the people of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, we have all done a lot of work over the last number of months, knocking on doors and talking to our constituents. I am very pleased about the information I have received from time to time when I speak to my constituents. They all tell me about the commitments we made to the people of the region and are very happy with the promises we made, and are happy with the promises we have committed and the promises we have delivered on.

Mr. Speaker, for the next three or four minutes I have in this chance to speak in Address in Reply, I want to talk for those last four or five

minutes this afternoon about the commitments we made to fishery in the Province. I want to speak in the capacity that I have right now as the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Speaker, it is a billion-dollar industry in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have seen massive changes in the fishery from the way the fishery was many, many years ago. It is now a billion-dollar industry. This government is committed, and I am proud to stand here as Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture to talk about how important the fishery is to all of Newfoundland and Labrador but, more importantly, how important the fishery is and aquaculture industry is to the rural parts of the Province.

It is the life blood of who we are as a culture and as a people, Mr. Speaker. The fishery has been around as long as our ancestors have been around. Previous to the Europeans coming to this great country of ours, this great land of ours, even before that, the fishery was what sustained our ancestors.

We talk about our non-renewal resources that we have today which are finite. We have them today. Eventually over time we will lose them, but we better not lose sight. As the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture it is important to me, and it is not lost on me as Fisheries Minister that the fishery is a renewable resource like our forestry; it is a renewable resource that will sustain our communities in rural parts of the Province for generations and generations to come, Mr. Speaker.

So, I am proud to be able to stand here today in the Address in Reply to talk about the billion-dollar industry and what we have committed. I want to take a couple of minutes just to talk briefly about two or three of those things – a \$4 million investment, Mr. Speaker, in the Fisheries Technology and New Opportunities Program. For people in the industry, perhaps not for the people who are listening at home, across my desk we put the acronym out there, FTNOP. How many times in the short period of time that I have been in Fisheries and Aquaculture do I see an application come across or approval to come across for a FTNOP, which enables the industry and fishers and harvesters and others who are looking at alternatives to technologies

that can enhance their ability to be able to compete with the industry worldwide, Mr. Speaker.

We had a collapse in our cod fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador, the moratorium, and we need to understand that although we had a collapse in the cod fishery in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, there was no collapse in the cod fishery worldwide. That fishery throughout the world continued. When we return to a cod fishery in the Province, it is important we all remember that we have the best technologies available for harvesters and for fishers and for plant workers, et cetera, because we are competing with the other countries of the world that are putting good quality products on the market.

I was over in China just very recently, and what I saw over there after being there for about eight days is the importance of quality, quality, quality. How many times did it get spoken to me by people from Norway, and people from Chile, and people from other countries of the world, how important quality is? I have had numerous meetings since I have been the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture – and actually, I am proud to say I do not believe there has been a phone call that has come to my office yet that I have not been able to sit down and arrange a time that I am going to be able to sit and meet with fishers and union representatives, whether from the South Coast or other parts of the Province, industry folk alike.

I am trying to do that and trying to get an understanding of where we need to be, Mr. Speaker, when the cod fishery – because we know that the cod fishery is coming back. We have had numerous years with shrimp and with crab, yet we need to be prepared. If we are going to get prepared for a return of the fisheries to be involved in the cod fishery, as we once knew it, focusing on quality, quality, quality, we need to make steps now so when that day comes we are going to open up that cod fishery again the way it was, then we need to be prepared, and that is what we are trying to do as a department, Mr. Speaker.

I am looking at the clock. It is five seconds that I have, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to speaking

about other fisheries and aquaculture issues as we go on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

MR. SPEAKER: Was the member asking for leave?

MR. GRANTER: I can ask for leave, Mr. Speaker, this afternoon.

MR. SPEAKER: The member has two minutes leave to finish.

MR. GRANTER: Two minutes leave.

Mr. Speaker, another investment I am glad to speak to this afternoon in the fishing industry is the \$2 million continued funding for the Canadian Centre for Fisheries Innovation. This investment will be made over two years to ensure industry stakeholders can avail of the centre's expertise and resources when pursuing innovations that build competitive advantages.

As I say all the time, if we are going to compete on the world stage, we need to be using the best technologies that we have and we need to be producing the highest quality fish product. We can take product in the Province, Mr. Speaker, and we can dump it on the world markets, but if we are not taking the best quality of fish out of water, no matter what species it is – if we are not taking that out of the water, good quality and being able to make sure it is fresh and go onto the world markets, clean, high quality, then we are going to be getting a lower price.

Sometimes, as I said before, and a question that was asked a week ago, we often talk about quotas and increasing the quotas. Obviously, there is another way as well that we can increase the amount of money that goes into the pockets of a fisher, or the amount of money that goes into the pockets of people who work in the fishery, is to increase the quality. When you increase the quality, Mr. Speaker, you are actually going to get a better price at the end of the day.

I know on average this past year, I understand – and I do not have that note in front of me – it

was around seventy cents a pound people got for cod fish, and they could have gotten like thirty-five, forty, forty-five, and fifty cents. On average across the board, I understand it was around seventy cents a pound in the previous year, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, another industry that is vitally important in the Province is the \$6 million we have allocated for Aquaculture Capital Equity Program, an investment that will help foster new investment in aquaculture operations which in turn will stimulate the economy in rural areas. We have seen how important the aquaculture industry is on the South Coast of the Province.

Do I have more leave, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: Does the member have leave to continue?

MR. GRANTER: A couple of more minutes?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, between 2006 and 2013, the provincial government invested approximately \$25 million to support aquaculture development in our industry in the Province. That leveraged \$400 million. So, \$400 million in aquaculture in the Province that was leveraged. Since I have been in the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, there is high interest in developing and further developing the aquaculture industry on the South Coast and on the Northeast Coast.

Mr. Speaker, another investment of \$4.9 million over two years to support the Centre for Fisheries Ecosystem Research. Since 2010, the provincial government has committed \$15.1 million to the Marine Institute Centre for the Fisheries Ecosystem Research. It conducts research – as I say to my hon. member across – that gives the Province unprecedented insight into trends involving provincial fish resources and marine environment, and helps us plan for the future.

Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude by saying the fishery has always been the backbone of who we are as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It sustained us – and I will continue to say to this – for hundreds of years and it will sustain us again

for generations and generations to come. As a Province, we need to be prepared as we re-enter, and I quote, the cod fishery as we move that industry forward. We need to continue to invest in the fisheries industry of the Province, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Given the time of day, I move, seconded by my hon. colleague, the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The motion is that this House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House now stands adjourned until Monday.

To those members who are travelling back to their districts, the weather is bad in different parts of the Island; I wish you safe travels on the weekend. I hope to see you all on Monday.

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