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Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

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MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

We would like to welcome to the public gallery Mr. Harry Cooze. Mr. Cooze will be the subject of a Member's statement today.

Statements by Members

Today for Members' statements we have the Members for the District of Lewisporte – Twillingate, Fogo Island – Cape Freels, Conception Bay East – Bell Island, Placentia West – Bellevue, Virginia Waters – Pleasantville and Topsail – Paradise.

The hon. Member for the District of Lewisporte – Twillingate.

MR. D. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize an outstanding citizen from the District of Lewisporte – Twillingate, Mr. Norman Austin.

Last month, Mr. Austin was the recipient of the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers, presented to him by the Governor General of Canada, David Johnston. The Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers recognizes the exceptional volunteer achievements of Canadians from across the country. Mr. Austin is certainly deserving of this honour.

For over a decade, Mr. Austin has dedicated himself to the region as a snowshoeing and athletic coach with the Special Olympics Newfoundland and Labrador and the Gander Wings club. In this role he has helped local athletes train and build confidence and reach their fullest potential.

Mr. Austin has no plans to stop volunteering, and no doubt will continue to contribute to the community of Lewisporte and to Special Olympics Newfoundland and Labrador in a very meaningful way.

I ask all hon. Members to join me and please congratulate Mr. Norman Austin on this prestigious award and thank him for his many years of volunteer service.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House to recognize and celebrate the efforts of two communities in my district that have held their first-ever Remembrance Day service. I had the privilege of attending the inaugural service in both Dover and Lumsden. Through the efforts of their volunteers and generosity of the donors, these communities built monuments that bear the names of those fallen in past world conflicts.

The memorial in Dover is located right in the middle of town. It will serve as a sombre focal point for residents of that community. The memorial in Lumsden has been built in the old Lumsden North Cemetery, right next to the grave of Pierce Parsons, a young man from the town who was one of the brave individuals who gave their lives on July 1 at Beaumont-Hamel. I was very proud to be able to take part in these services, and each was supported by a very large turnout.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in celebrating the efforts of these two communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I stand today to recognize a very active organization in my district. I speak of the Portugal Cove-St. Philip's Lions Club who, for the past 40 years, has supported the residents of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's through a multitude of special projects and unique events. I had the privilege of speaking at the Lions Club 40th anniversary banquet this past Saturday and saw

first-hand the impressive work they do to engage and improve the lives of residents.

They partnered with a multitude of groups to offer seniors programs, to supply equipment for disabled youth, special health equipment for citizens to improve their quality of life and the list of supports they offer goes on and on.

I would be remiss if I didn't note an international project the club was involved with this past year. The club took on a special project and sent their president, Mr. Bradley Moss, to Haiti in a partnership with the project Broken Earth to help provide free eye screening to over 650 patients and supplying eyeglasses from the Lions Club to 423 men, women and children.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating and thanking president Moss and all members of the Portugal Cove-St. Philip's Lions Club.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue.

MR. BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a man whose name has become synonymous with helping others, giving back to the community and putting the needs of those around him ahead of his own. His name is Harry Cooze and is in the gallery today.

As a long-time member of the Marystown Lions Club, he has served the sick, fundraised for the downtrodden and still serves as chair for the Lions Junior Speakout Competition. For this and his many years of service he was awarded in 2014 the Melvin Jones Fellowship Award, the highest honour for a Lion.

His second passion has always been physical fitness. He ran his first road race in 1957 while attending university and has run more Tely 10 races than we can count. He was a founding member of the Mariner's Athletic Club and I can safely say he is responsible for many, many people taking a healthier lifestyle more seriously – including me.

In 2006, he was recognized as the recipient of the Dr. John Williams Award from the Tely 10 road race.

I ask all hon. Members to join with me in congratulating Harry on his successes and for the many successes that he has encouraged others to attain.

Thank you, Harry.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to wish one of my constituents a very happy 100th birthday. Rita Symonds, who lives in Pleasantville, celebrated a century of life on Remembrance Day, surrounded by her friends and family. I had the honour of attending Ms. Symonds's birthday party and presented her with a certificate on behalf of myself and the hon. Premier.

It was a privilege to be able to meet someone who has lived through so many changes in our world. There was a great turnout for Ms. Symonds's party. I would estimate well over 50 people in attendance. This is a tremendous testament to how much she has affected the lives of people in a positive way.

I would also like to congratulate all of those who received the Duke of Edinburg International Award at the bronze level last Tuesday, including six members of my district. The Duke of Edinburg Award encourages youth to develop their leadership skills with a mixture of service, skill development, physical activity and adventurous journeys.

I ask all hon. Members in this House to join me in congratulating the Duke of Edinburg International Award recipients, all of them, for their hard work and wishing Ms. Rita Symonds a happy birthday.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the Town of Paradise and the St. John's Regional Fire Service on the opening of the brand new Paradise Fire Station No. 8 which celebrated its grand opening just recently, Friday, October 28.

To start the ceremony, the St. John's Regional Fire Service Honour Guard completed a parade of flags from the Paradise Town Hall to the brand new fire station. Thomas Tippett, a grade six student from Paradise, was the Honour Guard commander for a day, and was part of the flag march that led the opening ceremonies. He was selected during a contest as part of town's 2016 Municipal Awareness Days.

The St. John's Regional Fire Service is responsible for providing the region with an acceptable level of fire and emergency protection in the most economical manner, with a backup of emergency services being provided to a number of surrounding towns in the Northeast Avalon region. Fire Station No. 8 is equipped with Engine 8 and Tanker 8, a staff complement of 17 firefighters. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, it is a state-of-the-art facility.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating the Town of Paradise and St. John's Regional Fire Service for their enhanced service to the region.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the National Day of Remembrance for Road Crash Victims. This year's theme is "Moments Matter" and moments do matter, Mr. Speaker, because it only takes a

moment to lose everything that's important in someone's life.

Mr. Speaker, more than 1,800 people are killed in road crashes every year in Canada and another 150,000 are injured; road safety is a shared responsibility and each of us can take action to make our roads safer.

This afternoon I attended an event at the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary Headquarters where I met with many people who are dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of road safety in our province. Service NL's Motor Registration Division, the RNC and the RCMP are doing valuable work in this regard.

Service NL highway enforcement officers promote safety on public highways by monitoring vehicle traffic to ensure the *Highway Traffic Act* is respected.

Also, Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to brush clearing and public education. To date, a total of 14 tenders valued at \$1.95 million have been identified for brush cutting across the province. We are fortunate to be able to work with groups including Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Stand for Hannah, the Save our People Action Committee and Safety Services Newfoundland and Labrador, who help spread the message about road safety. These groups participated in today's event.

Mr. Speaker, I call on all my colleagues here in this hon. House to join me in thanking everyone who supports and promotes road safety in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: I'd like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. We, as Opposition, also join with government in

recognizing the National Day of Remembrance for Road Crash Victims.

Today our thoughts are with those families and individuals who have been devastated by road crashes. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank those who keep our roads safer including the RNC, the RCMP and the staff at Service NL; also, the many non-profit organizations that do such a diligent job to care for the cause of road safety.

I would also like to take a moment to encourage everyone in the province to be mindful of things we can do, the small little things that we can do to make sure our roads are safer, reduce speed, watch for weather conditions, non-distractive driving. There are so many different things we can do to make our roads safer.

When you look at 1,800 fatalities in Canada over a year, it's way too many. So anything we can do to reduce road hazards and different tragedies on roads, we want to encourage it also.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Because so many crashes have to do with moose on the highways, it is good to see the continuation of brush clearing and public education to address the many serious moose-vehicle collisions that continue to occur in the province.

I would encourage the minister to review the positive evaluation of fencing found in his government's own report of 2014, not just brush clearing.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agrifoods.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to highlight the provincial government's participation in the 2016 China Fisheries and Seafood Expo, which took place in Qingdao, China, from November 2 to 4.

This important seafood expo allows us to promote our quality seafood products to interested Chinese companies and help our producers build relationships in this important market. China is our second-largest export destination for seafood products. More than \$200 million – or 20 per cent – of our seafood exports went to China last year. Our key seafood exports to China include shrimp, snow crab, capelin, seal and turbot. As we transition to groundfish, China will continue to be an important market for us.

Mr. Speaker, I was also pleased to join federal and provincial counterparts in Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Ministerial Trade Mission events in Qingdao and Beijing. These meetings and events give us the opportunity to discuss market access and trade development issues for Canada's seafood and agricultural products with federal/provincial colleagues and government officials in China.

Mr. Speaker, in 2015 our seafood industry was valued at over \$1.2 billion. Participating in such events as the China Fisheries and Seafood Expo has the potential to open up additional business and opportunities for producers and we are proud to continue valuable support for the seafood industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. As I've said numerous times in this House, markets of our seafood are very

important for our fishery and our future in this province. I've heard from fishermen on a daily basis of having trouble selling their catch. Right now, we're looking at the groundfish returning and it's so important that our government be focused on the new markets that we need.

We talk about diversifying our economy. Well, our groundfish and our cod fishery coming back is one way in which we can save a lot of parts of rural Newfoundland and Labrador. It's so important that this government do due diligence to make sure that we have the markets in place.

Government promised a little while ago, and in their budget plan, that they were going to have a seafood marketing council put in place. I've heard nothing to date about that. I think it's going to be too late if government doesn't do action right away on marketing in our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. This is good news and I hope we open up new markets and new business possibilities.

The minister notes China is the second-largest export destination for our seafood products to the tune of \$200 million, but Newfoundland and Labrador is facing a serious job crisis. The fishery is one of our main employers, so I hope the minister is focused on creating more harvesting and value-added processing sector jobs for the people of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My first question today is for the Premier.

I ask the Premier: Why did the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have to hear from the Quebec minister of Natural Resources that you are having discussions with the premier of Quebec on Labrador hydro assets?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What has been known for quite some time now, if you look at what has been going on in our province right now in the mandate letter that was given to the minister back in December of 2015, just after the election, part of the development around Gull Island is that the minister would seek out opportunities.

To the former premier, I would say, Mr. Speaker, there has been no discussion with Quebec about the opening of the Upper Churchill contract or the Muskrat Falls Project or Gull Island. This came out in media reports out of Quebec yesterday. I reached out to the premier's office in Quebec last night, and he is out of the country, to get clarification on where this is coming from.

I have talked to the premier about the agreement on internal trade, which has nothing to do with those contracts. There are no negotiations ongoing with Premier Couillard in Quebec right now on the sale of assets of hydro or the Churchill Falls contract.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier probably should have called the Quebec minister of Natural Resources because he's the one who's publicly said that discussions have been ongoing for some time, Mr. Speaker. We're heard from the Quebec minister of Natural Resources.

Premier, when are we going to hear from your own Minister of Natural Resources about the Liberal's secret talks that are happening with Hydro-Québec?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the former premier mentioned in the media that came out yesterday that the minister of Natural Resources in Quebec mentioned about two premiers talking. Those discussions are not ongoing, so we reached out to the appropriate people, I would say, Mr. Speaker.

What was real interesting last night in that conversation, talking about secret conversations, the conversation that occurred before the former premier in 2015 is what came up during our conversation, I say, Mr. Speaker.

It was the former premier back in July of 2015, so we were told, that he had meetings. We have not had any.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, I did have discussions with the premier of Quebec and the premier of Quebec said to me: You end the legal action against Quebec and we'll have discussions.

So I ask the Premier: Will you abandon the legal action against Quebec to have discussions with the premier of Quebec?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So it's obvious now that the former premier has had secret meetings with the Quebec administration about the sale of assets. Maybe he will explain what happened in those secret meetings.

The last conversation I've had with Premier Couillard in Quebec was to notify him of this, is that we would be filing a notice of appeal in the last ruling against court action. The last conversation I had was to let him know that we would be filing a notice of appeal.

So we're not about relieving these court actions. We put the notice of appeal in. I've notified the premier of that, and no discussion since.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So the Premier is quite clear – and I'll make it quite clear for the Premier; there was no secret meeting with the premier of Quebec. He asked me to abandon the legal action and I refused, Premier. I would not it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: I wouldn't do it to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources said in September that there were no discussions happening with Quebec, so I ask the Minister of Natural Resources: Do you stand by that statement?

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

MS. COADY: Yes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On August 1, we asked the Minister of Natural Resources if the government is exploring options to selling assets or excess energy through Hydro-Québec, and if any negotiations have commenced with Hydro-Québec – and the minister responded just this Monday, three-and-a-half months later; 12 minutes before the House opened, the minister finally responded and she said neither the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador nor Nalcor are involved in discussions.

So I ask the Premier: Do you stand by that statement as well?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There were no discussions occurring with the Province of Quebec or Hydro-Québec that we were involved in, none whatsoever. However, I will say this: When you have an opportunity to pursue something that will benefit Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, our job is to explore the opportunities, whether they are with some other province –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Whether they be with some other province, be it Quebec, Nova Scotia, or someone else, the responsible thing to do is to explore the options that we would have available to us; not to be slamming doors against other provinces that are prepared to work with our province to improve the economic health in our province for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I am prepared to have discussions as long as it is a right deal and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians benefit from that. I would say, Mr. Speaker, the threshold of good deals is very low based on the work of the previous administration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And here we go with mixed messages from Members opposite again. Here we go.

The CEO of Nalcor has said he's having discussions with Quebec. He said he is. He represents the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Minister of Natural Resources says they're not having discussions with Quebec, Mr. Speaker. The Premier says they're not having discussions with Quebec. And now the minister of Natural Resources in Quebec stood before the media saying that discussions have been ongoing for some time.

How do you square that, Premier?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

How I square that is simply, it wasn't Premier Ball that was mentioned in that media outlet last night. It was former premiers. It was premiers. When officials from the Government of Quebec made reference to me, they said they've had discussions with the former premier. That is how this evolved.

I have not had any discussions with Premier Couillard, the minister of Natural Resources, accept to notify them that the notice of appeal would be going in; however, if there's a deal to be had that will benefit Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, I am prepared to have those discussions. Not on any conditions around court challenges and so on. If there's a deal to be had that will benefit Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, the responsible thing to do is not get past – we learned from our history, but not to let our past inhibit and restrict where we could be in the future, working with, not only the Province of Quebec, but indeed the Government of Canada.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, media reports from Quebec indicate otherwise, because media reports from Quebec specifically say that the Premier of Newfoundland – names him, I won't name him, Mr. Speaker, but names the Premier of Newfoundland – has had discussions with the premier of Quebec, Premier Couillard, for several months.

So is the Premier saying that information that the minister is saying is wrong?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm enjoying Question Period today, I would have to say.

First of all, the first call ever made with Premier Couillard was to congratulate us on taking government in our province. The second time was in Vancouver, when I met him there. We talked about climate change. We talked about the economy at the Council of the Federation. We met again in the Yukon, in Whitehorse, that was about the Agreement on Internal Trade and how we would have free flow of electricity through Quebec. There was one other call that was made after that about the Agreement on Internal Trade. The last call I had with Premier Couillard was to let him know we would be filing the notice of appeal. That is the extent of the conversations I've had with Premier Couillard of Quebec this year.

Not related to anything, the fear mongering, the thing the former premier is talking about today, that has not been the topic of our conversation; however, if there's a deal to be had for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that could benefit our future, I'm willing to have that discussion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I asked the Premier a few moments ago, the CEO of Nalcor is on the record as saying he's

having discussions with Quebec. Are those discussions being done with your blessing or without your knowledge?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The discussions that the CEO of Nalcor would have with Quebec are related to a one-third ownership in CF(L)Co with the operation of Churchill Falls. There's no discussion between the CEO of Nalcor and Hydro-Québec or officials in Quebec right now related to the Upper Churchill contract, Gull Island and so on. This has been clarified this morning, I understand, in the media.

Mr. Speaker, right now, the former premier is making suggestions and allegations that things are going on that are simply not going on. I would argue to say that the only discussions that have been had are the ones that occurred when he was the former premier back in 2015.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: So, Premier: Are you saying the discussions that the CEO of Nalcor had with Hydro-Québec at Muskrat Falls were actually about the Upper Churchill? Is that what you're trying to say, it had nothing to do with Muskrat Falls?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

They were in town, as far as I understand, to deal with the CF(L)Co, and the first time that they were there. I would also ask the former premier, what is wrong with putting in place relationships where you can work with other provinces, where you can – I know they're not used to working with federal governments, or not used to working with other provinces for that matter. What is wrong with exploring options that we have available to us?

The CEO of Nalcor right now – as a matter of fact, it was a former CEO of Nalcor that I would say said this, that if we were to explore and develop Gull Island the best possible route would be through Quebec. These were his words under that administration, I would say, Mr. Speaker.

So on behalf of the people of our province, the responsible thing to do, if there's a deal to be had, we will explore the options, but I will guarantee you one thing. We will not sell out the future of our province. We will not impact rate payers, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, I'll tell you what's wrong with having discussions with Quebec. I'll tell you what's wrong with that. For 40 years Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have been at the short end of the stick at the hands of Quebec.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Premier, that's what the problem is. For 40 years while Quebec received \$20 billion, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians received \$1 billion. That's what's wrong with Quebec.

I'll tell you what else is wrong, Premier. After effort after effort by previous governments from all stripes to try and resolve the differences between Quebec, they held us at our knees, Mr. Speaker, that's what happened. They held us to our knees. They held us at ransom, because we never had any control. That's what's wrong with talking to Quebec. And now they want us to give up legal action so they can entertain discussions.

So I'll ask you again, Premier: Will you commit here today to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador not to abandon those legal actions just so you can have discussions with Quebec?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Interestingly enough, we just heard a mouthful of rhetoric from the former premier of our province. What he didn't say, Mr. Speaker, was this. The former CEO of Nalcor, under his administration, they were having discussions with Hydro-Québec; they were having that. What he didn't say is that in July of 2015 he had had discussions with Hydro-Québec. Interestingly enough, he doesn't want to talk about those details.

The last conversation I had with Premier Couillard was to let him know that notice of appeal, appealing the court decision, that we were putting that in place. We're obviously not abandoning that appeal, Mr. Speaker, or would not have made that call. That's what I did.

Right now if the conditions are right for a discussion that will benefit Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, I would say what would be wrong with actually putting in place a program that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians finally would get some benefit. It didn't happen under their administration I would say, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've provided the Premier with the details of the discussion I had with the premier of Quebec. Just in case he didn't hear it, I'll provide it again. The premier of Quebec wanted us to drop legal action so we could have a discussion. The only way to have a discussion he said, drop the legal action, and I refused Premier. That's what I did, I refused.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: That's the details of the discussion we had.

Now I just asked the Premier, Mr. Speaker, and I'll ask him again: Will you commit to not ending the legal action against Quebec in order

to have discussions with the Province of Quebec?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, first and foremost, I haven't committed to even having a discussion when it comes to any of the details. I don't know what the details or conditions would be. But is he suggesting, is the former premier suggesting that we should not talk to, not put options in place for the future of our province? Is that really what he's talking about?

There have been no conditions put on me. They haven't asked me, Mr. Speaker, what the conditions would be. We're not even there yet.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, we should be very concerned right now. We should be very concerned.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: The Member opposite doesn't want to listen, but that's fine.

We should be very concerned and the province should be very concerned, because twice now I've asked the Premier a very straightforward question. Will he commit not to end the legal action against Quebec, not to end the legal action that are before the courts before having discussions with Quebec, and the Premier won't answer it.

Now, that's telling me that he's not committed to that. So I'll give him another chance: Will the Premier commit to not ending that legal action? Will he commit to not ending that legal action before having discussions with Quebec?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before I recognize the Premier, I would remind all hon. Members – I know this topic is very important to the people of the province, but the only individual that I wish to hear is the individual that has been recognized to speak.

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, it's obvious the former premier – they were much further along in discussions than we are as a government to actually lay that condition on the table. We're nowhere close to that. We are nowhere near that, Mr. Speaker.

I notified the premier about putting in a notice of appeal. I told him the notice of appeal was going in. He didn't ask to take it off the table. Obviously, with the notice of appeal that was going there, he saw that really as something that would be more court work that would be required on his behalf, I would say, Mr. Speaker.

Interesting enough, we are not that far along. I found out about this yesterday in media reports, Mr. Speaker. The last conversation I had with the premier of Quebec was to let him know that the notice of appeal was in. There are no conditions on any of this. There have been no conditions on any discussion papers because we do not have one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It sounds like there's a real difference now coming from the CEO of Nalcor, the minister of Natural Resources for Quebec and the Premier of our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: And we're left with now having to try and decipher where the most accurate information is coming from. To be honest with you, Mr. Speaker, we're not sure at this point in time. We're really not sure at this point in time.

August 31 was a significant day in the history of the Upper Churchill when the 25-year renewal kicked in.

I ask the Premier: Did you have any discussions with the premier of Quebec prior to that date?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The only discussion I had prior to that was about the Agreement on Internal Trade. The next discussion that I had was about the notice of appeal.

Interesting enough, though, I want to go back to the previous question that the former premier asked when he said: Before you start negotiations with the Province of Quebec, would you remove that condition? Why would I do that, take an option off the table, Mr. Speaker?

We would negotiate much better than that. We're not taking any options off the table that we have on the future of our province. If there's a deal to be had – I couldn't even go there if there's even a deal to be had. But if there is a deal to be had, it will be the right one. And I will guarantee you this, Mr. Speaker, it will be much better than the deal that we have in place related to the Muskrat Falls Project.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If the Premier is having discussions with the premier of Quebec about internal trade or having discussions about matters of mutual interest such as their very important, very valuable Labrador hydro assets, I ask the Premier: Why wouldn't you raise the August 31 renewal? Why wouldn't you raise that with the premier of Quebec if you're having those discussions?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just told the former premier that we were not having those discussions. We are not having them even today. Put in the notice of appeal, Mr. Speaker; it was the right thing to do to let them know that we were putting in that notice of appeal.

I will tell you this, Mr. Speaker, any deal that is struck in Newfoundland and Labrador related to any hydro project or any project that will require a partnership either with the federal Government of Canada or with other provinces, will be the right one. Not just for the people of Newfoundland as the Island portion, but it will also be for the Aboriginal indigenous people in Labrador. Something they had glaringly left out in the last deal, I say.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Premier: What discussions have you had with your federal cousins regarding Labrador hydro assets?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to answer that question because we've had a number of discussions with our federal colleagues. That's obviously a foreign discussion to the former administration and the former premier. They were not used to having those types of discussions.

But just recently – I guess it was in the news; I'm assuming that he noticed this – there was a \$2.9 billion enhancement to the federal loan Guarantee and other relief on the loan guarantee that was put in place. These were the only discussions that we were having with the federal government related to hydro projects in Labrador.

And I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, these have been very successful negotiations and discussions that we've had with our federal colleagues. And if in fact there's a deal to be made where the federal government can come in

and support Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in other projects, then that's a discussion that we're willing to have too, I say, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I asked the Premier a little earlier and I never got a clear answer, so I'm going to ask this again: Is the new head of Nalcor operating with the full knowledge and blessing of the Premier as he talks to Hydro-Québec about Muskrat Falls, the Upper Churchill, and maybe they're talking about Gull Island as well – is that with the full blessing of you, Premier?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We work very closely with the CEO of Nalcor and with the team at Nalcor for that matter, Mr. Speaker. We talk on a regular basis. Right now, I'm guessing and I'm sure that with any discussions that would be had related to the future of Newfoundland and Labrador, that we would work closely on those.

If we ever get to the point, which we're not – we're not at that point, Mr. Speaker – where we're having those discussions about the contract renewal of the Upper Churchill or Muskrat Falls or Gull Island Projects and so on, Mr. Speaker, yes, we would expect the CEO, we would expect Nalcor and this government and, as a matter of fact, with many people in Newfoundland and Labrador to be engaged with those discussions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: So Mr. Speaker, we know that Mr. Marshall, Stan Marshall, is running Nalcor. We know that the Premier has regular briefings from Judy Foote who really appears in many

ways, by many people's eyes, to be actually running the province.

So I ask the Premier: Who is making the decisions about these talks with Quebec? Who is making the decisions about the talks with Hydro-Québec and with the Quebec government? Is it you making the decisions, the minister, or is it somebody else?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I notice the former premier just did a fair amount of back tracking because when he closed off his question he really wanted to say: or is somebody else. What he was referring to, somebody else, would have been a regional minister, Minister Judy Foote, who I would say and is doing a very good job (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: And I do sense in the tone of his voice when he mentions Minister Foote there's a little bit of jealousy or almost animosity. Is he suggesting that Minister Foote and I, as Premier of this province, should not be working closely together? Is that what the former premier is saying, that I should not be working with Minister Foote to get the Marine Rescue Sub-Centre opened up, to get \$100 million for the core science building and the other federal programs that we brought, the loan guarantee, as an example?

Are you suggesting that Minister Foote and I should not be working together to benefit Newfoundlanders and Labradorians? Is that your suggestion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can assure the Premier and Members opposite, there's no jealousy when it comes to having good relations with either the federal

government or with other provincial governments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: It's a good thing for Newfoundland and Labrador to have good relations and I fully support having those good relations.

If you have relations with the Province of Quebec, which it appears the government opposite is, in some kind of way, and working towards a deal – and he says he wants to have a deal. I ask the Premier: Will you commit, right here in the House of Assembly today that if you are to reach any kind of an agreement with Quebec, with you or your government or Nalcor, if you reach that with Quebec or Hydro-Québec, will you first disclose the full deal to the people of the province and bring that to our Legislature here in the House of Assembly for a debate and ratification before it becomes binding with the Province of Quebec?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I just want to remind the former premier that on a Friday evening when he came out of Prime Minister Harper's office, some of the words he sent home as his message and his trip to Ottawa was: B'y, you can't trust that guy. It took him a long time – you can't trust Prime Minister Harper was his comments, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are a long ways from having any deal, any project, with Quebec or with Nova Scotia or anywhere, but I can guarantee you what we will put in place is a very open and transparent negotiation – if we ever get there, and I premise that by saying, we are not having discussions on the Upper Churchill contract or Gull Island or Muskrat Falls for that matter or any other projects.

Mr. Speaker, I hope for the benefit of our province and for the future of our province that we can get in place productive deals that would

benefit Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, but we're not there yet.

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I did go to Ottawa and I met with the prime minister. What I did when I left his office – in his office and when I left the office – I stood for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That's what I did, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: I put Newfoundlanders and Labradorians ahead of anybody else, especially the wishes of the prime minister of the day. I have no regret for doing that, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: The Premier has not answered my question. My question is very simple: If he reaches a deal with Quebec, if Nalcor or the government reaches a deal with Quebec or with Hydro-Québec, will he disclose that deal to the people of the province and bring that here to the Legislature for a full debate before it becomes binding?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I can guarantee you now – to the former premier I would say this, that I stand for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians too. I stand for –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: I will guarantee you this, that I will always stand for what's in the best interest of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians of all particular groups. Standing outside of some doorway in Ottawa and saying you can't trust the Prime Minister – Mr. Speaker, these are words that we all remember. Mr. Speaker, they had no results, though. Let's not forget, no results by those kinds of activities.

Mr. Speaker, we will be open and transparent, if we ever get to the point where there is something to discuss with our province. Mr. Speaker, we're not here today to outline what that process would look like but if we ever get there, I will guarantee you it will be very open and transparent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, the CEO of Nalcor said he wants to normalize relationships with Hydro-Québec over the Upper Churchill contract and the Quebec premier has since signalled a conciliatory approach to relationships with our province in connection with Churchill Falls power.

I ask the Premier, Mr. Speaker: Who's driving the discussions that Quebec has reported, the government or Nalcor? That is if he knows who's really in control.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned so many times during Question Period, there are no discussions being had. I ask the Leader of the Third Party, what's wrong with normalizing discussions or relationships with anyone? Is there something wrong with having a normal relationship with any particular province, I say to the Leader of the Third Party? Does she think everything must be abnormal to be successful? Is that your definition of successful, be abnormal?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I want good relationships with Quebec. I want things for this province, but I'm asking the Premier: Will he tell the people of the province what exactly it is that they want in speaking to Quebec?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we have discussions with Quebec or with Nova Scotia or New Brunswick or Ontario or if it's PEI, we enter into discussions in a very professional, very respectful way, Mr. Speaker. That is the way we work.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, we are not having discussions with Quebec. I've said this over and over. The CEO of Nalcor or this government right now, at some point – if we ever get to the point where there are discussions that are ongoing with any province, if it's Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, PEI, Quebec or with the federal government, Mr. Speaker, we hope that we can bring back benefits to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We're not there yet, but there's nothing wrong with pursuing opportunities for our province. Unless the Leader of the Third Party thinks – if she's willing to stand here today and say that these should not happen, that we should not normalize relationships with any provinces. Is, indeed, that where you are?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

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

Whether the discussions are formal or informal, I'm asking the Premier to tell the people of this province: What's the connection with what's happening right now with Quebec and Muskrat Falls?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

None at all; there are no discussions with Quebec, either the province or Hydro-Québec, related to Muskrat Falls. The last discussion that we had with Premier Couillard, as I just mentioned, was about notice of appeal. I've said that quite a few times. That is the last call that I've had with Premier Couillard. The next opportunity that we will be getting together will be at the Council of the Federation which will be occurring sometime early December of this year.

There's no agenda set. There's no meeting set. When he gets back from where he is – he's travelling right now, but when he gets back I would imagine we'll reach out again. There's no urgency here by us. There's no template, there's no schedule, there's no agenda; nothing wrong with having relationships with any province. There's no discussion on any deal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour mused about indexing the province's minimum wage, currently the lowest in Canada. The starting point for indexing is critical. Since 2010, the cost of living, especially for food, housing and other essentials, has gone up significantly.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Will he commit to recovering this lost ground for low-income workers as a starting point for indexing?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

This government is the first government to have reached out, to have received a mandate from the people not only to continue minimum wage as a universal labour standard, but as well this government received, for the first time – was the first government to actually ask for and receive a mandate to index minimum wage. That implies an increase.

Mr. Speaker, I've been able to reach out already to labour groups, to social advocacy groups and to others to have a very broad, general discussion about certain parameters about this, get their input. That's part of this discussion of what the hon. Member has referred to on the floor of the House.

We'll be making announcements based on those discussions, the discussions that we've had internally, but most importantly, on the basis of a mandate we've already received from the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Will he hold a true review of minimum wage with real public consultations and a public report, and when?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour for a quick response.

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

We have already received a strong mandate not only to maintain the minimum wage as a universal labour standard but as well to index. That was a mandate that was received by the people. It was the first time any government in Newfoundland and Labrador has sought and received that mandate. We shall fulfill that mandate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I give notice and ask leave of the House to confirm the Member for Bonavista as a Member of the Public Accounts Committee. This motion is seconded by the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Does the hon. Government House Leader have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay. The motion is that the Member for Bonavista be confirmed as a Member for the Public Accounts Committee.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

Further notices of motion?

Petitions.

Petitions

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

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

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland –

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

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

What I'm bringing forward is the requests of people of this province and I think we do need respect for their words.

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

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has the greatest percentage of the workforce earning the provincial minimum wage in Canada with women, youth and those from rural areas making up a disproportionate number of these workers; and

WHEREAS the minimum wage does not provide enough money for the necessities of life because a person earning minimum wage working 40 hours a week made between \$21,320 and \$21,840 in 2015 which is barely above the low-income cut off of \$20,065 for St. John's and a working couple on minimum wage with two children will also make close to low income; and

WHEREAS nine provinces and territories will have a higher minimum wage than Newfoundland and Labrador by May 2016;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to legislate an immediate increase in the minimum wage to restore the loss of purchasing power since 2010 and an annual adjustment to the minimum wage beginning in 2016 to reflect the consumer price index.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I bring forth this petition which people continue to send in to us here in our offices. This one comes from people in St. John's – and I'd like to point out from an area of the city where I think there a lot of people who are working for low wages and minimum wage. People who are affected themselves.

Since they sent this petition in to us, we now know that we are totally behind everybody else in the country when it comes to what our minimum wage is since October – this petition was signed prior to May of 2016. We now know

that we are behind everybody else in this country and this is not acceptable. There was a point at which we were up there at the top.

As I was saying yesterday when I presented the petition from another group of people, Mr. Speaker, there are those who oppose minimum wage saying that it's bad for the economy. As I was pointing out yesterday, we have now on record many economists, both in the US and in Canada – hundreds of them, literally hundreds of economists from all stripes. They aren't from political parties. They're from all various stripes of economists when it comes to doing their analysis, so many of them are saying that a higher minimum wage is good for the economy.

The one I would like to quote, Mr. Speaker, is Joseph Stiglitz, who himself is a Nobel Prize winner of economics who says, "... the weight of evidence now showing that increases in the minimum wage have had little or no negative effect on the employment of minimum-wage workers"

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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 school-age children are walking to school in areas with no sidewalks, no traffic lights, and through areas without crosswalks; and

WHEREAS this puts the safety of these children at risk;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to ensure the safety of all children by removing the 1.6-kilometre busing policy where safety is a concern.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, we do great amounts of work to ensure schools are safe. We have to do equal amounts of work to ensure kids get to school safely. As we know, particularly in some of the suburban and fast-growing communities here, that were normally rural-oriented for the last 20 or 30 years, but in the last decade have seen some substantial growth, yet still have areas where there's very little shoulder, if any, there's a ditching area where the sightlines are of question. These children, these students, need to be able to get to school in a safe manner.

We have a lot of infill over the last number of years with houses being built in particular areas that obviously add to the demographics, the number of students who are now walking, because they don't fit within that 1.6-kilometre busing route.

I realize, as the former minister of Transportation and Works, it would be tens of millions, maybe hundreds of millions of dollars to be able to go fill in these ditches, put culverts in, put sidewalks to ensure that our children are walking in a safe manner and that the sightlines in those are improved. I understand that's a work in progress.

It was started through our administration. There's no doubt this administration will continue to do what it can. But the immediate safety factor here – and we hear it from school councils, we hear it from parents, from kids themselves. We hear about multitudes of close near misses, where children were at a safety factor because a truck and a bus came where kids were on the shoulder and there was no space for them.

In the wintertime, with the ability of moving snow and having no areas to put it, kids are walking in the middle of the roads. So what we're asking here is that there has to be an investment in ensuring safety around the children that we put so much of an investment in to ensure that their education is not second rate – and we've moved that to that level. Let's ensure their safety, in getting to that institution, is not second rate.

So we're asking through this petition – and there's no doubt we'll continue this. I know my colleagues will from both parties on this side of the House. I suspect it's no doubt an issue with the Members on the government side also about safety, about the 1.6 kilometres. It's not only in the urban and suburban areas; it's also in the rural areas.

Kids have to walk a certain distance, particularly in adverse weather conditions, particularly around our drain areas and some of the other storm areas we run into with shoulders and these types of things. So it's very easily alleviated by changing the 1.6-kilometre bus policy and ensuring that we invest properly so that we have a safe mechanism for children to be able to get to our school system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS government has once again cut the libraries budget threatening the closure of 54 libraries; and

WHEREAS libraries are often the backbone of their communities, especially for those with little access to government services, where they offer learning opportunities and computer access; and

WHEREAS libraries and librarians are critical in efforts to improve the province's literacy levels which are among the lowest in Canada; and

WHEREAS already strapped municipalities are not in a position to take over the operation and cost of libraries;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to keep those libraries open and work on a long-term plan to strengthen the library system.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, we have incredibly well-educated, well-informed, committed, passionate and compassionate librarians right across our province. They know the needs of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. They have served their libraries well. They know whether their libraries are working or not and they are in the employ already of the government, of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, of the department.

Yet, this Department of Education has commissioned an accounting firm to check out whether or not we need our libraries. And we know that the budget for that, the bill for doing that is going to be over \$200,000. But the people of the communities intimately know whether or not their libraries are working. They intimately know what are the needs of their communities. They intimately know is the literacy levels in their communities. They intimately know how their libraries can best respond to the needs of their communities.

Yet, what has this government done? Instead of engaging the expertise of the people already hired and already serving the communities, they get an accounting firm to figure out whether or not we need our libraries and how they should be responding to the needs of our people.

Mr. Speaker, that makes no sense at all. I'd like to say it's an absolute waste of taxpayers' dollars. In fact, what should have been happening is that the people again who are the experts on the ground, they were the ones who should be able to assess what it is their libraries need to do in their communities, what are the needs of their particular communities.

Does this government not have any confidence in those who have the expertise, in those who are on the ground, in those who are already well serving the people of our communities? Does this government not trust them, not have any confidence in what they're doing? Instead, they hire an accounting firm.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know what else there is to be said about that.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

MR. SPEAKER: It being Private Members' Day, I call on the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville to present your private Member' motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very pleased to rise in this hon. House to bring forward the private Member's resolution here today.

WHEREAS the upgrading and development of road infrastructure is of paramount importance to the economic future of Newfoundland and Labrador; and

WHEREAS the traditional approach to road construction has led to momentous traffic backups, delays and frustration for citizens, tourists and businesses alike; and

WHEREAS it can be shown that nighttime paving will significantly reduce the negative impacts of road construction through traffic slowdowns and travel delays:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador initiative to implement a pilot project early in 2017 which uses nighttime paving as its primary method for completing the work.

This is moved by the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville and seconded by the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

In *The Way Forward* document, Mr. Speaker, there were specific items addressing the possibility of introducing nighttime paving programs in this province. The action plan outlines in broad themes, which stated categorically that we will improve the provincial road networks. I quote: "Our Government will

take several measures to enhance planning and decision making for road projects and to improve information sharing with the public and other stakeholders."

It also affords us the chance to look at things in a different way. Good governance means innovatively delivering services to the public by trying new things and figuring out whether or not these new things will work. By taking a different perspective on the issue, we give ourselves a benefit of choice. I think that is important to note as we begin debate on this resolution.

I'm particularly excited to speak to this resolution as a former city councillor in the City of St. John's, as those of us who worked in municipal councils and municipal politics – there are many of us around the table here today – understand the concerns that are expressed by constituents that disruptions of roadwork and paving can present.

The big issue for constituents in the major centres, not just in major centres but in rural Newfoundland as well or rural parts of our province is huge – testing ways that our current paving schedules could be improved is vital if we're expecting to deliver services to the people of the province in a better way.

The Way Forward indicates this: "In the first six months, we will: Adopt multi-year planning and early tendering of roadwork." In fact, we intend to "release a full list of road projects for the coming year in January 2017." This has never been done before. Call of Action 1.22 calls for the release of tender for a nighttime road construction project in January 2017. This, too, has never been done before.

The Way Forward document addresses the need for innovation in all sectors of our economy. This is just one example of the province looking not only to diversify the way we do things, but to better the economy and have better outcomes in the operations of this service. If we can come up with an innovative way to invest in road infrastructure, while also reducing some of the irritants of constructions like travel delays and lost time, why would we not engage in this activity or this pilot project?

For years we have heard the complaints, people complaining about the times of delays and time tie-ups associated with seasonal roadwork and upgrading. It has long been an accepted fact in our communities that in order to get this major roadwork done, we have to suffer through delays and the frustration associated with these delays.

No one will forget the long delays with the upgrading that took place outside Gander this year – the hon. Member for Gander in front of me know it all too well – or trying to navigate through Terra Nova National Park this summer. I can recall one day last summer when people were delayed well over two hours and took these complaints to social media as well as radio outlets to ensure that the rest of the public and government all were well aware of the issues they were facing there.

These delays at the height of our construction and tourism seasons have a major impact. We often don't think about these impacts and how they affect the lives of people, but think about it today when we're making this decision here to try this pilot project.

There are not very many ways to get around our province in every area. Not everyone has the ability to charter flights or hire a ship, although I'm sure we could try to ask the hon. Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island to see if he can find us a couple of ships.

Most folks, whether they're travelling to visit friends or relatives, or travelling across for work or delivering of goods or for medical care, they have to take the roads through our beautiful, scenic province. That effectively means that the flow of people around this place, from place to place around our province is affected by construction bottlenecks. In places like Terra Nova National Park, where there is only one way through, those bottlenecks can back up traffic for miles and, in turn, hours.

AN HON. MEMBER: The good District of Terra Nova.

MR. B. DAVIS: The great District of Terra Nova.

Tourism operators find this very challenging as well because their clients that are trying to

attend their particular areas get stuck in these tie-ups and miss their appointments, or don't get to experience the full value of their areas that they're planning on attending. It's not really fair to these individuals.

Tourism is one of our greatest economic success stories of the last two decades. Our communities have pulled themselves up by the bootstraps that have been devastated by the cod fishery closure and created a billion-dollar industry. That's the best of what Newfoundland and Labrador spirit is. It's a declaration that when we're faced with adversity, we'll find ways to get around that. We can innovate. We find the creative solutions.

The tourism industry has absolutely transformed rural Newfoundland and our province, but the operators of these tourist operations need roads for their clients and customers to travel over in order to reach these beautiful tourist sites. Now as our clients have to travel through bottlenecks caused by road construction delays, it can harm the operator's reputation or the feelings these tourist have when they come visit our province.

I think our role as government is to create the ideal conditions for business to operate in. That, more than anything else, is what a government is supposed to be doing to help industry succeed. So if we've tried out this innovative approach to road paving and we found out that it had merit and it helped ease some congestions on the roads and some of the problems our residents are facing, that's an example of good governance. Improving on the existing way of doing things is exactly what our role as a government should be.

We don't have it within our power to haul tourists and show them a great time, that's what the very skilled operators in our province do. But one thing we do have the power to do is the ability to make it easier for tourists to traverse our province and get around. This initiative we're debating here today, if it's successful, will do exactly that.

For this reason, I'm very happy to speak in favour of this resolution. This sort of innovative solution, oriented approach to the challenges we are facing in Newfoundland and Labrador has been and will be a key strength for our administration. Newfoundland and Labrador

needs innovative thinking and outside-the-box approaches now more than ever.

People with doctor's appointments and emergency cases all slow down because of delays caused by road construction. That's an obvious health and safety issue. It is one that causes concern for many people who live in rural Newfoundland that might be travelling longer distances for medical appointments. The measures needed to fix ailing infrastructure can result in traffic congestions and delays and cost people to miss appointments or make it difficult for someone in need of emergency care.

So if we can implement a way of doing things that cuts down on the amount of time that people have to traverse over our roads and be tied up in construction areas, I think we should at least try to see if it can work.

Forcing people to sit in their cars idling away while waiting for construction equipment to clear the roads is frustrating for business operators trying to meet deadlines, and citizens who are trying to make their appointments. I think we're going to have a perfect opportunity to have others here talk today about this initiative, and hopefully we can have a cross-aisle appeal. This is a very good initiative that I think at least we could look at the options of trying to make it work.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, following up to this private member's motion by the hon. Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville, I note they're bringing it in as a pilot project for 2017.

Night construction was a talked about issue when my colleague from Conception Bay East – Bell Island was Minister of Transportation and Works. I know there were a lot of issues – being in CBS, it was a huge issue. It became a big issue in my district because construction was happening on Pitts Memorial Drive and there

was huge traffic congestion. As anyone who knows in CBS, the routes, that's the main artery out of the town. There was a lot of pushback at the time, and the media, the open line shows were pretty busy. A lot of people were frustrated, which I can understand. Everyone has places to go and lead busy lives.

Anyway, my colleague had spoken about this issue on numerous occasions. As the former administration there, there was no opposition to doing this but there were a lot of concerns. I assumed that by proposing this private member's motion of a pilot project, I guess that's probably a good way to go forward to see what issues may arise from doing something like this.

There are things that I think need to be considered, even as we move forward. I think we'll bring it to light, some of the issues that we feel are important, and we had discussed ourselves. The number one concern that jumps out at me is safety.

Night construction; I've witnessed night construction in other – down in the US it's quite common, and other places throughout Canada, as far as I know. Safety is a huge – you can't stress the importance of safety. As we know, we had a couple of fatalities within the Department of Transportation and Works, which were quite tragic; one on the Outer Ring Road and one on the West Coast, which was affected by a flag person. Those happened in daylight, Madam Speaker.

We're talking about nighttime construction. So you can go down – safety is an issue, you can go down with a lot of angles on that. You bring out lighting, so are you going to have flags people? Will there be flags people? What's the lighting like there? Will you have activated traffic lights during the nighttime? Personally, I think it's a big safety feature with having a flag person, a man stood up with a sign in the dark. Natural light is so important.

Artificial lighting, there are problems with that, especially when you're on the highways doing this type of work. There are a lot of benefits to it, obviously. You're doing it at a lower – as proponents of nighttime construction will tell you, you're doing it with less traffic congestion.

Obviously, it's nighttime, you're not going to have the same issue of congestion. Depending on how close residential homes are, of course, you're going to run into the case of noise. Noise is always a factor that people have concerns about.

Another thing, too, it's a different dynamic when you're looking at those road projects. Contractors operate their asphalt plants usually during a 12-hour day. They probably fire it up at 5 o'clock in the morning, which is a two-hour affair from my knowledge of it. They run it until dark pretty much. A lot of those asphalt plants now would be probably running around the clock. That's a cost which actually will go on to the contract. So I guess value for money. Will you get the same bang for your buck, so to speak, Madam Speaker?

I believe, if I'm not mistaken, when my colleague was minister that was something that was discussed about a lot, was the cost. Roughly, there could be a 20 per cent increase in costs associated with that because you have your own staff people, too. You're doing nighttime construction; it's outside of their hours. So you have staffing issues within the department, to have inspectors, engineers out there to oversee these projects, whether that be overtime or hiring additional staff.

It's like everything, there's an increased cost. Probably the number one thing for me, safety has to be the number one issue. I know in the department there has been a lot of work put into creating a safer environment based on a couple of tragedies. In that department, TW in general, throughout that department it's more – I used to say when I was there, you didn't feel like you were in a government department. You felt like you were in an engineering firm. There were project management teams everywhere. There were more going around with work boots than suits. It was interesting that way.

The only fear – and I say this pretty well from my own personal experience. When I heard, a couple of years back, when people started pushing about nighttime construction, based on what was happening, construction was in my district. Safety, and I don't know how you – I suppose during the daytime, a bright sunny day, I suppose you can never make everything 100

per cent safe, but I do believe that has to be the driving force with nighttime construction. Make it as safe as possible.

Artificial lights are only so good. I have seen construction projects where they've used the lighting, but most of the ones I've seen, the roads were actually closed off. There was no moving traffic through those areas. Traffic was diverted. So they just had a workspace that was lit. Around here, we don't have that luxury. If you're getting on the Outer Ring Road, or any of our busy roads and you're putting artificial lights up to do paving that, to me, is a concern.

Another issue too, anyone who is familiar with asphalt, is temperatures. You've got an ideal temperature. If I'm not mistaken, dry and above 12 degrees Celsius is meant to be – anything above that is good for when you lay asphalt for tack coats, the technicalities of it, for joins, cold joins and whatever. You got to have appropriate temperatures to get a good coating of asphalt down, one that is going to last.

I have some information, but a lot of studies have shown that nighttime, obviously, the temperatures drop even during the summertime. Above 12 degrees is optimal. We know that a lot of our summer nights you're hoping you're above that, but you are running that risk.

There was one area where – it was in the study there – they based it on from three to 30 months after nighttime construction of asphalt compared to daytime, and the quality of asphalt deteriorated much quicker. There were several studies done proving this from nighttime to daytime. So a lot of that, no doubt, had to do with the difference in temperatures from day to night.

Again, as I say, I think it's a great concept. I think it's a great idea to do this, to run this pilot project, but there are a lot of issues that I think need to be brought to light, which is what I'm trying to do now.

Another issue, Madam Speaker, is your workforce. These are things you all think about, but on the flip side of it, I guess the department needing extra staff, you're looking at the contractors that are working on these jobs supplying the asphalt. I mean, you can't control

the hours that those people work because contractors are out to optimize whatever dollars they can from a contract.

That's something I guess within the department, they have their pre-start-up meetings and whatnot with contractors. It's very important that staff get the proper rest periods because not all – there are a lot of great contractors out there and I know a lot of them actually. I have several big companies that live in my district so I won't be on record as criticizing them.

I understand that they have to make a living too. Staffing is always an issue, truck drivers and equipment operators and that. So you may have put an added cost on them. And if the added cost can't be absorbed, you may get people working excessive hours in order to do this nighttime work in addition to what they'll be doing during the daytime, because from my knowledge daytime construction, paving won't stop. I'm sure big projects you might try to convert it to nighttime to get it done quicker; that's something I think will work. I think you'll have both of it with the nighttime picking it up and getting it done twice as fast.

I guess another problem – and it brings us to – we're only a population of a half a million people. I realize that a quarter million and probably more live on the Avalon Peninsula. It's always an interesting point that I find how impatient society has become. You get road construction on one of your main arteries and the Twitter world and *VOCM Back Talk* and *Open Line* are full of people complaining about the contractors. Yet, if they're driving through roads that are full of ruts and potholes, they're on about that too. In actual fact, within a week or 10 days most of these jobs are done and over with and they're gone.

I do understand that people get frustrated and that's the lives we all live, but I always find that kind of curious to me. It's different if this is going to be tore up for six months, but most times this might be a week or two and you go with your patch and grind work.

So in keeping with today's society and the fast-moving, busy lives people live, it's an interesting approach. It's one that, like I say, me and my colleague did discuss. He spoke publicly

on it numerous times and it was a lot of consideration being given within the department. But there were a lot of, I suppose, concerns that we probably never ever really got to because it was kind of talked about and the concept was being debated as for trying to implement it, like we're doing now, for a pilot project for next year, obviously it takes a couple of years to kind of rationalize. You have to talk to your construction associations and whatnot and get buy-in from all of them because that is another issue too.

Another question too is: Will contractors do this? That's the question. They don't have to. If they do it, they're going to do it at a premium. So when I get back the value for money – you have a \$10 million job that if you do it in the daytime, you're going to get \$10 million of the work. If you do it in the nighttime, you might only get \$8 million. Is that the best value for money because you don't want to frustrate drivers during the daytime? They're going to be late getting home from work or they're going to be delayed getting somewhere or it causes a lot of congestion and frustration. What is it?

I know the Minister of Transportation pointed out, during the last sitting, if he had a billion dollars he'd get every road done in the province. Well, I guess that's the question you toss in your mind now. In the meantime, we're not going to save a billion dollars at this or save a billion, but are you getting the best bang for your buck? As we all know, bad roads are a lightning rod and getting them paved is usually very important to people. Many commuters on our busy roads want a decent road to drive one.

So are you getting the best value for money with this nighttime construction if you have to pay an extra 20 per cent? That's \$200,000 on \$1 million worth of asphalt. In today's economy and today's construction world, you're not getting very far on \$1 million worth of asphalt. It's a sad statement. At one time that used to do a lot of pavement, but it does not anymore.

We support this pilot project, obviously. We thought it was a good idea, but there are a lot of areas of concern that I hope, before it's implemented, the minister and his staff work out.

I can't overemphasize the importance of safety. Safety has to be paramount with this because I have a lot of concerns. At one time in my previous life, a long, long time ago, I worked in construction. There was a gentleman who was the flag person on the job and we worked after dark. It was dusk actually. It was just coming on dark. It's kind of a sad story actually. The foreman gave me the cheques. He said can you give Johnny his cheque. I turned around to give him his cheque, I got about five feet away from him and his hard hat hit me in the back of the leg. He got ran over by a tandem dump truck and died two days later.

On a very personal note, that's the equivalent of a nighttime construction. Obviously not in the same environments of which you have artificial light, but there are a lot of dangers working in construction in the daytime, let alone nighttime.

That's my only message: caution and concern. I want to be on record as saying that I really believe, and I have no doubt, that the department will take – before they implement something like this, that it will be their guiding principle.

Other than that, like I said, we do generally support it. If it means getting more roads paved and getting it done in a hassle-free manner, we're all for it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm just waiting for my light to come on so you guys can hear and of course our listeners at home. Here we are.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Well, it's certainly a pleasure to stand here and to second this motion or our pilot project. But to respond, actually, to my hon. colleague across the House there, the Member for CBS, he made mention would contractors be on board with

this. They have the option of not doing it. We happen to know for a fact that the Heavy Civil Association that represents companies and their suppliers, who have built infrastructure throughout our province, supports this initiative. So there we are.

I'll put the question out there. How many of us have travelled across the province, whether it be this summer or in years past, or on our Trans-Canada Highway here just on the Avalon Peninsula and we've been delayed. I've been delayed many times, actually, going back and forth from my great District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave to the Confederation Building here in St. John's. We've had to spend a lot of time just sitting there in traffic.

Sometimes, if you're not anticipating this, we're not always aware that there are traffic delays on the road. I was held up for – I was over an hour late, actually, for an appointment. So I'll put that question to us. How many of us have experienced the frustration of traffic delays during daytime, especially during the summer hours in our summer season when this construction is carried out.

I also took the initiative to consult with some constituents on their opinion on this in the strong District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave which I represent, of course. Nighttime operations are certainly not a new idea. We know it's done in other jurisdictions and it has been for some time, though it certainly would be a first for my District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave and throughout our province.

We've seen it in other areas in the execution of the construction activity performed after regular business hours, after the evening commute, when many people are trying to make their way home after a long day and after the daylight hours. We know for a fact that there certainly will be less traffic on the road, which could definitely increase the safety of these workers.

There have been incidents where fatalities have resulted. We know this happened just recently here in the St. John's area. So as a result – and this is due to speeding motorists looking to get home after their day at work and not adhering to posted reduced speed limits and other warnings.

This also provides a benefit to the public as a whole where construction activity would not delay commuters getting home after work. Summertime, as we know, can be hot. It has been rare in our province, but lately we've been experiencing some good, hot weather in our province. We have had some high temperatures over the past few years. Extreme heat can also have an impact on the health and well-being of our construction workers, whether it's a flag person standing with little activity or an operator performing physical demanding tasks.

Nighttime operations can address these potential health risks. Construction traffic itself will have increased flexibility and mobility at work sites and improve logistics in moving materials. Cost-saving results from efficiency improvements due to the reduction of logistic issues, public traffic, et cetera should also be noted here.

In today's economy, in the attempt to address maintenance issues for all our constituents, savings and costs and execution time is second only to above-mentioned safety. Of course, this should come only to the above-mentioned safety concerns. Safety is first, as our colleagues mentioned. That is obviously my concern as an MHA and I would safely say it's everybody's concern here, every MHA.

Should an accident occur requiring medical assistance to be mobilized at the site, the reduced traffic at nighttime would allow an easy path for medics to reach the injured person.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: Hear, hear!

Also, after doing some research in going through this, nighttime temperatures, as I mentioned, are better for construction workers to work and to be even more productive. Night work helps our local businesses.

We have an active cruise ship industry here in our province in our great Port of St. John's. Due to the heavy construction carried out in our summer season, businesses are shut down and this is a loss of revenue. It also doesn't really put up the welcome mat when we have visitors from across the world visiting our port here in St. John's, for example, when those cruise ships

come in. Nighttime would certainly help our local businesses.

When construction work is being completed near a business, nighttime is best. Construction work can block off an entire section of a road and parking lots affecting business profit. Nighttime work is certainly better when most businesses are closed.

Fewer cars on the road mean less traffic for the work zones. As well, a well-lit area is easier for drivers to see. It has been proven in other jurisdictions that it works. It works in Nova Scotia; it's worked in Prince Edward Island, Ontario and, of course, around North America.

In closing I will say, according to Bill Rieken, a paving application specialist: In the equipment world, nighttime paving has been in practice in various parts of North America for over 30 years now. My colleague for Fogo Island – Cape Freels is excited about this topic, I can see. Nighttime paving has been in practice in part of North America for over 30 years now, so, many decades. It is established, continually expanding and certainly not going away.

I want to applaud our Department of Transportation and Works for introducing this pilot project in our province so we can first see the measure and measure the outcomes. Our pilot project will allow for some real evidence gathering as to whether or not this will work for a long-term basis here in our jurisdiction of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We all know the Trans-Labrador Highway could certainly benefit from this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: I'll also speak for Harvey Street in the Town of Harbour Grace which is the Conception Bay Highway and is the jurisdiction of the province. Anybody who has taken a drive through Harbour Grace in the past number of years, it's clear to see that Harvey Street has been neglected for many, many years throughout the Town of Harbour Grace.

I'll compare it to Mario Kart. Is anybody here familiar with Mario Kart, the Nintendo 64 game? A child of the '80s, of course Nintendo,

I'm a big fan. Driving on Harvey Street in Harbour Grace is like playing Mario Kart because there are so many obstacles to avoid, from potholes and broken infrastructure in the road. Maybe nighttime paving would allow us to get these jobs done and to get them done faster.

As I mentioned, it will give us the real opportunity to gather the evidence, whether or not this will work. Here are some things that we have to determine. Will nighttime paving mean safer paving? A well-lit, timed construction area will easily be identified from further away by out coming drivers. Will that slow quicker and make the work area safer? There will be a lot less traffic at night so the number of stops and starts for construction teams should improve productivity. They will not have to stop everything every few minutes to allow the flow of traffic. We can all attest to that.

The children are going back to school in September which is the height of the construction season. It can be pretty frustrating. If you have to be some place for 9 o'clock, in some areas you should leave by 7:30 o'clock in order to get there on time. We've all been held up.

It's constituents who call me with these concerns. It's also said to increase road rage. Has anyone ever experienced road rage? Our viewers at home, my colleagues here on either side of the House, it gets frustrating. It's said that drivers are different behind the wheel as they would be if you meet somebody in person. That is a major concern.

Will nighttime paving result in more paving being carried out? Well, I sure hope so. I sure hope to see that carried out in the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, throughout our Conception Bay Highway, and I will say again on Harvey Street in Harbour Grace. Or will it take longer to do because of limited lighting? Well, we do know that we will have the lighting.

Again, pollution, we have idling cars to consider when you're stuck there in that traffic for sometimes as long as 40 minutes. Anybody travelling through the great Terra Nova Park district, every year construction is ongoing there and you're held up; look no further than the Trans-Canada Highway here on the Avalon

Peninsula just this past summer, the Outer Ring Road. This affects constituents, residents from all across the Avalon and all across the province.

I have a number of commuters in the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave who leave every morning to drive in from Bay Roberts or Harbour Grace or Upper Island Cove or Spaniard's Bay to make their way to St. John's. It will affect people getting home to their family at nighttime sitting there. It will contribute to the air pollution.

So I certainly would agree to this pilot project, and I hope all of our hon. colleagues will certainly agree to it as well and vote in favour of this motion. It's done in other jurisdictions. Excuse the pun, but we are behind the ball on this one with regard to our nighttime construction. We're on the ground. Let's try it, let's see if this works.

I would encourage all hon. colleagues here to certainly vote in favour of this motion. Indeed, it is a pleasure to second this motion. So let's see it happening and we'll see, and we'll wish those professionals, of course, who carry out this work a safe workplace. We wish them all the best and we look forward to this now, this coming spring this year.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's indeed a privilege to stand and speak to this private Member's resolution today. I'll start the same way I'm going to end, by thanking the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville for presenting this and telling him that I will wholeheartedly be supporting this. That's the way I will end it at the end also, but I'll also outline as to why.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: I will outline exactly why. There's no doubt the conversations here have

been totally and will continue to be around mitigating some of the concerns that everybody would have regarding doing nighttime paving or nighttime construction of any level, particularly as a pilot.

There's no doubt, I have the full confidence in the department and the minister that they'll carve out a project that they can test all the potential scenarios they may run into so that they're cognizant of being able to say if this is going to be on a go-forward basis, how we address safety, how we address the additional costing, how we address the impact it may have if it's in a closer residential area from a noise perspective, how we're going to be able to address the additional piece of equipment that the contractors and that may have.

I like the concept that it's coming as a pilot. When I served as minister of Transportation and Works, one of the key things that I realized, and perhaps the one thing that I got the most adverse pushback from the general public, was around construction, but particularly around paving in the middle of the summer or particularly early to mid-September when people for some reason – traffic; people think it's the summer. We found traffic seems to increase in that separate September to 1st of October months. The minister can attest. His data would show the same thing.

What I did realize at the end of the day, people no doubt – I guess our attention spans and our patience are limited than they would have been before because we're always in a hurry. There are so many things that are happening for a family having to be somewhere, for medical appointments, for your doctors' appointments, for contractors moving whatever product they have wherever they're going. When we only have so many arteries coming into major centres, it has an impact.

Unfortunate for me at the time, but fortunate for the travellers afterwards, there was some major work that had to be done on the Outer Ring Road particularly, and the CBS Bypass road. What I inherited when I took over as minister was two major bridge projects. When you get into bridges, everything comes to a stop. It's not even about routing one lane around. At times, you actually literally have to stop and back up.

When you've got 10,000 to 15,000 to 20,000 cars coming from CBS and 10,000, or 15,000 or 20,000 coming from Mount Pearl or 20,000, or 30,000 or 40,000 coming out of the city at any given time, you get congestion, you get backups and you get people very irritable, people late for scheduling and that. So that adds to the confusion. Then you get the contractors who are on edge because there are cars coming on – particularly a lane that's set for one inside lane, are taking the outside lane. Then you have the RNC that has to step up patrol. So it does have a major impact when you do it in heavy traffic volume areas, no doubt.

So I'm happy to see there's a pilot going to be put in play. Hopefully it will be around – no doubt I have confidence it will be – somewhere where it has that collaborative approach and that medium between where we have some heavy congestion, but where we also have an ability to moderate and modify exactly what we're doing as we go through it.

The previous speaker had mentioned the Heavy Civil. I remember meeting with the Heavy Civil. At the time, it was a big blow-up. It was September, we were 80 per cent into our contracts and the general public – and that became a big issue about nighttime paving.

We met, and no doubt, everybody agreed we'd love to be able to get to it. Mid-season you weren't able to do it. We did talk about some of the restrictions and we obviously had to get on and defend why we couldn't just change midstream what we were doing. We talked about the concerns. The concerns are still there, but in a pilot they can be addressed in a modified process so that you ensure safety is the key component there, and you ensure you get your best bang for your dollar.

I was fortunate enough to be able to travel to other jurisdictions to have a look at this. Had we formed government, and had I been asked to be the minister of Transportation, it's one of the things that I wanted to move forward because it does have an impact on our tourism. It has an impact on our business community. It has an impact on people's day-to-day lives. But you wanted to ensure you had that balance of safety, the equitable investment and the quality of the job that is being done.

There is a process. Other jurisdictions have found ways to do it. It's not as simple as people think just because you come in and do it. They do it in downtown Montreal. I remember going and looking at it and getting a reality check that, well, 95 per cent of downtown Montreal is not there in the nighttime. From a lighting point of view, all you could see, it's like daytime down there because of the natural buildings. I said I can't compare that to what we would do in Newfoundland and Labrador, so you have to find other places.

Nova Scotia and New Brunswick had found ways where they're doing nighttime paving on the arteries outside of the cities so that they could still have an area where it wasn't disruptive to residential areas. You're bringing in generators for artificial lighting; you're also bringing in equipment at all different times of the night as part of that process.

So they did it and I followed up on some of the information. The data looked like this could be workable. I'm glad to see that the minister and his department have taken it, and that the Member for Virginia Waters is putting this forward, because there are merits in what we're doing here for the betterment of people. There's no doubt a whole collaborative approach on how we do these things and how we make them work. I do remember sitting with the officials in the department and having a full dialogue about what are the best ways that we move forward.

The best way to move forward – and I know the minister has done this – is engage the industry because the industry has to be prepared for it. Sometimes they can modify their workforce. There's specialized training that they may have to do with them. There's giving their own employees an opportunity to say, look, unfortunately I can't work nighttime, I have responsibilities for my family in other ways. So you want to make the industry family friendly also.

So doing it as a pilot and getting it out there, you give the industry an opportunity to adjust accordingly their schedules and the way they do things. It gives them an opportunity now to look at other jurisdictions who may have modified a piece of equipment that can make this more efficient, make it safer, make it be more

beneficial and make it show that at the end of the day, the real data would clearly tell us whether or not this can be the way we go forward on 10 or 20 or 50 or 800 or 90 per cent of the contracts that we put out there.

You know, I do want to outline that people say nighttime; we'll do this if we're in some small community where there are 10 cars a day. That wouldn't be the intent. I'm confident that the Member who put this forward, we weren't talking about that level, that you would spend 20 or 30 per cent more just to give that privilege that people wouldn't have to wait two or three minutes when they're putting a culvert in and digging before they pave the road, these type of things. So there's a balance there.

The balance is around in heavy congested areas or in areas where there's going to be a big tear up and it's going to be a big inconvenience for people or have a disruption around businesses, particularly businesses that operate in the daytime. It's very important to be able to do that.

I know the City of St. John's is grappling with how they're going to deal with some of the things when they get into construction in the city itself. They have a unique situation. They have as much business in the daytime as they do in the nighttime, so there may be a medium there that they are going to have to come up with.

I do remember – and I say this tongue-in-cheek, but it was funny. Anybody who's a minister would know you don't make it as a minister until Kevin Tobin gives you a cartoon and he puts it in *The Telegram*. Well, my first cartoon was all about the nighttime paving issue. He had a beautiful caricature of me. He called it NyQuil and it was all about how you get rid of the congestion, wake up, all these type of things. It sort of said Brazil will drink this, it would make all of his problems go away when it came to nighttime paving. So it was a good tongue-in-cheek process, but the issue was still there.

We could say we were going to add additional contractors to try to speed the process up, but for the period of time that the contractors were in play, it had a major impact on people's ability to travel, meet their scheduling needs. It did have an impact on certain businesses. We heard that.

We had a couple of businesses at times threaten they were going to sue us for lost revenues. I understood their frustration. You would try to go back and explain this is the process we have, this is how it's played out for the last 70 or 80 years that we've been doing paving in this province. But we are open to looking at new ways of doing it and we had to have dialogue with the industry and we had looked at other jurisdictions.

Again, the fact that we're moving to this level, no doubt, us on this side will be supporting that. We see this as a great next step, the next step in improving how we do things in Newfoundland and Labrador. You'll find on this side that we're very open to trying new innovative ways.

Sometimes you have to try something and realize, oh, we have to modify it, and maybe we have to take another approach to it. But this is a good first step, and no doubt I would think it would be welcomed by the construction industry themselves, it would be welcomed by the municipalities that are going to have to deal with it. It also would be welcomed by other jurisdictions because there are businesses in other areas that may want to come in here and be able to offer their expertise to help out. So there's an ability here to develop some good partnerships between existing businesses here.

And this may become a niche where local companies – because don't forget, the terrain in Newfoundland and Labrador and some of the environmental challenges that they face, would make us better to do a multitude of things anywhere else in this world. Because once we manage to modify how we do that – and our workforce is second to none when it comes to skill set – then who knows. Maybe then, this becomes a spinoff business because we've now been able to compete in jurisdictions where paving is done in the nighttime.

So there are other types of times when – in our jurisdiction here maybe it's too late in the season or too early in the season for us to get started. These trained people can go work for other contractors for a period of time and then come on back when we're ready to do it. So there are all kinds of benefits here that can be done. Before it couldn't be done because our workers weren't familiar with nighttime paving, didn't

have the understanding of how you operate a piece of equipment in pure darkness on the side of a road or in the middle of a street on one of our main thoroughfares. So there are some other positive things that can come out of this, there's no doubt about it.

The thing I like again about this is that it's a new innovative approach to things. It's sort of think outside of the box because if you said it before, there are times – and I don't mind saying that I had to try to justify why we couldn't do it. We use all of our standard things; it's about safety and cost overrun and noise congestion and all these things around those types of things. But, at the end of the day, there's nothing in this province that can't be done. It's just having the will to do it, making sure you do due diligence when you put it in play and making sure, more importantly, that you collaborate with all those who have the expertise to do it.

Hats off to the department and hats off to the Member for putting this forward; I'm going to be looking forward to hearing a little bit more about the dialogue between the industry and what they're talking about and how they're engaged into it. I'm looking forward to hear new innovative ways that they're going to approach this.

There's no doubt I suspect some of their engineers, some of their key foremen, some of their owners and some of their workers are thinking about if we're going to bid on something like that, here's what we need to do to modify our existing backhoe now to have better lighting or a better backup signal. Here's how we better give visibility to our flag people. How do you get that sign to stand out more 400 feet on a highway on a dark highway? So there are all kinds of things like that.

Some of the companies here may start modifying the vests that they make for people, the stop signs and the yield signs that they make. The lighting pylons now, while they're all visible, may necessarily have to be done a different way. So there could be another industry that can spin from what we've started here. It's a great opportunity.

I think we all have a responsibility here to promote that we're moving this forward. So any

business that has an innovative way that they think might improve safety or improve the quality of the work that's being done – and it could be the paving companies because the reality is here, and my colleague had mentioned it, nighttime in Newfoundland and Labrador, as we know, beautiful summers, the night is when we get our cold periods of time. So maybe how they wrap the asphalt when they travel, maybe how the plants mixed it at the time, there may be all kinds of innovative ways that may open up other industries for us in this province.

So it's a great start to what I'm hoping will be a way of addressing some of the challenges we have in particular areas. That may be modified because some years maybe we're doing 90 per cent of our stuff in heavy congested traffic areas. Other times, it may be in isolated, smaller areas that we're paving a road that was a dirt road for the last 70 years and now we're paving that. You may not have to get into that. That will be your standard daytime.

So the industry has to know that there's a mixture there. I'm glad there's no pushback from the industry, because a few years ago when we talked about using polymer, which was a mixture because of the ruts in heavy traffic areas, some companies weren't adverse to it, but they were adverse to it because they weren't ready for it. There's a certain thing that you have to have as part of your plant to be able to do the mixture of it. So people weren't ready for it.

Since we started announcing it, other companies have invested. So it's a new investment for them. They found a new way of using technology. They've even become innovative enough to be able to use it in a manner that we're hopeful the quality of the pavement we get now will even be beyond what we expected when we were adding the polymer at an additional cost.

So when you start a process, while there might be a little pushback or a little misunderstanding of exactly what you're trying to achieve, I think the end results prove themselves. That was seen with the polymer process. We're confident now that we'll get more years out of our main thoroughfares before we have to replace the ruts. We've used it on the Trans-Labrador Highway

to ensure that highway lasts as long as possible before we have to do any repairs to it.

So again, this is another creative way, another engaging way and it's another way that our industry can take the lead and moves things forward. So I do applaud the department, applaud the government. I applaud my hon. Member over there for bringing this forward. I do look forward to hearing from other Members, and I do look forward to being able to say aye in putting this forward and look forward to the pilot as we get into this early in our spring.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly my pleasure to stand today and support this resolution. I'd just like to thank my hon. Members for making the motion, seconding the motion and putting this forward.

I'd also like to say a big thank you to the former minister of Transportation and Works when he talked about the caricature and getting a cartoon made in his image. I would like to thank him for the opportunity of just one month in office, I got mine done. And it was with the *Veteran*. So it was certainly interesting because it gave my department and gave some of my staff an opportunity, when I celebrated my birthday a few months after, that they used that cartoon as the front of the cake. So I reaped some benefits from actually having that there. So I thank the former minister for that.

Madam Speaker, it is certainly a pleasure for me today to stand and support this resolution and to just talk for a few minutes about what we are actually doing with this pilot project. One of the key areas for us as a government is to make sure that we engage and we collaborate with industry. One of the things that we decided to do early on as we were looking at the possibility of doing a pilot project for nighttime paving was to consult with the Heavy Civil Association and I must say that the president, Mr. Jim Organ, and the entire

board as well as the contractors were very receptive and certainly were very supportive of us moving forward on this initiative.

I might add too, Madam Speaker, that I'm excited. This is just another example of this government being proactive and actually looking at – I know for years and years and years and I know the former minister must have been bombarded with people that were calling in and complaining about the fact that they had to wait for hours sometimes in the summer when it was hot.

However, Madam Speaker, this government, we have reacted and we have reacted in a positive way. We can forever sit back and make excuses and say why this can't be done and why that can't be done, but in the end it shows leadership, it shows understanding when we're able to take that and now change it into doing a pilot project so we can determine whether nighttime paving works for the province.

I just want to really thank all of my colleagues. When we discussed this and when we talked about this in *The Way Forward*, I got the support. I got the support from the Premier. I got the support from Cabinet. I got the support from my government that this is the way we want to do things. These are new ways in which we can work to make sure that what we're doing as a government will benefit the people that are actually having to face these challenges.

Madam Speaker, I know my colleagues have talked about the fact that sometimes in the summer we have to wait for these long lines when it's construction. Geographically, we may be a large province; however, there is not a lot of flexibility when it comes to alternate routes. We do not have the luxury of having alternate routes whereby we can go around construction areas, so that has created problems over the years. I know when we look at the Trans-Canada Highway in particular – where most of the traffic happens and created some of the problems this past summer – we do not have that luxury of being able to go around these construction areas.

Madam Speaker, I was actually sitting in my office this summer and I had a call from one of my constituents who I know very, very well who

was sitting in a car for over two hours with her children and grandchildren in the car. I can only imagine the frustration that must have been. We all know, as adults, trying to sit for two hours in a car waiting for someone to flag us through; that in itself is frustrating enough. Imagine compounding that issue and that problem when you have children that are exposed to that as well.

So, Madam Speaker, I thought it was important for me, as minister, to take the lead to ask my government, our government, to support me in looking at an opportunity whereby we can go out and have a pilot project. Part of the reason for a pilot project is to give us the information we need. What we're going to do is simultaneously, when we do this pilot project, we're not going to do the pilot project on the Outer Ring Road and compare it to the Trans-Canada Highway that could be between Badger and Grand Falls-Windsor.

When we do the pilot project, Madam Speaker, it will be simultaneously in an area that the volumes of traffic are the same; conditions are the same so that we can actually do a comparison. That's part of what the hon. Member opposite talked about when he was making his points; some very, very good points because we have to compare apples to apples. It's important for us, when we make a decision we need to know whether the cost is going to be 10 per cent more or 20 per cent more. You can't really do that if you're not looking at comparable areas in which you're doing this pilot.

So that was part of the strategy we used, to make sure that when we do the pilot we will have enough information, there will be enough data that will come from what we're looking at so we can actually compare that with the traditional, conventional way of paving during the day. I think it's important for us to do that because we can gather that information and in the end, Madam Speaker, it will determine whether this is something we want to move forward in subsequent years if it's going to cost us 30 per cent more. Then, we're going to have to make a decision. So we want to do 30 per cent and cost more than was 30 per cent less in paving. So these are decisions that we can make once we have all of that information.

So I think it's important for us when we're doing this pilot project that we do it right, that we know what we're doing, that it makes sense. And that we're able to, at the end, be able to take all of that information and then make a decision as we move forward on how we want to proceed with nighttime paving.

Madam Speaker, one of the things that we really want to emphasize is safety. When I became minister back in December and my first meeting that I had with staff when we talked about through our briefings, I wanted to make sure that everyone in my department – every single person in my department – was fully aware that safety is going to be number one in my department.

I think it's important that we recognize that and we realize that. Safety is the most important thing that we can talk about, and make sure that all of our employees who leave in the morning to go to work can expect that they are in a safe working environment, and that every family and person who is leaving can be expected to return in the afternoon safe. I think it's important for us because when we look at Transportation and Works, we are dealing with a lot of heavy equipment; we're dealing with adverse weather conditions in the winter. Some of the conditions that we are dealing with on a daily basis are sometimes challenging. When we look at that, we must realize that safety has to be number one.

So when we look at this pilot project we understand that it's going to be nighttime paving and there will be some challenges that will be associated with that; however, we are making sure that we've taken all the measures necessary. When we implement this nighttime paving, all of the boxes have been checked when it comes to safety because that is the most important thing that we have to deal with.

I can assure my Members opposite, as well as my colleagues, that safety is going to be number one. That will be certainly something that we will be making sure that all of our employees are fully aware of the fact that we will be adhering to that.

Madam Speaker, again, as I said, this is exciting. It's exciting for me as a minister; it's exciting

for us as a government. I'm just hoping – and the indication is – that the Members opposite will be supporting the resolution today. I think that's an important step for us because we can put aside politics and we can realize that this is an initiative that is for the benefit of those people that are actually going to be on our highways during the summer. It will give us an opportunity to better strategize as we move forward.

Madam Speaker, this year we were able to accomplish a fair amount of paving on our highways. One of the reasons we were able to do that is because this year we initiated early tendering. When we initiated early tendering, we were able to get our contracts, the tenders awarded early. We were finding that we were getting a better return on the tender values.

I will have some stats, Mr. Speaker, in subsequent sittings of the House that I will be bringing forward; letting the hon. Members know that this is the amount of paving we're able to do during 2017. We have some comparative numbers in previous years, so we can show the Members in this House that what we're doing is in the right direction and that we're making sure we're getting the best value for our dollars. That is certainly important for us.

As a government, we are conscious of best value. That's something we will continue to do because we want to look at areas that we can save money or invest money so that we can get a better return. So these are areas, particularly in my department, Mr. Speaker, that we've been spending a lot of time on lately to make sure we are getting the best return we possibly can.

As we continue to look at new options with new technology, with new opportunities, this is something that I feel as a government we will continue to do. We will, certainly, be in a position – in spite of our fiscal situation that we're faced, we are in a position that we have to make wise choices; our decisions that we have to make have to be based on where we're going to get the best value for our dollars.

I think, Mr. Speaker, we are moving in that direction and we will continue to move in that direction. So I'm certainly looking forward to

and I'm so pleased to be able to stand and say that this particular resolution will pass unanimously, I'm hoping today, so that we can now finally tell the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador we are no longer going to sit by and not take any action.

We are now going to look at opportunities and ways in which we can – we've listened to the people. We know your frustrations. We know your concerns. Now we're certainly taking that and we're putting into action because we feel it is important for us to listen and it is also important for us to react to what you're saying and the suggestions you're putting forward.

So, Mr. Speaker, this can be and this will be an exciting day for us. I'm looking forward to getting this pilot project out this summer and certainly looking forward to the information we're going to be able to collect, the information we're going to be able to get back from the results on this pilot project. I have my fingers crossed that hopefully it will work, and hopefully we'll be able to get a good return on that. Then we'll be able to take that and hopefully in subsequent years then, Mr. Speaker, to be able to add more areas to nighttime paving.

I think some of the concerns we've had with regard to the paving; I think we will be able to determine they're probably not necessarily accurate. I think we'll be able to find that through nighttime paving, we will probably be in a better position and we'll have a better flow of traffic and people will not be caused to have the delays that we've seen in the last few summers.

So, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity. I certainly look forward to the result of this resolution today.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

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

Yes, I'm happy to stand and add my voice to the discussion this afternoon. Although I have to say, I'm a bit bemused by the fact that we're dealing with a private Member's motion about a decision that government has already made, and vote on a resolution that sort of goes nowhere; but, if nothing else, it does give the opportunity to us to stand and talk about the issues with regard to night paving, and I'm glad to do that.

I think we are behind the times here in Newfoundland and Labrador when it comes to it. I agree with everything my colleagues have said, both in the government side and the Official Opposition, with regard to the need for looking at this whole issue and the need for looking at it, though, with great care.

Yes, I do not see any reason for not supporting it, but I certainly do have a concern with regard to the issues that have been raised by the Minister of Transportation and Works and raised by the mover. There are concerns and we have to make sure that in putting this pilot together, all of those concerns are taken care of.

Now I noticed that the minister just referred to collaboration with the industry. I didn't hear him talk about collaboration with the unions. I presume that would be something that has taken place. If not, that has to take place because the unions represent the concerns of the workers. I can imagine there are a lot of questions that have to be looked at here.

For example, is the nighttime paving going to be seen as overtime? Or is there going to be, as part of this pilot, a shift system put in place so that the workers are actually doing a shift that is a regular shift and not overtime. Obviously, in looking at the economics of it, if this is overtime, then it automatically is going to be more expensive than doing daytime paving. So we haven't gotten any details from either the mover or from the minister with regard to that. I would like to have an answer to that when the mover stands at the end of the afternoon, to tell us what exactly the plan is.

It's the same way when it comes to the safety issues. The safety issues for workers, for me, are paramount. I do believe we have to be concerned about the general public. I do believe we have to be concerned about the absolute frustration of

people having to be held up sometimes for an hour or more when paving is going on the Trans-Canada Highway or on any of the other major routes in the province.

We have a very short summer, so the period of time for doing our roads is much shorter than, say, in Southern Ontario, or much shorter than in the southern parts of the other provinces. Or much shorter than over in BC, in the southern part, and do not even have to deal with the fact of having freezing temperatures and snow. So we have a very short period of time for keeping our roads in good condition and we need them in good condition for the safety of the people who use the roads.

One of my colleagues, I think, in the government talked about the whole issue of road rage, and that is an issue. When you have our main thoroughfares being cut up with paving in high-traffic time, people do get frustrated. So night paving, in actual fact, in and of itself, can become a positive, safe thing to do. But in terms of the workers, then we have to look at what is safe for the workers. I would assume that this pilot project could not be put together without co-operation from the unions, not just from other companies in the industry. Because it's the unions who represent the workers and the unions who, I am pretty sure, will know what has been done in this whole area in other districts, whether in our own country or in the United States, if we just look at the North American continent.

Some of the safety issues we need to consider for the workers have to do with things like the impact of working at night. Working at night may not be something that has been the norm for the workers who are involved. Working at night can really have a negative effect on workers. For example, the body operates counter to its natural rhythm because our natural rhythm is to be awake in the daytime and to sleep at night. That's how we operate, for most people.

There are some people whose internal clock is slightly different. There are some people who work at night very easily but for most of us, when it's bright light, that's when we should be awake. When it's dark, that's when we should be sleeping. Some people adjust easily. Some people don't.

There is a disorder called shift work sleep disorder. It is a recognized medical disorder that can affect those who work at night. I put this out to the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville to let us know whether or not they've looked at studies with regard to this impact on workers of this disorder. Will they monitor workers during the pilot project? Will workers have a choice?

If workers do not want to have to pave at night because they know their bodies will not adjust easily, are they going to have a choice with regard to working at night or is the pilot going to be something that shows the night paving would be a normal shift in the work of these workers? Sometimes they're paving at night and sometimes they're paving in the daytime. That can have a tremendous impact on the effectiveness of the worker and on the health of the worker.

People who have shift work sleep disorder suffer from insomnia and excessive sleepiness. People with this disorder are more accident prone, they're irritable, they become irritable easily and they're less able to concentrate. The disorder can also lead to depression, anxiety, substance abuse and other mood disorders.

Now, I know that lots of professions have shift work that involves nightshifts and all I'm saying is this will be a new reality for the workers who are working for Transportation and Works. This will be a new reality for them; they're not used to working at night. They're not used to doing shifts. Although I do note that in the City of St. John's right now, they are doing some nightshifts in their effort to get the roads of St. John's fixed before things freeze up. They want to get the bit of paving left, especially where they are repairing little pieces of roads, but it's not the norm.

So we need to look at what has happened in other jurisdictions when workers who are not used to doing this do it. So there has to be, I think, an aspect of training that involves helping them to understand the different lifestyle that is going to be involved for them and what they may need to do and what their employer may need to do – and that means the government – in terms of making sure that they are ready for this change.

It's going to be difficult for them in the sense that it's a pilot so it's something that's going to start and it's going to end. We can't take it for granted; that's all I'm saying. I don't think listening to the minister, it doesn't sound to me like its being taken for granted but I'd like details. I'd like to know how the workers are going to be prepared.

Research from other jurisdictions emphasizes the importance of improved safety through a number of ways. We have to make sure – and this is going to be the problem; this is why I'm interested in the economics of this because we have to make sure that there are no shortcuts in terms of the equipment that's going to be needed. So, for example, the lighting equipment, we have to make sure that we have the best lighting equipment so that we minimize as much as possible the possibility of accidents because of inadequate lighting.

I am sure, like with everything, there are some systems that are better than other systems. So I urge the government that if this pilot project is going to work, then we can't cut corners when it comes to having the best possible lighting. Also, the use of protective barriers, we have to make sure again that everything is done to make sure that they are visible and that they are safe.

The proper traffic control devices: Now, I would think that the best way to do this is, let's say the Outer Ring Road for example, that if a piece of that is going to be paved for the night, that whole piece gets shutdown. There's no reason why you can't. Because the Outer Ring Road, everywhere along the way has all the different accesses off the road, so you could easily shut it down. Now, we would have pieces of the highway where, for example, there isn't an easy way to get off the road – like we just had happen in the summer out in Terra Nova. Well, not the summer, the fall when we had that very, very heavy rainfall and people were using an unsafe track to try to not have to be held up in the traffic, and they were using an unsafe track to get off the road.

That's one of the problems we will have in different areas, and going through Terra Nova Park is definitely one of those areas where you can't just go down and take the bay road. So, for example, if you're on the Avalon Peninsula and

you're doing the road between St. John's and Cochrane Pond or further out, Butter Pot, you can go down to the bay road and you can come back up to the highway.

In cases like that, I think all of the road that's being paved should definitely be shut down. But in cases where you can't get off the road and you want to do paving, say, for example, talking about the Burgeo Highway, you're not going to be able to get off that while it's being paved. That means that you still have to allow traffic through, but it won't be the amount of traffic that would be there in the daytime.

So you have to make sure that there are proper traffic control devices in place – and we've seen them. We have them here in the province, temporary traffic control devices that make people stop, change lanes. One lane is there and people take turns going to that one lane. But it it's going to be at night then we have to make sure that we have the best possible setup of those traffic control devices. We have to. There has to be adequate warning, and there has to be – yes, adequate warning is one of the biggest things, knowing well in advance that it's coming up and being ready for it.

There are a number of safety devices, one which we're used to, and that's the use of active illumination on clothing and hardhats, which is beyond just reflective clothing. So again, what I'm saying to the minister is that we can't cut corners. That's why I'm fascinated that this is happening right now at this time where government is making us so aware of being in a financial crunch, but we can't cut corners. We have to make sure the best possible of everything is here. Then we have to make sure there's public involvement. People have to be well informed. There has to be a big awareness program so people understand what the program is going to be.

We have to make sure that municipalities are involved in the discussion where it's important for them to be involved. We have to make sure that the unions are involved. If there are subcontractors, they have to be involved. All of this has to be prior to the pilot project being put in place.

So it's not simple. I'm sure the government doesn't see it as simple, I'm sure the minister doesn't, but I really urge them, as I've said already – I'm going to say again – don't cut corners. Make sure we use the best of procedures. Make sure we use the best of technical knowledge. Make sure we use the best of equipment. Make sure we put all the best in place because if we don't we could end up with accidents, we could end up with tragedies or we could end up with not knowing really how night paving could take place.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to bring these points forward. I look forward to supporting the resolution.

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

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to stand here today to support this private Member's resolution that has been put forward by the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville I think it is called now. I'm encouraged that the department as well, under the minister's direction, is willing to move ahead with this.

AN HON. MEMBER: Seconded by (inaudible).

MR. LETTO: Seconded. Yes, of course.

There have been a lot of concerns brought up by the Opposition Members and rightly so. These are basically the same concerns that we have. I feel confident that the minister with his officials have addressed all of these and taken this under consideration when deciding to move ahead with this pilot project.

We have to remember that this is a pilot project, even though it has been done successfully in other jurisdictions, in other provinces and other highways. It is a pilot project for this province. The fact that we're prepared to move ahead with that I think is encouraging. It shows that the department, the officials, the minister, they're all willing to think outside the box.

I was also encouraged by the comments from the previous minister who had it on his agenda as

well but didn't move ahead with it. Nevertheless, that is something that's been thought about for a while and it is good to see that this has been on the go for some time. Nevertheless, we are prepared to move ahead with it.

I represent a district in Labrador where traffic is not that high. I spent years lobbying as the municipal representative for highways. I didn't care when they paved them. They could have paved them in the daytime, they could have paved them at night, they could have paved them in the winter, I didn't care.

But the fact is now that we are getting our roads paved and we are investing in the Trans-Labrador Highway – the previous administration did – it's now time to look at what is best for our province, what is best for transportation and keep the movement of goods and people in our province, which is very important to the business community and very important to tourism. There is nothing worse than when you come into a province and a highway that's under construction and you're waiting, sitting there. It's very disruptive and certainly it doesn't help your tourism experience.

Nevertheless, the one thing that we have to make sure – and I'm confident that the department has done that – is to follow all safety precautions. I worked in an industry for 30 years that night shift, day shift, afternoon shift; it didn't matter what time of the day it was, you did the same work. Whether you were driving a truck, whether you were working inside the pellet plant or the concentrator, night shift was no different than day shift. So it's a matter of culture, it's a matter of change for some people. This is new to the construction industry for highway construction, but it's nothing new.

We hear the Opposition talking about, or the Leader of the Third Party talking about, whether there's going to be overtime or whatnot. Well, we enter into a contract with a contractor; it's up to the contractor what they pay their employees. I know in our industry there was always a premium, but it wasn't considered overtime unless you worked over 40 hours a week. Then, no matter what shift you worked, it becomes overtime.

So these are some of the concerns that I think are – I wouldn't say unnecessary, but certainly haven't been taken into consideration. I applaud the minister and I applaud the department for taking this initiative. We have to remember, again, that this is a pilot project; this is not a done deal. It may work, it may not work. I'm sure that evaluation will be done after the pilot project is complete. I'm confident that will be done in a very expeditious manner.

Also, the fact that we do have the Heavy Civil Association in line with this, they do support this initiative. Again, it's a pilot project with them as well, I'm sure. They will come back with their opinions and their comments after the project is completed. I'm sure they will have their say. If they feel it's not in the best interests of their industry, then it's something that we have to consider.

I can guarantee you, we are in no way – and I feel confident about this – when you talk about cutting corners. This is not about cutting corners. This is about being more efficient. This is about addressing the concerns of the people.

We've had several concerns, and I've had them as a municipal person when I was involved with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador. We had many complaints about construction, especially at peak season. We know our season is short. We don't have a long construction season. So we have to take advantage of what we have and the weather and whatnot. I'm confident that all these considerations, all these concerns have been taken under serious consideration by the department and have been addressed.

When you look at it, paving roads in the nighttime is not something we see very often. We have to go somewhere else to see it, but we're at a time in our history where we have to start thinking and get more innovative and more effective. If this is one way to do it, then maybe that's the way of the future; but, until we test it, until we prove it and until we consider all the positives and the negatives about it, we will never know, will we? That's what this is all about. This is about finding out if it is more effective. If it is more appealing and accepting to the public, then maybe that's the way we will look at it in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I certainly look forward to getting full co-operation and full support on this resolution.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville.

MR. B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to also thank the Members who spoke to this resolution. The seconder, the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, the Minister of Transportation and Works, the Member for Conception Bay South, the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island, the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, and our friend from the Big Land in Lab West.

It's great to see the full House is going to be in support of this initiative, I hope. It's a long time coming, as it's been highlighted that the previous administration were looking at this as well, which is an important testament to how important this is that the previous administration was looking at it as well.

One of the things I'd like to address is a couple of the concerns that were raised by my colleagues across the House. Our government has said since the election a year ago that we'd use an evidence-based, decision-making model. Put another way, we're going to look at the best practices of other municipalities, other countries, other provinces. In this case, that's what we have done. This is not a new initiative. It's been done for 30 years or more in other jurisdictions, both in North America and other places, in Ontario and New York. These are important things for us to look at.

The people have cried out for us to try to fix the system that seems to be a little bit more disadvantaged for them. So we're looking at this as a pilot project. That's the key point here, it's a pilot project.

Nighttime paving; we need some evidence based here in this province. That's why we've established a pilot project. There's going to be a

mirror project being done, daytime paving. So we're going to evaluate both projects on their merit. It will give us value for money, which is talked about by the Member for Conception Bay South. He wanted to ensure there's value for money, which is important and we agree with that. That's why we're doing the balanced approach of having two simultaneous paving jobs happening, one in the night, one in the day, so we can evaluate the progress to see what the quality of the work is; all the avenues you've discussed as concerns. That's why we're doing it this way.

One of the other concerns was lighting. Directional lighting is important, as we see with softball fields and other fields around this city or other places that are lit during the evenings. Directional lighting can make a difference for putting light exactly where you need it.

For instance, in my district King George V, I used to get phone calls all the time about the houses that were affected by the lights of the soccer field. They changed the lights to a more directional light. They have more light on the field and less light lost into the backyards of the houses that were being impacted. That is the exact same scenario we're talking about when we deal with going through areas where there would be homes that may be impacted by this, but let's not be too coy about this. We're not going to be in municipalities affecting homes while people are sleeping. That's not the approach. That's not what we're doing it for. We're trying to follow suit in areas that make sense.

We talked about just outside of Gander when they were doing work on the Trans-Canada Highway, which is important. The Outer Ring Road was very difficult for people in my own district, and many other people who transverse that area of the Outer Ring Road, to move around while we were doing a paving process. If that happened in the evening, there was a much better opportunity for us to deal with it in a better way for the general public.

One of the things that was mentioned is about safety. Safety is our government's primary concern for both the workers that will be doing the site work, as well as the individuals that will be traversing those roads. We want to ensure

they're safe. There's no one in this government trying to cut any corners or anywhere like that. We're going to make sure that it is safe right across the board. All the precautions that have been taken in place right across other jurisdictions will be looked at.

There are definitive advantages to paving at night. Temperatures are cooler. One of the discussions that was made mention to us, mostly in our climate temperatures are not entering into this equation, but sometimes in the summer during July and August – which are our peak paving months – those times are sometimes hot and the pavement doesn't get time to cool in the way it needs to. So paving in the night in those certain circumstances is going to make a difference in the paving process there. So as long as we take into account the safety and ensuring the quality work that's there, it's important.

One of the other things that was mentioned was the tendering process – sorry, talking with our unions and our workers. Well, that's important, there's no doubt, but during the tendering process the businesses that will be tendering or the contractors who will be tendering for this understand this. They are making sure they're responsible for determining their resources for allocation, and they will do that and built into their costs. It's very, very important that that's going to be the case.

The Member for Lab West talked about making sure a lot of different industries work different shifts, split shifts, overnights, during the day, afternoon shifts. That's a fact of life in many jurisdictions, not just here, right across this country and right across North America. So we're going to make sure that we're doing our due diligence to ensure their safety is taken care of and we're going to look after our employees. It's important that the contractors will know all this going in front when they make those bids for the tendering process.

One of the facts of life that we have in our province is we're a little slow to sometimes take advantage of things that are happening in other municipalities and other jurisdictions. This is an opportunity for us to lead the way here in this province, to do something we haven't done before. I applaud the Minister of Transportation

and Works for being so agreeable to try to do this in a fast, but efficient way to ensure safety's there.

It's very important that we move on this, not only for the potential cost savings and extending the season, potentially, but more importantly, for trying to alleviate some of those concerns that residents had each and every day on our phones, that call us because they were waiting for two hours or an hour in a line when it doesn't make any sense for them to do so. If there's a better way to do it, we should find it.

I'm sure that because of the appeal in the House, it's great to have the rest of the Members of the House of Assembly in support of this. We hope that will be the way it goes, but it's looking pretty good that way. I do want to applaud some of the key points that the other Members made, because it allowed us to address those concerns head on.

We all know that the construction season, as I've said, is pretty short so anything we can do that would elongate that or make it a little bit more flexible, which is important – we don't have the luxury of having a long season like Florida or places like that. We have to make hay, as they say, when the sun is shining. So this is an important thing that would allow us to continue on with the paving process. In some cases that makes it a little bit faster, a little bit more efficient and it makes that much better for us as a government and us as a people in this province.

There has to be smarter ways to do things and this is one of the ways that we can try to find out if it can work. We're using the evidence-based approach I've mentioned before, which is very important. You need to have simultaneous operations going so you can figure out all the issues that could arise. Because when you start up something new, it may not work as well as we had hoped it does, and we need to evaluate that to see if there are ways to improve it or whether it needs to be scrapped altogether, which is an important thing. We want to make sure that is something we move forward with.

Testing out ways to make roadwork more efficient in our province seems like a relatively insignificant thing, but it has a dramatic effect

on the lives of people in our province because nearly everyone in our province has to traverse roads during the summer season and our construction season that are impacted.

I know driving around the City of St. John's this summer, it was great to see the work being done, which is fantastic to see, but it's also very hard to try to get to appointments and things like that when you're trying to move around our city when there are stoppages in place. So we're trying to take that out and hopefully other jurisdictions will move forward with that, be it other municipalities in our province, where it makes sense, could look at it as a possibility.

However, I cannot stress enough that this is a pilot project. We don't know whether the pilot is going to work perfectly, but it is something that we need to test. The initiatives part of our government's commitment to evidence-based decision making, just because the initiative works in other jurisdictions doesn't necessarily mean it's going to work here for sure. So we want to make sure we take every opportunity to utilize the information that we find in this pilot. The minister is going to evaluate that and make a presentation back to us as a government to ensure that this works.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. B. DAVIS: What a minister is correct.

As I mentioned earlier, there are several core questions that must be answered during the pilot project and I've addressed some of them today because our colleagues across the aisle have mentioned some of them. Will the nighttime paving be safer? We've said that we will unequivocally ensure that safety is our number one priority when we do any work on our roads. Human life is much more valuable than any dollars that can be saved or any more paving that can be done across our province. So it's very important that that is our guiding principle on this and that's what our department has said.

Well-lit nighttime construction areas will be easily identifiable from a long distance away, probably much more than they are during the daytime. I know travelling the highway and some of the construction zones across the Trans-Canada Highway this year you were almost on

top of the zone before you noticed it was there. The lights that will be beaming at night would obviously make that a little bit more obvious to drivers that are going over our roads.

It is important that the businesses that are bidding on these contracts know this in advance and get the correct equipment that is going to make it a little bit easier for our staff to do what needs to be done in order to make it a valid test.

If the pilot doesn't pass the test – and here is the good point. There's a host of potential advantages not just to paving at night but if it doesn't pass, we have to know that now. We can't always have the residents of this province asking us why we can't pave at night. It makes sense. It definitely makes insurmountable sense to me but now we have to get the numbers to make sure it works. That's the important key piece we are going to try to identify in this.

As I've said, we don't have the answers yet and I can't presume to have all the answers, but we're going to get the answers through the pilot process. At that point, we'll have those answers for everyone to see.

One last point I'd like to make and conclude with is that if we continue to do things the same way we've always done things, we're going to get the exact same results. I think it's incumbent upon us as a government to try to do things a little differently, make it a little bit better for our residents. We can't do it all the one shot, but it's very, very important that we take every advantage we can to do things right. Sometimes making a little change like this is going to make the lives of the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador a lot better and, in turn, make it much easier for our Transportation and Works to get the job done that they need to do.

Thank you very much. I encourage everyone to vote for this initiative.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion as put forward by the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

It being Private Members' Day, this House now stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.