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Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Today, we are pleased to welcome to our public galleries representatives from the Children's Wish foundation, who will be the subject of a Ministerial Statement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today we have the Members for the Districts of Labrador West, St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, Fogo Island – Cape Freels, Cape St. Francis, Harbour Grace – Port de Grave and Mount Pearl North.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to congratulate a master athlete, a volunteer extraordinaire and resident of Labrador West. Alf Parsons has been involved in sports since 1969 with hockey, curling, trap and skeet, golf, biking, triathlons and cross-country skiing on provincial, national and world levels, where he has truly left his mark.

Alf has participated in many World Masters cross-country events since 2003, mainly in Europe, where he has won bronze and silver medals. For his achievements, Alf has been inducted into Newfoundland and Labrador cross-country hall of fame and the Newfoundland and Labrador Sports Hall of Fame.

This year, Alf attended the Canadian Masters in New Brunswick where he had podium placements in four races and is now attending the World Masters in Switzerland.

Alf serves on the executive, coaches youth and he's a trail designer at Menihek Nordic Ski Club. Over the years, Alf has cooked more steaks than George Foreman and cut more wood than Paul Bunyan to keep this organization

alive. Alf is also an avid golfer and runs the junior program at Tamarack Golf course.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Alf Parsons on his outstanding accomplishments and wish him well in Switzerland.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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 take great pleasure today in rising to celebrate a constituent who, last December, was justifiably recognized by the province for her enormous contribution to choral music.

I am speaking, of course, of Kellie Walsh, founder and artistic director of the internationally award-winning Lady Cove Women's Choir; artistic director of the internationally celebrated youth chorus, Shallaway Youth Choir; and co-founder and now artistic director Emeritus of Newman Sound Men's Choir.

We have a rich choral culture here going back centuries and the envy of many in other parts of Canada. Kellie Walsh is a fruit of that culture, and with her passion for and understanding of it brings it to new heights. Her work and the choirs she conducts are acclaimed worldwide.

Kellie uses choral music to break down barriers and unite people. Her choirs encourage members' leadership potential, identity building and social and civic engagement. Her latest project is the Shallaway Lauda Ensemble, which celebrates neurodiversity. I'm certain Lauda is destined to be her latest success story.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Kellie Walsh on her well-deserved investiture to the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

We're waiting on the Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels.

MR. BRAGG: And we are ready to go.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize the valuable work and ongoing commitment of the Fogo Island Co-operative Society. In 1967, Fogo Islanders had a life-altering decision: Leave their beloved home and resettle, or stay and make the island a prosperous place to live and raise a family. To survive, the people turned to what they knew best; they turned to the sea.

Following a process of community self-discovery, now known worldwide as the Fogo Process, local fishermen formed the Fogo Island Co-operative Society Ltd., a community-based enterprise on which they built the economy of the island.

Their story is well known, Mr. Speaker. They built more boats. They built bigger boats. They took over the processing facilities left abandoned. They sought and found new markets. The Fogo Island Co-op not only survived, it thrived. Today, the organization is over 50 years old.

When giants in the fishing industry failed, the Fogo Island Co-op remained strong and continues to focus on the future; a future that will take us back to our very beginnings, Mr. Speaker, back to cod.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in celebrating the Fogo Island Co-operative Society.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise in this hon. House today to acknowledge the residents of Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer

Cove for their thoughtful and compassionate spirit. This past December, the residents of the town came together to offer a fellow resident, Anne Blanchard, a powerful act of kindness which, as they say, is sometimes the best medicine a person can receive.

Anne has been battling cancer for the past five years. During Christmas, roughly 100 residents from the town, including the mayor and some town staff, gathered to sing Christmas carols outside Anne's home, despite the cold and miserable weather. Anne's husband Tony, son Jordan, daughter Keely helped Anne out to the front step to see the crowd gathered, and she was clearly overwhelmed by their act of kindness.

The event was organized by the town, which also provided the crowd with glow sticks, and volunteers provided the song sheets. Everyone agreed that the blustery weather was no challenge for the supportive community, and the message to Anne was loud and clear – she's loved in her town.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in commending the residents of Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove and sending best wishes to Anne Blanchard and her family.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise today to congratulate the Bay Roberts Volunteer Fire Department. I was very happy to attend their annual firefighters' ball this past weekend to celebrate the 74th anniversary.

Along with providing fire and emergency services to Shearstown, Butlerville, Country Road, Bay Roberts, Port de Grave, Bareneed and Coley's Point, the department participates in many community events and fundraisers. It's the dedication and community spirit such as this which contributes to the great success.

Residents and volunteers have once again come through for our community. On Saturday

evening, it was announced during an NHL game that Bay Roberts has made the top 10 Kraft Hockeyville 2017 nominations –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: – hear, hear – among the chosen communities across Canada.

Citizens, town staff and the team at Powell's Supermarket worked very hard to make this happen by promoting and organizing events such as a recent friendly ball hockey competition. The Bay Arena is one of the busiest stadiums in the province, with doors opening every morning at 6 o'clock. Kraft Hockeyville voting takes place on March 12 and 13 to select an east and west finalist.

Of course, we ask everybody across the province to support Bay Roberts, with the hopes of becoming the next Kraft Hockeyville. As we know, Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador certainly is one big team after all, and of course these details can be found on the Kraft website.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate and recognize a young resident of Mount Pearl, Noubahar Hasnain, who has chosen to be a federal delegate for Daughters of the Vote. Noubahar was selected by the organization, Equal Voice, as one of 338 women across Canada. With 1,500 applicants, Noubahar is representing the federal riding of St. John's South – Mount Pearl.

Noubahar is a first-year engineering student at the University of New Brunswick. She's hoping to enter Civil Engineering next semester, and aims to work full time helping build infrastructure in developing countries.

On February 23, as Members of the House know, the Daughters of the Vote for

Newfoundland and Labrador visited our Legislature for a day of learning and orienting on legislation and women in leadership. Noubahar will take a seat in Parliament in Ottawa on March 8.

Equal Voice's ultimate goal is to ensure women are dynamic and equal participants at every political decision-making table in the country.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating Noubahar and many other young women on their accomplishments to date. I would also like to recognize the extraordinary work of Daughters of the Vote.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Before we move to Statements by Ministers, we'd also like to welcome to our public galleries today Gaël Corbineau and other representatives of the Francophone community for Newfoundland and Labrador, also the subject of a Ministerial Statement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MR. TRIMPER: And Francophone Affairs, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to inform my hon. colleagues about Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie.

Pendant Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie, du 2 au 22 mars, les Canadiennes et les Canadiens reconnaissent et fêtent la culture et la langue française de notre pays. C'est une occasion de rapprocher nos communautés d'expression anglaise et française. Cette alliance est très importante cette année alors que nous célébrons le 150e anniversaire du Canada.

Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie is a part of the event surrounding the Journée Internationale

de la Francophonie on March 20 – a day that is celebrated every year around the world to promote the French language and its numerous cultural expressions.

Mr. Speaker, many activities are taking place in the province over the next couple of weeks to mark this occasion and to give us all an opportunity to learn more about Newfoundland and Labrador's rich French culture and history. These include community gatherings, film viewings and educational activities, among others. To find out more information on how to participate, residents can visit the Franco TNL Facebook page.

Je profite de l'occasion pour remercier la communauté francophone et acadienne dynamique de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador pour leur riche contribution à la société de notre province. Je veux aussi reconnaître les personnes qui travaillent très fort dans nos organismes francophones et qui font du bénévolat dans nos communautés. Nous félicitons votre énergie, enthousiasme et dévouement.

Bon Rendez-vous de la Francophonie à tous et à toutes!

Merci beaucoup.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis and the critic for Francophone Affairs.

MR. K. PARSONS: I want to thank the minister in advance for the copy of his statement. I wish I could speak French like the minister could.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize 2017 as the Rendez-vous de la Francophonie and upcoming International Francophonie day. This event will be celebrated around the province and around the world, and provides a great opportunity to promote French language and culture.

We have a rich French culture right here in our province. I encourage residents to learn more about it, and the upcoming celebrations should

be great. I hope everyone participating in these events and activities right across the province in the coming weeks enjoy themselves, and I'm sure it will be a great success.

Thank you very much.

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, am happy to join with the minister in congratulating our wonderful Francophone community. La langue française et les gens qui la parlent enrichissent nos vie de façon incommensurable.

Unfortunately, the French classes formerly available to government employees have been reduced to an online, for-profit program with limited enrolment. I'm sad to say employees basically enter a lottery to see if they can take training. C'est inacceptable et pas le geste d'un gouvernement qui apprécie la francophonie.

Merci, monsieur.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to proclaim March as Children's Wish Month in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAGGIE: Children's Wish Foundation of Canada is the largest and only all-Canadian, wish-granting charity dedicated to granting wishes to children between the ages of three and 17 diagnosed with life-threatening illness. Over the last 30 years, Children's Wish has granted wishes to nearly 25,000 children. Here in Newfoundland and Labrador, 802 wishes have been granted.

I had the pleasure last week of meeting an amazing young lady, Raiya, one of the foundation's ambassadors for Children's Wish Month, and other representatives from the local chapter to sign an official proclamation. Tonight, beginning at 6:30 p.m., a ceremony will take place in the lobby of the Confederation Building, East Block. My parliamentary secretary will be there as the building is lit up in blue to recognize this organization and the work that they do. The lights will be turned on each evening until Saturday, March 18.

Mr. Speaker, granting the single wish of one child can make a huge difference in their lives and for their families. I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in expressing our sincere appreciation for the work of the Children's Wish Foundation.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement this afternoon. We join with government in recognizing and celebrating March as Children's Wish month right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As the Minister said, over the past 30 years 25,000 children have had wishes granted. And equally as impressive over that time period, no eligible child's wish has ever been denied – a remarkable accomplishment.

Mr. Speaker, the Foundation rightfully states that joy is a wonder drug and that wishes raise the spirits of a seriously ill child and give respite to their family.

On behalf of myself and the Official Opposition, and everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador, I offer sincere thanks to this wonderful organization and commend them for their tremendous work. I'd be remiss if I were not to encourage folks to visit childrenswish.ca to contribute and help grant a wish to a deserving

child. We can all help make a difference and we all support this great cause.

Thank you.

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. Congratulations to the Children's Wish Foundation for their amazing work. I am sure tonight's ceremony will be a huge success, and I hope government will follow the lead of the dedicated people at the Foundation and fix the problems many parents face with medical transportation when they have to accompany a seriously ill child to the Janeway or out of province. Parents should not have to fundraise or face financial difficulty because their children are sick.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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.

Mr. Speaker, as all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are aware, in 2015 the Liberals campaigned on many promises. And one such promise was to be more open and transparent, a more open and transparent government. They said that they would make more information available than ever before.

So I ask the Premier: As part of your restructuring, if that's the case, why are you eliminating access to information departmental positions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well I can assure the Member opposite that I am certainly not making it more difficult or put up barriers to provide information to those that request it. I think the Member opposite would know that if there is an issue, certainly he could take those concerns to the Privacy Commissioner. That is a process that's been outlined within access to information, protection of one's privacy, Mr. Speaker. So there is a process as outlined there.

I can assure the Members opposite, and all Members in this House, that I am certainly not protecting information, and I certainly am committed to openness and transparency within government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well I'll ask the Premier this. I'll ask the Premier if he can confirm that access to information coordinators within government positions are being told they have to apply for other jobs, that their jobs are being eliminated.

Premier: Can you confirm that?

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

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

I'm certainly happy to stand here as Minister Responsible for ATIPPA and talk about ATIPPA itself. Certainly we have no idea what the Member opposite is talking about. What we need to worry about in this Province is access to information, and what I can say is that with the changes we've made and changes that we advocated while we were in Opposition, we want to see more access to information and more protection of personal privacy. That's what we

campaign on, that's what we asked for when we were in Opposition.

I think what we all need to remember here is that no matter the changes that we make, there will be no impacts on access to information. It's something we campaigned on and we stand by, and certainly didn't take any lessons from the other side on.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'll ask the Premier once again if he can confirm, and maybe the minister will speak for him, but can he confirm that positions that deal – departments that deal with access to information, can you confirm that you're saying they're not being eliminated? Can you confirm it?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, as I have said in the House in the last week and a bit, the restructuring that we are currently in the process of going through has a number of impacts on individuals. Most of those individuals have been communicated to now.

I had a privilege of having a briefing by my officials just before coming into the House today on those numbers and we'll be providing the details of the positions that are impacted. Certainly, as part of the process under flatter, leaner management a review of the workloads and the positions that are in departments, that are management positions, were looked at.

As I've said to the Member opposite several times in Question Period over the last week, certainly we'll provide transparency for him and for Members of this House, and more importantly even the public of the province on those changes as soon as possible.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, one of the benefits of ATIPPA, Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act is so that individuals in the province can find out information. Sometimes we struggle trying to get information from government here in Question Period and that's why I ask so many questions.

I'm going to ask the question again because the Premier and two ministers have risen now, neither one of them answered the question, and it's very simple: Are you eliminating access to information departmental positions or are you not? We hear that you are.

The Privacy Commissioner has said that access to information processes, because of the big increase in requests, is starting to collapse under its own weight. Are you considering that? Are you eliminating positions?

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

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

I am certainly happy to stand here and speak to ATIPPA and access to information. It's ironic, because I can remember being on that side a couple of years ago when the current Opposition Leader stood right there and talked about ATIPPA and how we should get rid of it and how we should have the most draconian legislation in the entire country. So I find it funny that he's standing here today.

We are very concerned about ATIPPA, we always have been. When we were in Opposition, and right here now, we have seen a tremendous increase in volumes in the requests that are coming in and we do our best to make sure that we live by the current ATIPPA act, one that was brought forward and voted on unanimously in this House.

Our goal is to stick by those guidelines. If people have concerns about that they'll go to the newly, I guess, implemented Privacy Commissioner if there are any concerns with

that, but right now our department has continued to do this work, continued to get the requests and continue to put the information out to the people of this province, as it should be, and certainly not like it was with the previous administration.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We're not getting answers from this government here once again today. So maybe the Premier can tell us this, because they have a history now of politicizing positions. They politicized the Clerk's position; they politicized deputy minister positions and assistant deputy ministers.

Is it your plan, Premier, to politicize these access to information positions in departments? Is that what the plan is about?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd be happy to respond to the question about politicizing positions within government. Well, no, that is not the case at all. These are not positions which should be or would be politicized.

Mr. Speaker, on the other hand, I would like to remind all Members of this House that we have taken one lesson from the previous administration, something that we will not do; as an example, just prior to the election last year when we saw a number of appointments that were political appointments that were made in the late days of the prior administration. One such appointment was indeed the CEO of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, Mr. John Ottenheimer, who ran for the leadership of the PC Party.

Mr. Speaker, if there's anyone in this House that understands political appointments is the Member opposite because he's made quite a few.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Nowhere in the history of this province is there a time when the Clerk was a politicized appointment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: The Clerk of the Executive Council should be independent from all politics and the current Clerk today –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: The current Clerk today was a leadership candidate for the Premier's party, Mr. Speaker, and he is now head of government. They've established clearly an environment where if you're a Liberal friend you get a job; if you're not a Liberal friend you don't. They clearly and continue to clearly show that trend.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: I'm going to ask one more time, because they don't want to answer the question if they're reducing resources or not.

At a time when your own minister says there's a continuous increase in the number of access to information requests, we know that ATIPP coordinators are under a tremendous amount of stress with the growing number of requests.

Will they make a commitment here today not to reduce those positions and continue to provide access to information to the people of the province, information they're struggling to get right now from this government?

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

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

I'm certainly happy to stand here and speak about ATIPPA. I hope all the rest of the questions today are about ATIPPA and we can talk about the stark contrast between our administration and the previous administration which used to buy toner by the boxes because of all the blacked-out documents that they liked to put out when they were in government.

The fact is any positions that happen will be done through a competition process. That's how it goes. He knows that's how it goes, and we'll continue to do that.

Again, we realize there are challenges when it comes to the new ATIPP Act that only came on the heels of our opposition to their Bill 29, which the current member likes to stand up over here and talk about how we should reduce access to information. We've improved access to information. We'll continue to do that, and to make sure that access to information is there, it's respected and when the requests come in, that the information is put out there on a timely basis. We will continue to make that pledge.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in last year's budget this government eliminated 24-hour snow clearing and promised their decision would achieve savings of \$1.9 million.

Can the minister tell us if government is on track to achieve these savings?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure for me to speak today with regard to snow clearing. I want to just start by applauding the 700 men and women that we have that are on our highways –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAWKINS: – that are on our highways every single day and in some situations, Mr. Speaker, as well as nighttime, trying to make sure that our highways are safe. This has been an extraordinary winter when it comes to snowfall.

If you just want to look at all of our workers, particularly on the Northern Peninsula and Labrador over the last four days, a significant amount of snow. We have done an excellent job, Mr. Speaker, in making sure that our highways have been cleared, and we will continue to do that.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just shorten it up this time. Can the minister tell us if government's on track to achieve the savings they've outlined in their budget of \$1.936 million?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I will try to shorten up mine as well.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that, I guess, all of this province needs to be aware of is the fact that a lot of misinformation has been coming from this opposite side. One of them is 24-hour snow clearing they've been talking about.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, we on this side – believe it or not, we on this side have gotten calls and emails from people on Fogo Island, the Burin Peninsula, Random Island, that never, ever had 24-hour snow clearing, and the reason they got that is because Members opposite has not been giving the correct information.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, we've even had tweets out from the Member for Mount Pearl North saying that he applauds the people, that's the mayors, that are actually looking to restore 24-hour snow clearing on Route 210 who never had it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess the answer is no.

Through an access to information request, we learned that, as of the end of January, government had already spent over \$3.7 million in snow clearing overtime – 700 employees are pretty stretched, if you ask me, Mr. Speaker.

If government would openly release the numbers, we would know this figure is much higher today. Will the minister table costs of snow clearing overtime so we can see if there are any savings by cutting the 24-hour snow clearing?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, if the Member opposite did his work, he would have found that overtime in the previous year was \$4.2 million for the same time. So we have \$3.7 million in the same time frame. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the amount of cost for the 24-hour snow clearing that the Member opposite is talking about to the same period of time this year, last year, in the previous year, it was \$1.5 million. This year, so far, it's been \$407,000 which we have done.

What has happened, Mr. Speaker, with our 24-hour snow clearing, it has been very clear. I've been very clear right from the beginning. We said that we would provide snow clearing, 24-hour snow clearing on only the 13 routes because there are 274 that never ever had 24-hour snow clearing, and we said that we would do that based on a need and when the need came up, we have done a great job in making sure that the people have been out and getting those roads cleared.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to correct the minister on one point. We have the ATIPP request; \$4.2 million was spent all last year, not comparable to the \$3.7 million that's up to the end of January. We have another 2½ months to go, Mr. Speaker, so that number will be higher. And I wish the minister would come clear, instead of pointing fingers, that conversations we're having with our constituents that are concerned, maybe they should do the same.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: Thirteen routes, Mr. Speaker, take up 70 per cent of the population. So I'm asking the minister will you table the information we're requesting.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I certainly, as the Minister of Transportation and Works, take great pride in the work that we are doing and we will continue to do. As we said, we were looking at a new model of doing our snow clearing, particularly during the nighttime. And as, of course, I've mentioned over and over again, it's unfortunate that the Members opposite have tried to politicize this by saying that we removed 24-hour snow clearing when, in fact, 24 snow-clearing was on 13 of the excess of 284 routes that we had.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue I guess that we're talking about when we look at the snow clearing, we realize that there are only two of the 13 routes that actually had 24-7. The other five had 24-5. So we have changed the model we are doing in 24 hours.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess that was another long list of nothing.

So I'll ask the minister again: All across the province people are complaining that the roads this winter are in the worst condition they've ever seen. Now we're seeing the Liberal government has saved no money by cutting 24-hour snow clearing, so will you commit to doing the right thing and re-instate 24-hour snow clearing?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many times I've got to make this statement. I thought I made it clear last year in the fall of the year when the Members talked about the 24-hour snow clearing and we said we're having a new model of 24-hours snow clearing, which has been effective. There were some bumps along the road – not pun intended – starting it off, because any time you have a new model in place, you're always going to have that.

But if the Member looked at, particularly, the last couple of months and how we've been doing it, I think people have been very pleased with the way in which we are doing the 24-hour snow clearing. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to do that.

As a matter of fact, my department is a department of innovation. We're also looking at newer ways of doing things. We're not like the old government, keep the same thing year after year after year, so we're looking at new ways of doing things.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: Mr. Speaker, one more question. I want to point out, in 2008 this was brought in as a pilot project; 2011, not political people, staff re-assessed this and said it was

feasible to keep moving, and they actually added roads on to this 13 routes. It was increased because it was a success. So, Mr. Speaker, he should go back and ask his own department officials who done that study.

One final question: Is the Liberal government considering privatizing snow-clearing operations in this province?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, in answer to that question, there are some areas in the province that we do some contracting out, but right now that's certainly not something that we're entertaining, and we haven't had that discussion.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Minister of Health and Community Services give us an update on his response to the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association's proposal on reviewing health facilities and services in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

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

Yes, I met with the Medical Association on several occasions. Their rebuilding document focuses very clearly on a whole raft, probably eight or nine, common areas which line very well with government policy, and I'm keen to keep that dialogue going. I think we work very well together.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: I ask the minister: How can your government prepare to cut another \$100 million from the health care system without any kind of coordinated vision and actual planning?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that as part of *The Way Forward* document, health, as part of this government, has a very clear vision for where we want to go with a primary health care, patient-focused system that is distributed in communities, which is, if you like, a step care model which has been referred to in the all-party committee, on which the Member sits, where the right provider in the right place at the right time. I think those facts align very nicely with *The Way Forward* document.

We don't have a strategy, Mr. Speaker. We have a plan and we're going to implement it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: I know that the minister supports our primary health care framework and that's a good thing, but very little resources have been allocated to bring it to life.

As the Liberal government prepares to cut \$100 million this year from the health budget, how can we have any confidence that the various regions of this province will be treated fairly when there is no province-wide plan and standards related to service levels?

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

MR. HAGGIE: I'm not sure where the Member opposite gets his figure from, Mr. Speaker. I mean, quite frankly, if you look, recently this government has invested significantly in health care. There's a long-term care facility in Corner Brook to meet the demand there. We have an acute care facility, RFQ consultancy (inaudible).

Our focus is very much on outcomes and using the dollars that we have wisely and efficiently

rather than any arbitrary number, such as the gentleman opposite came up with.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: We've heard from a variety of sources, Mr. Speaker, that the \$100 million figure is the one that the minister and his department has focused on cutting this year. So we will find out soon enough, I guess.

The NLMA is calling for an independent review of health facilities and services. Without a plan, government will fail to address the root of its challenges in a rational, evidence-based way. We support the review that they're calling for. The NDP supports a review, health professionals support a review.

Why won't this government agree to the review?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We have met with the NLMA and other interested groups, the RNU and a whole variety of health care providers, around planning for health care delivery into the future. The NLMA is one group of stakeholders. They have an interesting plan and their recommendations align very clearly with ours. We have a plan, and we're working through implementing it, and we look forward to continuing discussions with any of the interested stakeholder groups, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the government is well into the second year of its mandate. Having meetings and discussions is no longer sufficient.

I know these meetings have taken place, but the minister hasn't provided any kind of response to the NLMA's proposal.

Minister, we both know that the health care system today is not sustainable. Reform is needed. The approach proposed by our province's Medical Association, supported by other health care professionals, is logical. You've now had a proposal from the NLMA for a year. Why not get on with it, why not take action?

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

MR. HAGGIE: We have taken action, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest if he read *The Way Forward* document it would talk about primary health care teams with specific reference to Burin and Corner Brook. It talks about implementing immediately the recommendations from the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, which will be reporting shortly. We have an infrastructure plan in place. We have a chronic disease plan in place. We have a whole variety of things. I think to cherry-pick and focus on one individual group's report distracts from the bigger picture and doesn't really paint an accurate reflection of the implementation and planning this government has put forward in the health care field.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: I thank the minister for once again listing a whole bunch of initiatives that were undertaken and executed by the previous administration. I appreciate the acknowledgement.

What the NLMA is now calling for is different, though. It's consistent with the Liberal election platform commitments. It's consistent with commitments that are in *The Way Forward* document, which I did read.

Why has government sat on the Medical Association's proposal for the past year when it's consistent with what they promised during

the election campaign and consistent with their infamous *The Way Forward* document?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that pretty well every recommendation and every implementation that this government has come up with, the Member opposite seeks to take some kind of credit for. Yes, he may have come up with lots of thinking and lots of planning, but in actual fact we've actually delivered.

He thought of Naloxone, we've got the kits out there. He thought of Suboxone, we got the kits out there. Suboxone has been off the branded formulary since 2013. It was on the market in 2003. There was plenty of time for the previous government to do something. We have actually done it; we have not talked to them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the Medical Association is calling for an independent review process that will lead to higher quality care, it will lead to improved safety and it will lead to greater efficiency. Does the minister disagree with that? Such a review would also make future budget decisions easier.

What will it take for government to get on with it and undertake such a review? It's a simple question.

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

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

We are getting on with it. We have met with the Medical Association. We've met with the RNU. We've had stakeholders. We've met with folk from Tasmania. We have a plan. We are looking at multi-planned approach, looking at primary

care, at secondary care and speciality care in an integrated and cohesive way.

Our plan aligns very nicely with the NLMA; I don't know why the Member opposite is trying to create this rift when none exists.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: I'm not trying to create anything, Mr. Speaker, just hoping for some action and some leadership, which is sorely lacking from that government, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: We know cuts are coming, Mr. Speaker. The minister's responses today don't offer any confidence whatsoever otherwise.

Will the minister commit to consulting with communities and consulting with regions before any further cuts are made to our province's health care system?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Over the last 12 months, possibly 14, I have travelled to not quite every district in the province but I've certainly met with significant number of stakeholders and groups and communities from the South Coast to Baie Verte to Corner Brook to the urban areas of St. John's, this –

AN HON. MEMBER: Don't forget Labrador.

MR. HAGGIE: Oh, my apologies; yes, Labrador West, Goose Bay and Nain. So I think it's very disingenuous to suggest that my department has not engaged with community groups or community stakeholders. They are integral partners in what we are going to plan and initiate and implement for a better health care system in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North, for a very quick question, no preamble.

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I'm not suggesting that they haven't consulted. It's their favourite word –

MR. SPEAKER: No preamble.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Will the minister commit to consulting with communities and with regions before making \$100 million this year of cuts to the health care system?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services, for a quick response.

MR. HAGGIE: Again, I don't know where he gets his number from; it's fictitious. I won't talk about fantasies or any authors from over the seas. The facts of the case are we have consulted; he can't damn us for consulting too much and then tell us for not consulting at all.

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.

The Minister of Finance's aggressive public sector bargaining move last week recalled the employer tactics that led to long, bitter labour disputes at Voisey's Bay and St. John's International Airport.

I ask the Premier: Why has his government chosen the very same high-priced collective bargaining consultant, McInnes Cooper, who represented employers in both those disputes?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, we, as a government, take our responsibility as an employer very seriously. We also take our responsibility to the taxpayers of the province very seriously. And collective bargaining is a process that government goes through periodically. And it's a process that must be respected and must be worked on by both parties in a way where the objective is an agreement.

Mr. Speaker, our decision, and I would suggest that NAPE's decision as well, to move to a conciliation process on those bargaining units is a testament to the fact that we both believe that an agreement is possible, and that's our priority.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board: How much, to date, have this government paid for the advice of McInnes Cooper?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, we've taken advantage of the expertise inside of our own departments, the Human Resource Secretariat, the Department of Justice, as well as an external consultant to provide the best advice to ensure that as a government – and more importantly as an employer – that the process that we're undertaking is one that is based on recognizing and respecting the process.

I don't take my responsibility as the Minister Responsible for Human Resource Secretariat and a lead minister on collective bargaining lightly, nor does our government; and we will continue to make sure that the steps we make are made in a way that respects the process, particularly in light of the fact that we are faced with a very difficult situation in our province. And this is a very difficult round of bargaining.

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.

So no answer how much money they're giving to this group of people who are really great at making strikes long enough to really treat employees in this province unjustly. And that's who they are using.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Finance: Do the announced terminations of non-bargaining unit positions include a reduction in the number of staff of the Labour Relations Agency who provide conciliation services and who will have an extra workload because of government's latest draconian move?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, as an employer, I can assure you that our priority and focus is on reaching a negotiated settlement with our public sector unions. We have had time at the table to have meaningful dialogue. As I said in the House last week and to the people of the province, conciliation provides us an opportunity to reach a negotiated agreement, and that's exactly what we're working on, Mr. Speaker.

The work that is done as part of conciliation, we would expect that the regulatory arm of government would be prepared to handle that, and I'll certainly defer to the Minister of AESL on his team's preparedness.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: I ask the Premier, is he laying the groundwork for forcing a public sector strike or lockout to save money?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board for a quick response.

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, if that Member opposite thinks that any Member on this side has a position other than acting in the best interest of the taxpayers and acting in the best interest of our employees, she is sorely mistaken. Our priority is a negotiated settlement with our collective bargaining groups, and conciliation provides us an opportunity to do just that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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 Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

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

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply to consider a resolution for the granting of Interim Supply to Her Majesty, Bill 71.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to give notice that I will move the following private Member's resolution, seconded by my colleague the hon. Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

Member for St. John's Centre to move:

WHEREAS the federal government has introduced pay equity legislation in the public sector; and

WHEREAS pay equity has been proven to not be universally achieved by collective bargaining alone; and

WHEREAS lack of pay equity disproportionately affects women, and women in Newfoundland and Labrador earn on average 66 per cent of the wages of their male counterparts; and

WHEREAS government needs to give leadership on this issue of fairness to women;

BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly urge government to start the process to enact pay equity legislation in the province.

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

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

The motion just presented by my colleague from St. John's Centre will be the subject of debate on Wednesday coming, the private Member's motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the government has not implemented curriculum to teach the basic monetary skills needed by our youth; and

WHEREAS the government of our province has a responsibility to act in the best interest of our youth; and

WHEREAS the youth of our province deserve the greatest level of respect and consideration;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to introduce financial education into provincial curriculum to prepare youth for the monetary and financial challenges of life upon entering the workforce.

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

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have an opportunity this afternoon to speak to this issue once again. I've presented several petitions in the past on this issue of financial literacy, especially when it comes to young people in our school system.

I met last year with a group that I know the Minister of Education is familiar with, FLY financial – Financial Literacy for Youth, or FLY – which was founded last year, and its purpose is to teach basic financial and money management skills to high school youth through their career development class. But what these young people have found in the work they're doing as volunteers is that it really isn't enough. We've recognized for a while that there's a need for more education related to financial literacy to be embedded into our curriculum in the K to 12 system.

I want to applaud the efforts of the Memorial University alumni that are out presenting to high schools in our province, but I want to join with them in calling on government to fix the curriculum and make sure that this is addressed. Maybe through the ongoing task force on educational outcomes this is an issue that will come up and maybe we'll see some recommendations related to it.

The lack of financial literacy in our society is causing people to be taken advantage of by

lending companies and credit card companies, for instance. We hear about that regularly. Unawareness can have a large impact on people's financial future. Thirty-four per cent of Canadians indicate that they're hoping to win the lottery to help finance their retirement. Young people are not being taught enough about debt or about savings and doing so could actually help future generations. Given the state of affairs in our province and the doom and gloom created by this current government, bankruptcies are on the rise.

So the need for a heightened level of financial literacy in our society has never been greater. The current state of the economy calls for increased awareness of personal finances. And individuals can find themselves in trouble by acquiring too much debt.

Lending institutions make their money from charging interest, and I think it was Albert Einstein who said compound interest is the eighth wonder of the world. Those who understand it, earn it and those who don't, pay it. I think that statement still rings true today.

So let's positively impact our career development curriculum in our schools by teaching young people these skills that they need. Everyone has to face personal financial decisions, and we can have an impact by addressing this in our K-12 curriculum.

Thank you.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS government plans to remove the provincial point-of-sale tax rebate on books, which will raise the tax on books from 5 per cent to 15 per cent; and

WHEREAS an increase in the tax on books will reduce books sales to the detriment of local bookstores, publishers and authors, and the

amount collected by government must be weighed against the loss in economic activity caused by higher book prices; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the lowest literacy rates in Canada, and the other provinces do not tax books because they recognize the need to encourage reading and literacy; and

WHEREAS this province has many nationally and internationally known storytellers, but we will be the only people in Canada who will have to pay our provincial government a tax to read the books of our own writers;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government not to impose a provincial sales tax on books.

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

Mr. Speaker, this still goes beyond reason. It flies in the face of reason. Once again, we have the lowest literacy rate, we have the highest illiteracy rate and this tax on books makes no sense whatsoever.

In speaking about it, our own Rick Mercer, celebrated comedian, actor, commentator, said: When you are increasing taxes on books, you are accepting the fact that fewer books will be sold. And so, it is an attack on literacy. There is no other way to look at it.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that nowhere else in Canada is there a provincial tax on books. Very few places in the world there is, and it makes no sense whatsoever. We know that this tax will put a damper on reading in the province, with one of the lowest literacy rates in the country.

Now, the other thing, Mr. Speaker, that people may not be aware of, there are online sellers from other parts of Canada who will send books to individual customers in Newfoundland and Labrador and they are not charging the provincial sales tax. That means there is such an extra burden on our own booksellers here in the province. It's breaking the backs of our independent booksellers.

So any way you look at this book tax, which was aggressively put forward by this government, it is damaging. It is damaging to the literacy levels of individual people. It's damaging to our own writers. It's damaging to our own independent booksellers, which are independent and private businesses.

Mr. Speaker, this whole book-tax conundrum is damaging; there is nothing redemptive about it at all.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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 the 2016 provincial budget impacted adversely and directly the education programs at Beachy Cove Elementary in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's; and

WHEREAS the student population of Beachy Cove Elementary is growing exponentially and this growth is sustainable into the future; and

WHEREAS parents request the re-instatement of the previous teacher allotment formula for Beachy Cove Elementary for this year and subsequent school years to service the growth and enrolment, and be able to provide all students with equal opportunity to enrol in the French Immersion program;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to reinstate the previous teacher allocations in order to provide children of Beachy Cove Elementary the right of quality education.

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

Mr. Speaker, as we've seen and we've had a lot of debate and dialogue here, publicly, and within

the House of Assembly around the issues of a deteriorating education system, that has nothing to do with the quality of the teachers or the administrators or the support staff that we have in the education system.

It has solely do with the resources that are necessary to be able to offer proper programs like intense French Immersion; to offer programs around inclusion; to offer basic programs around physical education and proper monitoring and proper supervision; to offer other kinds of courses about extra-curricular engagement. Because the cuts that have happened to our education system this past budget, it has a detrimental effect on what's happening in every school system.

In Beachy Cove Elementary, a community and a school that's growing by leaps and bounds, they have unbelievable support mechanisms from the community, from the school council, from the town itself, from the administration and all the teachers; but they can only do so much in an overcrowded system, in a system that doesn't allow the resources that are necessary, particularly when they want to. They're committed to wanting to be able to offer a good quality full-day kindergarten, a good quality of inclusion program, good quality French immersion, good quality social programs that benefit the students and are the holistic approach to a well-rounded citizen that we want produce here, and they have restrictions.

Administrators – and you have to give them all credit everywhere in this province – do a lot with the minimal resources that they've been given in the last 12 months. As a matter of fact, they haven't been given additional resources; there have been resources taken away. In some cases, they've been given, for full-day kindergarten, additional services there, but at the expense of other programs. While, at the same time, overburdening those kindergarten teachers to ensure they have to do additional supervision. They have to deal with inclusion challenges. They also have to deal with issues around limited space within their facilities.

So all of these have contributed to making our education system at a point where it's starting to fall behind. The only cause here is that we're not resourcing it properly.

Mr. Speaker, I'll have an opportunity to speak to this, not only Beachy Cove Elementary, but all the other school systems here about proper resources.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I call Orders of the Day.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. A. PARSONS: I would call from the Order Paper, Order 4, second reading of Bill 68, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic No. 5.

I would ask, seconded by the Minister for Service NL, that the act be now read the second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 68 be now read a second time.

The hon. the Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels.

MR. BRAGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a privilege to rise and speak on amendments to Bill 68, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act No. 5. From our last day, which I suppose we will refer to as yesterday, in this House and listened to everyone speak, I think we can all agree, this is not only an important bill but a very emotional bill. I'm guessing there's not a person in this House or sitting at home that cannot relate a horror story seared in their memory relating to drinking and driving.

We look at the stats and we talk about drinking and driving, mostly we relate to the death and destruction that it's caused. Being a dad now, but growing up in an area when drinking and driving was – I really don't know how to say this. It was not accepted but it was more like:

look at him, he's loaded, he can't drive. And then we would go and say something like: Can he?

Many of us watched our family and friends have one too many and take the wheel. Many of us now wish we had taken the keys. So far we have heard stories that are heartbreaking of families torn apart, moms and dads burying their loved ones, and children burying their moms or dads, all as a result of drinking and driving.

Young people have the highest rate of traffic deaths. Fifty per cent of these deaths are caused due to impairment. I hate stats, especially the ones of this horrible nature.

I looked up the MADD site. It said they support Uber and Uber supports MADD, and I'll get to that point in a second.

As I said in the beginning, I'm a dad, a dad who gave up numerous social events on Friday and Saturday nights to make sure my daughter and most times, most of her friends got home safe. We lived 30 minutes away from a bigger community in which our kids went out. There were no taxis in our area. I remember many times setting the clock for 2 a.m. so she would have a safe ride home.

Many of you may think – and I hope that all other parents did the same. Meanwhile, I did have a chance to smile at some of the stories they told on the 30-minute ride home. As my nephews and niece all got older I would often tell them, don't ever get in a car with someone who has been drinking. Call me and I will come and get you, especially if you're afraid your mom and dad will be mad.

Mr. Speaker, I only wish other youth would have called their moms and dads. I remember all too well a couple of accidents in my area from the time my daughter completed levels I, II and III in high school, one was a fatality. Actually, Mr. Speaker, I'm sort of filled right up here thinking about it. I remember what the parents went through looking for their child, and I don't need to tell you how that story ended.

The other one, the parents will be forever in care of their child, and that is sad. Many lives were affected. Most of us carried on, but the parents

and the siblings will forever have heavy hearts filled with fond memories but all overshadowed by one horrible memory that will forever hang over them.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned about Uber. I was Uber in our area before anybody knew what Uber was. I'm very proud of it, that I was the dad that most times Allison and her friends called to come pick them up; not that other dads and moms didn't do it, but I seemed to be the one that always got the call.

I thought I would be the first one to mention about the seat belts, but the hon. the Leader of the Opposition mentioned it before me. I think it's worth mentioning again. My dad drove and never knew what a seat belt was. He thought the only reason to put it on was to save \$75.

Shortly after I got my licence the seat belt law came in, and after a couple of warnings and losing that \$75, I became accustomed to putting it on. Now it's second nature. My daughter got her licence at 17. She never thought you could ever drive without putting on a seat belt. What I'm thinking here and what I'm hoping we do is change the mindset of the people.

Today, we are bringing in zero tolerance for any driver under 22. Just think about it, for the first five years they would have trained themselves that one drink is one drink too many. If that can save one life, Mr. Speaker, it's worth it – just one life. Maybe we'll see 22 is not the magic number and five years for all new drivers will be the new norm.

I haven't even mentioned the new changes to the penalties, impoundment of vehicles. When we were briefed on that, most of us were shocked to find out that we didn't impound vehicles when someone was picked up by the side of the road impaired.

The other thing is the ignition interlock. It sort of sounds like something from another world, but like the hon. Member for Lab West, I saw it. Not that I've had to use it but I saw it in a vehicle. Naysayers may say, well, there's nothing to that. All someone else needs to do is blow in it, start the car and they can go. Nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. By the time they put the car in drive, you have to

blow into it again and again and again and again and so on. It's a machine that really, like it had pulled you over. To be honest, if you blow it and it's over, sirens will go off, the lights will flash. So that will be another thing that we can see.

I'd say this; no amount of penalty will stop everyone from drinking and driving. It's an enforcement of everyone in this House, everyone who is watching at home, anyone who has ever seen anyone get behind the wheel; we have to be the biggest advocate for that. You can put the enforcement there, we're going to impound you and restrict your licence forever. People may still do it but if we see it first and report it, we can make a difference.

I'm going to relay this story to you. I remember gassing up years ago, as I waited to pay for the gas the person in front of me was buying a case of beer. Not a sight you're not used to seeing but he could barely stand. I waited to pay, when I looked out the window I saw this very same person get into a pickup and drive away. I was absolutely mortified. You're wondering how old I am, but there were no cell phones at that time. So I paid for my gas, I berated the clerk. I found out afterwards the clerk was related to this person – small towns of course, that's bound to happen.

I went home, and all the way home I was thinking, just suppose someone was out with their family for a drive – and I know it's always about what-ifs or it could have been worse – but a family out for a drive looking for ice cream. Once again, we'd be looking at the headlines with horrific results.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for allowing me the time to speak and support this bill. I would like to thank the Minister of Service NL and also thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and their staff for the fine work that makes this bill passable. And to the people at MADD, keep up your good work because no amount – and you don't go unnoticed.

So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Lewisporte – Twillingate.

MR. D. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great honour as I represent the people of Lewisporte – Twillingate to speak to Bill 68, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act No. 5.

Although the title may not appear to have much impact on the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, the content and implications of this act will have great consequences to those who choose to commit the selfish and inconsiderate act of driving while impaired.

Shortly after we held the media release on Thursday, I posted a video clip on my Facebook page and I received a number of responses, all in support of this bill. I also had the opportunity to attend a number of functions in the communities of Laurenceton, which they hosted their winter carnival this past weekend; Loon Bay, for the unveiling of their fire truck, and Lewisporte, where they had their firemen's banquet over the weekend.

I've had the opportunity to speak to a number of people concerning this bill, and all of them had to agree that this is a move in the right direction to reducing impaired driving, especially among our young people.

I too would like to thank the former Minister of Service NL, along with his staff, for initiating this bill, and the current minister for seeing it passed. I would also like to acknowledge Mothers Against Drunk Driving national president, Patricia Hynes-Coates, and the many volunteers for their dedication and commitment to the safety of all drivers, and who are seeing these regulations implemented.

Last May, I attended a presentation by the provincial chapter of MADD. Seeing the staggering statistics of impaired driving in Newfoundland and Labrador and listening to the heart-wrenching stories of loved ones who have been impacted by an impaired driver really highlighted the serious problem we have in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the impacts to family members and loved ones.

To know that the City of St. John's has the highest rate of impaired driving among all major

cities in Canada and that it is double the national average, that is disturbing and very scary.

Across Canada, young people have the highest rates of traffic deaths and injuries due to impaired driving, and motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among ages 16 to 25. And, in these cases, drugs or alcohol is a factor to 50 per cent of these crashes.

Mr. Speaker, these statistics really highlight the serious problem we have and, more importantly, the need for immediate action. And that is what this government is doing. For some of my colleagues who shared their stories of family and friends that were victims of impaired driving, I'm sure we all have our stories and we all know of someone that has been impacted by an impaired driver and the way it has changed their lives forever.

It is my hope that by legislating this bill, it will deter drivers from sitting behind the wheel and taking the lives of someone else's mother, father, child or friend into their hands. This is why I'm supporting Bill 68, as I'm sure all other Members in this hon. House of Assembly will be supporting. We all have a role to play so that another tragedy doesn't happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour to speak to Bill 68, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act No. 5. Now, Mr. Speaker, they say there's no greater pain than feeling the loss of a child. Over the last five years, I've had several opportunities to sit down with some of the MADD chapters and hear some of these stories. When I grew up, as a kid – I think as far back as I can remember, there was one vehicle in my home community. Now, Mr. Speaker, there are upwards of 60 or 70 and it's a small town, 360 people. I can speak of the same situation all along the North Coast.

Vehicles are only used in the summertime, because there's no snow clearing in our

communities. So we relate to snowmobiles and ATVs more so, Mr. Speaker. When you talk about a motorized vehicle, a snowmobile and an ATV are under the same classification as a car or a truck.

We've had our share of snowmobile accidents; it doesn't need alcohol to have a snowmobile accident, Mr. Speaker. I broke my ankle this winter while using a snowmobile. So it can happen at any time. The problem is when you add alcohol to the situation. On the North Coast of Labrador, the age where you can operate a snowmobile legally is 13.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are upwards of 100 to 200 snowmobiles in a community at any given time. If you have someone under the influence operating a snowmobile, with people as young as 13 years old, it's a recipe for disaster, and we've had our share. We've had our share of alcohol-related snowmobile accidents causing death. It's not something that anyone would like to see.

I'd just like to give a shout out to Mrs. Hynes-Coates and the MADD chapters in the province for their persistence in cutting down on drunk driving in our province.

Being in this position for the last five, going on six years, I was a new driver to St. John's and I had to learn my way around. So I was actually quite shocked to learn that St. John's has the highest number of alcohol-related offences in traffic, Mr. Speaker. Again, I think, thanks to the MADD chapters, work is being done to cut down on drunk driving.

I, too, would like to thank the Minister of Service NL and the Minister of Municipal Affairs for taking this approach against drunk driving one step further.

Mr. Speaker, up in my district, snowmobiles aren't just used for recreation. Snowmobiles are your link. They replaced the dog teams of old and snowmobiles are used for hunting, fishing and access around the communities and to other communities. There was a time when I could put as many as 12,000 kilometres on a snowmobile in one year but, due to the nature of my position, I'm gone a lot now, so that number is dropped to 8,000, which is still a fair number of kilometres.

The point is that the only section of this *Highway Traffic Act* that is really applicable in my area is the impoundment. Now, as I said, snowmobiles are used for work, they're used for harvesting and they're used for travel. I think the good approach here is that this will send a lesson to those who engage in drinking and driving that you will lose your snowmobile and when you lose your snowmobile, you lose your transportation and you lose your access to the land, which is a big part of my culture and a big part of my heritage.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that, I will take my place and, again, a shout out to MADD for their persistence in pushing the don't-drink-and-drive message forward.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to take just a couple of minutes this afternoon to speak to Bill 68 and the good work that this bill does, and the importance that it has to the people of this province, making us a leader in drunk-driving legislation in the country. The great work done by MADD has to be recognized for pushing government to do the right thing, and this is the right thing.

I'm going to take a little tiny, different approach I think for a minute, Mr. Speaker, to talk about this new regulation when it comes to young people. I have two teenage sons; one who just turned 17 this past October and one who will turn 16 in April. When you think about some of the stories that we've heard over the last couple of days with regard to people that have been impacted by drunk driving and the results of that, I reflected, to think about my son that, last year, was able to get his driver's licence and, God willing, my younger son will be old enough to get his driver's licence this April.

It gives you a minute to reflect, and one of the things I reflected on over the last number of days is my oldest son has been given the opportunity

to actually get his driver's licence, and there are a lot of young people who are never given that opportunity because of the criminal act of drinking and driving. That opportunity for young people doesn't come. Mr. Speaker, in that, what I've drawn on, as a parent, is we're not asking too much of our young people not to consume alcohol until they're 22 years old.

That's not too much to ask, when you realize that some young people will never get the opportunity to drive. So when it comes to asking our children and, as a father, we're not asking too much and it's about time that this responsibility is taught to our children. When we talk about road safety, we think about our kids getting in the car and you're worried about them speeding and other different things, breaking the rules. Well, this is just another one of those rules of the road, and I can speak for any parent, I guess, that has a child that is just after getting their driver's licence. On a Saturday afternoon when my son says Dad, I'm going to take the car for an hour and do this, or do that, from the time he leaves the house until the time he gets back, it's a worry. So again, Mr. Speaker, my children are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to drive and I don't think for one minute that it's too much for us to ask of our children not to consume alcohol when they're driving.

Mr. Speaker, I've lost friends to drinking and driving over the years and it's a very difficult thing for anybody to deal with so I can only imagine, again as a parent, the tremendous loss that it has to be. It's just actually terrible that this day and age we're actually here still having to have this debate. It's time we move past this debate, Mr. Speaker, and work with groups like MADD to even move this file maybe even a little bit further, and that's very important.

It becomes a level of acceptance, I guess. In 1990, when I was graduating high school, in my high school in Heart's Content, we were –

AN HON. MEMBER: 1990?

MR. D. BENNETT: Yeah, 1990.

We were the first graduating class in that high school to ever have what was a safe grad. So if you think back now, that's 27 years ago and now that's become acceptance. For our young people,

the idea of not being able to consume alcohol and drive until you're 22, maybe it's a lesson for all of us that we're asking our kids to do that, maybe it's something that we should be challenging ourselves as people over 22 to do.

Mr. Speaker, just to a couple of other points of the bill when we look at mandatory ignition interlock systems, again, if a person chooses to break the law and drink and drive, this is a consequence that undoubtedly they should face, absolutely, undoubtedly. To even think that this was voluntary measure, we're long past that time.

Again, just on the final point of the bill, the seizure of the vehicle. Mr. Speaker, when you think about it, my department, we're responsible for many safety issues in the enforcement division and you take if you arrest somebody for something and it's an infraction, you would seize their weapon or whatever that person was using, but we weren't seizing these vehicles. How many times have we heard somebody arrested for impaired driving twice in the same day – totally unacceptable; your car becomes a weapon and there's no way that we would arrest anybody and give them back their weapon. Mr. Speaker, that's what we have been doing.

So, Mr. Speaker, again, to MADD and other groups that long fought for this legislation, to the previous minister, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment, I know put a lot of work into this bill and today to the Minister of Service NL and Climate Change, thank you for the great work you've done.

Just over the weekend being in my district and talking to many people, people are very, very supportive of this bill. I talked a high school principal on Friday night and like she said to me, again, it's not too much to ask of our young people, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very proud today as a parent, and a parent of young drivers, to support Bill 68.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): The hon. the Member for St. George's – Humber.

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour today to rise and speak on this bill and to add a few words. A lot has been said about this bill, so I won't take my full time, most likely, but I wanted to say a few words just to add my support and some points to this debate, Mr. Speaker.

It's an important step here that's being taken to improve public safety and to reduce impaired driving. These changes will strengthen the impaired driving laws, impose tougher penalties on those who are impaired and it will better prepare our young people to be safe and conscientious drivers.

So, specifically, the changes that we're talking about, people have talked about them and the importance of them, but I will just review them quickly. Impounding vehicles: As others have mentioned, one of the problems is that people were, in the past, being caught two or three times for impaired driving in the same day. They were go back and get their vehicle, which was still by the side of the road. So this legislation will result in the impounding of vehicles and will make that not happen. So that's an important step in and of itself.

The mandatory Ignition Interlock Program which takes place after someone has served their time without a licence, this is another measure to protect people from repeat offenders, people who, despite having lost their licence, maybe would attempt to drink and drive again. So that's an important measure as well that's happening here.

Mr. Speaker, there's another measure here: drivers under 22 years of age have to maintain a zero per cent blood-alcohol content level. That's a way of people who are becoming new drivers, they may be experimenting with drinking as well, it sends a message to those drivers in the early stages of their driving how important it is not to drink and drive – and I think that's an important measure as well.

Other people have mentioned that they're fathers of children who are entering the years where they're driving, and I am as well. My daughter is 15 now, so in the next few years she'll be looking at getting her driver's licence, and I

certainly support this measure in terms of the impact that it will have on her.

These changes that are taking place, many have mentioned that, in this province, our regulations and our laws related to impaired driving haven't been as strict as those in other provinces in the past. What's happening here now is we're going from amongst the least strict laws in terms of impaired driving, to some of the most strict laws in terms of impaired driving. That's very important in terms of the way we operate as a province.

A number of people have mentioned that we're looking at laws, changing the laws and putting more restrictions on people who drink and drive. What we really have to move towards – and this is happening as well in society, it's about changing society's views, changing the way we think about drinking and driving, changing the way we think about impaired driving and impaired drivers. And that's happening very slowly, I think, in society, but it's happening because of groups like MADD – Mothers Against Drunk Driving. And it's a very important thing to be happening in our society.

It's because of the groups like MADD – the district that I represent, the Bay St. George area and Corner Brook as well, have very active MADD chapters, and they've been doing a lot of things, like they have their Stride walk, their red ribbon campaigns. They have a Christmas campaign. They have information booths and tables set up at community events, and they have their candlelight vigils, which continues to send the message to people that drinking and driving is no longer acceptable in society. I think that's what has to happen. I want to compliment groups like MADD and others as well for the work they're doing in this regard.

It's through their work and dedication to their cause that this change is happening. I guess if anyone wants to look at, take dispute with the fact that a small group of people can't change society, can't change the laws in society, they need to look at the example of what MADD has done in this regard. They've changed societal views. They've met with our caucus and impressed upon us the importance of the changes that they wanted. Now, here we are in

the House debating this legislation that they lobbied us to have brought forward.

It's been a short period of time but I'm very happy that these new laws are being brought in to be debated here. I want to compliment the previous Minister of Service NL and the current minister as well for the work they've done, and the officials in the department for bringing this legislation forward in such a timely manner and the work they've done on making this happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It certainly is indeed an honour to get up and speak to this *Highway Traffic Act*. It certainly is, and although this is positive legislation, it surprises me that it has not happened prior. As elected officials, it is our duty to initiate positive change for the well-being and the benefit of the people of our province.

So I'm certainly pleased that we are bringing this forward but I'm also very pleased that all Members are supporting this change of course to improve public safety by introducing these amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act*. Again, it's always a pleasure to stand here and represent the district, the strong district, as I say, of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave District and a chance to address our viewers at home.

Just listening to the *CBC Morning Show* actually on Friday after the House had closed last week, after we had some great constructive debate here – I say debate with hesitation because everybody is in agreeance of course of these changes, but just to hear what some reporters of course had been saying about this.

There was one reporter from CBC of course who had gone out and done some streeters, to get opinions on these new amendments. Of course, streeters are simply when a journalist should go out and interview random people, and they went to Memorial University. Several young students were interviewed on this and not one, I didn't

hear one negative comment or concern about this.

Again, they went to the young people in our province, our young students, and everybody was certainly in agreeance of these changes. Also, there was a lawyer that was interviewed on the show as well. Again, they were hard pressed to find some negative connotations or negative comments on this. Of course, journalists know how to ask a question, the same question ten times to try and get an answer, a different answer, but you know everybody was in compliance with this and everybody supported it.

One thing that was noted of course, by enforcing zero tolerance it eliminates that judgement call. When people often go to a party, go to a social, go out to a bar, at the Breezeway, wherever they should go, people are – if they're having a drink they're asking themselves this question: Can I have another? Will I be over that limit? Enforcing this legislation will eliminate making that judgement call.

I will say for on the record, if we were to go even further and not just implement this for children – or rather young people of 22 and younger – across the board zero tolerance, I would certainly support that fully. And I will say that on the record here in our House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: Also, just to highlight as well, not only do we have to have concerns about impaired driving of course, something that we – certainly when I got my licence back in the late '90s, I won't say the exact date, but when I got my licence I remember being so excited to get on the road, to have that freedom and to have that privilege, but something we never had to think about at that time was, of course, texting.

Smartphones were not of common use at that time. It's something that we – they say if a driver is texting and not paying attention to the road and handling their smartphone or whatnot it is just the same or perhaps even worse or even more dangerous than being impaired. So that's something we need to raise awareness about.

When you're on the road it's not just your own safety that you're focused on or your passengers, it's everybody else around you. It's pedestrians, it's other drivers, it's people on motorcycles. I will talk about motorcycles as well. I do myself, I drive a motorcycle. I enjoy it. It certainly is a privilege, but having said that it's something you have to focus on and be extremely, extremely careful and practice extreme caution.

I did the program, actually, offered by Safety Services NL. It was quite an extensive program, instructor Darren Dunphy at the time. One thing that they emphasized was huge, was that although you can have a drink and drive a vehicle, a car, an SUV or whatever, any enclosed vehicle, but they certainly do not encourage that on a motorcycle. You wouldn't so much as smell a bottle cap as they say, by driving a motorcycle.

That takes me to a memory now, an unfortunate memory actually. It was last summer. I happened to be driving in the metro area. It was on a Sunday afternoon, and I noticed a person was driving on a motorcycle and I noticed the driving was erratic. I mean, at one point in time this driver on the bike went up over a curb, swerved in and out of lanes. I thought to myself, this driver is definitely impaired. Either that or there's something seriously happening.

So I quickly noticed what was happening, it instilled fear in me instantly. I slowed down and I gave him some space, because I could quickly see what was happening. I mean this guy is going to go down and sure enough, not even several blocks up the road, I came up – I didn't see it, I didn't want to see it. It was terrifying for me. It was traumatic to even witness that driving of this gentleman on a motorcycle.

Sure enough, when I approached it, all the cars were stopped and this guy had wiped out. Thankfully, I don't think he collided with another vehicle because it was quite evident he was certainly having some challenges operating that bike and down he went. I must say, it just goes to show how important it is to emphasize that no alcohol – you shouldn't have a sip of alcohol when operating any motorized vehicles.

Also, now at this time I want to commend and recognize the Coates family. Unfortunately, it

was Nick Coates who happened to be on a motorcycle. Of course, as we know, that fateful, horrific day, he was on a motorcycle and hit by a driver. I certainly want to commend them because unfortunately it was such a horrific event that brought this on for them but what that family is doing in conjunction with the support of everybody else who is involved in Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, they certainly are to be commended.

I also saw her, of course, this past week talking to our local media and she did a great job. I know she spoke with pride. She could speak from the heart and there was certainly no doubt the passion that was behind those words, of course, when she spoke, and very proud to say and to acknowledge her for being the national president. So not just is she a leader here in our province for this initiative, she's a leader province-wide on a national basis, and no surprise, Mr. Speaker, that we have a fighting Newfoundlander to lead this.

So let's give the Coates family a round of applause –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: – and let's show our appreciation for what they're doing. It certainly is remarkable. Just last week we spoke to legislation about women in leadership roles. Well, this is a fine example of a strong woman in a leadership role.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: Absolutely, and of course we have to do our part as private citizens. If we see somebody who we suspect to be impaired, pick up the phone. We have Crime Stoppers which is anonymous, if you're not willing to disclose your identity or whatnot, but make that call because you could be saving the life of that person behind the wheel or a loved one, or anyone who's on that road. We certainly have to do our part as private citizens.

Again, as I mentioned, I would support a zero tolerance across the board for any of this. Not just alcohol but, of course, drugs are something to be looking out for, and prescription drugs as well. So we certainly have to work together.

It is worth mentioning that when we go out for a night of entertainment, when we're out with our colleagues or we're out with our family or whatnot and we're having some drinks, and we're doing so responsibly, it's important to keep in mind that it's not a great idea to wake up at the crack of dawn at 7 o'clock or 8 o'clock or even 9, depending on how much you have consumed the night before, and get behind the wheel. As we know, many people are picked up for driving under the influence the next morning. Unfortunately, that has been the case where people have died and they've been the victims of people who have consumed heavily the night prior to going out and taking to the road. So it's certainly very important to keep in mind.

I know if I'm ever going to be having some recreational beverages, I don't plan to go anywhere the next morning, early. I make sure it's well in the afternoon, of course, for me, personally.

Also, it's something that a lot of the constituents and our establishments that we have in the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, this is something that is taken very serious there. We have two RCMP detachments located in the district. One in Bay Roberts on Bareneed Road and the other actually in Harbour Grace on the Conception Bay Highway in the corner of Alberta Drive. So we have a large police presence in our district; very pleased to say that. It's something that's taken very seriously.

Throughout the community events and the organizations, the leaders who take the time to organize these and when they're speaking, they always say: Let's have a great time tonight. Let's make some memories. Let's enjoy the moment, but, please, enjoy it responsibly. Make arrangements to get home safely; to have someone come pick you up; take a taxi cab. That final message is: Don't drink and drive. We all have to promote awareness and certainly do our part.

Some establishments, I will name. Actually a lady, Donna Fowler, she's the owner of Kelly's Landing in Bay Roberts. She's very involved in a lot of community events that we have, whether it be for the Trinity Conception Placentia Health Foundation or any cause, this woman puts her hand to that cause and she promotes safety and

safe practice in everything she does. She has that establishment – and, sure enough, there's no excuse. She has one of those direct lines. One of those telephones that are on a wall in a prominent place in the establishment; you just pick up that phone and it's a direct line to a cab. So there's no excuse for any of us to operate a motorized vehicle after consuming alcoholic beverages. There are lots of ways around that, to get out there, to be responsible, to enjoy and to do so responsibly.

I certainly am supporting the amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* for young people under the age of 22 and, of course, the interlock ignition; that's all brilliant. It should have been done a long time ago, but I'm very proud, very happy to say that this is happening now and we have the unity of all Members here in this hon. House.

I know a lot of people want to speak to this. It's very positive legislation in a time when we're facing many challenges, as we know, arguably the most in the history of our province, fiscally, but it's so wonderful when we can bring strong legislation for the people of our province such as this and it's not costing us a dime to do that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: Absolutely.

I also want to commend my colleague, of course, the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue, strong district and my colleague for Burin – Grand Bank; they've taken a leadership role among our own caucus to incorporate and to have the organizers from MADD come into our caucus room and really promote that. So I want to commend them on that for their leadership role in this because it's something they've been very passionate about.

Again, it's our volunteers such as the Coates – I understand Mrs. Coates is back now; we want to commend you for your work. We're very proud of the work you're doing. You're doing us all proud on the national stage. We saw you in the local news of course last week, so good for you. Again she's back, ladies and gentlemen, let's give her a round of applause and let's make the viewers at home aware of the great work she's doing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, always a privilege here to stand and represent my District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

I will now take my seat and give my colleagues an opportunity to speak to this wonderful, positive legislation and we look forward to the support of each and every person here in the House of Assembly here today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It's difficult with a piece of legislation like this, with so many speakers, to get up and say something that may be different or new. I think the amendments, though, do stand on merit. They are evidence based. The concept behind zero tolerance for 16 to 25, people may say well, why have you just picked on that age group, but I think it's an initial step for a group of folk who are plagued with drinking and driving.

We've heard that the incidents of accidents in that group are high. It's a combination really of inexperience and then when you factor in alcohol, alcohol, the first thing that will do is actually impair your ability to make a decision. That's your first problem and the second thing after that is it impairs your ability to react and your physical coordination.

So that combination of inexperience in driving situations within impairment on various levels, compounds things. A full third of all alcohol-related serious injuries and illnesses fall in this 16 to 25 group.

It's about de-normalizing behaviour. One of the reasons I wanted to stand up and I suppose is maybe unique to my own situation. I came to this role from a different career, three decades as a front-line surgeon and clinician, and this phenomenon of drinking and driving has quite literally been the scourge of my career.

Right back from the beginning, you close your eyes and you see all sorts of things you don't want to see because they march through your head every night. And really and honestly, it is sad enough to lose a child but to see that happen week in and week out for the same reason really defies belief. And if a generation of practitioners don't have to go through that, I really think this act will have achieved more than it ever set out to do, quite frankly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAGGIE: The other pieces, the interlock, there is a feeling that somehow driving is a right and not a privilege and I don't think that you can justify that on any level. I think if you have sinned – for want of a better word – served your penance, I think you owe it to yourself and everybody else to show that you can get yourself back to where everybody else thinks you should be. And the interlock, I think, is a reasonable, thought-through way of dealing with this. And it's not just a key that relies on alcohol or lack of it, it is also a monitoring system that can be interrogated by the registrar of motor vehicles so that you can see if someone is trying to deliberately play the game, circumvent the system.

Is it a foolproof system? Of course it isn't, but it's enough of an inconvenience and an expense for the individual that it's a statement of intent, and I think the sooner we rejig the idea that there is anything normal about having alcohol and getting behind the wheel of a car, I think we win on that basis again.

Again, the impounding is perfectly sensible. You have someone who is impaired, they get booked, they get processed, they go out, they go back and pick their car up and they may still be under the influence. So really, I'm not going to beat this to death. I felt it was important for me, having spent 35 years picking up pieces, just to make the observations I have. And I will commend this bill to the House.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port.

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

It is certainly a pleasure to stand today and take my place and add commentary to what has been an extensive, I'll say, discussion, if you will, as the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave pointed out. Typically, when we speak to legislation we refer to it as a debate. I think it would go without saying that carrying on from the debate on Thursday this is more of a discussion. Certainly, everyone has a voice to lend to this conversation.

So I'm just going to take a moment just to state for the record, if you will, and perhaps to those who might be joining us today, we're continuing discussion on Bill 68. That's An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 5.

There are three major takeaways, if you will, from this amendment. I'll read them, if you bear with me. The "Bill would amend the *Highway Traffic Act* to":

One, "reduce the permissible proportion of alcohol in the blood of a person who is under 22 years of age and not a novice driver while he or she is operating a motor vehicle or has care or control of a motor vehicle to 0 milligrams of alcohol in 100 millimetres of blood;"

Two, "introduce the mandatory use of an ignition interlock device on the reinstatement of a driver's licence or driving privileges of a person who has been convicted of impaired driving offences under the *Criminal Code*; and"

Three, "add regulation making authority to enable the seizure and impoundment of a motor vehicle where a person is impaired or fails or refuses to comply with a demand by a peace officer."

In short – that's the lengthy version as noted in the legislation and, of course, we're all anxiously awaiting the day that this legislation does come into effect. As with most of the other Members, I'll add a great thanks to the various ministers who played a role in this portfolio: the Member for Bay of Islands, who's now the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment, and formerly the Minister of Service NL; and, of course, the Member for Lake Melville, who is

now the Minister Responsible for Service NL. Between these two ministers and their staff, it was quite apparent, as we attended the briefing just last week, how much work has actually gone into this.

It has been mentioned – of course, we wouldn't perhaps be here at all today discussing this and debating this in the House if it wasn't for the fine folks, Ms. Hynes-Coates from Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the voice they loaned to us this past fall.

Attending the briefing, as noted last week, just to throw out again and I guess to put into context; Members of the House of Assembly are invited to briefings on a regular basis for various pieces of legislation. This particular briefing was a jam-packed room, I can tell you. All Members took the opportunity to attend and listen to the officials who've worked diligently on this, and who are very pleased to have been some driving force behind this.

I'm certain the Minister of Service NL will – it will be great to point out some of the fine folks who are the driving force behind this. Bill 68 – 68, what that means is this is 68th piece of legislation we're discussing in the House of Assembly since assuming office in November of 2015. So for the 48th General Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador, this is Bill 68, the first bill I've seen with ultimately unanimous support from all sides; absolutely, unanimous support. In addition to that, I don't know if there has been a bill debated in this General Assembly that has had the amount of speakers to lend their voice to this piece of legislation. So that certainly speaks volumes in itself.

The first piece of the amendment of the act around young drivers – and I guess we're trying to curb societal thinking. Of course, has been noted, statistics will point out I think young drivers somewhere in the age of 16 to 25 was noted, made up only of about 13.6 per cent of the population. But they attribute to about a third of the impairment-related driving offences. So while they only make up a very small portion of the population, being responsible for a third certainly has something to say about shaping a young mind and encouraging a young mind to think twice.

While radio ads – and we hear them all too often on various media streams – the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation would have information at their stores. We constantly see these ads. We see the red ribbons, and we see the red ribbons on various vehicles. You can't go to very many parking lots without seeing a red ribbon. All these things play a reminder, but a reminder can only go so far.

I think with this legislation, the intent to the young driver, as to all drivers, but primarily one of the pieces here changing the young drivers to bring the blood alcohol content to zero. Beyond important, and I think will be well-received. As the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave mentioned, just Friday with some of the media commentary, it was noted that going around Memorial University, for example, that young students were very receptive of this.

The ignition interlock system – wow! I tell you, when we attended the briefing and it to be said that this was a voluntary measure in the past, it was almost like there was just this moment of silence, where people were just kind of shocked. I know of course we had heard it, and we had heard it when Ms. Hynes-Coates was invited to speak to the Liberal caucus. But just to think about that for a moment, and then to put Newfoundland and Labrador in perspective with the rest of the country, and only our province, I believe along with the Northwest Territories – and you can correct me if I'm wrong, Minister. I believe it was just our province and the Northwest Territories, were the only two that had a voluntary system.

To think that this was a voluntary measure before, it's almost – I guess of course as a Member of the House of Assembly, and I can only speak from my perspective, but you learn so much and you get saturated in terms of information overload. Whether that's to do with legislation or constituency work or laws of the land or different jurisdictions, but this was something that I can honestly say I was not aware of. To think that this was a voluntary measure in the past is just mind blowing. I guess it speaks volumes to the report grading that Mothers Against Drunk Driving had put out and published there, giving us an F. And, no doubt, we certainly deserved an F as a province if that was to be the case.

So this is a mandatory piece, and the Member for Fogo – Cape Freels had spoken about well, of course, you would have to blow into the ignition interlock system. When you start the vehicle, you may go a few kilometres. It may just randomly beep again and you'd have to blow into it again and so on and so forth. So that's a deterrent in itself, but even in order to get there, even in order to get to that point, you're still going to have to pay some close to \$1,000 or \$1,100 to get the system installed. So right away we have a financial impediment. So to those who are picked up for this type of offence, that's a financial implication, number one.

Number two, they're going to have – the vehicle could very well be impounded as well. You drive across this province, and of course there are times – I just drove across the Island just this past weekend and not often do I drive the full 775 kilometres from Stephenville to St. John's but there are some times when I take the opportunity to or may have to for other reason, and you drive across the Island you see vehicles kind of parked on the side of the highway. I often think to myself, my god, they must have had a breakdown or something went wrong with the vehicle, or any number of cases, but this is exactly one of the cases as well.

To think that you've been pulled over for impaired driving, the RCMP or the RNC have you pulled over, they've issued the offence and you've been arrested and what have you, and your vehicle can just stay there. I mean that's a danger in itself. You talk about the *Highway Traffic Act*. That's a danger in itself to have the car just stalled on the side of the highway.

This is why, as Members have mentioned, we heard instances where people were picked up twice in the same day, perhaps returning to their vehicle. So the impoundment piece is critical as well, because after you go through the piece where you have to pay to get the car un-impounded, and that of course could range, because there's going to be cost to have it towed. There's going to be a cost of the different private operator that you'll have to pay to get the vehicle released, and then you're going to have to pay a cost to get the ignition interlock system put in place as well. These measures are

absolutely game changing, I think, when it comes to deterring drinking and driving.

As I said, there's much to be said about the number of Members who spoke. What really struck me this past Thursday, two Members in particular spoke, which I think with great emotion and passion, that being the Member for Harbour Main speaking about her mother. And my gosh, you know your colleagues and you hear stories about your colleagues and their families, and we all go through various challenges, but to hear her story that she shared about her own mother was certainly something that will stick with me, and something that I'll always remember every time I speak with the Member for Harbour Main.

To hear the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville reference the fact that he knew young Nick Coates; that's something that I didn't know as well. And, of course, we've all been touched by these instances and I guess that's why this bill speaks volumes to not only all of us in the House of Assembly, but to all citizens in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It really shows how far we've come as well. I listened to some of the commentary; I did listen extensively to *Radio Noon* on Friday. Excellent job, Mrs. Hynes-Coates, with the *Radio Noon* on Friday; certainly radio could be your next career choice, by all means; very articulate and very good words spoken there.

I listened to the commentary – the Minister of Service NL had called into *Radio Noon* on Friday and added his commentary as well. I guess a lot of debate has occurred since this was introduced on Thursday and some have said well, you've gone too far; some have said you haven't gone far enough and these type of things. But I think the biggest takeaway is that we went there, and you have to start somewhere.

As I went home the weekend and I had a number of conversations with people in the district, and had a great chance to talk with some folks just yesterday at a community breakfast with the Winter Carnival, and one of the – I'll say – older adults – I guess, to put it quite properly – had said to me: John, you wouldn't believe what it was like here in the '70s and '80s. And I said: Well, what do you mean?

And he said: Sir, in the '70s and '80s, we'd all be down to what was then known as one of the night clubs. I won't mention it. People would get off work – of course, the history of Stephenville with the Linerboard and the Abitibi paper mill, a lot of folks they'd get off, you'd go have a few drinks and you'd go home. And he said there'd be instances where the police would pull you over, check and see if you were all right, and then say, now Sir, we're going to follow you home to make sure you get home safely; full well knowing they were impaired. That was the societal type of norm, if you will.

We'll just take our time; we'll follow you home to make sure you get home safely, and continue to watch them operate the motor vehicle down the road. So to think that's where we were just some 30-odd years ago is absolutely mind blowing. And knowing that and knowing that we can only make one change at a time, you have to start somewhere.

So while there has been some commentary around the age restriction and some of the nuances here with respect to the suspension and why is it only three days and five days – I mean there's a number of things you can pick at, I guess, and that would go with just about anything; but the reality is we had to start somewhere, we started here, this is beyond a significant very first step – certainly beyond a first step.

And these are the types of conversations that we need to continue with. I think, as you'll hear from the Minister of Service NL when he will look to close debate, I'm sure will certainly add – I'm willing to bet – this wouldn't be the last time we make an amendment to the *Highway Traffic Act*. You have to take the proper time to go through with the legislation and to get the regulations in place and to see what type of impact that has. You also have to be very much aware of the impact this is going to have on various communities, the additional responsibilities with RCMP and the RNC, the impoundment, getting the various mobile centres.

There are a few fixed centres right now across the province that have the ignition interlock system in place, and then there's a mobility piece, where, if you need the system installed,

there's a mobile unit that can come to you to have this installed and you can go to them and have it installed. To get some of these things in place will certainly take time, but this is something that had to start somewhere.

For those in the Mothers Against Drunk Driving movement – and we have a great chapter in Stephenville – I know they do some fine work, and the Member for St. George's – Humber had alluded to that. In addition to the awareness campaigns and the red ribbon campaigns and the marches and the fundraising efforts, one thing that they do for young drivers and it's certainly something to see, Mr. Speaker, if you haven't seen it – they did one I think just last year, correct me if I'm wrong, in St. Joseph's – sorry, St. Joseph High is now Appalachia High – in the community of St. George's. They did the mock disaster.

So when we hear from the Minister of Health referring to his previous life and his profession, and having to see individuals come in, in this type of situation where they've been victim of a crash as a result of an impaired driver. When you get the students involved in these type of situations, where they see the mock disaster, you see the ambulance response on site, you see the paramedics on site, you see all of our first responders across this province who all play a very, very critical role in addressing some of the severity that can come of impaired driving, when you see the mock disaster, it's just like the real thing.

For those who haven't seen it, I encourage you – if there's a Mothers Against Drunk Driving chapter in your region and they haven't perhaps had an opportunity to perform that at a school or at a community or at any event for that matter, I'd encourage you to get in contact with your chapter and perhaps, as a Member of the House, you can work with them to ensure that that type of situation can get replayed. There's something about talking about drinking and driving and there's another thing when the visual piece is there.

I guess on that note, I can only go a little bit further to thank Mrs. Hynes-Coates and those with Mothers Against Drunk Driving who continue to tell their story. Because in telling their story, they're reliving it every time.

They're reliving it every time they tell it. I cannot even begin to imagine what they must feel like; I honestly can't. To have the compassion and the will and the desire to share that story over and over and over again, it just certainly speaks volumes to their desire for change and their compassion and will to work with legislators and to work with RCMP and to work with enforcement of all levels to ensure that our roads are a safer place.

The Minister of Transportation and Works spoke to this legislation on Thursday, and of course he hears a significant amount about everything to do with our highways. Mr. Speaker, we have some 9,000-plus kilometres of highways in Newfoundland and Labrador. I believe some 9,700-odd or it is 9,070, but in any event, it's between 9,000 and 10,000 kilometres of road in Newfoundland and Labrador.

You can picture, it's only 7,000 kilometres if you hopped in the car and drove from St. John's to Vancouver. So we have a great enough challenge as it is in ensuring adequate infrastructure and funding for maintenance and what have you. Can you imagine the ability from our RCMP and RNC to enforce this over some 9,000 kilometres of roads? So by giving and putting this piece of legislation in place, that's certainly going to make their job a lot easier. We most certainly hope it would deter folks from thinking twice before they hop in the car and give it a second, sober thought before they do so.

As mentioned as well, on that note, in addition to all those thousands of kilometres of highways across the province, St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, to be the highest rate incident per capita in the country is just shocking. It is absolutely just shocking.

If you had to look at some of the other cities on the list: Kelowna, BC; Victoria. My God, it's just extensive. We need to change things. It has to start somewhere. I'm very well pleased that it started here in this House of Assembly and under the direction of the two ministers, as previously mentioned, the now Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment and the Minister of Service NL.

So again, in closing, I cannot thank them both enough, the officials enough. I feel more

educated on the subject and I feel that I now have a message that I can carry to people in my district, and certainly something that we can all be proud to promote.

In closing as well, a huge thank you to the Hynes-Coates family and all of the great work of the various chapters of Mothers Against Drunk Driving throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, and throughout the country for that matter. It's the advocacy of these groups that keep our feet to the fire, keep us thinking, keep us going and thinking on ways on how we can do things better. And in terms of doing things better, this particular piece of legislation is going to make things safer.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak and I'll take my place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour to stand here to speak on Bill 68, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act No. 5. It's a bill that I wish I didn't have to stand here to speak on because of the consequences that have been faced by many families here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We wish that had not taken place with families. But unfortunately, we have to discuss this issue because people continue to drink and drive.

First off, I'd like to thank Mothers Against Drunk Driving for being a strong advocate for this important issue, bringing awareness, working with government, working with their communities to raise awareness on the harmful effects that drunk driving has on many families, their friends and loved ones. As my friend for Stephenville – Port au Port mentioned, it takes extreme courage because when you get out and speak to something like this, you relive it time and time and time again.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Minister of Service NL for bringing this legislation forward, and to the Minister of Municipal Affairs whose staff has been working diligently on this. This is

my second time speaking to legislation that we've brought forward with regard to impaired driving. This past fall, we talked about and brought forward legislation that would see anyone who would refuse a breathalyzer face charges.

I think this is very progressive legislation, along with this, to curb drunk driving in Newfoundland and Labrador. And for us to receive an F, it's embarrassing. This legislation, which is supported by all parties, all Members of the House of Assembly, will go a long way in being the toughest legislation here in Canada, and it's something to be very proud of.

My friend, the Minister of Health and Community Services, and again, my friend for Stephenville – Port au Port mentioned de-normalizing behaviour. In my previous career, I spent 14 years as an officer in the navy. During my time in Halifax, I held several postings, several jobs. One of which would be running the engineering department on a ship, but that also holds a number of administrative roles as well, and as well as my time with the Canadian Forces Naval Engineering School, where I served as divisional officer for combat systems engineering department, where I was an administrator, worked human resources, but also a disciplinarian.

So what that meant for me is to have responsibility for over 100 new sailors as they just came off the street, off basic training, and you tried to guide them in the right direction. So myself and my staff, we'd sit them down and give them a day-long or two-day long briefing on different aspects of navy life, what to expect at the Naval Engineering School. One of the things that stuck with me right away as I was in that posting, was the commandant of the school would always meet with the students. It relayed an important message, because when you're in the navy, you talk about the drunken sailors. Well, you get that reputation for a reason, because alcohol use has always been prevalent in the navy, and you've seen a number of steps over the past few years to de-normalize that, to promote responsible drinking, and provide addiction services to people who need it.

One of the things that the commandant of the school would relay every three, four months as

new students would come in is he said, if you go downtown – and we're not saying don't go downtown, but he said: There's no hotel room that is going to be more expensive in downtown Halifax than the fine you'll face by being picked up from impaired driving. He said: You might think that a thousand dollar fine isn't very much, losing your licence for six months is not very much – no, excuse me, a year in Nova Scotia, actually. But he said: Look at it this way; what value do you place on a human life? That's the financial penalties, but there are also the social, personal penalties that you face when you drink and drive and go behind the wheel.

We've seen this. I represent a district in rural Newfoundland and you see time and time again how that attitude is still there. I talked about an incident when I spoke this past fall where someone refused the breathalyzer and there was no consequence. We brought forward that legislation to make things tougher for those people. That's legislation I hope and I'm sure will make people think twice about drinking and driving, not just in rural Newfoundland but all over this province.

One of the things I'd like to mention about the young people, even though you talk to them, you try to give them briefs, you tell them not to drink and drive – we talk about the 22 years of age being zero tolerance, well most of these young men and women that were coming into the Naval Engineering School when I was there were any range from anywhere between 18 to 40 or 45 years old. I think we had someone slightly over 50. So there's that young person, but time and time again, I'd walk into work on Monday morning, before I get to my desk, they'd be the chief saying: Yeah, we have to deal with another impaired driver. No matter how much we tried to do this – I think it went down significantly just based on us pushing the fact that you shouldn't drink and drive, but it still happened and it disappointed me every time.

I'd have to go to court, as attending officer, to make sure that they were at their appearance, to report back to my chain of command on the outcome. When I'd sit down in court, I may be there two, three, four hours during that morning because I had to wait for the young person to have their hearing, but the majority of those court cases in the morning or afternoon were for

impaired driving charges. That's just in Nova Scotia. I can only imagine what it's like here in Newfoundland and Labrador. So this legislation is going to go a long way to deter that.

The fact that you have your vehicle impounded is going to make a huge difference. The fact that you're going to have to have a breathalyzer in your car, at your own cost, is going to be a deterrent. So I'm very excited to see that this legislation is brought in here today.

Having conversations with constituents from Thursday night until I got in here today, people were happy that this is in place or coming into law. They're happy that all parties are supporting this piece of legislation.

You talked about the radio and three shows where people get on the air to talk about the issues of the day. I don't think there are too many negative things that were said. I think I read about one this morning, but I think for the most part over the last three days that this legislation has been introduced, it's been a very positive thing and we've got some substantial positive feedback.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I fully support Bill 68, and I'm glad that I'll be able to stand up here, hopefully, today to show my support in this bill and this piece of legislation.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Like my colleagues, it is a pleasure for me to stand up today in this House to lend my support to Bill 68, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 5.

There is a lot of legislation, since being elected as a new MHA, certainly we brought forward into this House. Not every piece of legislation I suspect, that everybody is able to stand and speak to. Some of it impacts people differently. I, for one, over my career and the number of years that I've been on this earth, have been

significantly impacted by people who have been drinking and driving. I've had some pretty horrific things happen, and I certainly don't want to get into some of those specific details because they are very painful to talk about.

I remember – well, let me back up. As I look at some of the legislation, one of the things that keenly interests me and I guess that's why I found a bit of the courage to stand up today and talk about this legislation, is when we say that this legislation is going to set zero blood alcohol content for drivers under 22. I think back to when I was a teenager. I can remember my best friend at the age of 13, and he was going to a dance and had asked me if I would go along. I said no, I think I'm going to stay home tonight. I got a call. My mother awakened me a little later in the night and my friend had been killed, and it was because of someone who was drinking and had taken his life. So that's a person I never got to continue a friendship for the rest of my life.

As you grow up you get tougher and you have all kinds of experiences. I can tell you that I suspect not one community in this province has not been impacted by the fact that someone has been drinking and driving. They've impacted not only the family but also the community itself.

We talk about, some of my colleagues, we've been talking here and we've said how times have changed. Thirty years ago it was very customary, Mr. Speaker, for people to drink and drive. Could you get home safe? You were out partying. It was on a Saturday, and it was okay to get behind the wheel. You made it home okay, and the next weekend you probably did it again.

I think of the efforts of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and Ms. Hynes-Coates, and other advocates in this province. I'm hopeful that we've changed the page so it's no longer something that we tolerate as a society.

There are summer events that happen. In my home community of Port Blandford, I live along the highway. We've had a number of fatal car accidents because of people who've attended summer events; have not been sober in the morning, have been driving and before they reach home – and these have been young people

– before they've arrived home they've been killed. As a society, we thought that's okay.

With this legislation, though, Mr. Speaker, I'm confident that we've finally seen that it's not okay. That we have to change the page and change the societal norm so that young people, all people in our province, realize that we shouldn't take any alcohol or drugs if we're going to get behind the wheel.

I think of my daughter. I was working in the public service in the day; I was out in Central Newfoundland when she called me to tell me she had just gotten her driver's licence. And I was extremely proud of the fact that she had gotten her driver's licence but I was just as worried because I didn't know what she was going to do as a young person, but also what other people were going to do when she was behind the wheel driving on the highway or on a roadway.

Over the last number of years – I guess she's had her licence for seven or eight years now. When she'd come to visit us in Port Blandford, I can remember when my wife and I gave her, her first car. She would want to go out to see her friends. We knew that they would be drinking, and I would always say to her, leave your car, call me. I do not care what time of the night, the morning, call me. I would sooner for you to get home safe and be alive than to get behind the wheel.

We have to do more of that in this province. We have to say there is no tolerance. We're talking about under 22 in this piece of legislation, but as my colleagues have talked about, this weekend they've had discussions in their districts about the changes to the legislation. I, too, have had some discussions with my constituents, and people said we need to take it further. We need to have zero tolerance for all ages.

This is a step, Mr. Speaker, where we're moving forward and saying that we no longer tolerate for people to get behind the wheel time and time again after they've been drinking and to go out and risk their lives and the lives of others when they get on our roadways.

It's been said, Mr. Speaker, that driving is a privilege not a right. Unfortunately, there are a

lot of people in this province who figure that it's a right. They get misconstrued in thinking that – they forget that it is a privilege. I felt very privileged when I got my licence. I take that privilege very serious every time I get behind the wheel.

If I go out and socialize, I make sure that I have a dedicated driver so that even if I have one drink, I've got somebody who's going to be driving me to make sure I'm safe and the other people that we're going to encounter as we're trying to get home. Certainly, it is those examples that we all need to take and consider when we're going to go out and engage with our friends and our families and go out into the community, so that not only is it going to be for 22-year-olds, but hopefully, we start with that age range and it moves up through so we don't have those examples.

We're hearing in the news time and time again about this person who was picked up at 9 a.m. and they were picked up again at 2 p.m. and picked up again at 8 in the evening. With this change to the legislation, those days are in the past. We won't be encountering that again.

I want to say thank you to the Minister of Service NL for bringing forward the legislation, but also to our colleague, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment. I know he and his staff did a tremendous amount of work on this piece of legislation so they could bring forward – so that we can all stand up and lend our support behind the amendments that we talked about not only in this House in the last day but also today.

I'd also like to have a special thanks, or say a special thanks to the staff who have worked very hard, I suspect, in terms of bringing it forward so that we can stand here, and to all advocates, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Ms. Hynes-Coates, as everybody has referenced as they've spoken, being a true leader in bringing this forward, but all advocates in this province who have brought this forward so that we can make these changes.

This is a good piece of legislation and I'm very pleased to have been a Member, to be in this House, and actually speak in favour of it.

So thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to stand and speak today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

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

It's been quite a few days since this bill was first introduced just last week and I think what a journey we've all been on together. I've remarked that we've had – including myself speaking now – 26 Members of this House who have spoken to this bill. And, as many have mentioned, this is quite a precedent from the technical briefing, to the interest outside of the House, both with staff but, frankly, from the communities across the province, it's been quite overwhelming.

I note that when I stood last week to introduce the bill, I was getting some messages on my BBM from the staff and the ministerial support in the executive office were remarking the phone calls that were coming in. People sharing their stories, telling their stories, saying thank goodness we're making some serious moves and steps on this huge problem. And the staff remarked that they've never encountered that before.

So it has been a very emotional journey and I suspect now if I did a straw poll around this House, probably around this province, many of us my age and probably older, if we think about the implications and the dangers around drinking and driving, I would suggest that most of us are counting our blessings just to be alive.

In fact, the leading cause of death for our youth between 16 and 25 years of age, frankly, are motor vehicle accidents. And unfortunately, over half of those are caused by a drug- or alcohol-related situation. So the fact that we're even standing here today, in many ways, is a miracle.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of miracles that didn't happen and there's a lot of tragedy. Again, we've pointed out – both

Amanda and Patricia Hynes-Coates are here with us – the role that they and so many other volunteers across the province have played around the lobby effort. The story that started, frankly, for me was when I first saw this – and I know I shouldn't be using props, but I have in my hand a report that was prepared for MADD and it describes some 20 legislative criteria that one could use to evaluate the effectiveness of the jurisdictions of this country in terms of getting to the bottom of this problem and actually setting a standard to shift the attitudes, but also to send a message that this type of behaviour would not be appropriate.

I can remember I was with the Member for Lab West, and my other colleagues for Labrador, the MP and my other three close colleagues for Labrador when we met with the MADD chapter in Labrador West last March. And when I first saw this graphic it struck me, and I just think of the effectiveness of this jurisdictional scan, this score card which has us at the bottom with and F plus As I've said in some of the media that I've done, there's nothing positive about an F plus – certainly a lot of work to do.

So since that time, I know we've met with MADD chapters here in St. John's. My colleagues, and I suspect on all sides of the House, have interacted with the various – I believe it's some 12 chapters in locations across Newfoundland and Labrador that have been working and convincing us of the importance of doing this and doing more, and I'm very pleased to see the interest and level of activity here today.

I did want to talk a little bit about some of the messages that I've heard. It's interesting that when you have a bill that so many people are interested in speaking to, one remarks on can you find something unique, can you find something different; and I would say that all 26 of us, and many others who are watching, we all have something different to contribute. I'm just reflecting back myself as a teenager – again, showing up on a scene where a car's just gone off the road. I know the drivers of that car, there's been a horrific crash and you're just wondering if they're still alive, who's injured. You can smell the alcohol, you can see that scene and it's very vivid in my mind, as it is for many others who've shared their experiences.

That's what's got to drive us and we have some attitudes to shift.

I just thought I would share some of the feedback that we've had external to the House. My colleagues here have done a very excellent job of presenting their views, but there've been some other points of view, and some of them a little challenging, and I just wanted to talk a little bit about them. One was in relation to the idea of impoundment. Why are we impounding a vehicle if you don't – the suggestion had been, and this was on the CBC last week. The suggestion had been that the incidence of repeat offenders was not that high.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we did some further homework this weekend, and I'm sure Patricia and others can quote these numbers; but, in fact, 20 per cent of those charged with impaired driving have experience with the courts. They have a criminal background and, unfortunately, 16 per cent of those charged have been charged with impaired driving within the previous 10 years.

So we're just not sending the signal that this is unacceptable behaviour; hence, the need for getting into these – I would suggest the idea of the ignition system interlock, a very humiliating and I hope debilitation type of mitigation to tell these drivers that they're going to have to, once their sentence is served, still serve this period of humiliation when the only vehicle they can operate, by the way – and this is a point that I don't think has come out in the House. On your driver's licence, once you've lost your licence and then you're getting it back and you have to serve this period of time with this interlock system, it will indicate clearly on there that the driver has to be operating a vehicle which has this mandatory interlock.

Again, we have to come up with these kinds of methods and strategies to get around all that scheming that goes on out there. How can I circumvent the system? I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, techniques like this will go far. Once they've served that time and if they've done it to a degree that they've not had any infractions – several of my colleagues have described how this system will work – they then need to apply back to the registrar, back to Alan Doody, who's within my department, who's worked extremely

hard on this and thought a lot about what needs to be done. They'll have to go back and demonstrate that they, in fact, had a clean record of operation, of using this system over the course of that.

So I wanted to get back to that. Again, overwhelming support, but I did want to address some of the criticisms. Another challenge we had is: Is it tough enough? Have we gone far enough? Why don't we do this? Well, I guess you can always debate that. Maybe we should double the fines. We should double the sentences and so on. What we did want to do was respond, frankly, to the good work that MADD have done in this report.

So you will see, if one were to pick up this document and align those 20 criteria, some of which we had in place, but if you align them with the new proposals, the new proposed amendments, you will see close alignment. So these are the measures that MADD came to us and said: Could you, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, consider doing this? This would go a long ways to deter because other jurisdictions in this county are finding them to be effective.

So we're never going to say we're done, but this is in response to what other jurisdictions, frankly, that were way out in front of us. I'm very pleased to see us step up to the plate.

Another element, and one of my colleagues just mentioned a few minutes ago, about the idea of youth commenting and these streeters and how they felt at Memorial University, for example. No, we are not picking on the youth. What we are trying to do is frankly help them survive a period of adjustment. I mean going through your teen years on into your early 20s, there's a lot changing in your life. There are a lot of new experiences. What we're trying to do is set a behaviour, set a complete societal attitudinal shift that drinking and driving are two behaviours that we need to remain separated at all times. That's why the focus.

Again, the stats I just spoke about a few minutes ago in terms of this is your number one chance of dying in that 16 to 25 year age group through a motor vehicle accident, and chances are, if that

happens there are drugs and or alcohol involved. So it's all about keeping those people safe.

I did speak about the switchboard. Again, I think a lot about how hard some of the staff have worked. If I could, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to forget this. I just wanted to read off some of the names of the people who have worked very hard on this, and some of which I've only come to know in the last two weeks since I've been on the job. But the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment did an excellent job with his team. I happened to inherit that team, and it's one that I've been very excited about.

Some key folks: Roxie Wheaton, Megan Collins, Alan Doody, Gina MacArthur, Marc Budgell, my EA who's always there to support me, Ian Murphy. Helping us draft up the legislation are: Angela Whitehead, Ellen Haskell, Tom Duggan, Susan Marrie and Julian McCarthy. The deputy minister – who I'm pleased to see, is now back on his feet – Sean Dutton, has done a great job in leading us all through that.

A few other questions that were raised, particularly by the Opposition and the Third Party that I thought I would respond to now. If we still want to discuss them in committee, I'm more than pleased to do that. One was raised around the question of fines, and what about fines in terms of the legislation? A lot of the fines frankly are captured under the *Criminal Code of Canada*. This is under our *Highway Traffic Act*, and we do not reference fines in here; however, there are costs that are going to be borne by the offenders. I thought I would just mention, certainly that interlock ignition system, that's about \$1,100 to install and a substantial penalty there.

The impoundment of the vehicle; if you have your vehicle impounded at roadside, there's the tow charges. That's going to be anywhere from \$150 to \$250, and then you've got your storage fees on top of that. Again, the offender will have to pay. Those dollars will go directly to service providers. So there's no cost to government, nor will revenues come into government, but our service providers certainly will be available and we'll make sure they do their thing.

As I said, there are no impaired fines under the existing *Highway Traffic Act*. But we do have a schedule of offences, fines and penalties if those fines go unpaid. So perhaps that answers the Member's question. As I said, the *Criminal Code* does have those fines. A first offence of impaired driving is not less than \$1,000; a second offence would result in imprisonment of not less than 30 days, and a subsequent imprisonment of not less than 120 days.

Another question that was raised by my colleagues in the Third Party, I believe it was there, was on the idea of consultation and whether or not we would be – and how we would be rolling out the messaging around this. Essentially, why do we need six months to do this? So to answer sort of two questions, the six months are going to be required – first of all, we have forms. I even have an example here. In discussions with the RNC and the RCMP last week I had a look at these forms. So they need to be reworked.

Staff are going to have to be trained. We have two key departments, too, that we want to use: the Department of Education and my colleague to my left, as well as the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills. Both of those departments will have key roles in educating the public and ensuring they understand what is coming. And it is indeed coming, subsequent to approval here today.

Also, in terms of consultation, I understand staff have been speaking to certain groups, sort of 50-plus organizations, some municipal organizations, other community groups. If Members have other ideas, we'd love to hear them. I certainly look forward to rolling this out so that again, everyone has clear awareness of what is coming and our seriousness around that.

I did have a couple of key points I wanted to make around blood alcohol levels and youth. As I said, we have a graduated licence program now, where for the first 24 months we are watching closely, making sure that youth can understand how serious society is about the consumption of alcohol and driving. But what we wanted to do with this legislation was push that out, and it's frankly a five- to six-year period now that a new driver, assuming you're

starting at 16 years of age, will have to shape those habits.

This morning I spoke with the media about my own experience. Given my age, I can remember when seat belt laws came in. Myself, I learned to drive with a seat belt, but I watched my father and many other adults, frankly older than myself, struggling with that and how awkward it was to change that behaviour, to put that seat belt on. They felt constrained. I heard human rights abuse, all kinds of constrictions and protestations around putting on a seat belt that frankly would save your life.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the moves we're making here today, these amendments are doing exactly the same thing. They're sending a signal that are going to make you a lot safer, and hopefully at some point now into the future, we'll find ourselves with only historic memories of just how horrific this problem was.

I think, Mr. Speaker, what I'd like to do is, if you'll forgive me, and I hope people will indulge me, because I do believe that this is a very emotional discussion. I've not, in my short year and a half as a politician, seen such interest in everyone wanting to speak. To see it carried over, I think has been telling on how important this is. The attendance in the audience and at home and the feedback I continue to get on my phone has also been dramatic.

Last week, when I was with Ms. Hynes-Coates and her team, one of her teams – I think it was Mr. Bern Pike, provided me with a folder. And if I could have your, bear with your indulgence, what I'd like to do is read the names because I can't think of a more telling way to send a signal. We often think about the offender, but it's really important to remember the victims. It's because of their sacrifice that we're here today trying to make our lives better for the future.

So I'd just like to – perhaps in a style consistent with Honour 100, people who've given their lives for something important – read those names. So, if I may: Roger William Linehan; Damien Burden, just 17 years of age when he was killed by an impaired driver; Mabel Care; Matthew Churchill; Nicholas Coates; Julia Gaulton and Mary Gaulton, two sisters killed on

the same day; Rita Hennebury; Clyde Hennebury; Cory Kenway; Richard John Murphy; Cory Skanes; Marlene White; Juanita Bromley.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to read a name; it's a person I never knew, but this tragedy occurred in Labrador some 25, 26 years ago, and it still continues to divide our community. It's also so much of the drive of the staff and the people who've been involved to get this bill before the House here today, and I'll read the name of Kerri Lynn Dutton, sister of Sean Dutton.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 68 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 5. (Bill 68)

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

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 5," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 68)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Service NL, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 68.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Bragg): Order, please!

We're now considering Bill 68, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 5.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 5." (Bill 68)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise and Leader of the Opposition.

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

Thank you very much, and there are a number of items I think could be best described as for clarification and a better understanding that I'd like to discuss with the minister this afternoon, and I trust that he's open to that, to some questions for clarification, rationale and reasoning why some of the decisions they made in the bill.

Before I get to that, I just want to express, last week when I spoke in second reading, my appreciation for the bill coming through and want to thank the minister again for bringing it forward. And also very interesting just now when he closed debate in second reading and he took a few minutes to name some of the individuals, young people who have tragically lost their lives through impaired driving, and I thought it was a real personal touch for the minister to do that and I want to thank him for that.

I take your comments with great respect, Minister. Just reflecting, it's only a few minutes ago, on how impaired driving can impact us while we may not have known somebody, personally known somebody who has lost their life, became injured, or somehow their life was changed as a result of impaired driving, but through any variety of connections it's obvious it can have an impact on each and every one of us. Obviously, with the minister in his commentary just a few moments ago, the work that he's done here and being exposed to personal stories and so on has had an impact on him.

I've seen my share of the loss of life, destruction and devastation caused by impaired driving through my lifetime and also been touched personally by it as well by people and by family. The seriousness of it should never be minimized or reduced.

I mentioned last week that organizations like MADD continue to push the envelope, and they will. And I'm sure that once this legislation is completed and enacted in the months to come that they will continue to push for stronger legislation, for more changes and so on, and I applaud them for that and I thank them for doing that. That's not a bad thing. You should never say well, then they're not satisfied. They want to continue to push the envelope and change how society views impaired driving, either impaired by alcohol or a drug. I'm glad they're there to do that. I encourage them to continue to do that.

I heard some discussions, public discussions, today about some people feeling now that the envelope may be pushed too far and others saying it can be pushed further. It is always good

to have that discussion, that dialogue around impaired driving.

Maybe the discussion and this bill coming forward and public discussion that's happening – as I said last week, you can't measure what it may have prevented. You can't measure the person who never got behind the wheel or how many times that has happened. But maybe today somebody will be hearing some of this public commentary and will decide not to take their car tonight somewhere where they plan on consuming alcohol, or will take a cab home because this is on their mind or they thought about this while they were out today.

I just wanted to comment on that; I appreciate it. I appreciate your comments and for all Members. It's good to see all Members of the House participating in it, supporting everyone. There were a large number of people participating in this debate today.

Minister, the first point that I just want to grasp a better understanding on – and we know that motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for young people age 16 to 25. We know that in those crashes – 55 per cent is the number I saw – alcohol and drugs are a factor in 55 per cent of those crashes. While at the same time, age 16 to 25 only makes up about 13 per cent of our population. So my first question, Minister, if you don't mind elaborating on is: How did you land on age 22 versus 21, like many provinces have, or 25, as is the age range that that particular study talks about 16 to 25? Maybe you could give me some commentary or insight on that.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

As you say, the age of 22 is consistent with what MADD had asked of us. As well, it's consistent with some other jurisdictions; I'm sure there are some exceptions. But again, the idea of whether it be 22 or 23, the main objective is to create a period of time – and as we've been describing as some five to six years – where a new driver starting in at 16 years of age will have some five or six years of diligent monitoring,

understanding that they're now operating within an environment of tough situations, tough rules that separate drinking and driving.

So nothing magical about it, other than the fact that it was asked of government to consider by MADD and it's an age which they have found to be effective elsewhere.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

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

I appreciate that, Minister. We talked about this as a caucus and, I tell you, we didn't want to come in here today and get into presenting a list of amendments, or potential changes or that type of thing. We felt the best way to do this, the most beneficial way, was to come in and have it through Committee and have this discussion.

Based on statistics that I saw and my discussion with stakeholders is that 25 would likely have been the more appropriate age, where the motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death in that age group from 16 to 25. And it's under legislation. So it's either an amendment that would have to happen under legislation or a new bill to change the age. I would certainly ask that you give that consideration because my understanding is there were certain stakeholders who had indicated 25 as a suggested age for this. But I can leave that with you or speak to you further offline on it.

In the briefing materials that were provided, and also in the bill itself, my understanding on it – and I want to talk about the impounding of vehicles, Minister, for a few minutes. The impounding of vehicles is going to be under a section which is an enabling section for what would be become in regulation, but it indicates – I'm looking on page 7 of my bill, 5(1). It talks about subsection 186(1) of the act is amended by adding the following: “providing for the seizure and impoundment of motor vehicles by a peace officer where the proportion of alcohol in the blood of a driver or person who has care or control of the motor vehicle meets or exceeds the prohibited proportion or the driver or person who has care or control of the motor vehicle fails or refuses to comply with a demand”

Now, my reading on that is – and I'm asking you for clarification on it. Does that mean that the impounding, the provision for seizing and impounding will occur when a person is actually charged with a criminal offence, either driving with over 80 milligrams of alcohol in 100 millimetres of blood, refusing a breathalyzer.

So it would be failing a breathalyzer or – it wouldn't happen with a blood demand because it takes time to get that back, so it's either driving over 80 or refuses to comply with a demand. I just want to be clear – is that the case when this provision will apply, only when a person is charged with one of those criminal-related offences?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you for the question.

First of all, I'm going to go back and just to answer another clarification on why 22 was selected. We are following Ontario and Quebec, which is where the age is set right now, so just to answer that point.

In terms of when will it be mandatory for a peace officer to impound a vehicle, it's described, as you've indicated, either the operator refuses to provide a breath sample or the sample that's provided indicates an illegal limit.

In clarifying with staff – and I may need to come back to you – is the intent for persons under the age of 22, if alcohol is detected on their breath, the intent will be to impound the vehicle as well. So I wanted to put that there. I'm not sure if I'm answering your question exactly, and I may need to seek support from staff.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you.

We're in the same ball park, because my read of it says where a driver exceeds the prohibited proportion and then it – because it also refers to refusing to comply with a demand. So under *Criminal Code of Canada*, when a peace officer

has reasonable, probable grounds to believe, or reasonable grounds to believe that a person is impaired by alcohol, they can give a demand for a breath sample.

Also, if they fail a breathalyzer, having more than 80 milligrams of alcohol in 100 millilitres of blood, or 0.08 per cent, then they've committed a criminal offence, or would be alleged to have committed a criminal offence. So my reading of this is that the impounding, seizure and impounding, would not occur until that level is reached.

So my question would then be: Well, what's the case of a person under the age of 22 who is required to have zero tolerance? A person over the age of 22 could have between zero and 50 milligrams of alcohol in their blood while in care or control of driving a motor vehicle and no penalties or repercussions would come to them. A person under the age of 22 is required to have zero milligrams of alcohol in 100 millilitres of blood.

Then the other question on that – and I can break them down more so, if you want, Minister, but the other question then would be what's sometimes referred to as the warn range, which would be 50 milligrams to 80 milligrams. So in 50 milligrams to 80 milligrams, any driver would receive a suspension. For a person under the age of 22, any concentration of alcohol would trigger a suspension. But for drivers over 22, if they are between 50 and 80 milligrams it would trigger a suspension.

So then the question would be it doesn't trigger the impoundment. So the person would leave their vehicle on the side of the road. I know one of the concerns that was expressed here today is, so if a person is detained, their licence is suspended at the side of the road and you leave their car there on the side of the road, there's a risk they return to take it back, and also it's the traffic hazard of it being left on the side of the road, which I heard during debate today.

So my question then would be: Why wouldn't an impoundment be triggered by a suspension rather than the criminal limit?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you very much for the question.

I understand it; I don't have an answer right now. But if I may, I'd like to report back to the House with a response.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

MR. P. DAVIS: I thank the minister. Maybe between Committee, if there's not a chance –

MR. TRIMPER: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: Oh, you might have it there now. I was going to say, if there's not a chance between Committee and third reading, maybe then we could follow up on the third reading. But I'll take my seat, it seems like the minister may have an answer for that.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Thanks to technology, I have some insight on the matter.

Yes, so essentially the prohibitive proportion will be defined in the regs and how that's determined. I take your point and we need to make sure that it's clear for the peace officer who's on the scene and dealing with a possible offender. So we've got some work to do. And, as I indicated when we introduced the bill around the notion of 0.05, 0.08 and so on, we are certainly interested in being as strong and as tough on this behaviour as we can. We look forward to taking that direction and doing what we can in the regs.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

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

Thank you, Minister, I appreciate that. I know sometimes in the language in an act or a bill, a piece of legislation before the House – and for

those not familiar with it, then quite often the legislation will lay out the parameters in which regulations can be made, which are generally more specific to certain areas of the legislation.

Legislation sometimes a higher level, regulations a little bit lower level and more specific. In this case, this bill allows for the making of regulations. Then it would be to the minister or to the – I'm not sure if it's the Lieutenant Governor in Council or if it's the minister's authority to make those regulations, but one or the other. Therefore, it doesn't have to come back to the House, that the minister or the Cabinet can make those regulations.

So part of the regulations, Minister, is – and it's not in the act. My next question is not specifically in the act but it was in the material provided in the briefings provided by your department, which we greatly appreciate, by the way, and appreciate the co-operation of you and your staff in that regard. They indicated under impoundment, roadside vehicle impoundment, that the vehicle impoundment for a first offence would be three days, seven days for a second offence, and 30 days for a third or subsequent offence.

My understanding is that in all other jurisdictions the first impoundment is seven days for a first offence, not three days, which is what has been provided to us in the briefing material. Now, maybe your regulations could look different, but I would ask you if you can – is there a reason for three days versus seven in the first offence? And, if not, then maybe that's something that could be considered when you're drafting the regulations to look at other jurisdictions.

The information I've been provided, in other jurisdictions the first impoundment is seven days. I've also heard some talk, some discussion that a short three-day impoundment period – because it also allows for appealing the impoundment period and so on under certain circumstances. A short three days may be problematic for processing of paperwork and requirements for policing enforcement and so on. Maybe you can give us some indication why three days instead of seven. If your BlackBerry helps you out maybe, but –

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: No insight coming through the technology, Mr. Chair, but I would add that in the last few days since we've introduced this bill into the House, I've heard a similar comment. We're certainly willing to take a look at whether or not three days are sufficient and whether or not seven could be the considered first duration for the first offence.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you.

I'll finish up with this, and I think colleagues may have a question or two following me here, Mr. Chair. But I'll just let the minister know that maybe when we get to third reading we can have a further discussion about the age because I know you said Ontario and Quebec have 22. My understanding was they had 21 versus 25. Maybe you can give us a little bit more on that, and maybe you can between – if the opportunity permits between now and then, a little bit more on the period of time for impoundment.

I appreciate your response this afternoon, Minister.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: I'd just like to take a chance – I'm going to assume, because we found as this was coming together in speaking to the staff, the terminology is interesting. We have phrased this specifically as less than 22 years of age.

So I'll take a look at what you're suggesting, and maybe other jurisdictions have worded it 21 or younger. We've worded it as less than 22 to capture that. So it may very well be absolutely consistent with Ontario and Quebec and how you read it.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

Like I said when I got up earlier and spoke on this bill first when it was presented, I said it was a great day to be here as a parliamentarian and talk about this because it affects so many people, but what I really didn't realize is what the talk was out around.

During the weekend, I had a lot of questions asked to me about different parts of this, and that's what we need to do. We need to get people talking about this because it opens the eyes for so many individuals out there that realize it's such a serious problem. A lot of people didn't realize how bad we were: F rating, St. John's the worst city in all of Canada.

So I have some questions. They're questions that were asked to me. My partner here asked a couple questions that were related to what I heard the weekend, but I just want to talk a little bit about the interlock system, Mr. Minister.

I understand, through what I heard over to the briefing, that under the interlock, if a person tries to drive their car while the interlock system – it registers and shows that that person made an attempt to drive while – they couldn't get a pass on it. It also says that it also can be extended.

I know it will be in the regulations, but is there anything that's done across Canada or anywhere else that indicates, say if you try this twice you get six extra months on the interlock. Is there something like that, because that was one of the questions that was asked to me?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you for the question, and an interesting one.

I'm not sure I can answer directly, but what I can tell you is that the technology allows the registrar, at the conclusion of that period in which the offender needed to have served as a driver with an interlock system, there's a record of when they drove, when alcohol was detected and so on.

The other interesting thing about the technology, and I heard some of the other Members speak to it, is that maybe you get somebody to help you start the vehicle but as you're operating it, it is randomly asking, demanding the driver to provide a breath sample. So, again, the technology is there to deal with those who spend a lot of energy trying to get around the system.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Okay, that's very interesting. I didn't know that, because that's one of the questions a lot of people ask. They say, what's to stop somebody else from blowing into the device and somebody else then letting that person go off and drive. So that's great. It's good to see that.

Also, on the interlock; again, I think it's unbelievable. I think it's a great thing because at least for that full year or whatever – because we hear so often about people that get picked up for impaired and had been picked up six months previous and stuff like that. You also mentioned when you were talking earlier today about the driver's licence changing.

I know that when you listen to the reports in the morning on the news and you see people always getting tickets and some guy owes \$10,000 in fines, because all they do is switch from one vehicle to another vehicle to another vehicle. I know it's almost impossible to do, but there should be some kind of deterrent we have in place that if somebody gets picked up for driving a vehicle, because it doesn't have this interlock in it but if they do get picked up, there should be some kind of suspension. Is there anything in the regulations that you can see like that, because that's what people are doing today? When you see a guy who owes \$30,000 in fines, obviously, he's after driving three or four vehicles.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you very much.

A couple of points; one, first of all, the registrar does receive a record of the driver's performance with that interlock system as it's occurring. So the technology is allowing our Motor Vehicle Registration to actually track and monitor the behaviour. We also will through this, as does PEI and some other jurisdictions I'm told, have the ability to extend that period of time in which the driver needs to serve.

Further to your second point, or your most recent point just now, the fact of the matter is, yes, with your licence it will indicate in there that this person has to be – is allowed to only legally operate a vehicle with a mandatory interlock in there. So to jump into somebody else's vehicle and think they're getting away with something will not be acceptable. Of course, it will be subject to being confronted by a peace officer. The system isn't perfect, but it's certainly tightening up a lot of the manoeuvres that have occurred in the past, to circumvent.

Thank you.

MR. K. PARSONS: I will ask a question, Mr. Chair. (Inaudible) –

CHAIR: Excuse me.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: I know that it was mentioned also that the Newfoundland Labrador Liquor Corporation are going to do some advertising and stuff like this with part of their advertising. I'd be very interested in knowing what the ideas are for education for our young people that are going through – whether it's Young Drivers of Canada, or any of these driving schools, anything at all. What would be available to really emphasize as part of what we're trying to get across here today and the habits that we want people to have when they start their driving?

Like we said earlier, everyone here I think talked about the seat belt. Once you get used to doing it, then it's (inaudible). What is the plan for education, whether it's in the high school level, or it's one of these driving schools, or is it something that before somebody gets their driver's licence that this will have to be done?

You know, just a thought; I think the more we do with the education to our young people, the better it is. As people talk about this, it's a great thing.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Newfoundland Labrador liquor commission now has social responsibility programs. I would expect that based on the feedback that we're receiving now through this activity that we'll be able to roll out those messages. I certainly look to continuing a strong relationship with MADD. They've been a huge supporter. Their network of some 12 locations across the province will be absolutely essential in both getting the message out that this new legislation is coming, but also to explain why it's coming.

As I indicated in my closing remarks, two departments dealing with education will also play a key role in our schools and universities and other opportunities. I know the Member for the Third Party also spoke about the other opportunities to engage – not just through the Internet and not just through social media, but through some physical means. So if it involves sitting down in face-to-face meetings, we're also very interested in doing this.

We see this as a huge attitude shift in society, and we know we're going to have to put a good effort in to do this. I appreciate the fact that we're having such a level of dialogue. The province is engaged right now; we want to build on that, so we're anxious to make progress.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

Again, this is a very important bill, and I think one that the people right across the province can support. I'm not sure if the minister's already specifically covered this particular question, but the minister has incorporated most of the recommendations that MADD has made, and

that's a good thing. But I'm wondering if he could speak to – and again I'm not sure if he's already spoken to this – why he would not move the level from 0.08 for people over 22 to 0.05. Is there a particular reason to not accept that particular recommendation?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: I almost might look to the Minister for Justice and Public Safety. But the designation of 0.08 as a legal limit is set by the *Criminal Code of Canada*, so it's a different jurisdiction.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 7 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 to 7 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 7 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 5.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Government House Leader and the hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

I would move that the Committee rise and report Bill 68.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 68.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): The hon. the Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels.

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that Bill 68 be carried without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 68 carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would call from the Order Paper Order 5, second reading of Bill 69.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that Bill 69, An Act To Amend The Health Professions Act, be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 69 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act To Amend The Health Professions Act.” (Bill 69)

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

MR. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, I rise before this hon. House today to introduce Bill 69 entitled, An Act to Amend the Health Professions Act.

The Health Professions Act regulates several health professions using an umbrella model of regulation. The act is currently in force for seven health professions; namely, acupuncturists, audiologists, dental hygienists, medical laboratory technologists, midwife, respiratory therapists and speech language pathologists.

It doesn't include the larger disciplines numerically, for example registered Nurses, licensed practical nurses and physicians, as these have their own specific models of regulation in legislation for historical reasons.

Each of these professions regulated by the *Health Professions Act* play an important role in the provision of quality services.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Council of Health Professionals is a regulatory body for the health professions that are designated under the act. It then becomes responsible for registering practitioners for quality assurance, for dealing with allegations and complaints regarding the conduct of health professionals.

Each profession that's governed by the act has its own set of regulations that details the requirements under each of these areas for registration, renewal and other requirements specific to that profession, such as ongoing professional development.

In addition to this, each designated profession also has its own professional college that's responsible for providing professional expertise and guidance to the council around areas of registration, standards of practice, entry to practice, scopes of practice, codes of ethics, and competency and education for its members. So this is, if you like, a modular arrangement with the College of Health Professionals sitting as an umbrella over the top.

Currently, there are actually six colleges because whilst we have seven professions, audiologists and speech language pathologists decided to come together and have a single professional college to govern both their activities as they're so intimately linked.

Once a health professional is registered by the council, they then actually become members of the college particular to whichever of the disciplines elicited here before. As with other health professional regulatory bodies, the Department of Health has a really good relationship with the council. There are regular meetings between the Council of Health Professions and the department. It's actually those meetings that have stimulated this piece of amendment to the legislation and regulation.

It's that ongoing consultative process that have essentially highlighted issues with the original act which was proclaimed back in 2009 and finally came into force in 2010. These are changes that the council feels will make the operation of the college and the whole process more streamlined.

The act, as I said, has been enforced for a number of years now and because of the experiences there, the council has recommended certain amendments to the act to improve its functionality. The discussions with the department have been very fruitful, we agree, and this has generated the material that I bring before the House today, specifically this draft amendment.

It's not unusual for regulations and legislation to have to be changed after coming into force. When it's been enacted for a few years, the professions change, the circumstances change and the views of the profession as to how best to do things also alters. Professions themselves could often take a few years to settle into these new regulatory models and both the *Medical Act* and the *Registered Nurses Act* have been amended in the past because of input from the professional associations.

Numerically, this council actually regulates 1,100 professionals across the province. So it's certainly of a magnitude of the other kind of big three. It is actually one of the largest health professional regulators in the province.

The organization of the council was, as I said, set up in 2011. It's met its mandate under the act and the proposed amendments that I'm going to go through shortly are designed in their view, and the view of the department, to allow them to more effectively continue to meet that mandate going out into the coming years.

The proposed amendments really fall into three groups. The first of these is to reduce the number of elected and appointed members of the council to streamline it, and I'll explain why that has become necessary in the view of the council and the department. Secondly, it alters the legislative framework around the registrar so that the individual holding the post of registrar will actually be able to take on duties that are currently legislatively and regulated really assigned to a registration committee.

It will also, thirdly, allow the quality assurance committee under the umbrella of the health council to appoint health professionals that are registered and licensed in other provinces and territories to act as assessors for the quality assurance program. Again, I'll go through the rationale behind each of those moves as we get to it.

The first requested change involves modifying the composition of the council. Currently, the council has two representatives from each professional college and one public representative for each college, a total of three. To represent currently the six professional colleges, there are therefore 12 college representatives and six public representatives on the council, for a total of 18.

College representatives consist of the elected chairperson of each college and one other member elected from and by each college, and there's a public representative. The public representatives, for information of the House, are appointed in accordance with the processes established under amendments to the *Public Service Commission Act* and this is common to a lot of regulatory bodies.

So every time a profession is regulated under the act, there are three new members added to the council; two college, one public. You can see there's a problem with numbers coming rapidly. The councillors advise that the administrative

logistics of operating and coordinating a group of this size is already a challenge, and as further professions become regulated and fall under this umbrella it's going to multiply the size of the council geometrically with each addition.

So the amendments outlined in this bill will alter that, by allowing for one college representative to be elected from each college's board of directors, and for a cap of six public representatives to be appointed through the usual process under the *Public Service Commission Act*. So in the future, as new professions are regulated and new colleges are created, there will only be one new representative from the college's board of directors who will then be added to the board of the council.

The amendments contained within this bill will still provide an opportunity for necessary input from each profession and will continue to recognize the important role played by public representatives within a regulatory body. For clarity, and just to refresh everyone's memory, public representatives cannot be members of any of the colleges and they are there to bring a unique outside perspective from the public to issues facing the college. The idea is that the number of public representatives will now remain at six and will not increase with the addition of further professions.

The proposed amendments do actually, though, reflect a ratio of public representatives that is just as robust as any other jurisdiction and currently better than some of the larger colleges. So even though over time you could imagine that ratio of public representatives to elected members decreasing, having six, we feel, both in the department and the council, that this is sufficient to ensure a robust public voice in the activities of the council.

So that's the first amendment which is proposed, which is about the composition. The second one changes the legislative authority to allow the registration committee of the college to actually delegate certain of its powers to an individual, i.e., the registrar.

Currently the registration committee is responsible for evaluating applications for registration by a professional and then for registering them under the act. By allowing the

delegation of those activities under the act to a registrar, it speeds the process up, quite frankly.

The council already has this process allocated or allowed for in regulation and would review moving this to a legislative framework as more of a housekeeping measure, but it does actually make this then consistent with legislation around the other bodies that look after professional activities.

The third principle amendment is one to allow health professionals licensed in another Canadian jurisdiction to be used as assessors in the quality assurance program. The goal of that is to continue to promote high standards within the profession which are regulated under the act.

Now, to provide a little bit of context for those of you who were riveted by the amendments to the *Hearing Aid Practitioners Act* in the first sitting of the House, you will recall that this House approved the concept there for hearing aid practitioners regulated in other jurisdictions to sit on quality assurance committees and disciplinary committees of the hearing aid practitioners group.

The logic under that was that they're such a small group of practitioners within the province that to find individuals who would have no reasonable apprehension of bias in any proceedings within the province was actually very difficult. So it was felt appropriate to go outside to make sure that there was no apprehension of bias.

The act here again would follow that precedent. So an assessor would actually have a number of powers, including the ability to enter and inspect premises where the health professional works; to inspect the health professional's records of care; to require information from the health professional regarding the health professional's patient care; and also to require that the health professional confer with the quality assurance committee.

There are elements of discipline here, and standard setting and standard maintaining. So currently, the act under which the health professionals' council is constituted insists that the assessor must be a person licensed under the act or another act of this province.

So to flick back to the logic, we have small numbers. Although the health professionals' council actually registers a large number of individuals globally, within some of the subsets there, there are actually a very small number of registrants. So enhancing and increasing the pool of potential assessors will enable the council to more effectively operate the quality assurance program.

There would be situations otherwise whereby a technologist or an acupuncturist might actually find themselves in the situation of being assessed by the only other people in the province who are capable of doing it under the old legislation, who are people known to them and there may be a perceived or a real conflict of interest.

So that would be the third substantive one, which would be to allow folk licensed and registered under other legislation in other provinces to be used as assessors for this purpose. The drafting of this bill has been done in a way that would allow for smooth transition from the current council format to the new one by a process, essentially, of attrition. There wouldn't be a revolution in terms of the composition of the council. It would occur over time, as people's terms ended, and they would be replaced with people who fit in under the new format.

Current council members would remain until the end of their term. And since a council member's term cannot exceed three years, the maximum length for any transition period would be three years. Allowing the current council members to remain until the end of their term will ease that transition as the council moves down from two representatives to one.

So only when both college representatives' terms are up would a new person be elected from that college's board of directors, and only when the number of public representatives dips below six would a new public representative be sought through the Public Service Commission process.

Bill 69 also contains a clause which delays the commencement date for the amendments. The amendments contained within this bill will require the council to amend its internal bylaws,

and they will need some time to complete this task. Officials in my department have discussed this with the representatives of the council and it's believed that six months would be more than sufficient for them to complete this internal work. We would, therefore, recommend that the amendments in this bill, if adopted by the House, would come into force September 29 of this year.

So Mr. Speaker, in summary and conclusion, the Newfoundland and Labrador Council of Health Professionals provides an important service. The council has the mandate and requires the necessary legislative support to continue to effectively meet its mandate going forward, and this is the purpose of the amendments described in this bill, in terms of allowing it to meet its current and potential future mandate and do so with greater ease.

So in the interests of brevity, I will pause at this point and suggest to the House that hon. Members might feel inclined to support me in this endeavour.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, given the hour of the day I would move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House now stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

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