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Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we'll hear statements from the hon. Members for the Districts of Lewisporte – Twillingate, Topsail – Paradise, Exploits, Torngat Mountains, Stephenville – Port au Port and Placentia West – Bellevue.

The hon. the Member for Lewisporte – Twillingate.

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

I rise today in this hon. House to congratulate a true entrepreneur from my district, Mr. Gary AuCoin. Gary has been working in the accounting field for 30 years; 25 of those years has been with H&R Block.

Today, he owns and operates five of the 900 Canadian franchises, with businesses in the communities of Lewisporte, Gander, Clarendville, Marystown and Placentia. Gary has over 35 staff members to his team.

On October 31, Gary was presented with the Canadian H&R Block 2017 franchise of the year award at the company's national convention in Calgary, Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, Gary served for six years on the national leadership franchise council of Canada. In the community, Gary has been a very active volunteer with the Lewisporte Craft & Trade Show, school council, Lewisporte & Area Chamber of Commerce and Ducks Unlimited, to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, entrepreneurs like Gary AuCoin play a tremendous role in Newfoundland and Labrador's economy. I applaud him and all small business owners for their dedication and the contributions they make to their communities and our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Speaker, Light The Night is the signature event of the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Canada. Each year, in communities across our country, teams of families, friends and co-workers come together to raise funds for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Canada's Light The Night Walks and bring help and hope to people battling blood cancers.

Newfoundland and Labrador held its first ever Light The Night event in Bowring Park this past September and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, as a lymphoma survivor it was a privilege for me to attend.

The event was a huge success, with more than 1,000 people in attendance and over \$100,000 raised. The money raised goes to support patients in Newfoundland and Labrador, including important research on improved treatments, provides educational materials, supportive programs such as family support groups and peer-to-peer counselling.

Light The Night Walks are evenings filled with inspiration. During this, what's designed to be a leisurely walk, families and friends gather to bring light to the darkness in the world of cancer.

Thousands of walkers carry illuminated lanterns and the colours showcase their relationship to the cause: white lantern for blood cancer patients and survivors; red for supporters; and gold in memory of loved ones lost.

Mr. Speaker, please join me as I congratulate the organizers of this successful Light The Night event. I look forward to next year's event as well.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for the District of Exploits.

MR. DEAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to congratulate Effie Jewer on celebrating her 100th birthday on August 22.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DEAN: I was extremely pleased to have attended the birthday festivities with Effie, her family and friends at Golden Years Estates in Grand Falls-Windsor where a memorable time was had by all.

Born in Hodge's Cove, Trinity Bay, she moved to Botwood after her marriage to Frederick Jewer, where she was employed as a clerk with Thompson's Stores for 60 years. Her commitment to community was reflected in countless hours of time devoted to the success of events hosted by the town, as well as the Trinity United Church.

Effie continues to embrace all activities to the fullest and insists as well in helping staff with other residents, to the point where I have been told she could pass as one of the staff.

I would ask all hon. Members to join with me in congratulating Effie Jewer on her milestone birthday of 100 years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the 150 individuals who have been recognized as Labradorians of Distinction.

The Labradorians of Distinction Award was created by my federal colleague and fellow Labradorian, MP Yvonne Jones, to celebrate achievements of exceptional Labradorians who made outstanding contributions to Labrador culturally, socially, environmentally and economically.

One hundred and fifty Labradorians were honoured at ceremonies last week in Nain, Hopedale, Makkovik, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador City, Port Hope Simpson and L'Anse-

au-Loup, many, Mr. Speaker, who are no longer with us.

Labradorians of all backgrounds, cultures and regions were recognized. There were artists, advocates, athletes, environmentalists, community volunteers, municipal leaders, business people and medical professionals – all of those honoured last week have helped shape their communities and are true ambassadors for Labrador.

Recognizing Labradorians, past and present, is an excellent way to celebrate Canada's 150th birthday. An exciting event for Labradorians has been established and will continue to honour Labradorians for years to come.

As Labradorians, we are fiercely proud of our region and our heritage. Thank you, Yvonne, for introducing a program that honours extraordinary Labradorians and for sharing their stories and accomplishments with the rest of Canada.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand to recognize Radhika Verma. The 17-year-old Stephenville High student is an active member of her school's humanitarian club, student council and Community Youth Network. She is also a passionate volunteer with Mothers Against Drunk Driving, winner of the Lions Club local and regional speak-offs, former Stephenville Youth of the Year and a Rotary Music Festival Rose Bowl winner.

Most recently, Radhika was selected to sit on the Premier's Youth Council and also named a SHAD fellow, attending Lakehead University for a month to study science, technology, engineering and math. In addition to her extracurricular activities in school and her volunteer work in the community, Radhika is a strong academic currently holding a 97 per cent overall average.

The culmination of her accomplishments, academics, passion and dedication to her school and community was acknowledged this past weekend. On Sunday evening, Radhika was awarded the title of Miss Achievement Newfoundland and Labrador. Miss Achievement Radhika Verma is a true role model for all youth and ambassador to her community and the province.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Radhika for receiving this very much-deserved prestigious award.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, Christmas is joyous occasion, especially for children who marvel at the splendor of the season. For children, it is also a time for the anticipation of the unveiling of those brightly wrapped gifts.

However, for some less fortunate families, it is a time of melancholy. Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, there are organizations out there that recognize this fact and work tirelessly to bring a smile to the face of a child or to relieve some of the burden endured by parents during this season.

Just this past weekend in Marystown, I participated in the lighting of the VOCM Happy Tree where residents are invited to donate gifts to be distributed amongst families in need. Throughout Placentia West – Bellevue, and indeed throughout the province, the Salvation Army is manning their iconic kettles, with funds raised also being used to brighten Christmas for those without. In some areas, first responders will park their rescue vehicles outside supermarkets on a selected date and gather donated non-perishable food items to ensure food banks, such as the Sacred Heart Family Aid, are well stocked during the holiday season.

Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to thank all those volunteers for their time to help the less fortunate and encourage the people of our province to give generously to help make it a truly Merry Christmas for all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to highlight that the Purple Ribbon flag will once again be raised at Confederation Building this coming Monday, November 27, at 1 p.m. This is to mark the beginning of the annual Purple Ribbon campaign to increase awareness and responsiveness to violence against women. The flag will remain in place until December 10, coinciding with the International 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.

Violence against women and girls is a very important issue for all of us in this province. The rate at which women and girls experience violence in our province and across the country is much too high and is unacceptable. This must stop, and I extend my sincere sympathies to the women and their families that have been impacted by violence.

Mr. Speaker, our government continues to work to address the ways violence is perpetrated in our communities through initiatives that directly target violent behaviour and fight social normalization of violence. We are working with representatives from the women's community, regional coordinating committees against violence, the indigenous community as well as new immigrants, to identify collaborative, culturally appropriate ways to address this in our province and throughout Canada.

This includes continuing the work of the Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence in Newfoundland and Labrador, stakeholder consultations and engagement, regional outreach on violence prevention, continued financial support for the indigenous Violence Prevention Grants Program, as well as the Intimate Partner Violence Unit, which is a province-wide law enforcement effort.

Mr. Speaker, violence against women is simply unacceptable, in any form and by any means. Violence is an issue that, unfortunately, has not been successfully eliminated. Together we must continue to make change happen by bringing our collective voice and strength to address the many complex reasons why violence occurs. We must teach our children what is right and what is wrong.

We must work collectively to end violence so that all women and girls can live, work and play in a society where they feel safe and can pursue their full potential.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. We, on this side of the House, encourage individuals to do their part in increasing awareness of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence commencing with the annual Purple Ribbon campaign.

Violence against women and girls is a very important issue in our province. I, too, extend my sincerest sympathies to the women and their families who have been impacted by violence. I also wish to thank those who work each and every day to provide supports to those whose lives have been affected by gender-based violence and to those who work diligently to prevent violence.

We must all work together to stop violence against women and girls. There must be zero tolerance. I hope to see stronger mechanisms across Parliaments, the public sector and the private sector as we say this will no longer be tolerated.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank women's groups who have been tackling this problem for decades, often with very few resources. I thank our allies and organizations working to eliminate violence against women and girls, including the police, the courts, social workers, health care workers, teachers and the general public. We all have to work together.

On behalf of these experts, I must stress once again the critical need for a task force to start immediately to develop direct actions and solutions to deal with the increasing violence against women. It must happen now.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to highlight the strides being made through our three-year multi-year infrastructure program to build safer and sustainable communities.

We have been working together with municipal councils and residents, and in September, along with the federal government, announced that \$29.3 million has been allocated for 77 municipal infrastructure projects under the Small Communities Fund of the new Building Canada Fund. We also announced \$9.5 million for 28 communities under our provincial Municipal Capital Works program. This is in addition to the \$70 million allocated in *Budget 2017* over the next three years for the Multi-Year Capital Works Program.

Recently, we issued another call for applications that included municipal capital works projects and Small Communities Fund Projects, as well as those that may be available under new federal infrastructure programs. This application process will allow us to commence project funding earlier in 2018-2019 as priority projects will

have been identified well in advance of the budget.

Mr. Speaker, by laying out our long-term plan in 2019-20, we are allowing communities to start projects that respond to their individual needs. We continue to update information so that municipalities can better plan and manage budgets, resources and ongoing infrastructure projects with upcoming infrastructure investment opportunities.

As part of *The Way Forward*, we committed to strategically leverage all federal funding. This includes Phase 2 of the Investing in Canada Plan: a 10-year program to be announced in 2018.

Infrastructure projects that support clean water, waste water management and disaster mitigation have been prioritized by the residents and our government. The initiatives we are investing in drive industry, improve the economy and promote employment, which in turn gives our young people greater opportunities within their communities and greater opportunity to raise their own families here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, I am very aware of how important municipal infrastructure programs are to building and improving sustainable communities. I know how important the funding is to municipal councils and residents across our province.

I certainly am supportive of allowing communities to select projects that respond to particular needs. While some may identify water and waste water management as a priority, there are municipalities where other infrastructure, such as roadwork, recreation, municipal buildings would be identified as their priority.

Unfortunately, due to the change your government made in the cost-shared ratio, there are many projects now becoming unaffordable, particularly for small communities. I would hope that consideration would be given to communities that find themselves in this situation.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. It's good news that more funds are coming from these federal government funding programs. It's great that funding is going to be coming early in 2018 for priority projects and that municipalities will be able to do more long-term planning of their infrastructure needs. But it doesn't change the fact that many communities still have a hard time maintaining the roads, buildings and other infrastructure because of the funding arrangement of this government, which does not meet their needs.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

I ask the Premier: What assurances can he provide to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that the province will be ready for the implementation of marijuana for July 2018?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First and foremost, I think we need to remind ourselves why we're in this situation, why it is that we're working towards a July '18 deadline.

This was an initiative and a campaign promise made by the federal government, at the time, in 2015. It was based on this: Keeping dollars out of the hands of organized crime. That money, from young adults in many cases, was finding its way to organized crime.

Secondly, it was easier for young adults, young Canadians, to access cannabis than it was alcohol, Mr. Speaker. Also, getting in place regulated products – these were key initiatives around this announcement for legalization. So this government will be ready, we gave an update to the people of the province today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the Premier for his answer. I asked the Minister of Justice and he stated, and I quote: There will be significant costs borne when it comes to safety, education, health and addictions.

I ask the minister: Can he give us a detailed anticipated cost?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

The simple answer to the question would be no. There is no detailed answer that can be provided at this point. It's the same, I guess, situation that all provinces and territories are dealing with. You can anticipate what revenue might be, and even that can be difficult to calculate. When it comes to safety, what we are doing is working with our federal colleagues, with the other provinces and territories to get the best analysis on this.

Obviously, when we have something as momentous as this, the legalization of cannabis, we know there's a huge responsibility comes with it. We'll continue to work with others and, at the end of the day, there will be a cost and we need to ensure that protection of our people is a priority.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Alberta's Premier has said that she's worried that the legalization of marijuana could increase policing costs and court costs.

I ask the minister: What is his plan to address increased pressure on our justice system?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

One of the reasons the federal government decided to move forward with the legalization is the prohibition system simply was not working. In fact, one of the statistics I referenced today is when you look at roughly 10,000 drug charges in the last year, about half of that was for cannabis possession. Those are matters that are clogging up our courts currently.

With this, we are going to see a decrease in that. That being said, obviously, we know there is a need for an increased presence on our highways and on our roads. It is something we are working very closely with our police chiefs on in terms of drug recognition experts, in terms of technology. We'll continue to do that and we will be ready for the implementation of these pieces of legislation.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I ask the minister: Will Newfoundlanders and Labradorians be permitted to legally grow marijuana for personal use?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

When the federal government brought forward their legislation, they put in a limit of four plants per household, but they also left it open to provinces to make their own rules on this. Some provinces have already moved forward to come up with their own regulations on it.

As a Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, we are not ready to unveil our policy and our legislation as it relates to this. That's something we are still working on. It will certainly be in place well before the legalization in July 2018.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

They're not sure yet. I appreciate that.

I ask the minister: Will people be allowed to legally grow marijuana for commercial use?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

When we did the announcement today, one of the questions that were asked was about supply. Supply is an issue that is being discussed amongst all the provinces and territories, because with the impending legalization we know that there is a demand that we will need to meet.

Obviously, this province is open to economic development. That's one of the things that

multiple departments are working on now, so we'll continue on with that.

The legislation that we have in the House of Assembly today deals with the distribution side, which we need to be ready for. We also put out some of our other policy planks. We look forward to more announcements in the coming future as it relates to this very important policy initiative.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

I ask the minister: What quantity of marijuana will any individual be permitted to possess at any given time?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

Again, this is another one of the aspects where the federal government has set rules but allowed provinces to make their own decisions on this. This is not something that we've announced publicly yet.

Again, we've done a significant amount of consultation with the public, with our police forces, with the health professionals, with business and with other provinces and territories, as well as the States. That's another announcement that we'll be prepared to make in the future. Certainly, we will have rules and regulations that are both put in place and well communicated to the public as we make these decisions.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

I ask the minister: What will the tolerance be for vehicle drivers in our province? Will it be a zero-tolerance policy?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

This is something that is being worked out throughout the provinces and territories and with the federal government. What I can say is that we, as a province, do not tolerate impaired driving of any way, shape or form, whether it's drugs, whether it's alcohol.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: So the easy answer that I can provide at this time is that if you indulge in alcohol or drugs, stay off the road. But there will be more decisions coming and we're working with experts on this to make sure that we bring in the best legislation that protects Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

I ask the minister if this province will use saliva testing to determine the level of impairment on our highways.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

That's a very important question and one that we're working with our law enforcement colleagues across the country. I'm in very close contact with the RNC and RCMP. It's one of the issues.

One of the biggest issues that are being discussed across the country is what we do to protect road safety. Saliva detection is one of the models that's being discussed, but with

something as significant as this, there's still more work to do. We'll be continuing to do that work and to make announcements as we move forward.

We still have a lot of time left before July 2018 to make these decisions. Rest assured, we had to make sure we consult with everybody before we bring in something like this and we'll continue to do that.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The federal government's proposal is that Ottawa gets a 50 per cent cut on excise tax on marijuana products.

I ask the minister: What is the minister doing to address this federal tax?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for his question. It is an important question because most of the costs to legalizing cannabis will be borne by the province. We're simply not satisfied with the 50/50 cut that is proposed by the federal government. We continue dialogue with the federal government, as well as all ministers from across the country on this particular issue.

It's important that the federal government recognize that the provinces will bear most of the cost.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The minister said this morning that Newfoundland and Labrador will get between

\$28 million and \$41 million annually in revenue based on the sales of marijuana.

I ask him: What is that assessment based on?

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

MR. OSBORNE: He's pretty close in what I said this morning. What I said was it's very difficult to estimate what we will receive in revenue because this, right now, is an illegal substance that's being sold. There's no way to really quantify the amount of sales in this province, but our best guess on what will be received is between \$28 million and \$41 million.

Out of that, there will be considerable costs to the province for additional enforcement, for social issues and for education, for example.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I appreciate the information from the minister.

Can he tell us what his best guess is based on?

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

MR. OSBORNE: The best guess was put forward in part by federal numbers and by the work of the officials in the Department of Finance. The officials in the Department of Finance made an estimation which was to their best ability because, again, Mr. Speaker, we have no idea the volume of cannabis sold in the illegal market at this particular stage.

So it is a best guess put forward by the officials in the Department of Finance. Once we get into the actual sale of the product, we'll probably have a much better idea of the amount of revenue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I ask the minister: Will there be a provincial tax on the sale of marijuana on top of the federal excise tax?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, we're still in the early stages of this. My guess is that the tax that's put in place by the federal government is the tax on cannabis.

We do have retail sales tax in the province that's also applied to alcohol. It's my guess, at this particular stage, that the retail sales tax would be applied to this as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

I ask the minister if municipal councils will have the ability to block sellers from establishing a marijuana business in their municipality.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

Certainly, there's a lot of consultation that has been done on this. I think MNL would have been one of the consultations that did take place.

We all know what the intent of the upcoming federal and provincial legislation is, which is to legalize the usage of cannabis, consultation we'll continue to have. That's not a concern that's been expressed to me directly by any municipality.

But, as with anything, we're certainly open to hearing from them to discuss this and to deal with the legislation that's coming in. The fact is that cannabis will be legalized in this country in the very near future.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

I ask the minister: Who will regulate growth and quality of marijuana products sold in our province? Will it be Health Canada or will it become a provincial responsibility?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you.

I thank the Member again for his question. The production of cannabis is regulated by the federal government.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation is the regulator and distributor of alcohol products in this province. As far as distribution and the regulation of the sale of the product in this province, Mr. Speaker, it would go through the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

My question was more specific on regulating growth and the quality of the product that's being sold, standardized product being sold, the safety of what's being sold.

Maybe the minister can tell me: Will that be Health Canada's responsibility or a provincial responsibility?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the parliamentary secretary for Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we anticipate the legalization of marijuana, anticipated in July of next year, we have to ensure we have adequate supply and demand

and that production is available. That licensing will go through for cannabis through the federal government. It will be the same process as is maintained through Health Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

I ask the minister: With the legalization of marijuana, can the minister advise what changes will take place under *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations* and the act with respect to the use of marijuana in the workplace?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

I appreciate the questions coming from the Leader of the Opposition. You know what? The questions that he's asking are certainly ones that are shared by people throughout this province.

With this upcoming policy change – one of the most significant we've seen in decades in this country – there are going to be changes required to numerous pieces of legislation. One of the big issues is the employer and employee situation.

What I can say is while we have not made changes to that yet – today we're dealing with the *Liquor Corporation Act* to talk about the distribution side and the retail side – this is one aspect that will be covered off in the near future and likely through this House.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

We've asked several questions today on cost and revenue, on safety and other impacts in which

the government still does not know the answers of. This is a federally mandated initiative.

I ask the minister: When will you release a comprehensive, detailed plan for the sales, distribution and use of marijuana for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

The first thing I would point out – that we made it quite clear during our press conference today – is that there is still more work to do. This was a huge issue.

I'll take an opportunity now to thank all the people behind the scenes, people within just about every government department, that have put a significant amount of work into this.

We're moving forward today with some policy announcement and some legislative changes, but there is more to come. What I can say is that we're well positioned to be ready for July. We're certainly further ahead than some other provinces that haven't even begun public consultations yet.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Minister of Tourism confirm that the individual who was appointed the interim chair of the board of directors of Marble Mountain Corporation is still in that role today?

MR. SPEAKER: The parliamentary secretary for Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member opposite for the question. In our province, we're blessed with a tourism industry that employs some 18,000 people and generates a billion-dollar industry here in the

province. Marble Mountain is a key facet of that in our tourism product for the winter season, particularly, and is central to the economy on the West Coast of the province and the province in general.

I can confirm that the interim board that is in place is currently chaired by the assistant deputy minister of Tourism within the department.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you for that response. You should be informed that, as of today, the Registry of Deeds and Companies Online lists the interim chair as the director and the IAC is advertising for a new chair.

Can the minister provide the amount that Mountain Consultants has been paid by Marble Mountain since April 5?

MR. SPEAKER: The parliamentary secretary for Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to take responsibility if the Member's researcher is too busy on Twitter to provide her with the accurate facts as it relates to the board composition with Marble Mountain.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BROWNE: It's very clearly known publicly that the interim board chair is the assistant deputy minister. I emphasize the word "interim."

There is a recruitment process underway through the Independent Appointments Commission, a merit-based process – something that eluded the former administration, I might add, Mr. Speaker. That process is ongoing. The interim chair of the Marble Mountain board is the assistant deputy minister for Tourism within the department.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Mr. Speaker, we all know how much merit is in Bill 1's process.

Documents we received indicate that Mountain Consultants has received \$67,620 since April 5, 2017. Can you confirm if this is correct?

MR. SPEAKER: The parliamentary secretary for Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I will reiterate the commitment that this government has towards Marble Mountain and enhancing the winter tourism product in our province. We want to enhance the quality that visitors, non-residents and residents of the province have within Marble Mountain.

The new board, the interim board that's in place, Mr. Speaker, has made good strides towards that with a number of initiatives: low-pricing options for early birds. We're very proud of the bold set of initiatives that have been led by the interim chair of Marble Mountain.

With a specific response, Mr. Speaker, I can consult with the department and return with that information.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mountain Consultants' only director is the same person you appointed as the interim chair of Marble Mountain and who has received over \$67,000 since the appointment.

Is this a conflict of interest in your opinion?

MR. SPEAKER: The parliamentary secretary for the Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Immediately following the new board – the interim board being put in place in April – an operational review was conducted. Tony Abbott has been appointed as chief of operations at Marble Mountain. That appointment is still in place, Mr. Speaker.

The interim board chair, I should repeat, is not Mr. Abbott; it is the assistant deputy minister for Tourism. We are very pleased with the work that Marble Mountain has done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on May 5 our office wrote the former minister of Finance and asked for additional detail on *Budget 2017* information. On Monday past, we did receive some information, but there were other details that were lacking.

We asked for the detail as it relates to \$6.5 million identified as savings from salaries and benefits from ABCs. The minister responded just recently that it was related to MUN.

I ask the Minister of Finance today: Have these savings been achieved? How much has Memorial University actually cut from its salaries and benefits since announcing *Budget 2017*?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The information that we provided the other day was the information that was prepared based on the request that the Opposition had put forward in May. I'm just having a look here now. As it relates to Memorial University, I believe you said.

I'm not sure at this particular point, Mr. Speaker. I don't think I have the breakdown of the amount that was saved for Memorial University,

but I will certainly endeavour to get that information for the Member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We also asked for a breakdown of the \$38.3 million in new spending initiatives, and were provided a list which also lacked some details.

Can the minister explain the \$3.1 million for financial support for departments and Crown agencies for initiatives consistent with government's objectives?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for his question again. Part of what we've done here through the agencies, boards and commissions – I believe that's what the Member is asking about – is trying to ensure that we have consistency throughout agencies, boards and commissions, as we do with government departments. Part of the funding that was provided was to ensure that we have that consistency in the way that programs and so on are carried out with the agencies, boards and commissions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would ask if he could table in the House a list of how much of that \$38.3 million went to each agency, department and for which projects.

We also asked for details on the \$25.5 million in other savings in ABCs.

Minister, how could the budget forecast \$25.5 million in savings when in the fiscal update you indicated that ABCs had gone over budget by

\$18 million? Are there any savings in this other category and, if so, how much?

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

MR. OSBORNE: A couple of things, on the \$38.3 million, we did provide a very detailed list to the Opposition of where the funding had gone. I can go through that list here, if you wish, but I think you have the list in front of you. As far as the \$18 million, most of that was for pensions through Memorial University.

Part of the reason that we've indicated that we're asking the agencies, boards and commissions to come online and co-operate with government departments, what we've done through government department is to realize the savings through attrition, Mr. Speaker, through finding efficiencies and through zero-based budgeting.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, within that category I just mentioned, there was a forecasted \$20 million savings from the regional health authorities and other province-wide programs.

I'm just asking the minister today: How much is actually being saved to date related to 2017 fiscal budget?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, as I outlined during the mid-year fiscal update, we realized savings within government departments of over \$20 million. Within agencies, boards and commissions, it's \$18 million that we didn't realize. If we'd saved the savings that we had anticipated at the beginning of the year, we wouldn't be taking the measures that we're taking to try and realize the savings through the agencies, boards and commissions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I understand the minister, but he did indicate that they hadn't reached their target and he was looking for additional monies from the agencies, boards and commissions as they move forward to the last part in their fiscal year.

Minister, within this category there has been forecasted \$5.5 million savings related to *The Way Forward*. I'm wondering, halfway through fiscal year or more, can you give us an update on what actually has been achieved to date?

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

MR. OSBORNE: I can certainly get that information for the Member. I'm not sure which category here he's referring to, but I will certainly get the information for the Member opposite.

We did get the information very quickly for the Members when they asked for the information. I will ensure, Mr. Speaker, that there's no delay in getting that information for the Members opposite.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Minister of Education be expanding the operational grant program for early learning and child care programs as recommended in the Premier's task force on education?

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe the Member is asking about the Operating Grant Program. I'm pleased to say that, please God, the weather remains fine, the federal minister will be in town next week and we will be signing an agreement that will see the

province get some \$22 million in federal funding for child care –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: – over the next three years and, as part of that strategy, we will announce the details next week. If the Member is interested in that, I say, stay tuned.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's good to hear that there's going to be additional money put into early childhood development – well needed.

I do ask the minister: Has the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development undertaken a full review of the *Teacher Training Act*?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development for a quick response, please.

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, just to address the Member's preamble, we always hear from the Opposition that the sky is falling in. This year alone, with the federal funding, we will see \$10.7 million of additional funding this year for early learning and child care.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. KIRBY: \$10.7 million to help families get quality early learning and care for their kids, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

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

Government's own public consultation on the sale of cannabis shows the top choice overall of the participating citizens was selling cannabis at

an existing or new Crown agency, such as the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation.

I ask the Premier: Why is his government choosing to work the NLC out of the picture, eventually causing a loss of profits and, therefore, revenue that could go to the province's social programs?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

I'm a little bit confused over the question that was asked by the Member opposite because I don't recall the consultation we did saying that. In fact, there was a very large majority of people that said they wanted to see private industry have their say here. I think we've struck a very, very strong balance here where we have a very strong regulator in the NLC and we're reaching out to the private business community of Newfoundland and Labrador to be involved with this.

I think we've struck a strong balance. We look forward now, with the passage of this legislation, to allow for the NLC to get the RFP process ready and to have private industry come in and be a part of this.

Thank you so much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

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

There were two questions with regard to corporations: one was the existing one or a new one. When you put the two numbers together, I think he'll find a different number than he's speaking to.

Mr. Speaker, officials say there is, to date, no tax structure in place for the sale of cannabis.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Will he ensure that revenue from the sale of cannabis, like revenues

from alcohol, return to government to be used for the public good?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm always quite interested in listening to the questions from the Member opposite. A little while ago she was asking what we were going to do to increase economic development in the province. Now, she's saying not to allow private businesses the opportunity to sell cannabis.

Mr. Speaker, more to her point, we've outlined today very clearly that there are social costs, there are health costs, there are legal or justice costs associated with the sale of cannabis. So, yes, obviously we are going to use some of the revenue and put it back into government programming to deal with these issues.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Despite launching an environmental assessment on the proposed Grieg aquaculture project for Placentia Bay, government is appealing the judicial decision that led to government having to authorize this EA.

I ask the Premier: If his appeal is successful, will he still commit to completing the Grieg aquaculture environmental assessment?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for the question. As the minister responsible for Environment, my number one priority is the environment and to do what we can do to protect the environment. Also, on the other side, there are economic benefits, but there is nothing from the economic benefits that we'll ever do to hurt the environment.

As for the question about appealing the case, Mr. Speaker, the Justice Department felt there was some interpretation that we needed in the legislation that we had. Also, after sitting down with Grieg, they said we can go ahead and continue on with the environment – which we ordered them to do.

What we're doing, Mr. Speaker, is we're doing the prudent thing. We're asking the court what could be done and we're also doing the environmental impact study to ensure that we're protecting the environment.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I ask the Premier: Why is he refusing to meet with the Newfoundland and Labrador Coalition for Aquaculture Reform, a coalition of over 20 groups that have serious concerns surrounding the aquaculture industry's impact on our ecosystems and wild salmon stocks? They've been asking for this meeting for over six months.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure who the Member is speaking to because I have no requests, as the Minister of Environment, for it.

There was one person, Bill Bryden, I think, who requested, to a friend of mine in Corner Brook, a meeting. I picked up the phone and phoned Bill Bryden. I offered the meeting.

What Bill Bryden said to me was: We're setting up a coalition, we may ask for a meeting later. To this date, I have yet to get a request for a meeting from that committee. I phoned Bill Bryden, personally, and offered a meeting through a contact in Corner Brook who said Bill Bryden wants to speak to you.

I have no idea what you're talking about. If they want to meet, they know where I am. I'll definitely sit down and meet with the group.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The time for Oral Questions has ended.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During Question Period earlier this week, I was asked to provide this House with some data as to the usage and cost of running the gas turbine in Holyrood. I'm happy to provide that information, Mr. Speaker.

So far, to date, in 2017 we've spent \$12,420,000 as compared to 2016, it was \$19,900,000. I'd like to table this information for the House.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Given the recent topic of discussion, I'd like to table a document here published by the Canadian Institute for Health Information entitled *Pan-Canadian Trends in the Prescribing of Opioids, 2012 to 2016*.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have two; one is quite lengthy. I'll do the shorter one first.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled An Act To Amend The Independent Appointments Commission Act, Bill 28.

Mr. Speaker, this is a resolution respecting the reinstatement of the point-of-sale rebate of the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax on qualifying printed books purchased by individuals.

I give notice that I will ask leave to move the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Assembly as follows:

WHEREAS on August 22, 2017, government announced its decision to reinstate the original point-of-sale rebate on purchases of qualifying printed books made after December 31, 2017; and

WHEREAS the harmonized sales tax is levied by the Government of Canada pursuant to the federal *Excise Tax Act* and the collection of harmonized sales tax is administered by the Canada Revenue Agency; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador entered into a federal-provincial agreement called the Comprehensive Integrated Tax Coordination Agreement which allows the province to introduce federally administered tax exemptions with certain conditions; and

WHEREAS a condition of that agreement is that a change in the provincial tax policy must be brought before the House of Assembly for a vote ratifying that decision;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the point-of-sale rebate on the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax on purchases of qualifying printed books made after December

31, 2017, be reinstated in the same manner and form that it had been employed prior to January 1, 2017.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

In accordance with provisional Standing Order 11, I give notice that I shall move that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, December 4, 2017.

Mr. Speaker, I further make notice under provisional Standing Order 11, I shall move that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 5, 2017.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

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

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

WHEREAS deaf and hard of hearing children in the public education system of Newfoundland and Labrador are not receiving full and equivalent access to a quality education because of the lack of appropriate full-time resources; and

WHEREAS from 1964 to 2010, deaf and hard of hearing children were provided with a full-time quality education in the Newfoundland School for the Deaf, but deaf and hard of hearing children currently placed in mainstream schools

receive only a fraction of a school day with a teacher qualified to instruct deaf and hard of hearing children;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to undertake an immediate complete and thorough assessment of the supports in place for deaf and hard of hearing children by a committee of at least two independent and recognized experts in the field of deaf and hard of hearing education, and to accept the recommendations of these experts, and in the interim, take measures to honour the support commitments made to all current and future students upon closure of the Newfoundland School for the Deaf in 2010, to ensure that all deaf and hard of hearing children are provided with access to a quality education equivalent to hearing classmates as well as access to sign language.

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

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I stand with this petition that this time has come to me, again, from all over the province. It looks like the Bonavista Bay area is big for this one because I see Musgravetown, I see Cannings Cove, I see Bloomfield, so people all over the province concerned about what's happening to our deaf and hard of hearing children. As long as these petitions come to me, I will stand and present them.

Promises were made to the deaf and hard of hearing children when the School for the Deaf closed in 2010 that they would get the same services that they had in that school. That hasn't happened, Mr. Speaker.

This government has to look at the fact – one of two things: either they make sure that in an inclusion education all of those services are made available to the children who are deaf and hard of hearing; if not, they have to look at reopening the School for the Deaf, as other places in the country have done, having closed schools for the deaf.

The recognition of the very, very special needs of deaf and hard of hearing have to be paid attention to by this government. We have to

make sure that children who are in classrooms, who are deaf and hard of hearing, are getting more than two or three hours a day of education from teachers who are trained in deaf education. It is special training. It is special needs.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. P. DAVIS: 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 emergency responders are at a greater risk of post-traumatic stress disorder;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to enact legislation containing a presumptive clause with respect to PTSD for people employed in various front-line emergency response professions, including firefighters, emergency medical services professionals and police officers not already covered under federal legislation.

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

Mr. Speaker, it's not the first time I've presented this petition. I've asked questions in the House of Assembly and the minister did indicate that there was some work underway and, as a matter of fact, when I asked questions the last time said that very day she had asked for some work to be done by her officials, and I'm glad of that.

Mr. Speaker, it's a very important matter for first responders and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and even beyond those traditionally seen. If we look at legislation in other provinces, most recently in Nova Scotia, who has enacted presumptive legislation for first responders, they've gone on to include some youth care workers and 911 dispatchers. To be clear, any employee in any profession in the province entitled to workers' compensation

would include post-traumatic stress disorder or occupational injuries as such.

What this is for is a presumption because first responders can respond to literally hundreds – hundreds – of chaotic and traumatic events and we now know in the most recent health care that it can be impossible to determine which event actually caused the illness. That's what we're asking for here, that's what these petitioners are asking for, Mr. Speaker, and it's my pleasure again to rise and to raise this very important issue.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

To the 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 Indian Meal Line and Bauline Line are maintained by the Department of Transportation and Works; and

WHEREAS these roads have very narrow shoulders and are particularly hard for pedestrian traffic; and

WHEREAS excessive speed is an issue on these roads;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to implement traffic-calming measures, such as speed bumps, electronic signage, et cetera, to reduce speed and ensure the safety of all residents.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is the second time I presented this petition. In actual fact, I have quite a number of petitions to present on this particular

act because there were over 300 people that signed this petition.

Just to give a little history – and more so on the Indian Meal Line than on the Bauline Line – that road goes between the towns of Torbay and Portugal Cove. One time you could go in probably about three or four kilometres and you'd hit a dirt road and you'd get to Portugal Cove; there were no houses there at all. Today, I would estimate there are probably handy to 1,000 homes on the Indian Meal Line between the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's and the Town of Torbay.

This road has a very narrow shoulder where people are walking along. There's a lot of dump truck traffic. There's a lot of traffic that goes back and forth. It's a shortcut to get to St. Philip's. As we know, there are a lot of residential areas in St. Philip's. A lot of people from the Torbay area live in that part of it and a lot of people from that part live in Torbay.

These roads are used like you wouldn't believe, but there are families, and a lot of young families, on this road, where you can see a young mother walking along with a stroller. When you look at a shoulder of a road that's probably 24 inches or less, it's very difficult and it's very unsafe for that young lady, or anyone, to be on that road. It's just an example I'm giving you. It could be a bicycle of a child or anything at all.

I've spoken to the RNC. I have to thank the RNC because they do put extra patrols on the roads, but we need to do something to slow the traffic down. The reason being is this road, first when it was constructed, was for very minimal traffic. Today, it's like a major thoroughfare where there's a lot of traffic. People need to slow down.

I'm calling on the Department of Transportation and Works to go down and have a look at these roads. I'm sure there are other districts in the province that are similar. The Bauline Line is another one that's similar in my area.

There needs to be something done to ensure – work with the municipalities, work with the Town of Torbay. They're willing to work with the department, just to make sure that safety

comes first and we do anything we can to make sure these roads are safe for pedestrians and all users in the area.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

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 a 2013 risk assessment report made public in June 2017 makes it clear that initial cost estimates and financial risks for the Muskrat Falls hydroelectric project were understated; and

WHEREAS the Muskrat Falls Project is way over budget, diverting funds from other needs and potentially doubling electricity bills, and it has raised serious concerns about damage to the environment in downstream communities; and

WHEREAS Nalcor and the provincial government have not been transparent or accountable as to why the 2013 report was not previously made public, and the people of the province are left with many unanswered questions;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to immediately conduct a forensic audit of the Muskrat Falls hydroelectric project.

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

Mr. Speaker, we know that there have been announcements of the inquiry, but people really want something immediate as well in terms of a forensic audit. People have lost faith in government's ability to manage this project and manage the people's money as it relates to this project.

People know there have been great wastes. We all know that. There have been types of

mismanagement on this project. We all know that. We've all heard the stories. We've heard stories from workers; we've heard stories from contractors. We've seen the budget double.

Although the budget has doubled, it hasn't improved the project. It hasn't doubled the scope of the project. It hasn't doubled the output of the project; it has simply doubled the cost of the project with no apparent benefit to that doubling of the budget.

Mr. Speaker, people want to know: What went wrong and how did it go wrong? This is the people's money – \$12 billion and rising. It's a serious issue because we know it will affect our social programs, it will affect our current situation in the province's economic situation and the future as well.

I believe that when people are asking for a forensic audit, they have a right to the accountability of what happened to their money, what went wrong, how was it spent and what's happening going forward.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: 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 Adult Dental Program coverage for clients of the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial drug program under the Access and 65Plus Plans were eliminated in *Budget 2016*; and

WHEREAS many low-income individuals and families can no longer access basic dental care; and

WHEREAS those same individuals can now no longer access dentures;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reinstate the Adult Dental Program to cover low-income individuals and families to better ensure oral health, quality of life and dignity.

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

Mr. Speaker, I have stood a number of times now in this hon. House to bring this petition forward and we're going to continue to do so, as Members of the Opposition, because we believe this is a very, very important issue.

Health care today is identified as one of the most significant expenses of our government. It is well known that your teeth are a very important part of maintaining optimal health. Problems with your teeth and with your gums can lead to problems with heart failure and all other kinds of complications and infections, Mr. Speaker. They can prevent a person from being able to eat properly which in turn can lead to conditions like diabetes.

In the interest of preventative health care and ensuring that health care costs can be kept lower in the long term, we truly believe that having a good set of teeth is fundamental to that. For those individuals of society who are unable to afford these dentures, I think it's incumbent upon us as a government and as a people to return and give back to society and help those most in need, Mr. Speaker.

I call upon government to truly reconsider this decision in the upcoming budget or sooner, to give very serious consideration and action towards reinstating the Adult Dental Program for those who really need it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: The Deputy Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 25.

Thank you.

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?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

This motion is carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are considering Bill 25, the Prescription Monitoring Act.

A bill, "Prescription Monitoring Act." (Bill 25)

CHAIR (Warr): At this particular point in time we're going to recess to consider the amendment to clause 22.

Recess

CHAIR: Order, please!

We have considered the amendment and it is deemed to be in order.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, that was the last amendment with one we're going to ask leave for to go back on one

that we had a discussion on, with the House's indulgence a little bit later. On this one, what we were proposing here was just to go back to section 7 and 8 where it outlines the definition and responsibilities of prescribers and dispensers and have that in line with the act itself as it follows through.

We were proposing to take out, under section 22(d) immediately following the word "respecting," the words "for the purposes of sections 7 and 8 of the act." Our only argument and our only issue was that the minister would have full prescribing powers over outlining exactly what could and couldn't be done.

We weren't overly averse to that, but we want it to be in line with the previous part of the act which was section 7 and section 8, which already outlined. So we were trying to say we didn't want it to be confusing and we wanted the prescribers and the dispensers to have a clear understanding of what their responsibilities were and what they could have direct input to.

It was just sort of clarification in saying there might be some confusion there, but there may be some rational arguments as to why that clause may have to stay in in unique situations that we weren't aware of. I'll ask the minister if he has some particular issues around that that he could clarify.

That was my only point around that particular one.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

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

The rationale behind this and our desire to avoid visibly linking it directly to section 7 and 8 stems from, in a sense, things we don't know, but we anticipate trends. This is the flexibility of the regulation in the future to deal with situations that don't currently exist.

Section 7 and 8 are very good enshrining, if you like, the status quo. Just to illustrate both, a simple example from the point of view of prescriber and then from dispenser; there are trends now for certain medications which have

come out in other fields and are not the subject of this bill, that there is a recommendation, for example, for an educational requirement or some particular skill for the prescriber in order to make that prescription safe.

If that approach were transferred to opioids with new delivery techniques, we would then have to come back to this House with the wording suggested in the amendment to actually reopen the act to allow that to happen. Given the length of time it took to persuade Purdue pharmaceuticals to change from OxyContin to OxyNEO, which is a safer option that could result in fatalities.

From the point of view of the dispenser, there are methods now in some of the ones that are fairly well established around certain ways of packaging, may actually be something that we'd like to look at in terms of specifying how opioids are dispensed, particularly with a view to avoiding diversion or inadvertent use by minors.

Again, these are things we can't fully anticipate and we can't fully prescribe in the act because we don't exactly know where we're going to be in two or three years' time. This is the nimble piece, it would again be done on the basis of consultation with the advisory committee which would consist of dispensers and prescribers and clinicians and expert advice.

I understand the Member's concerns to try and tighten this up, but this is an area where we need a little bit of flexibility to bring in expert advice in the future.

I would recommend that this amendment not proceed and we stick with the original wording of 22(d).

Thank you.

CHAIR: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: The amendment has been defeated.

On motion, amendment defeated.

CHAIR: Shall clause 22 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 22 carried.

CLERK (Barnes): Clause 23.

CHAIR: Shall clause 23 carry?

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

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

I appreciate the minister's sense of urgency. We all appreciate the sense of urgency on this act and how important it is to get going and to make our province a much safer place, but I would like to state, once again, the Canadian Medical Association has also written the minister asking him to just slow down a bit. It might only take a few days to really address the concerns they have raised, that the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association has raised and the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner has raised. I appreciate the minister wants the act to come into force January 1.

I believe the outstanding work that has been identified by these experts in this area, very important stakeholders, that to take the time to engage with them, to see what their concerns are, will not impede the enforcement of this act. The enforcement of this act for January 1 could still proceed.

I believe, Mr. Chair, if the minister is true to his word on consultation and he wants to make this the best possible act that it can be, to enforce it

for January 1, to honour his sense of urgency and the sense of urgency of even all the people who has written to him, who have consulted with him, that it is still possible. It won't take a long time to deal with these issues and it would not impede enacting this act.

I plead, on behalf of those who have raised these issues, for the minister to take them seriously and to engage with them so that we can then move on with a confidence that this bill, this act, is the best it can be to deal with this very critical – very, very, extremely critical – problem that also affects, for some people, matters of life and death.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Shall clause 23 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 23 carried.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

With the leave of the Government House Leader, the government itself and the Minister of Health, we would like to propose to go back to clause 14, another sub-amendment here, that would have a discussion on the particular issue here related to prescribers and dispensers.

It reads: Subclause 14(3) of the bill be amended by deleting the words "one prescriber and one dispenser" and substituting the words "two prescribers and two dispensers."

Mr. Chair, as we've talked about here – and we've all had concerns of ensuring that the appropriate people involved here, the appropriate experts, have an opportunity to have input. This is a great piece of legislation because it deals with an entrenched issue that we have here.

Everybody is on the same side of wanting to deal with this immediately. That's the reality here, but again, we need to ensure that the people who are at the front line, who are dealing with this continuously, particularly dispensers and the –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: Oh, sorry.

CHAIR: I just want to remind the hon. Member that I should ask for leave prior to.

MR. BRAZIL: Oh, sorry.

CHAIR: Leave granted?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

CHAIR: Thank you.

MR. BRAZIL: Sorry, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Continue, please.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you.

We just want to clarify that we ensure what we're proposing here would give appropriate numbers and the appropriate people, along with others that would be added to the committees that the minister would put in play. Because there are dispensers and prescribers who come from different sectors of that particular industry, this would add the proper input and the proper expertise to ensure that the two front-line components here, along with all the other people who have a stake in this, have direct input to be able to advise through the committee and the minister on any changes that may be necessary, or how you roll out the program and how we best get to the end result, which is curbing the abuse, particularly misuse and diversion of opioids in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We're hoping this passes the Table. Then we're hoping we'll get support from all sides here to move this amendment forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The subclause 14(3) was provided to us in advance. It has been reviewed and it is said to be in order.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

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

I see merit in the Member opposite's recommendation. I would be happy to support the amendment as he's proposed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The same here; I think it makes all the sense in the world to prescribe two prescribers and two dispensers. The broader the participation of prescribers and dispensers, I think, the better.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Is it the pleasure of the Committee to adopt the amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, amendment carried.

CHAIR: Order, please!

Shall clause 14 carry as amended?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 14, as amended, 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: Prescription Monitoring Act.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 25 with 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 with amendment, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: I move, Mr. Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bill 25.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 25.

Shall the motion carry?

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 (Trimper): The hon. the Member for Baie Verte – Green Bay, Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have carried Bill 25 with an amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and carried Bill 25 with an amendment.

When shall the report be received? Now?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I call Order 2, third reading of Bill 25.

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 the amendments be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the amendments be now read a first 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.'

This motion is carried.

CLERK: First reading of the amendment.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that the amendments be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the amendments 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.'

This motion is carried.

CLERK: Second reading of the amendment.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call Order 2, third reading of Bill 25.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that Bill 25, Prescription Monitoring Act, be now read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

This motion is carried.

On motion, amendments read a first and second time. Bill ordered read a third time presently, by leave.

CLERK: A bill, Prescription Monitoring Act. (Bill 25)

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

On motion, a bill, "Prescription Monitoring Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 25)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce a bill entitled An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No 2, Bill 27, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2, Bill 27, and that the said bill be now read a first 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.'

This motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2," carried. (Bill 27)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2. (Bill 27)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 27 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I call Order 7, second reading of Bill 23.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services, that Bill 23, An Act To Amend The Liquor Corporation Act, be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 23, An Act To Amend The Liquor Corporation Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Liquor Corporation Act." (Bill 23)

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, we unveil government's first piece of legislation relating to the legalization of cannabis. This, Mr. Speaker, is a required step to allow the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation to carry on the work they need to do to get us to the next step. I will say that in the

spring session of the House of Assembly we will be coming forth with additional legislation.

This piece of legislation is required as currently Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation does not have the authority to carry out the piece of work they are required to do, Mr. Speaker, to allow them to move forward and get us closer to the implementation of what is necessary to legalize cannabis in the province and be ready for the distribution and sale of cannabis in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The *Liquor Control Act* regulates the operations of the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation. As we announced earlier today, Mr. Speaker, amendments are needed to the act in order to grant NLC the authority to act as distributor, regulator and, possibly, a retailer of cannabis should that be necessary.

As we outlined earlier, that will be a last-resort scenario because we will be looking for private retailers of cannabis throughout the province; however, I will say that NLC initially will be the online distributor of cannabis in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. These changes are the first step so that we can proceed with the considerable work that's required to establish a retail distribution model and to ensure that cannabis is available to purchasers when it becomes legal next summer. Today, the main changes that we are making include: repealing section 33 of the act to make substitutions and to add section 34 to include cannabis into many of NLC's existing authorities around alcohol.

Mr. Speaker, along with my colleagues, the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation and the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, we will be happy to answer any questions specific to the changes once we get into Committee. But for now, I would like to explain that these changes are broad and the reasons why we are making them.

The first change we are introducing to NLC's role is as distributor. The Liquor Corporation is ideally suited for a role as distributor as it already has the infrastructure in place to distribute alcohol, both through its own stores and through private retailers across the province.

The change we are making is that we are taking the clause that originally said that NLC has the authority to buy, import and sell alcohol or articles associated with alcohol and we are adding the same authority to cannabis or articles associated with cannabis. Similarly, we are amending the clause that lets NLC control the possession, sale and delivery of alcohol to include cannabis. The NLC will also be empowered to set the price of cannabis in the province, similar to its current authority with alcohol.

With cannabis, we are dealing with a controlled substance that requires diligent oversight by an experienced regulator. NLC has the experience in licensing retailers and enforcing regulations. Already, as they are required, they have the resources and infrastructure in place.

With these amendments, NLC will be able to grant licences to possess, sell and deliver cannabis to persons or organizations. They will also be empowered to determine the forms, manner and fee associated with these licences.

Through these licences, NLC will have the authority to ensure that private retailers comply with relevant laws, such as selling only to individuals of legal age and regulations on how cannabis is displayed in outlets. Many of these laws will be determined through future legislation. Again what we are putting forward here is the first step, a necessary step that will get us to the next stages of what we need to do.

NLC will also set regulations for such things as the days and hours during which cannabis stores are open for business. Finally, we are making amendments that would allow the Liquor Corporation to establish, maintain and operate cannabis stores should it be required. As we stated earlier, we are looking for a hybrid model of retail operations.

I will reiterate, Mr. Speaker, they will only operate as a very last resort as our primary focus is on finding private business to retail cannabis in this province. Our focus is on supporting independent licensed retailers; however, in communities where there is limited interest from the private sector, we will allow NLC the authority to provide retail options as a backup. It is for this reason that we need to make

amendments around the retail sales for NLC. NLC will also undertake online sales at the beginning of this process. We believe this approach will help encourage small businesses and entrepreneurs to set up in this province.

In conclusion, there is still a great deal of work to be done on this file, Mr. Speaker, but this is the first step in our efforts to regulate cannabis. We will bring further legislation to the House in the next session, as the work gets carried out by the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, we've had a number of our departments in government working co-operatively on this. They've put a great deal of time into this. I'd like to thank the officials throughout those many departments. We've had NLC involved; I'd like to thank the folks over there. We have looked at what has happened in other jurisdictions and tried to gauge the best approach for this province.

Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, this is a necessary step as we proceed and as the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation puts the pieces in place that they need to put in place and carry out the work they need to do. We will continue to work within government departments and as government to bring us to a place where next spring we will be able to bring in further legislation with a better understanding, Mr. Speaker, of the enforcement that is required of the social demands that will be in place and additional requirements on the health care system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to rise today to speak to Bill 23. As the minister has just gone through some of the particulars of the bill, An Act to Amend the Liquor Corporation Act, which deals specifics with – I guess, it doesn't deal in totality with the legalization of marijuana, but deals with the first step from the government's perspective, in terms

of who and what entity will be in charge, beginning with the licensing and distribution of the product, and has identified the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation to do that.

In doing that, their first step has been to amend that act to allow the corporation the ability to regulate, distribute and do business in cannabis, similar to its authority today in respect to alcohol.

If we go back and look at why we're here today and why we're going through this process, the federal government, as an initiative of the current prime minister and the federal Liberal Party, had made the commitment for the legalization of cannabis. This process we've started here, and is undertaken at the provincial jurisdiction, is to start to engage in that process which has been set to begin by July 1, 2018.

Really, the provinces have been mandated to do what they need to do, find the mechanisms and the entities to allow the legalization of cannabis to flow within their provincial jurisdictions and what that would look like. My understanding from what the federal government has said, it's open to the province how they would do that. Today, the government has announced the first step would be to align that with the current Liquor Corporation, and as well the act as we're discussing here and the minister has just talked about.

The bill, as we have here, indicates the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation will be the regulator at the outset and will be a distributor of cannabis in Newfoundland and Labrador. I think the minister spoke about online and through other means as well.

I know there were briefings done for our staff as well. The feeling, from government and officials, is that Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation has the experience to be the appropriate regulator and distributor to ensure the product will get provincial reach.

That would be similar to, I guess, when you look at the distribution and regulation of alcohol and in the more urban and more high-density areas in regard to the full gamut of liquor stores and facilities. Then you get to other areas where

there are smaller entities that are attached to small businesses in rural Newfoundland and Labrador in different regions. Will that be replicated as we go through here? There will be a lot of questions asked in terms of how that will be done.

I know the minister spoke of the private sector and wanting to engage the private sector. I certainly applaud that. The private sector would be involved and given an opportunity under the regulatory framework that's outlined by the Liquor Corporation to engage in this activity, to be able to provide the means, the structure and the focus to be able to do this. So that's certainly encouraging.

As well, we need appropriate legislative authority to implement a retail and distribution model, which this will be non-medical cannabis, in time for the 2018 legalization deadline that's been put in place by the federal government. I guess we'll talk about this as we go through as well, in regard to legal cannabis, is what we're talking about here in terms of 2018 and non-medical cannabis, which is now available based on a number of criteria related to health and specific designation related to health care conditions. Bill 23 is intended to deal with these issues that I've just talked about.

Some of the specifics related to Bill 23 and the amendments to the *Liquor Corporation Act* to start this process specifically looks at or enables the Liquor Corporation to look at the whole gamut in regard to the buying, the import and sale of cannabis. That's interesting as we go through, and we'll have questions as we go through, how the oversight is there as the regulatory body in regard to the production of cannabis here, who can produce it, farm it, those types of things.

In regard to the import, it would indicate there would be interjurisdictional in regard to province. It could be imported from other provinces in regard to a product. I guess that's what the legislation is referring to. We'll probably have questions on that as we go through.

We heard some time ago in regard to an agreement related to the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, but I'll discontinue for a moment. I

think the Speaker would like a moment to intervene.

Go ahead.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I thank the hon. Member for just taking a little pause in his commentary.

I would like to call all Members of the House to the attention of some very special guests. If I may, I would like to welcome His Excellency, Alexander N. Darchiev, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Canada; Sergey Stokov, Counsellor with the Russian Embassy in Ottawa; Kirill Kalinin, First Secretary and Press Secretary; Dr. Stuart Durrant, the Honorary Consul of the Russian Federation and Ms. Thomasine Barry, Protocol Office.

(Russian spoken: If I could say a few words, please. I am so appreciative to see my friends from Russia here. We had an excellent evening of interesting discussion. It is truly good to have them here with us today. *Translation provided by the Member.*)

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: If I may continue, just for the benefit of our guests, you may find this discussion quite interesting. I know your agenda is quite full, but we're discussing the legalization of cannabis, of marijuana. So you may want to stay the whole day.

Thank you very much for visiting. Please enjoy.

Thank you.

Please continue.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We'll revert to discussions on Bill 23. We're speaking today in regard to the amendments to the *Liquor Corporation Act*.

As I've said, the primary focus of the act, what we're talking about today and the amendments, is related to the buying, importing and selling of cannabis, which will be done under the Liquor Corporation. I was mentioning the fact of the import component of it and how this will be worked out in the months ahead in regard to who would grow it, could individuals grow it, could it be commercially grown and, as well, the import or trade from out of province or interprovincial trade and how that would apply.

A number of months ago, the provinces signed the Canadian Free Trade Agreement in terms of exchange of goods and services between provinces. Would this be applicable? I assume it would. That would have to be worked through as well.

Under the corporation act as well, there would be the control, the possession, sale and the delivery of cannabis as well, looking at establishing, maintaining and operating cannabis stores.

I know earlier the minister, when he spoke, talked briefly about wanting to entice and provide opportunity for the private sector, but initially, based on the capacity of the Liquor Corporation and their experience with alcohol, they would be the – it's government's proposal that they would be the mechanism to provide the operation of cannabis stores, maintain those and regulate them. I guess similar to the current model, up until some point that the private sector may be able to be at such a level that they would be able to offer the service. If not, I understand that the fallback is that the Liquor Corporation would provide it.

As well, the act would look at determined price and the forms, manners and fees associated with what we're talking about here with licences for cannabis. So with approval, and our understanding from the briefing, there was consultation done, I'm sure there's more to come as we move forward in the months ahead.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation will develop and issue requests for proposals for retail licences. That will go forward, I assume. I know looking through the bill it's very similar to what happens today in regard to the application for a liquor licence.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation will be the regulator and, as I said at the outset, the distributor of cannabis. The minister also mentioned online retail will be carried out as well by the corporation. Retail store sales will be through licensed private retailers to be expected and the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation stores only where necessary. I assume, initially, with the time frame, even though there's a request for proposals going out, we may see initially significant involvement of the corporation and then maybe as they work through it, more private sector involvement as we move forward as well.

When we went through this and looked at the amendments to this particular act – and this is the direction government's going to take – there are many other aspects to it as we move out and look at the process. Some of those questions were asked today in Question Period by the Leader of the Opposition in terms of many particulars in regard to the legalization of cannabis and what it means in a number of areas, in a number of pieces of legislation.

Areas like the *Highway Traffic Act* in terms of enforcement, legal limits. How testing would be done in regard to someone under the influence, restrictions and penalties in regard to that and how that would all flow through the *Highway Traffic Act*. So there's the whole policing piece of that and how that would be developed.

That's a huge component of it, too, as we move forward to July 2018 to get that done. We've got a week left here in the Legislature in this particular year, there will be another session in the spring and then that would all have to be determined, consulted, debated here to be ready to go for July of 2018.

The *Highway Traffic Act* would certainly be one that would have to be looked at. Other areas that would be looked at, obviously, there's a concern related to the workplace – employer, employee and those relationships. I think the Minister of Justice spoke to that today in regard to a question in regard to working through those particulars of that.

We have various pieces of legislation that's part of how we oversee and regulate the workplace,

the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* in regard to what is the requirement on an employee in a workplace in regard to being under the influence of cannabis? Is it zero tolerance? When you look at such things now as possible drug testing and what the results would be if someone was in contravention of those requirements in terms of operating in the workplace.

Liability issues much like alcohol, if someone was under the influence at a particular time, what would the result be of that in the workplace? All of that needs to be looked at, oversight through the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and all the provisions related to that.

Further to that, in regard to the *Workplace, Health, Safety and Compensation Act*, in regard to particulars there, in regard to workplace injuries, those types of things, if something was to occur in the workplace related to the influence of cannabis and someone in the workplace. So these are all significant issues that need to be dealt with as we move forward on this particular piece of legislation.

Other areas as we go through, too – we talked about distribution and those decisions that need to be made to look at the amounts that are allowed to be purchased at any one time. The age limits have been established, the age of 19 by looking at the legislation; and as well from the growing point of view, who is able to grow the product, the regulatory framework around that, the sale of the product, all those types of things.

One of the things that's derived from all of this when we look at the fact that the federal government is basically saying we've set a date for July 2018. As a province, you need to become compliant. There was some discussion from the federal government with regard to any federal tax will be shared on a 50-50 basis.

I know for many jurisdictions in Canada – and I think the minister here has referenced it – they have huge concerns with that in regard to what that's going to actually reflect and how much that's going to be. Even today in Question Period from the Leader of the Opposition to the current Finance Minister, the question was related to the estimated revenues that are going

to be generated from the sale of cannabis here in the province. I think there was a reference to maybe \$28 million to \$30 million, in that range.

The minister was further asked: Where did you come up with that and what's that figure based on? I don't think to date there's real clarity in what that would be. Understandably, not because it's tough to go from an illegal process to legalized cannabis now in society and what that would look like. I guess the concern from our perspective would be in terms of the province picking up additional costs or expenditures for something that's coming so quickly, realistically, when you look at all the legislation and everything that's got to be changed to get us to July. What's that going to cost the Treasury of Newfoundland and Labrador? We don't know, really, any sound determination of what's going to be sold, how much is going to be sold for the taxation model – all of those variables – what it's going to cost the Liquor Corporation.

That's the revenue side. Then, on the expense side, what are we going to have to pay to implement this and get it up and running? Because it is driven by the federal government to make sure the province puts it in place. That's certainly a concern.

As we go through in the weeks and months ahead – and I'm sure we'll, hopefully, get more details on all of that, on how this is going to be implemented and what the details are going to be. It is a big change, no doubt, in regard to our province and right across the country, in regard to how this would roll out.

We look forward to having that discussion as we go forward on the various pieces of legislation that would have to complement the changes here to the *Liquor Corporation Act* and what those changes would be. Many of those would be different in society in terms of what we've experienced in the past in regard to cannabis being an illegal substance, and what it would be under this new proposed bill, which is the first step in looking towards getting it to where it needs to be.

There's some benefit here to try to avoid location with alcohol, to have it separate. Some of the information released from officials

acknowledged there will be possible instances whereby stores could set up in a secure area, off to a side with some retail spaces, similar to what you might see today with tobacco and liquor stores located within supermarkets.

The amendments, what we're talking about, are required now, as we said, to hopefully allow time for potential retailers to examine what they would need to become involved in the business and to respond to any requests for proposals. Any business proposal, business plan, would have to look at what's my capital investment to get set up for this? Is it infrastructure, is it fees, is it licensing, is it staff? All of those components. What's that going to look like? Then, from that perspective, right now they don't know what's going to be charged, what taxes are going to be on it, so what's their revenue potential?

To bring both of those together, there's a lot of information that needs to come forward, I would think, to allow someone to suggest an entrepreneur or business owner, a current business owner, to expand their operations to avail of the legal sale of cannabis.

Many of the proposed changes in regard to the legislation, and the reading through it, just added in addition to alcohol the word cannabis. That allows, obviously, as we said when we started – it's an act that's currently in place. The framework is there in regard to the sale of liquor, alcohol, so this would parallel that from the whole process of regulating, distribution and doing the business of selling the product.

While many of the proposed changes I mentioned just add the word cannabis into existing legislation, there are several new components that I'll just mention as we go through.

Under section 2(1), paragraphs are added to define cannabis and what that actually means. If you were to go to the definitions it would outline what that is meant to be, a cannabis plant. It talks about a part of the cannabis plant and then it looks at, but does not include, impartial roots, plants, all those kinds of things that would not meet the definition. That's defined clearly, we think, but we'll certainly do more work on that

in regard to looking at it, but that's broken out and defined in what it is.

If we go to section 34.1 in the proposed bill, we have the licence of cannabis and talks about what information would be included and how that would be done. Section 34.1 talks about the board issues licences and sets the licences terms and conditions. Licences will only be granted to people 19 years of age and older. I'm not sure if the legal age of consumption – because that's something that wouldn't be part of this piece of act or legislation. That's something that would come later. We're not sure of the legal age of consumption, what that would be.

I know there are some studies that have been done in the past in regard to the effect of cannabis and some of the growth, the development of the brain and how there are some scientists and experts who would talk about the fact that it should be to the age of 25 because that's when full growth occurs in regard to brain development and maybe some of the negative effects of some of the contents of cannabis on that, if the age was lower than the age of 25. That's something I guess, again, that will have to come in future legislation to suit your policy or regulatory frameworks that are outside the purview of this particular bill.

In this bill the board can deny a licence application for various reasons, including if it is of the opinion that the applicant is not a fit and proper person – that's what is written in the bill – and/or there's a concern about the applicant's conduct, and/or where a licence would not be in the public interest, given the needs and wishes of the public in the community.

I know there was a question today as well in Question Period that the Leader of the Opposition asked in regard to the *Municipalities Act* and some of the framework that's within that legislation in regard to could a municipality actually not support the legalized sale of cannabis within their jurisdiction. In most cases, the municipality would have to issue an occupancy permit, a building permit, or something of that nature to allow the operation of the private operator to operate in that jurisdiction.

I think that's something we'll find out as we move forward in regard to the municipality because the act does talk about the needs and wishes of the public in the community. So if the public or community in a particular area had said we don't think we want this sold, could there be a restriction there to disallow it? I'm sure we'll have discussion about it as we go forward.

The board can also deny a licence where the applicant or agent in charge of a premise has been convicted within the preceding five years under either the *Excise Tax Act* or the *Customs Act* related to liquor or cannabis and the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* with respect to trafficking in a controlled substance. Other acts that would be reviewed for contravention in the past related to this would be the *Food and Drugs Act* with respect to trafficking in a controlled substance or restricted drug; the *Criminal Code* for an offence punishable by imprisonment of one or more years.

Obviously, that speaks to the regulatory framework and oversight that the Liquor Corporation would be expected under this bill to operate in regard to cannabis and the terms and conditions of that regulatory body, what they would do and whether they would apply and approve a licence application, or whether they would not. Obviously, related to past conduct of an individual, it would be relevant in regard to the issuing of that licence and the ability to operate. Those are outlined in the bill and the various contraventions of various federal statutes as well, in regard to contravention and what it would mean.

The board, as it exists in the bill, may also suspend or revoke licences where there exists a reasonable cause for doing so. I would suggest that would be very similar today to the liquor licence that was issued by the corporation that we're talking about here today. There's a certain requirement or conduct requirement or code of operations that would be required for the selling of alcohol by a licensed operator and that standard would exist and be transferred over to someone that was involved in the sale of cannabis.

That's the oversight piece this bill is suggesting that the regulatory body, the Liquor Corporation, would oversee. The board may as well, in discretion, limit the number of licences. That's certainly an interesting one when you look at our province and our density, our population and our geography.

As I mentioned earlier, I talked about larger urban centres where you have higher density but you get into regions of the province in regard to smaller communities, less populated regions. Under the current model with the corporation you have express liquor outlets that are added on to small convenience stores, maybe added on to the local gas bar, those types of things. I know government is talking about the private sector being the first priority. So in cases like that where someone has an establishment already, would this be allowed to be part of that establishment in regard to the local sale of cannabis? Those are things as we move forward, I guess, we would find these out.

Section 55 is of note as well. That allows the minister to set the fees and establish the forms to administer the act. That goes to the business model piece I spoke of earlier in regard to some entrepreneur, a small business owner that wants to expand their current operations. What's that framework going to look like? Before you put out an RRF, someone is going to want to know that. What's the cost? What's my capital cost? What's my investment? That would be all part of that in terms of how you would operate.

The other one in the bill is the tax design. What's that going to look like? Obviously, that fits into the business and private sector part of it, too, in terms of what that taxation is going to be like. As well to the province perspective, as I spoke of earlier, in terms of that whole thing of expenses and revenues. What's it costing the province to implement this through this agency and how particularly is it going to work?

As I mentioned, there were a number of provinces – and I think our government has basically said to the federal government, 50 per cent of any federal tax is not going to cut it in regard to an investment we have to make and what that's going to mean, as well as other provinces said. Is there going to be a provincial

tax here over and above the federal tax? Is there ability for municipalities to tax?

From a provincial concern or from the Treasury's concern, this is being mandated by the federal government. It should not, in any way, affect the Treasury of Newfoundland and Labrador. It should be a means.

As I said earlier, the Minister of Finance spoke today in Question Period and gave a number in regard to what possible revenues could be. But when asked how do we justify that number and what's your expectation on where that number came from, what's it based on, there was certainly limited response to that. That gets the whole issue of having the full plan in place of bringing this in and allowing us to do it by July 2018 with the confidence that we know what we're getting into and taking on the administration of this, and we're confident that it's not going to have a negative effect on the Treasury by this date that's been mandated by the federal government.

If you look at just a few of the jurisdictions and what some jurisdictions have actually said in regard to the issue of getting to July of 2018 and what it's going to mean, in British Columbia they have unveiled a plan. They're looking into a mixed model, both private- and government-run stores which would sell marijuana, which is somewhat similar to what's been talked about here today and was announced earlier today in the bill.

What that would look like, we don't know. I guess all jurisdictions are looking to what options are there and what it's going to look like. Each is looking at other jurisdictions, I'm sure, and what their intent is and what they may or may not do.

In Alberta, they introduced a bill that would make the government responsible for any online retail marijuana sales, but the private sector could certainly be involved. Much like, I think, what's been proposed here, retail locations would be operated by private companies. The Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission would be responsible for oversight of private retail. The details on licensing are expected to be available within the next year. That's where the province perspective in Alberta is going.

The bill would set the minimum age for purchase and use at 18 in Alberta, it's proposed, the same as the province's legal drinking age. It would also ban the sale of cannabis alongside alcohol or pharmaceuticals or tobacco. So they're making the distinction between their actual sales of alcohol, pharmaceuticals and tobacco related to the sale of cannabis.

Also, in terms of the consumption, the proposed legislation outlaws use in places ranging from schools, daycares and hospitals. That's the other part, I guess, in terms of getting the plan and the framework of what we're talking about. Where is the consumption of cannabis going to be allowed, looking at all aspects of society as we move forward? It could possibly, in terms of cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption, where you can consume it – all those types of things could be parallel to what's currently being done today in regard to cannabis, but that's something, as I've said, that's not available yet. We'll have to see as we move forward.

Further, in Saskatchewan, they haven't rolled out a plan as such; they're still gathering feedback and consultation online. I think they're having consultations with municipalities as well in terms of the concerns on the local governance level and how that would possibly work.

Quebec is looking at 18 years old. That would mirror the age for buying alcohol. Other things they proposed in legislation, certainly in Quebec: bar people from growing cannabis for personal use at home and would limit smoking to the same places where people currently would smoke a cigarette, so looking at combining the activities.

New Brunswick has laid out, somewhat, how it intends to proceed. Under that proposal, there certainly will be no smoking in public places and there will be a limit on how many grams a person can carry. That would be a restriction with regard to possession and things. I don't think in this province we have gotten to or amended or looked at amending the particular legislation to do so.

In New Brunswick, there would be up to 20 government-run stores. It would be established with strict policies in place that will be located at 300 metres away from schools – so they're

looking at adjacency to particular public activities and public buildings – will only display products under glass and customers will need to show identification to prove they are of legal age.

In New Brunswick it would be 19 years or older before they can even get in to even review what is available and to make a purchase. Again, they're at the point where there is no word on what the stores will be called, the pricing scheme, what that would be, but they do indicate there would be online sales as well.

In Nova Scotia they're looking at unveiling a marijuana regulatory framework, those types of things, by the end of 2017, which is quickly approaching. They haven't really gotten to releasing anything to date.

Territories, as well, would be looking at very similar or somewhat similar from other jurisdictions of what's being done. In the Yukon, for example, the legal age to buy marijuana would be 19. Their intent there is that the Yukon would own and operate at least one retail store and provide an e-commerce option as well. They're working through it as well.

All of these jurisdictions are looking at and comparing what others are doing. Most have expressed concern about the timeline, I think, in terms of getting there, in terms of July of 2018, as well, the whole revenue generator, the taxation and how that's going to work. That all flows into what the responsibility is of the agency that's going to be responsible to regulate, distribute it and carry out the business of cannabis.

The same as here in this province; that's some of the concerns we have. We'll talk as we go through this bill in regard to how that would fall out.

Today, I know in Question Period the Leader of the Opposition asked a whole array of questions in regard to where we are, what's the plan, can we meet the 2018 deadline, the expenses and revenues. Are we assured that the Treasury is not going to be negatively affected? Do we have the programs, the educational focus starting out, all the information we need as we go through for our demographics, from our very young to those

older in society in regard to access and what it would mean for them as we move forward with this proposal.

This signals, Mr. Speaker, Bill 23, a small part of the start here for this. The government has chosen to go with the Liquor Corporation and the distribution and regulatory framework in giving it to this entity to do without doing a lot of the other areas that need to be addressed in regard to other pieces of legislation, the sale, taxation, consumption and, as I said, enforcement.

We talked about things like the *Highway Traffic Act*. We talked about things like the workplace, which is so important, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, the *Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act* as well and all those components that feed into this. Some are directly involved and some are not, but they're all interconnected and are concerns and things that people want to see worked out and be articulated very clear by this government before we get to the July 2018 period.

We've been assured that we're ready. We can do this. We'll have this done. We just think that you need to make sure you have everything you need done. It's not so much about July 2018; it's about if we're going to do this, we do it right. We're well informed. The public is comfortable with it, understands how it will work. The private sector understands how it will work. Distribution and all of those variables that are talked about in this bill can be executed and executed at a level that gives confidence to the public that we're doing this and we're doing this right.

Mr. Speaker, those are the comments I have for now on Bill 23. I look at further discussion as we move forward and go into Committee and hearing specifics from the minister and from government on how this would roll out and how we move forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

I'm very happy to stand here today and speak to Bill 23, An Act to Amend the Liquor Corporation Act. When you look at it on its face, when you look at when we actually gave notice of this bill and talked about it, on its face it just appears to be changes to a currently existing piece of legislation which could seem very innocuous, seem very small, but the reality is this is a huge, huge change in this province.

What we have here is the advent of something, a huge policy shift in this province, in this country. What we have today, our announcement today, is the start of the legalization process of cannabis in this province. This bill, these amendments are the start to that as well, to deal with the retail side of cannabis legalization.

I think the minister did a very good job of explaining how this bill works and what the purpose of this bill is. I guess what I want to talk about is maybe a little more general. I can say that well over the last year, ever since I was tasked as being one of the leads on this file, I've been immersed in cannabis legalization, in policy and analysis.

It hit me, as I go through this, just how huge this is because a lot of people start off with a very simple concept. When you talk about legalizing cannabis, the picture in your head is that smoking a joint – which is something that was illegal but widely done – was now going to become legal. You just think about it from that view, from that perspective. Then, when you get into it, it's amazing how deep this goes, how broad this is, how extensive the work is and, really, how it affects every Newfoundlander and Labradorian.

A lot of people look at it from the perspective that, well, I don't consume cannabis, therefore it doesn't affect me. But it does. It does affect you, even indirectly. It has been a tremendous process.

What I'd like to do – I did it today in the announcement, but I'd also like to do it here in the House. I always say that we get to stand up here and talk about the legislation as the actual MHAs, as this is part of our duty. But this has

been formed by a significant amount of work done by people behind the scenes from just about every department. I'd like to thank them for the work they've done. This has been a significant education for me. I'd like to thank them for the work they've done that affects everybody in this province.

What I would say is a lot of times when we do our meetings – I'll say I'm pretty immersed in this now. I have a pretty good background in what I've learned over the last year. Part of our job over the next coming months and years will be talking about this change, how big it is, how it affects people and the different ways it affects people.

I can just look down across this frontbench here, when I look at Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, the minister is a big part of this, as we deal with the fact that this will have an effect on industry and innovation in this province. There's a business component to this. Certainly, we are very happy to deal with economic development in this province as it relates to the cannabis industry.

Then we look at Education; this is huge as it relates to the children in our province when we look at education, especially the K to 12 system. We have a lot of work on our hands to make sure we educate our youth, because this is contrary to a lot of what we've done in the past when you look at things – again, tying in Justice and Education: the DARE program. We're changing that now. So we have to get out into our school systems. That's why the minister is so heavily involved.

We look at the Minister of Finance; we look at the fact of the taxation side here. We look at the fact that NLC, by virtue of this bill, will be involved in this process. There's a huge financial component to this; the taxation side, the black market side, the revenue side. So, again, what Finance has been doing, this is a huge part. Obviously, our Premier, as the leader of this government and as the leader of the province, is spanning everything.

Justice; I look at what we deal with, especially when it comes to – one of the big things I deal with, obviously, is the road safety matter when we talk about impaired driving, when we talk

about enforcement, when we talk about our police forces and the work we have to do there. It's a huge part of this when we talk about the change in legislation, when we talk about people formally going through the court process, Crown prosecutors, defence. There are going to be changes to our Criminal Code. So there's a big Justice aspect to this.

Now, it's funny, because I don't know how much Natural Resources has to do. Although, someone jokingly said to me, this may be one of our greatest natural resources. There was a bit of joke there, but I look forward to municipalities and environment. There were questions in this House today from the Opposition about how does it affect municipalities? And it does.

Then we continue going down; we look at Fisheries and Land Resources, Crown Land. Crown Land has been a big part of this because we have individuals out there and companies that want to get into this business and they need to avail of Crown land.

We look at Health and Community Services; obviously, Health has a big role to play here because of the health impacts of this policy change.

We go then to Advanced Education, Skills and Labour; again, another significant involvement there. Memorial University has been a part of this discussion. We just talked about students when we talk about cannabis usage.

Finally, we go down to Transportation and Works; again, more indirectly than anything, but when we talk road safety, Transportation and Works has been a part of that.

I go back when I look at CSSD, when I look at Service NL – this really does span the entirety of government.

The first thing I want to put out to people is that everything is not known yet. This is just a beginning of a roll out of the policies which will govern this province as it relates to cannabis legalization. I'd like to think we're ahead of the curve in many ways when it comes to this process. We have some provinces that have not made these announcements yet, have not made these policy decisions.

We have some provinces that are ahead of that. In fact, I can remember going to my first FPT meeting, federal-provincial-territorial meeting, in January of 2016. What New Brunswick was bringing up was very much ahead of where we were at that time, especially with a new government coming in. They had been ahead of that. I even still have a binder upstairs of the work they had already completed.

What I can say, there's very much been a consultative process taken when it comes to talking to the other provinces and the other territories, talking to the feds on where we need to go with this. The feds laid out the groundwork, laid out the framework, but provinces have had a lot of decisions to make on where we want to go with this. In every province there are some similarities in how we operate and there are some differences in how we operate. Every province will say the same thing, and I'm certainly going to say it.

I think we're taking the best approach for Newfoundland and Labrador. There are some things I look at in other provinces that I agree with; there are some things that I disagree with, and that's fine. Again, while this debate I'm sure will be very specific in certain ways when we talk about what the purpose of this legislation is, I'm sure we will get very general questions as well about decisions we've made, what decisions are left and how we want to go forward.

When we talk about the policy we announced today, even as it relates to the age of majority 19, that's not part of the legislation we're dealing with, but it is part of the policy that we've announced.

One of the big reasons we need to go forward with this, though, is that when we look at the act itself, it's already combined the sale of alcohol, the distribution of alcohol in this province, for some time. Now we're dealing with the sale and distribution of cannabis. So that's why we need to change this.

We know that, basically, the NLC will be the distributor; they'll be the licensor of this process. We're very happy that private industry will be a part of this and we need this to move forward with that. I had a question the other day:

When are you going to make these decisions? Because there's a lot of lead time necessary. To that, I said: Yes, there is a lot of lead time necessary.

This will allow the NLC to start the RFP process to go out across the province and say: Who is interested in this? Who wants to be a part of this? There's work that has to even be done for that RFP; it's something that's very new. I'm sure the NLC has the resources and ability, given what they've already dealt with. But there are also some intricacies that have to be dealt with here when it comes to cannabis, which is different than alcohol, which is different than tobacco.

It's going to reach out there to the private industry and say: Who wants to be a part of this process? Any RFP process takes some time, it takes some consultations, it will come back. Then we have to figure out, okay, where are we? Where do we have the interest?

Again, there are very stringent regulations here. Even though there's the legalization, cannabis, like alcohol and like tobacco, is a very serious substance. It has negative health consequences in certain aspects. There are obviously positives to it. The fact it's already used medically says that, but the fact is we have to treat this seriously, especially when it comes to the youth of our province.

What we're going to see here, the sections we're dealing with in this piece of legislation, just to go through them very quickly, part one, we're dealing with the definition aspect. Basically, we're adding cannabis. What does cannabis mean? Even when we first started, this was the marijuana file, but that's not accurate. That's why it's gone to cannabis. That's what we're dealing with here.

Cannabis means a cannabis plant, any part of the cannabis plant, including the phytocannabinoids, any substance or mixture of substances that contain or has on it any part of a cannabis plant. But there's also what it does not include, including non-viable seeds of cannabis plants, mature stalks. So there are the inclusions and the exclusions of what actually constitutes cannabis. There's a cannabis plant definition and a cannabis store definition.

The next section – which I also think is very important, because I can tell you I don't mind saying here, obviously, ever since the federal administration said they were going to legalize this, there's been a lot of interest in this, both from those interested in the production side, the distribution side, or just the usage side – people that want to know more about this.

I've had a significant amount of contact on all levels. It might be people that come in for official meetings; it might be people sending you an email. It might be just if you're out at the hockey game and somebody says what's going on with this. The interest that it's generated is tremendous and I like to see that.

I look at some of the consultations that governments have done in the past. For instance, in the House we talk about the MCRC, Members' Compensation Review Committee. That committee goes out and holds meetings across the province to talk about things like MHA compensation. At some meetings they have, nobody shows up. They get very few written submissions. We've had budget consultations by multiple governments. They go out and have the road show, meet up and a lot of times they don't get a great attendance.

When it came to the public consultation we did here, we did it online. There were also some targeted stakeholder meetings. The one we did online had just about 2,600 responses. That's huge. That's excellent. To see that amount of interest of people that contributed was really promising. Then to see the targeted stakeholders where we reached out to, whether it was health, safety, business, education, you name it, just about any background, brought in to the room and were formed a part of the study.

Which then we got it, we compiled it, we analyzed it and we put it out to the public some time ago so people could see this, could have a look and see what the thought process was of the people that took the time to respond. That's just one part of what we used to help us, to guide us in drafting our legislation here. So I'm really happy to see that consultative approach.

Moving forward with the legislation, we have the conflict of interest section here that I think is obviously very important when we talk about the

interest and we talk about people that are a member of the board or an officer of the corporation, talking about them directly or indirectly, having an interest in or receiving a benefit. That brings me back to what I was going to say.

Even today, since we made the announcement, the amount of feedback I've received via email, via Facebook, via Twitter, via phone has been tremendous. People are interested in this process, especially on the business side. People are extremely interested in this, so anything a government does that generates interest, I think, is a positive. That is a positive.

Now, we move forward: "Section 33 of the Act is repealed and the following substituted" This is where we're changing what the corporation may do. Basically, there's the addition of cannabis to what they already do when it comes to controlling possession, sale and delivery of liquor. Now we're adding cannabis to this.

Previously, you could establish, maintain and operate liquor stores. Now we can establish, maintain and operate cannabis stores. That's basically the big change when it comes to that aspect.

We're talking about how the board may grant a person a licence to possess, sell or deliver cannabis. The application has to be made to the board in a certain form and manner. This is where we'll get into a section, I think, that's important because I actually had this question come up to me just after the press conference this morning.

It says under subsection (5) of section 34.1: "The board shall not grant a licence under this section where" The first part is they obviously have to pay a fee, they have to satisfy requirements in subsection (3) and (4), that being that they have to make the applications in a certain format. "The board, in the board's absolute discretion, is of the opinion that the applicant is not a fit and proper person to keep and operate a premises where cannabis will be sold" Obviously, we have to put checks and balances, regulations and standards in place as it relates to this.

At the end of the day, like anything, we're allowing for it, we're legalizing it, but we need to have the safeties put in place to allow for the prevention of it still being distributed and sold to youth. That's not what we want. We're not encouraging that. We don't want that. As I said today, nobody wants to see youth consuming alcohol, consuming drugs, smoking cigarettes, consuming tobacco, you name it. It's no different from this.

The board can also not grant a licence where they believe that "(i) the applicant is applying on behalf of a beneficial owner, and (ii) the beneficial owner does not satisfy the requirements of this Act" Again, there are some controls in place there.

"The board reasonably believes that the past conduct of the applicant establishes reasonable grounds for the belief that the applicant will not carry on business in accordance with the law and with integrity and honesty" Again, we need to make sure this business – because it is now going to be a legal business – is done in an upright fashion, in a legal fashion, in an ethical and moral fashion. That allows this.

"The applicant is carrying on activities that are, or will be, where the applicant is licensed, in contravention of this Act;" the granting of the licence would not be in the public interest; the applicant and where the applicant is a corporation have been convicted within the five years previous for a violation of the *Excise Tax Act*, the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*, the *Food and Drugs Act* and the *Criminal Code*. There are some strong conditions here.

What I will say on the federal side, when it comes to the current production of cannabis across the country, there has been some very strong and stringent conditions put in place to ensure that we don't have non-reputable people. One of the big things here has been underground organizations, criminal organizations, black market; we're trying to eliminate that.

We continue on here with some conditions. It talks about the price fixing here that has to happen. The board fixes the price for when it comes to wine, beer and spirits. The same thing is going to be here. But, believe me, we are extremely cognizant, Mr. Speaker, of the fact

that – because there are a lot of people out there saying is government going to tax it, well, yes, there will be taxation applied, but if this product is so expensive that the person is going to get it on the black market for a much lower price, then you've failed before you started.

We have to be cognizant that no matter what happens here, the same as there is a black market for liquor and there is a black market for tobacco, if we are not competitive with what's out there, people will stick with the avenues in which they currently avail of the substance. We need to be competitive.

That's one of the reasons that we are still in negotiations and in discussions with the federal government on a number of fronts, including taxation. This was a federal government decision. A lot of the responsibility falls to us so we have to ensure we get the resources that we need to do this and that it's not just a federal – I'm not going to use the term tax grab but, again, the feds have to work with us here. We have to work together to make this a workable policy item.

I'm going to take my seat now. I will look forward to the opportunity, during Committee stage, to answer as many questions as we can, to debate this. I'm sure there's going to be debate. Just as sure as I had people coming to me today saying way to go, we're so happy to see this happening, there are also people out there that don't like this. They don't like it.

Surely, this is not a policy discussion where you're going to have universality or you're going to have everybody that likes what you do. There are a number of people out there that do not agree with the legalization, and that's fine. I get that. I understand that. What we need to realize is that the federal government is moving forward with this and if we don't do our part, the feds will do it for us. That's not in our best interests. We need to do what is necessary and in the best interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I'd like to think that Bill 23, the amendments here, are a start to that. There are more pieces of policy, there are more pieces of legislation that are going to come forward as it guides the legalization of cannabis in this country and in

this province. On that note, I look forward to continuing the debate on this and I certainly look forward to us moving forward.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure to get up and speak on this piece of legislation, Bill 23, being debated here in the House today by my colleagues and Members opposite. It's an interesting piece of legislation, actually, when you sit down and you listen to the debate and the conversation. I think probably most Members in the House would agree that it's kind of a cultural thing. It's an adjustment to the train of thought, to getting their head around to the reality of what we're actually debating. I guess it's a show of progress and how life changes.

There was a time, I guess, when alcohol was – we had prohibition back in the day. They'd have to go and get their books signed to get their allowance, it was regulated to that degree. We've come a long way, obviously, Mr. Speaker.

My colleague from Ferryland, the Government House Leader, and the minister have spoken on it. We got into the details of the legislation and the bill itself. I know at the news conference held earlier today there were some briefings and the media is reporting on it. I guess we've talked about a lot of the fine details of this legislation, but I kind of wanted to put the human terms on it, the average person.

When I speak in this House, a lot of times I try to put it to the common Joe, the coffee shop conversation that most people have about this sort of thing, outside of getting into the weeds of the legislation because sometimes that can be very confusing to the average person.

I had an opportunity to speak about this to many of my constituents and they all accept that it was a promise made, the federal government brought in this change. Prime Minister Trudeau made

this promise, an election promise actually in 2015. It garnered a lot of attention, a lot of support for him and his government back then. It was a known fact, he did garner a lot of support right across the country when he announced this, but in saying that, he had a lot of naysayers.

I heard this morning on the radio, there's a guy, a federal MP, who was comparing it to fentanyl, the use of marijuana to fentanyl. That's the extreme example. I don't think anyone in this House could take – that's a bit over the top, but to put it in the context, there are concerns out there. It's something that under the regulations, when the bill is enacted there will be certain legislative changes or adjustments.

It's going to be just a full cultural shift in how we deal with this because we spend so much time – there are organizations dealing with it. You have MADD who are very big advocates on drunk driving, drinking and driving; Mothers Against Drunk Driving, they do a lot. I mean, this organization is well known. They promote awareness and prevention. I mean, it's not a matter of the use; it's always the abuse and it's something that they've always done since their organization – they've done a lot of good work.

Just recently we increased penalties for drunk driving, zero tolerance for our young drivers, in an effort to curb drinking and driving, the unnecessary deaths that happen on our roads.

Introducing marijuana as being legalized and trying to regulate it, we are, in essence – in one form, you're opening the door. It's a federal regulation and we're changing our legislation to accept it. As we open that door, we also open another door to creating a new problem that we're going to have to find ways around, and there will be issues with that. That's something that I think needs to be a more broad discussion on because I know that we speak about it, we hear about it now, it's the federal initiative, legalization of marijuana.

When you take that word – we're getting immune to it now in the last two years because it's over the news – the legalization of marijuana. You hear it every day and it's just like, okay, that's going on and you just don't pay attention, but when you sit down and you start really paying more attention, reading, digging

into the details of this legislation, digging into the commentary on it, it makes you take pause and have that sober thought.

The Government House Leader made a great point there when he mentioned the DARE program. I know I, and I'm sure a lot of colleagues here in the House, they attended DARE graduations. My own children went through that program. That's one of the big things that they're told at the drug awareness program: it's marijuana, it's one of them listed, tobacco, alcohol and, obviously, many of the other drugs.

You're teaching the children – the RNC has this great program and it's a good program – these are the no-nos, stay away. They are taboo, yet we're going to legalize it. I think that's going to be the cultural shift, psychological shift, what have you, that we're all – all of us, not only in this Legislature, in the province, in the country, it's going to be a huge adjustment to us.

I'll go a step further on this whole concept. Every one of us have constituents who work out west, out in Alberta. They commute to the oil fields or what have you. Mandatory drug testing is a huge component of those jobs. You have to comply every time. It can be random drug tests and apparently marijuana will stay in your system for upwards of 30 days. The cocaine and the heroine and other heavier, obviously more dangerous drugs, when you look at the level of danger, they stay there for a lot less time.

It's a known fact – I've talked to other Members in this House and I know lots of people in my own district – they go to cocaine because marijuana stays in your system for 30 days. We're going to legalize marijuana now, so will that still apply for the mandatory drug testing? If they're not impaired when they show up to the job site, they haven't done anything illegal. Will that affect their jobs? That is a valid question.

I have had this conversation with several people about this particular issue. In one sense, they're saying: How does this work? You're promoting – well, not promoting, but you're legalizing it, making it okay to use marijuana. Will the legislative change affect my job site when I go for the mandatory drug testing? Will that drug remain on the list? Will I be terminated from my

job if that shows up in my system even though I'm not impaired and I had that three days or four days ago? With alcohol and the heavier drugs – as I said, cocaine and heroin – it's okay, it's not in your system. I know all through this conversation of legalization of marijuana, that's something I've thought about and it's been one that I questioned.

I mean, we are looking at the *Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act*, that's one, but you're looking at, basically, your *Highway Traffic Act*. You're looking at, basically, the legislation and laws of the land, what's legal and what's not and what employers will be able to apply against their employees if they do show up with a trace of marijuana in their system.

If you're looking at 30 days, Mr. Speaker – and I'll use a crane operator, actually, because it was the one person I had spoken to and they used that example. So if you're a crane operator and you had marijuana two weeks ago, you're going to show in your blood test when you go back to the job site you had marijuana. You've never done anything illegal and it was two weeks ago, but they have a zero-tolerance policy.

Now that we've made it legal, it's no longer a criminal activity, I think that's a big issue, especially in Newfoundland where we have a lot of those workers who work in offshore and work in construction, trades workers. Mandatory drug testing policies are in place in all of those job sites for the safety of all. Not just them, the safety of everyone on that job site because that's a domino effect, Mr. Speaker. One person does the job wrong and makes one accident, a chain of events could happen and it could end up being a catastrophe. It could cause a lot of deaths.

It's very strict rules, but I think those rules are going to have to be revisited in light of this legislative change. I want to be on the record as saying that, Mr. Speaker. I hope government gives that some serious consideration when they're in the process of bringing in this legislation. I'll say it again: Newfoundland is very unique to that turnaround worker, that turnaround and work away. That's our culture. We've always worked away and that's not a new thing. It's a very common issue. I think all of us in this House, if you want to go and talk to

people in your district, you would find that is a big issue.

A couple of other things on that, too, Mr. Speaker. I noticed the minister got up today and answered our leader's questions. We had some questions. He came out publicly and stated the 50-50 tax breakdown that the federal government is offering or proposing is not satisfactory to the province, which is good. That's a good thing. We are glad. We had concerns. Why would the federal government still get 50 per cent of the revenue from sales and taxation when the province is bearing all the cost? I'm glad to hear the minister actually stated this.

Mr. Speaker, something else, too – and again, I'm trying to speak to the common man's thoughts and concerns and what have you. My colleague for Ferryland made a good point when he spoke and I know I've heard the same story. Young people and the development of the brain, it's up to 25. There are a lot of experts out there that say the brain is still developing until you're 25, but we're going to legalize and allow the use of marijuana at 19.

Again, I hope government takes some serious time to consult with those experts on that issue because it's not a matter of being opposed to legalization of marijuana. It is what it is. It's being done; it's a new age we're coming into. But I think it is incumbent upon all of us to look at all of the possible pitfalls and concerns. Not only concerns we have in this House – but better still, yeah, maybe it is the concerns we have in this House because we represent the population of this province. Forty of us in this House represent the entire population of Newfoundland so, yeah, maybe we should.

Those are concerns I hear. My colleagues brought it up here today. We all hear it. I'm sure Members opposite do, too. It's not criticism. None of this is intended to be criticism and I hope it's not taken that way. It's more of bring the issues out there. It may catch someone's attention and it may not, but it's incumbent upon us to speak for the residents we represent.

Mr. Speaker, last year I had the privilege of serving for the last six or eight months on the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and

Addictions. I'll come back to the cultural shift of use of marijuana in today's society. Addictions in general, I'm sure that a lot of people in this House – I know me, personally, addictions have hit close to my home.

The open question is: Are we aware? Are we all comfortable of where we're going with this? I'll go back to my initial comment. Marijuana has been legalized; it's the legalization of marijuana. It is what it is and we're going to have to live with it, but we're all becoming very immune to the subject of the legalization of marijuana.

My mom is in her 70s and she's in a different culture of this stuff. She has different visions on this. She was well behind; she had a different view on it altogether. But she hears it and when we get talking about it, then it is like: That's right. Yeah, that's true. When you start really thinking about it, it's not just the word when you start putting to practice.

Is it going to be fine to go over and walk in the hospital parking lot and the smell of marijuana wafting through the parking lot? Cars driving on the road – it's going to happen. It's not a manner of it not happening. You can be rest assured you're going to have this in private homes. I don't know how you're going to control that. I really don't. In reality, I don't really know how you control it. Are you going to limit the amount that an individual can grow? I don't know how you control that. You can put any regulation in; it's just how do you control it?

Again, I started off by saying the prohibition days when you had your book. It used to be the bond book, I think they called it, and you'd get signed off for your weekly or monthly supply. We've gone a long ways from there, but in today's world of 2017-2018, when it's going to be enacted in July 2018, we need to still have that cultural shift.

We need to really have a serious look at all of this stuff. Right now, you're caught up in – the regulation is coming down and it's here. I repeat: It is here. That's what struck me about this bill. We talked about it in our caucus, we have lots of discussions and reading the media, the briefing notes you get and here in this House.

I would guess most people in this Legislature, some of what I'm saying hits home with their own thoughts. When you move out of here, you're not at all against everything. I'm far from that, but when you put it in practical terms, I think it's a bigger thing than saying – I'll go back to my words again – legalization of marijuana. We all just say that and just move on to the next topic.

I think we all need to take that sober second look and thought. This will come. It's not a matter of stopping anything from coming. I just think we need to be, as a government, as a people, very cognizant of the possibilities, the pitfalls of this. There are always pitfalls. No matter what you do, there'll always be pitfalls.

There's going to be revenue generation. We're setting up the country. It's a new age. We're trying to make this legalized because medical marijuana, people believe in this. There's a big chunk of the population believes in this initiative. There's no doubt in my mind, I know that and I accept that. It's a very popular thing to do.

What Prime Minister Trudeau has done is a very popular move. It definitely garnered him a lot of support. I guess, who are we to question it? Maybe it was a brilliant move, but I still think in doing that move we need to have a serious conversation in this Legislature and around through the public consultations. I really think there should be more consultations done.

Right now we're bringing in legislation, but has there been any talk of having public consultations? I think that would be very interesting to have those conversations. Then you'd hear the crane operator that I was just referring to; then you'd hear the 70-odd-year-old grandmother, who has concerns; then you may hear the teacher come in; you may hear the police officer; you may hear the lawyer, the judge. That's where it's to. I think that's where it's at. This is not stopping – again, I'll go back, this is not stopping anything.

Instead of us using the buzzword of legalization of marijuana, maybe we can go a little bit deeper and say, you know, there are real concerns here. Maybe we should look at that. Maybe that's

something we should bring back to our federal counterparts.

You can go to the extreme of what I heard this morning on the radio, a federal MP comparing marijuana to fentanyl, which I started – I mean it's not funny, but I couldn't believe he actually used that term. I was blown away by that. All I'm talking about is more openness, more educational, more involvement.

I know we hear the word consultation is an overused word, and it is one of the words I'm very critical of a lot of times, but on something like this, I don't think that would be a bad thing to do. I don't think it would be a bad thing. I think we'd have consultations throughout the province, just to get feedback of what people feel.

Everything government are proposing people may say they love it, they think it's 100 per cent accurate. I think we speak for the population of the province, but it's not a bad practice either to sometimes on stuff like this, not everything because you were elected to govern. We've been critical of some things, you have consultations on too much stuff, but on something like this, I don't know if we know all there is to know about the effects, the impacts, the consequences this legislation is going to have on our province.

Maybe we should go and talk to all those individuals because they have their own expertise. We have former police officers sitting in this Legislature, we have a doctor, we have lawyers, we have all walks of life here, Mr. Speaker.

I think sometimes we pass legislation, we debate, we go through the back and forth and we think we hit all the marks, but on something like this I think we need more, I really do. I think there's a bigger picture out there. When I get up here and spend my time talking like this, and other Members do too, I hope the general public pose some questions and share them with the government, share them with the minister.

At the end of the day, hopefully we can make a better piece of legislation, a stronger piece of legislation that will deal with a lot of societal concerns because, Mr. Speaker, that is the big key. So instead of saying the legalization of

marijuana, there's a full pyramid under that. That's only the tip of the iceberg. There are a lot more things involved in that conversation than just that term. No doubt, there are positives to it, but there are negatives and we need to make sure we mitigate all of those things.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure for me today to rise in this hon. House to discuss Bill 23, An Act to Amend the Liquor Corporation Act, which I think is probably one of the most progressive pieces of legislation that we've seen in this House for a long time. It's here today because we have been, I guess, legislated by the federal government to move ahead with our own legislation to implement what we think is the best approach to the legalization of cannabis in this province.

First, I will say that this bill does not legalize cannabis in this province, but it certainly is the first step toward that process. We will eventually come to a time in this House when we will have an act that will legalize.

What I'm going to do with my time, Mr. Speaker, because I don't want to be too repetitive, but we have prepared, I would say, a question and answer document for our youth. Based on what we've heard from the people of the province, it's really a question and answer document on how we got where we are today and what we intend to do between now and July of 2018.

The first question I would say is: Why is the province legalizing cannabis? Some people have referred to this – as did the last speaker, the hon. Member for Conception Bay South – in the 2015 federal election the Liberal Party committed to legalizing cannabis. They introduced a bill, C-45, which was An Act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substance Act, the Criminal Code and other Acts, it's known as the *Cannabis Act*, was introduced in the House of Commons on April 13, 2017. If this act is approved by Parliament, the bill could become law with a target date of no later than

July 2018. When you think about it, Mr. Speaker, that's not all that far away.

Why has the federal government chosen to legalize cannabis? Well, according to the Liberal platform they put forward, the electoral platform in 2015, Canada's current system of marijuana prohibition does not work. We all know that today, that it is not working because we see lots of abuse and lots of misuse of the product. They stated that it does not prevent young people from using marijuana and too many Canadians end up with criminal records for possessing small amounts of the drug; hence, we are where we are today. It's a move by the federal government to legalize cannabis, which includes marijuana, and to put some serious restrictions on its use and access.

What actions has the federal government taken with the cannabis legislation? Well, to fulfill the federal government's commitment on legalizing cannabis, a task force on cannabis legalization and regulation was created to advise on the design of a new system. The task force sought the views of Canadians on issues that are key to the design of a new system. This information was provided to the federal government with a final report on December 13, 2016. It was that report that informed the federal people to put together C-45.

We just heard the Member for CBS say: Well, we probably need more consultation. Well, I will go as far to say that in the summer of 2017, the provincial government sought input from residents through an online questionnaire on the legalization of cannabis in Newfoundland and Labrador. The consultation process consisted of an online questionnaire, in-person meetings with targeted stakeholders in St. John's, Corner Brook, Labrador City and the opportunity for interested parties to make written submissions.

Close to 2,600 people submitted online questionnaires, making it the highest response rate for any provincial government online questionnaire to date. Approximately 120 people attended the in-person sessions and seven formal written submissions were received.

Mr. Speaker, I will venture to say that this has been the most successful consultative process that's ever been undertaken by any provincial

government in this province. It was these consultations that are leading us to develop the made-in-Newfoundland and Labrador legislation that we are starting to process today. It is because of those consultations that we were well informed of what the people of this province expect.

The Member for Conception Bay South was right, not everybody agrees with this, but it's 2017 and society has moved to a point where the legalization of cannabis, they feel, is the right thing to do. Every possible group that would be affected by this were consulted, Mr. Speaker, throughout the last six to eight months. There's always going to be time for more consultation, but what we're proposing here today really is the onset of a piece of legislation that will eventually be put into practice later in 2018.

We all know that there are risks involved, associated with smoking cannabis. The Member for Conception Bay South mentioned the one on the job, and that's a very important one, I might add, because it is a time now when most major companies do have very strict regulations and guidelines around employees and the use of any drugs or alcohol.

I would say to the Member, whether it's illegal like it is now or legal after July 2018, it's still the responsibility of the employee to govern themselves accordingly, whether to show up for work, whether they're under the influence of alcohol or under the influence of cannabis, it's still the responsibility of the employee to govern themselves.

I don't know where companies are going to go with this because it goes from illegal to legal, but I would venture to say that the outcomes and the risks are still the same, regardless if it's illegal or not.

We've also heard, of course, that cannabis is more risky for youth. We believe that. That is why we've chosen – as a first step in our policy – the age of 19 to be the legal age for the purchase and the acquisition and the use of cannabis. That would be concurrent with the age now for alcohol and tobacco. It's consistent and it leaves no, I guess, ambiguity in whether people who can and who cannot purchase the product.

There's been a lot of research done on what's the use of cannabis in Newfoundland and Labrador? Is it above the national average? Is it below the national average or where are we? Where do we stand on the national stage when it comes to the use of cannabis?

Currently, cannabis in Newfoundland and Labrador is below the Canadian average; however, that's a little bit skewed because even though we're below the Canadian average in cannabis use, we are amongst the worst tobacco smokers and drinkers in the country. Where we end up, I don't know.

Cannabis use is very strong amongst youth, currently being above the Canadian average. If you single out the youth of this province, the youth are above the national average, which is certainly an alarming fact.

According to the 2012 student drug use survey, that was in 2012, five years ago, 11.1 per cent of Newfoundland and Labrador students used cannabis either every week or almost every week and less than every week. We do have some statistics on this.

What objectives would we have? What are our objectives in legalizing cannabis? What benefits would come from that? Well, the key objective for the province in cannabis legalization would include: to discourage the use of cannabis by youth and encourage responsibility among those adults who chose to use it. By making it 19 years of age as the legal age to purchase the cannabis, we would be making it more difficult for youth to access it.

It will reduce the burden on our criminal justice system, and our objective certainly is to promote safety on our roads, public places and in our workplaces and to keep the profits from the sale of cannabis out of the hands of criminals because that's where it is right now. It's an underground market that is very active out there and the people who are benefiting from the sale of cannabis and other drugs, certainly, are the criminals.

Again, I go back to why we chose 19 years of age. As I said, this is consistent with the age designated for the purchase of alcohol. In Newfoundland and Labrador, 19-year-olds are

considered adults based on the *Age of Majority Act*. Having the purchasing age for alcohol and cannabis consistent is in line with other Canadian jurisdictions such as Alberta, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec. They have all accepted the model and have accepted that 19 years of age would be the legal age of purchase.

According to the online survey on cannabis legalization, 53 per cent of the responders agree with consistent ages for alcohol and cannabis purchasing. Again, we saw from the consultations that the majority of the people who responded believe that's the right way to go.

While some research suggests that cannabis use before the age of 25 is damaging, a balance must be struck between public health and safety and enforceability. How will the Newfoundland and Labrador government ensure youth are not accessing cannabis? This is a very important part of this whole process. By legalizing cannabis, how do we ensure that youth are not accessing it?

The provincial government will enforce a number of specific provisions designed to help keep cannabis and cannabis products out of the hands of children, including the following: a prohibition against providing or selling cannabis to youth; the creation of a new offence of using a minor to commit an offence relating to distribution, safe sale, import, export or production of cannabis; prohibiting the selling, packing and labelling of cannabis products that are considered appealing to youth, much the same as we do today with tobacco sales; prevent youth from being persuaded to use cannabis products by establishing many of the same advertising restrictions as exists today for tobacco products – we know that if you go into a convenience store today, the tobacco products are hidden, or at least they're supposed to be hidden behind shelving designed not to promote the sale – prohibiting the sale of cannabis through a self-service display or vending machine, so you won't be able to buy it through vending machines; and allowing the making of regulations that will require such things as childproof packaging and a universal THC symbol.

There are a number of initiatives that we will be implementing as we lead up to the legalization

of cannabis. But we have to remember that, today, in Bill 23, all we're doing is giving the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation the authority and the ability to get ready for July 2018.

When you think about it, while there are a few months between here and there, those months go pretty quickly. By legislation, we have to be able to give that organization the authority to move ahead with the planning and implementation. That's what we're doing with Bill 23 today.

How much cannabis can a person carry on them? That's still up in the air, but we know that the federal legislation and regulations are suggesting that adults will be able to possess up to 30 grams of dried legal cannabis or equivalent in public. The 30 grams is the amount that is being used federally. Whether we adopt it that's, again, something we will be debating over the next little while but, certainly, it's a guideline for all provinces to follow. Thirty grams seems to be somewhat reasonable.

I'm not going to get into the edibles because there are a lot of questions coming around the edibles. That's something that, as the minister stated today in his press conference, edibles are not included in this legislation. It's something that the federal government are looking at for 2019.

When it comes to edibles, I think you're getting into a whole new area of products because there are a number of forms, of course. It can be brownies, cookies, candies, gummi bears, suckers and chocolates, you name it; it can come in any form.

It's something that is going to have to be carefully –

AN HON. MEMBER: Alouettes.

MR. LETTO: Alouettes, even, yes. So it can come in any form.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LETTO: Oh, yeah.

I know some people in this House who have experienced that through their enforcement days.

I guess they can know pretty well that this stuff can come in many forms. Sometimes, it's very, very –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LETTO: Yeah.

It could come in many different forms and could be well disguised. That's something that's coming. We have to deal with it and the federal government, I think, have implemented a target year of 2019 as being able to do that.

One of the areas, of course, that's concerning for everybody – and it's been brought up by most speakers – is the fact of the use of drugs and driving. There's a lot of work to be done there.

We've been talking to organizations like MADD. I must say they're very interested in this; they were at the press conference today. They're looking forward to legislation and regulations surrounding that. We've gone and come a long way in the alcohol restrictions in the last year or so with regard to the driving limits and whatnot. That's going to be a very serious discussion that's going to have to be had by many people, I think, over the next little while, in consultation with law enforcement and the different organizations around the province – like I said, including MADD – to come up with a system that will be able to be used on our highways to enforce that.

We know that both the RNC and RCMP have officers now who are trained as drug recognition experts, but there's a lot of work that needs to be done there. It's not as easy as going out and taking a blood-alcohol test on the highway. It's more involved than that. We have to come up with a means to be able to determine what the drug use is and what the drug levels are in those people. There's still a lot of work to be done.

The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board also mentioned who would be selling this. Again, NLC will be carrying out that, going out for RFPs on who would be interested in providing sales and hosting that. I think it's the wish of the NLC and government that this would be done to the private sector more than – certainly, not in all cases because there may be some cases where the private

sector will not be able to do it and, then, the NLC would have to find other means, whether it was through their own facilities or not.

We hope the private sector will take advantage of this, get involved and provide good plans to NLC for the sale of cannabis. It's something that we look forward to as an economic development generator helping the private sector. Most of these people, the convenience stores – some of them are struggling, some are doing well, but this is another means of attracting customers to their premises. We hope they will take advantage of that.

Mr. Speaker, my time is running out, but I just want to conclude by saying I want to, again, thank the minister and all the departments that have been involved in planning this. I know there's been a lot of work done by a lot of good people within government.

We're not finished yet. There are still loads of work to do, but I can assure you – and as the Minister of Justice and Public Safety said – we will be ready for July 2018.

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'm happy to stand this afternoon to speak to Bill 23, An Act To Amend The Liquor Corporation Act. Actually, what it has to do with is an act to deal with the use of cannabis, so that has to do with the buying, the selling and the use of cannabis. That's really what we're dealing with here today.

I have to say that we've had a couple of pieces of legislation in the House this week that are extremely important pieces. One had to do with the monitoring of prescriptions, which got passed here today in short order, and then the other one is Bill 23 that we're now dealing with.

I have to mention the fact that, in both cases, we have pieces of legislation that were quite in

depth. We had a briefing one day and the next day we start second reading on those pieces. It's very disturbing.

I think if we used our legislative Standing Committees that are described in our Standing Orders, and we use them the way that they're meant to be used, these are pieces of legislation that would have gone to the Committees, while they were in the stage of being produced, so that the Committees – everybody together, all parties in the House together – could work on the legislation, bring forward people to speak to legislation and to have an open and public process around the development of the legislation.

Unfortunately, that's not how we operate. I'm hoping that when we finally get a democratic reform committee in place – and I know that's going to happen – I hope that we're going to be able to sit outside of this room and really deal with the fact that the process that we use in here to pass legislation is not – well, I'm not going to say effective. I mean, we certainly use it to the best ability that we can, but it's not inclusive of involvement of all parties in the House in the development of the legislation. By the time it comes here, government, for the most part, figures they've got a perfect piece of legislation and while we go through a process of trying to make amendments and get changes, nothing in depth gets changed because they've decided ahead of time that what they've put together is basically it.

We've got to deal with that, and I'm sure we shall, but right now at this moment, I will take the time that I have, even though we didn't get a copy in our hands to hold onto until yesterday afternoon. We weren't even allowed to take a copy of the bill with us after the briefing in the morning, but even though we only got in our hands yesterday afternoon, we obviously are ready to speak to it and we shall.

My starting point, having said that, is what the Minister of Finance said today in presenting the bill. In presenting the bill, the minister said: When it comes to the sale of cannabis, the main goal of government is finding private retailers. Private retailers are the goal of the government.

The minister also said that the use of the Newfoundland and Labrador liquor control outlets, he didn't use this phrase, but it's a last-ditch thing. It's the last thing you do. You only do it if you can't possibly get private retailers. You only do it through NLC in that case.

The other thing, of course, is it's restricted to private residencies. That was the other thing. That's not in the legislation either, that the use of cannabis will be restricted to private residencies.

Those pieces of information are basically not in the legislation, which I find interesting, because the legislation initially is allowing and opening the door for NLC, the liquor control, to be both the regulator and distributor, but in the presentation that was made to us it was made clear, and the minister echoed that today, that being the distributor is only at the outset. In other words, only as they get it off the ground, during that period of time NLC could be the distributor, but the goal is to have private retailers and this is disturbing.

In the legislation, and I'm not going to go through the legislation bit by bit at this time, I think we will be doing that in Committee, but right now, I do want to point out one thing to the general public who are watching. Section 33 of the bill – well, actually it says section 3 of the bill replaces section 33 in the act that's being amended. It's interesting that this gives the powers to the corporation, and the powers they're giving are powers that have to do with the buying, importing, selling of alcohol and cannabis or articles associated with alcohol, liquor or cannabis.

What's really interesting is the phrase that is used: the corporation may. So it may buy, import and have in its possession for sale cannabis. The corporation may control the possession, sale and delivery of all alcoholic liquor and cannabis – it may. The corporation may, with the prior approval of the minister, “establish, maintain and operate cannabis stores” at the places in the province that may be considered advisable for the sale of cannabis.

That “may” is really significant, because anybody who didn't hear what the minister said today or anybody who hasn't seen the news

release that was released around noontime will not know from that “may” that in actual fact the real goal of government is to have sales, in particular, done through private retailers.

Having the “may” in here in the legislation allows NLC to get all of this started, but ultimately government wants them out of the sales. The only time they would be involved in sales is if it was absolutely impossible to get a private retailer in the community. So the “may” allows for that, but the ultimate goal of government, according to the minister – and I wrote it down as he said it – the ultimate goal is finding private retailers.

Now, that really disturbs me because that in and of itself, I believe, is extremely short sighted. We all know how much money NLC makes through the sale of alcohol. It’s huge. The profits they gain from alcohol are huge and the profits that government receives from those sales are huge. We know, and everybody who does the analysis around the use of cannabis and what’s going to happen with the whole legalization of cannabis in our country, is that there’s going to be big money to be made – really big money to be made.

Mr. Speaker, I’m having a hard time to speak.

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much.

We know there is big money to be made and I cannot believe that government, in pushing private retailers, is giving up the opportunity to make more money that can go into our social programs in this province.

One of the issues I have raised many times, and my colleague has raised many times in this House, is that it is not a spending problem we have. The spending problem is related to our revenues, and here we have an opportunity to increase our revenues, to increase them significantly if the sale of marijuana or cannabis is kept under the NLC as liquor is. So I find it really, really difficult.

Other places, for example, in Nova Scotia, the union involved with workers who would work inside of the public system in Nova Scotia and

the Nova Scotia government together did a study with regard to cannabis. In Nova Scotia, they came to the conclusion that keeping the sale under the public sector was the way to go.

Now, we know there are places where that’s not happening. One of them is Manitoba, but let’s listen to what the president of the Manitoba government employees union said: “Like with liquor sales, the public sale of marijuana would ensure a greater level of social responsibility” – and that’s important – “while also ensuring revenue generated from the sales would go back into other public services such as health and education.”

That’s from the union in Manitoba, the union of government employees. That same sentiment, one will find, when one looks at the model they’re using in Ontario. Again, in Ontario they are committed to selling it under the public system. They are committed to maintaining, therefore, unionized, higher paying jobs, and they are committed to taking revenues and putting them into the social services.

I know government here has said, yes, they want to take some of the money and put into social programming, but it would be a lot more money if the sales are happening under our public system.

I find it interesting that the Minister of Finance couldn’t give a real number about what the revenues could be. I think he started at \$29 million and went to \$40 million. I think that’s what he said. It definitely went to \$40 million, but my question is: Why couldn’t he give us a firmer figure? Why couldn’t he show us in a more firm way how much money will be made by private retailers instead of by the liquor control, therefore by government because of revenues that would go to government?

Let’s look at some other points, Mr. Speaker. The reinvestment of money is what government is all about. The reinvestment of money they get from taxation, the reinvestment of money they get from royalties, the reinvestment of any sources of funds that come to government, reinvesting into the people of the province, and that is not the responsibility of private retailers.

The responsibility of private retailers, whether it's to themselves or whether it's to shareholders – although I don't think we're going to be into corporations that have shareholders – their big goal is to make money. So who is it that this government is most concerned about, people who want to make a load of money or the good of the people in the province?

Now, it's important that the legislation we have does allow for a hybrid way of dealing with sales. I have no problem with that, but I do have a problem when the Minister of Finance says that the ultimate goal is to have all the sales in the hands of private retailers.

I heard it said by one of the government Members, it was during the press conference, I think, that this will create jobs. Yes, it will create jobs. If it were kept inside of the public system or whether it goes private, it will create jobs. The important thing is if it happened inside of the public system under NLC, it would create jobs that are permanent, well-paying jobs. So that's not the issue here. You're not going to have more jobs because of the private retailers. It could very well be you'll have fewer jobs. We can't do that analysis. I don't have the information, but it could be.

You certainly will not have people paid at the same rate that they're being paid inside of the public sector. We know the public sector does well. The Crown corporation NLC does extremely well. They do that; they pay well-paying jobs, workers with benefits, workers who are working in safe places. They do that and still make a huge profit. That profit is going to be lost because of what this government is doing, and I am really shocked by what this government is doing. They say they care, but when we look at what they're doing we have to question how much they care.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that concerns me is how the government is going to put in place, before July 1, what needs to be put in place. NLC has to put out requests for proposals. NLC has to try to get a network set up. They are the ones in charge of all of the work that has to be done in preparation. They're going to have to come up with the regulations with regard to the control, the possession and sale and delivery of cannabis. They're the ones who are going to

have to get stores established. Whether those stores initially are within their system or whether they are stores that are private, they are the ones who are going to have to get them established and set up.

How all this is going to happen between now and July 1, I really don't know. I'll be hoping the minister, or one of the ministers because there's more than one minister involved with this piece of legislation, will give us some answers. What is their plan to really show the rollout can happen?

Now they've protected themselves, because by having the Liquor Corporation in charge initially at the outset, we actually do have the possibility of some structure being in place, but there is so much that the Liquor Corporation will have to do, I just don't know how it can be. I'll be looking forward to an answer to that from the ministers as we proceed with this debate.

I also will be looking forward to an answer as to why. Will they be accountable to the people of this province for giving up revenues that could be going to the people? How can they be accountable for that to the people in this province? I'd like to know. We need more money in our health, in education. We need more money in so many of our social programs, and this government is actually going to be renegeing income.

Again, the Minister of Finance sort of gave a \$10 million or \$11 million range in the profits he talked about. Well, that's a big range, number one. And number two, why? Why only a range? Is he afraid for people to know how much profit will be lost because it's going to the private retail sector?

I noticed in Ontario, one of the things they expect to happen in Ontario is that – because it's going totally under the public system there – people who right now are entrepreneurs and involved in cannabis and the sale of cannabis, et cetera, growing, et cetera, they expect a lot of them are going to choose to become employed within the public sector.

Number one, they'll have good jobs and they'll be doing what they know. That's the kind of thing that has happened in other places, as well,

where cannabis has become legalized. People actually leave the sector where they were involved in the production and sale of cannabis and have become part of the system, and that's what they expect to see happen in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many issues that we are going to want to bring up and we will be doing that in Committee. There are so many details that we want to get at.

The report – this was something I was looking for earlier – from the study that was done by the Nova Scotia government, along with their General Employees Union, their research was really clear: "... a publicly controlled retailing system best protects the public, including our children, from unnecessary harm associated with cannabis." That's one thing that came out in the report.

The report also shows that: "To maximize monetary gain for the cannabis industry, a privatized system would be ideal." However, if we want to protect and promote the health and well-being of communities, a publicly owned system is the best solution according to the public health literature.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I leave that for the government to think about. I look forward to speaking further to this in Committee.

Thank you very much.

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

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

We'll adjourn debate on Bill 23.

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

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

Given the hour of the day, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that we adjourn the House.

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

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.'

Before we do depart, I would like to remind all Members that if you have vehicles parked in the area just out here, I'd ask you to move your vehicles. We're going to do some reconfiguration in compliance with the accessibility parking regulations that we're trying to keep up with. So I'd ask you to move your cars to parking lot A, please.

This House now stands adjourned until tomorrow, 1:30 o'clock on the 4th of December, a Monday.

Thank you.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, December 4 at 1:30 p.m.