



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLVIII

SECOND SESSION

Number 40

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA

Monday

December 4, 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

In the public gallery today, I'd like to welcome several guests who are here for the second reading of Bill 27, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act.

With us today, we have Gail Thorne, Levi Thorne and Karen March of the STAND For Hannah Foundation; Joe Davis and Sherri-Lin Davis of the Sunshine Squad; Chris Blundon and Duane Antle of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services; and a special welcome to two people I know well, Sarah Pittman and Frances Ralph.

Welcome to the gallery.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Also in the public gallery, I'd like to welcome the Stella's Circle Inclusion Choir, including members of the Stella's Circle management team Lisa Browne and Rob McLennan, and volunteer director Helen Murphy, who are here for a Member's statement.

Welcome to you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today we will hear statements from the hon. Members for the Districts of Terra Nova, Ferryland, Harbour Main, Mount Pearl – Southlands, Virginia Waters – Pleasantville and St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HOLLOWAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to recognize a former educator and community pioneer.

Originally from Hickman's Harbour, Mr. George Martin moved to Clarenville to be principal of the former Horwood Regional High School. Later, he became principal of Clarenville Integrated High School, a position he held until his retirement in 1988.

I met Mr. Martin in 1980 and I saw him as a dedicated volunteer, being involved in numerous charities and local organizations, including the Clarenville Co-op Society and the men's softball league.

For 26 years, as its chairperson, the George Martin Charity Golf Tournament raised in excess of \$500,000 for the Discovery Health Care Foundation.

Sadly, at the age of 86, Mr. Martin passed away on November 4, 2017.

I think George's neighbour, Victoria Best, sums it up best when she said: George is one of those great humans that didn't just make the people around him feel better, but hugely impacted his whole community, province and made the world a better place.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in recognizing the passing of a community icon, mentor and educator, Mr. George Martin.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I stand to recognize a group of male athletes from St. Kevin's Junior High who won the Junior High School Soccer Championship for the Eastern District on October 30, 2017.

The accomplishment of these young people was heightened by the fact the team consisted of many underage players whose contribution helped in the championship despite playing against many older players for much larger school populations. This is the second soccer banner for the school, which reflects the growing soccer program in the region.

I would also like to congratulate and recognize Coach Charlie Simmonds, who has been running a soccer program in Goulds for almost 20 years. This was indeed a very proud moment for players, coaches, parents, students and friends.

The youth started playing soccer with the Metropolitan United Football Club, formerly called Goulds Kickers Soccer Association. For several years, this club has operated in Goulds. This club has complemented the youths' involvement in their school soccer, is an integral part of the community and, no doubt, we will see more soccer success for both boys' and girls' teams over the next few years.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating St. Kevin's Junior High School soccer team for their outstanding accomplishments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I'd also like to welcome in the public gallery today Pastor Crane and his wife, Kathy, who are joining us here for a Member's statement, too, today. Welcome to you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PARSLEY: Mr. Speaker, as we head into another holiday season, it is important for us to remember the many blessings which we are privileged to enjoy throughout the year. Sadly, there are many people across the province and in my district who find themselves alone or unable to provide a hot meal to themselves or their families.

Thankfully, Mr. Speaker, such individuals living in the town of Clarke's Beach and surrounding area need not fear this type of Christmas, as every year Pastors David and Kathy Crane – son-in-law to John Crane, former MHA for Harbour Grace – provide free turkey dinner meals to people in the basement of the Pentecostal Church in the town. Now an annual tradition for the parish, each year dozens of individuals and families join together to

celebrate the magic of Christmas, regardless of religious beliefs or financial situation. Following the Christmas Eve service, volunteers from the church stay behind to help cut and peel vegetables and prep for the feast that so many people will enjoy the next day.

I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Pastors David and Kathy for their service to the community of Clarke's Beach and wish one and all a blessed Christmas and a happy new year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in this hon. House to recognize the accomplishments of six individuals who have given their time and talents to the sport of soccer in the City of Mount Pearl. Four of these individuals, Don Coaker, Wally Lawrence, Ron O'Neill and the late Sam Pretty, have been inducted into the Mount Pearl Soccer Hall of Fame in the category of Builder; Lana (North) Burns in the category of Player; and the late Dave LeGrow as an Honorary Life Member.

Soccer, like many other sports, provides tremendous benefits for our youth, not only from a health and wellness perspective, but also in providing lifelong lessons such as the value of hard work and commitment, and working as part of a team. Through the tireless efforts and unwavering commitment of these Hall of Fame inductees, many young people in my community have benefited from a physical and social point of view and have gone on to be very healthy, well-rounded and productive citizens.

I would therefore ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in commending these six individuals for their contribution to this great sport and in congratulating them on being inducted into the Mount Pearl Soccer Hall of Fame.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise in this hon. House today to wish a very happy 103rd birthday to a man who has given over nine decades of service to the youth of our province.

Major William G. Tilley joined the CLB in 1926, served in both C Company and its Naval Company before becoming regimental band's drum major in 1939 for some 63 consecutive years.

Tied to the steps at his Plymouth Road residence as a child, he watched drummers leave the old Princess Rink and longed for the day he would lead the parade. Over these years, he has indeed led the band for thousands of miles and through many significant events.

He retired from CN in 1977 and was asked to preserve the history of the CLB, which he has done meticulously, ensuring the information is available for everyone in our province for many generations to come. Major Tilley is a mentor for thousands of young men and women who have had the pleasure of marching behind him all these years.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in wishing my mentor, Major William G. Tilley, a happy 103rd birthday and thanking him for his years of service. Keep the flag flying, Major Tilley.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm delighted today to congratulate an organization that has been creating positive community empowerment for the past decade. The Stella's Circle Inclusion Choir is a place of acceptance where there are no auditions and people sing for the joy of it. The choir is comprised of Stella's Circle participants, staff and volunteers, has 35-plus members and 100 performances under their belt.

Stella's Circle has a mission to transform lives for people facing barriers to successful inclusion in the community. The Inclusion Choir increases social connections for the members and can be a step towards engaging in other community activities.

The choir's original song "Be the Change" was written this past spring with Juno award-winning, singer-songwriter Amelia Curran. I was delighted to take in the screening of a video documenting the songwriting process at the St. John's International Women's Film Festival. MusicNL recently presented the Inclusion Choir with a community award. The philosophy of the choir is that every one of us can sing when encouraged and given the opportunity.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Stella's Circle staff and volunteers, all choir members and volunteer choir director, Helen Murphy, on the 10th anniversary of the Stella's Circle Inclusion Choir. I encourage you to find the time to go listen to them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House to recognize yesterday, December 3, as International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Twenty-five years have passed since the United Nations proclaimed this observance to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.

As a government, we have accomplished much, including new government-wide policies for accessible communications and inclusive engagement practices, recent changes to the program for Hunters and Anglers with a Disability, Buildings Accessibility Regulations and Designated Mobility Impaired Parking Regulations. Also, Mr. Speaker, we are working

with community and other partners in the design of an Individualized Supports Funding model, a commitment from *The Way Forward*.

We are proud to partner with organizations like Empower, the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Association for Community Living to improve employment opportunities and inform and support our work. We are pleased to provide funding to individuals, taxi companies and community organizations to improve accessibility.

Mr. Speaker, we know there remains much work to be done. Barriers still exist and, unfortunately, discrimination is still not a thing of the past, but our government recognizes inclusion is both a process and a goal, as the slogan 'Nothing about us without us' articulates so well.

We know an inclusive planning and decision-making process is important to ensuring everyone can avail of programs, services and opportunities. Our government is committed to consulting and collaborating with the community of persons with disabilities to achieve, as this year's theme envisions, a sustainable and resilient society for all.

Thank you.

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. The Official Opposition also wishes to recognize December 3 as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and we celebrate the theme of transformation towards a sustainable and resilient society for all.

On the 25th anniversary since it's proclamation by the United Nations General Assembly, we have come a long way. We observe this day to encourage the public to have a better understanding of disability issues and promote support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.

We all have a responsibility to increase awareness of gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of our society. The resilient spirit of these individuals must be met with not just understanding but absolute encouragement.

Much has been done, but much more is required. I commend all efforts that work towards a more sustainable and resilient society for all.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. Mr. Speaker, on this day I want to congratulate the incredible organizations and persons living with disabilities for the work they have done leading us all in the advancement of the inclusion of all people in our community.

We all know there is so much more work to do. The deadline for a new act is looming. Poverty among persons with disabilities is growing because of government's regressive policies and inaction. We need inclusive procurement in our Procurement Act and organizations need to sustainable multi-year core funding to continue their important work. We must keep moving forward.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, today I rise in this hon. House to acknowledge the Grammy Award nomination for the Broadway musical *Come From Away*.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Specifically, the musical has been nominated for best musical theatre album.

Mr. Speaker, the previous winners in this category are a who's who of the world's famous Broadway musicals; *The Colour Purple*, *Hamilton* and *West Side Story*, just to name a few.

This nomination is just another in the long list of achievements for *Come From Away*, and the accolades and triumphs continue to grow.

Just recently, *Come From Away* grossed the highest eight-show week in the history of the Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre in New York, earning just over \$1.52 million. The previous record was held by *It's Only a Play*, which starred prominent Broadway actors Matthew Broderick, Nathan Lane and Stockard Channing.

And now, Mr. Speaker, maybe the grandest accolade of all – a film adaptation of *Come From Away* is in development.

While still in the very early stages of planning and writing, *Come From Away* creators Irene Sankoff and David Hein told the media they are bursting with ideas for the cinematic version of their Broadway musical. Ms. Sankoff said she looks forward to showing “more of the world, more of the characters and the place itself.”

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, I attended *Come From Away* in March, and it is an excellent portrayal of our province's genuine kindness, generosity and acceptance during one of the darkest moments in recent history.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all that hon. Members join me in wishing *Come From Away* the best of luck at the 60th Grammy Awards on January 28.

Thank you.

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 his statement. On behalf of the Official Opposition, I wish to congratulate the cast and crew of *Come From Away* on being nominated in the category of best musical theatre album at the upcoming Grammy Awards. We're all very, very proud.

The creators, Irene Sankoff and David Hein, have created a special depiction of our province's kind and caring nature, which is now being shared throughout the world. For their efforts and hard work, they are very much deserving of this accolade.

I also wish to congratulate the creators for having their stories chosen to be adapted into a film. Through this, more people will learn the story of how communities in our province opened their lives and their homes to those who found themselves here due to terrorist attacks in the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, I once again congratulate the cast, crew and creators of *Come From Away* and I look forward to viewing the film when it is finished production.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: I thank the minister as well, Mr. Speaker. We are all delighted at the continued success of *Come From Away*. I'm sure the minister agrees this is what happens when there is investment in the arts community.

This is an industry where truly the more you sow, the more you reap.

As for the success of *Come From Away*, well, we have a million more stories from our province to tell and our storytellers need that support. Standby world, you ain't seen nothing yet; and bravo, Irene and David and cast and crew of *Come From Away*.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

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

Mr. Speaker, an Access to Information request revealed a dramatic drop in the number of *Highway Traffic Act* tickets issued in August 2017 in our province, compared to the same month in 2016.

I ask the minister to inform this hon. House what the total number of officers was that were deployed to Labrador during this past summer?

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

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

My understanding is that the total number was somewhere in the range of 120, which would have come from all different aspects of the RCMP, both here in province and out of province, but the latest numbers I have is roughly 120.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

My understanding is there were 120 at any given time.

Can the minister clarify: Were those numbers of officers rotated out on a rotational basis?

The numbers at any given time were 120, but there were actually more officers than that deployed to Labrador.

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

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

The number that I've been given is about 120 officers. I do know they were doing two-week shifts. Again, that number could have fluctuated, but the number that I've been given by the RCMP is in the 120 range.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

On October 16, here in the House, the minister stated that there was absolutely no disservice to traffic services anywhere in the province during this period of time.

So I ask the minister if he stands by those statements.

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

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

Again, I did answer a question from the Leader of the Official Opposition during the House back in October, I think it was, where the information I had at that time was there was nobody taken from the highway traffic division of the RCMP. Now, I've since learned that has changed. In fact, I said that on province-wide news just a couple of nights ago that there were some officers taken.

Again, it was an operational decision made by the RCMP. It was done with the intelligence and the expertise of the RCMP and done on their advice, and that's where we are.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Our understanding is a significant number of traffic officers from the Island were deployed to Labrador during the summer.

So, minister, your comment that there was absolutely no disservice to traffic services anywhere in the province, again I ask: Do you stand by that statement?

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

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

Again, I stand here now and say that there were officers from the highway traffic division along with officers from other aspects of the RCMP within the province and outside the province that did go to Labrador based on instructions from the RCMP, based on the need that was identified in Labrador to do with the Muskrat Falls Project.

The fact is that this was an operational decision by the RCMP. That information has been provided and was done on their advice.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, my understanding is the minister actually signed off on the deployment to Labrador.

So I ask the minister: Did you ever ask the very simple question of the RNC or the RCMP if the deployment of officers to Labrador could impact safety here on the Island?

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

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

I've been clear in my conversations with the media that as the Minister of Justice, I do not direct the RCMP as it relates to operational matters. When the RCMP identified the need for

extra security in Labrador for the Muskrat Falls Project, they would have come to me based on the intelligence that they acquired.

What I would have had to sign off as responsible minister was the requirement for extra funding to allow for this. Again, I certainly wouldn't want to see it done to the detriment of anybody else, but that's the way that our policing agreement operates with the RCMP, and it was an agreement that was signed in 2013.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

I appreciate the information from the minister.

So, Minister, I'll ask you this: Before you signed off on the extra funding, did you ask the very simple question, if the deployment of officers could impact safety here on the Island?

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

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

Again, I signed off on an operational request from the RCMP who identified the need for extra security in Labrador along the roadway for the transformer move for the Muskrat Falls Project. What I signed off on was a request for extra funds to allow for this, extra funds that were above the normal allotment for the RCMP.

Again, it was my belief that it was not to be done at the expense of anywhere else in the province. They would require extra resources from elsewhere, and this is why the extra funds were allotted.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

Just a few days ago, the minister told the media that the information he's received since September confirms that there was, in fact, a smaller presence on our roadways this past August. The minister says he signed off on the operational plan for additional financing. He's now said there were a smaller number of officers on our roadways during August.

So I'll ask the minister very clearly: What was the impact of officers on our roadways? How many fewer officers were on our roads here on the Island because of the deployment that he signed off on?

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

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

The first thing I need to clarify – I would ask the Member opposite to please quote me accurately. I did not sign off on any operational requirement for the RCMP or direct where officers go. That's simply not within the purview of the Minister of Justice.

What I would have signed off on is a request to the federal department for extra funding under the RCMP policing program. There's a contract that we have in place, a 20-year contract, and when you go outside of that, I have to sign off on that.

The request for extra resources would have come from the RCMP. This would have been operational issue that they identified that was needed for the safety of Labradorians as it related to the Muskrat Falls Project.

Again, just to make this clear, I would have signed off on the extra resources, requesting the extra resources in terms of money, but it's the RCMP that direct the operational mandate and not the minister.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

These questions are not difficult questions; the questions are about safety of the public on the highways, the safety of not only Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, but visitors that come to our province, especially in the summertime and in the fall.

The minister has changed the information that he provided in the House earlier when he spoke publicly. He's changed it. He says it confirms there was a smaller presence.

Minister, if you can't tell me what that presence was, when were you made aware of the accurate information?

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

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

I would have been made aware of this information – I can't give an exact date right here, but I think it would have been sometime in October. Again, there's a process behind this.

Back some time in the spring, the RCMP identified the need for extra resources as it related to the Muskrat Falls Project when it came to the safety of the transformer move that was going on, a significant operation that took weeks. Last year there was quite a disturbance at the Muskrat Falls site in October so, again, the RCMP were being proactive here in ensuring the public safety of all involved in this process.

The information I would have received after, but it wouldn't have been done, in my mind, at the expense of highway operations.

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 minister confirms that he was made aware of a smaller presence in our province.

The question I have for you, Minister, is: What was that impact? What was the smaller presence in our province? How many officers were taken off our roads because of the deployment to Labrador?

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

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

At no point was I made aware, as the minister, that there was any significant disservice to the highway traffic services for the RCMP over the summer. That's certainly not something that I would have been made aware of.

There's a highway traffic division that basically operates – it's not based out of any detachment; they operate all across the province. The RCMP said they needed extra resources to ensure the safety as it related to this move and the public roadway in Labrador.

There was no information given that it would have any effect on the roadways here in the province, and that's the information – I rely on the RCMP for that expertise, and that's how they make their decision.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

So the minister has said that there wasn't an impact – as a matter of fact, the minister had said earlier that he was told by the RCMP that the deployment would not have an effect on regular operations.

Well, Minister, who provided that information to you and what exactly is it you were told that wouldn't be impacted?

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

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

Again, this is a process that's been ongoing for some time. The original, I think, notification of the extra resources that were needed in Labrador would have been sometime in the spring, and I'll ask for forgiveness here that I don't remember the specific date. There were a significant number of people in that meeting. It would have been RCMP, myself and individuals from the Department of Justice and Public Safety.

At that point, it was indicated that there was a significant need for extra resources in Labrador and in order to enable this that we, as a department, that I, as minister, would have to sign off on a funding request to the feds to allow for this to happen outside of that normal agreement.

It certainly would not have been done at the expense of funding here in the province. It was to allow for extra funding for extra resources.

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 questions I've asked, the minister has not been able to be specific on the impacts, the numbers of officers that were deployed, if it was 120 in total or 120 at the time.

I'll ask the minister: Minister, will you endeavour to get the specific numbers from the RNC and the RCMP? The operation is over, the impacts on the operation are passed and the time is passed for that. Will you get the specifics from the police in Newfoundland and Labrador and make that public so people can understand what changes happened and make their own decisions if there was a risk or not?

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

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

Certainly I have no problem – again, the Member opposite should know that I wouldn't have an update day to day on how the operations

of RCMP operate. I have no problem trying to have that information put out there for the public. It is taxpayer dollars, so we should know. As long as it doesn't compromise any current operations, I have no issue with that.

What I would point out, though, is that the Member is trying to draw a direct causation here, one that he should know does not exist. The RCMP will certainly tell you that there are a number of factors that lead to issues on our highways more so than just enforcement. Again, the Member should know this; I hope he's aware of that.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I was ready to move off on this topic, but I have to speak to the Member's comment right now and put this question to him because there's a significant loss of life on our highways in a short period of time.

In the first 30 weeks of this year – my understanding is there were seven facilities in the first 30 weeks of 2017. In a seven-week period, starting in August, there were 18.

I've been quite clear to say that I'm not going to say the lack of resources were a cause of this increase. I've been quite clear on that. I stand here today; I'm not prepared to say that.

I ask the minister: Are you prepared to stand in your place and say the lack of resources were not the cause?

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

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

I'm glad the Member opposite is not going to stand here and say it because he knows it's not the case, but I think he's certainly implying it.

What I will say is the same thing that the RCMP says: there are multiple factors, unfortunately, that cause accidents on our roadways.

Sometimes it's distracted driving. Sometimes it's impaired. Sometimes it's road conditions. There are a number of factors here. This is just one possible factor, but I think one would point out that the number of tickets that are written by the police on our highways does not equal to less facilities. There is simply no causation or no correlation there.

Either way, my concern is for the safety of our roadways and I'll continue to work with the ministers, caucus and Cabinet to ensure that.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

I thank the minister for his answers and I look forward to the specific information that he is going to endeavour to obtain for this House.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Will your government issue a request for proposals for the supply of marijuana to this province?

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

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

I'm happy to stand up and speak to this impending change in policy that's going on across the country. Just last week or the week before, we stood here and spoke to the RFP process that will allow for private industry to be involved in this upcoming industry.

One of the issues that comes with this, however, is there is a supply that is needed here in the province. What I will say is that we are aware that there is a significant amount of interest as it relates to the need for production here.

We will be ready for supply. As a government, and certainly the Minister for TCII will say to you, we're always looking at ways to encourage and spur on economic development here in the province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

I'll ask the Premier if he will commit for his government to ensure that local Newfoundland and Labrador companies are given first priority to supply marijuana product to NLC.

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

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

One of the first things I would say to the Member opposite is that when it comes to licensing for this, this is a federal aspect. It's one that's not just controlled by the province. The feds decide on the licensing and production. There's a significant process they have to go through to get that.

What I can say is that this government is always committed to helping Newfoundlanders and Labradorians prosper here in this province. The fact is we have to have a supply here. So, hopefully, as a government we can make that happen. Come July 2018, with the legalization of cannabis, we have to ensure there will be supply. We'll continue on working to make sure that happens.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

We don't have to provide the supply if the rules are in place and the province is ready. You've already raised concerns about our province not being ready.

So I ask the Premier to advise this House if your government is in discussions with a mainland company for a seven-year incentive program to

sole-source marijuana production for the Newfoundland and Labrador market.

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

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

I'm happy to stand up and speak to this. I know this government has entertained a number of different options and offers as it relates to the production of cannabis here in this province, the same way that there's been a number of contacts made as it relates to the distribution.

What we can say is that there are significant regulations when it comes to this and it is federally controlled who gets production, but we will continue to work with entrepreneurs to ensure we have production here in this province. So we'll continue to work on that and to ensure that we have supply here for when July 2018 comes.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

Is the minister saying that the province, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, will not have control as to who the supplier is for this province, who is the supplier, who's doing the production and that the province will not have control of that?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As you know, within the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador there are certain procurement rules. There are certain trade rules that are in place for people who actually work within government. As this government, we're prepared to work with Newfoundland and Labrador companies to whatever extent it takes to make sure they get fair opportunities, Mr. Speaker.

I could point to many decisions made by the Member opposite. I point no further than the ferries that we're actually dealing with in our province right now that were procured outside of our province.

The Leader of the Opposition stands here today suggesting otherwise, that things could be done in our province when on his watch we saw ferries being built in Romania. We saw foreign companies coming in to do Muskrat Falls, Mr. Speaker.

There are tons of opportunities when they gave up on Newfoundland and Labrador. We will not give up on Newfoundland and Labrador (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

The Premier likes to change the channel very quickly, doesn't he?

We're asking about marijuana. We're asking about the supply of marijuana. Who is going to produce it, manufacture it and supply it to NLC when the government rolls out their distribution next summer?

So I'll ask the Premier this, if he wants to get up and talk. We've asked him several questions. It's the first time he got up today.

I'll ask the Premier this: Are you or your government or anyone in your office having discussions with a mainland company? Let's use an example: Canopy Growth, for example. Are you talking to Canopy Growth about supplying marijuana for Newfoundland and Labrador?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, going back to the earlier comments when he talked about this particular procurement model, the fact is the truth hurts. The Members opposite do not want to hear the truth; they do not want to accept the responsibility of ferries that were built outside of this province.

When we remind them – I know it's a sore spot for them. I know it's a sore spot because not only did they build the ferries outside of Newfoundland and Labrador, they forgot about the wharves that went attached to that, Mr. Speaker.

We are willing to work with companies no matter where they are from, Mr. Speaker, if it means that we can create economic development for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Companies like Canopy and others right across this province, we are willing to work with them to create jobs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm going to ask the Premier again – he doesn't want to talk about it, but I'll ask him again: Are you talking to Canopy Growth? I'll use them as an example. Are you talking to them about a seven-year incentive program over a longer term contract to supply marijuana here in this province?

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

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

As a government, we've entertained a number of offers from people that are interested in this. In fact, I can say that one half hour ago up in my office I met with a Newfoundland and Labrador company that's interested in production here in this province. We're willing to sit down and have those conversations.

What I can say is that no decision has been made on this; there's a lot of work to do it. But I can guarantee you that the guiding factor for any decision made by this government is what's in the best interests of 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.

The minister is saying there was no decision made. They made no decision last night on this. I'm glad he's telling us now there's no decision made because it's important for Newfoundland and Labrador companies to also have an opportunity to compete. Canopy Growth is an example of a national Mainland company that is a supplier and producer of marijuana.

I'll ask the Premier very carefully and very clearly: Are you talking to them about a seven-year incentive deal on a longer term contract to supply for Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

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

I'm happy to stand here and speak to this issue. It's a huge issue here in this province. I can guarantee you that there are multiple companies that this government has been in conversation with as it relates to the production of cannabis here in the province.

There are a number of incentives for this. People want to come here and see the jobs here. We are one of the few provinces that don't have production in the province. We're working on that and we're speaking to companies that are interested.

In fact, like I just said just prior to coming down to the House, I spoke to a Newfoundland and Labrador company that wants to get in here. What I can guarantee you is that no decision has been made, but when we make a decision, it will be in the best interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and we will be ready for July 2018.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. P. DAVIS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt from what we're hearing they're going to do whatever they can to make sure they're ready for July 2018.

So I'll ask the question very simply: If they're going to provide opportunity to other businesses, such as those interested within Newfoundland and Labrador, to be a supplier and producer of marijuana, would they also have the opportunity for a seven-year incentive program?

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

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

Again, at the end of the day, whatever decision is made by this government as it relates to production in this province, there are a lot of moving parts to it, but what I can say to you is that we will do what's best for this province and for the people, what is the best approach to take. There's no decision to make; there are no barriers being put in place. In fact, I think as the minister likes to say, we are open for business and we want to have business here in this province.

The decision has not been made. I cannot be any clearer, we will be ready for July and whatever decision that this government makes will be in the best interest – again, I can only state this, that the only thing that we're concerned about is what's best for Newfoundland and Labrador.

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 only rise again to be clear, and I hear what the minister is saying; I just want to make sure it's accurate and correct.

Is the minister telling this House that the government has not made a decision on the production and supply of any marijuana, whatsoever, for this province? No seven-year incentive programs, no 20-year contracts – they

haven't done any of that. Is that what the minister is saying?

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

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

Again, I'm happy to stand here and say that we have entertained offers from multiple companies that want to do business here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Some of those are from out of province and some of those are from here, right in the province. I just met with one.

What I can say, again, is that no deal has been struck as it relates to production here in this province. There is no deal that has been struck. We will be ready for July and we'll make a decision that is best for the people here in the province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the fall fiscal update, the Finance Minister indicated that he would be bringing legislation mandating agencies, boards and commissions to cut their spending. There are possibly only four days left to the Legislature calendar and no sign of legislation.

I ask the minister: When can we expect to see this legislation?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will say to the Member I thank him for the question because it's important. The agencies, boards and commissions in this province account for about 60 per cent of the spending in the province, 80 per cent of the salaries. So it is important that we get the spending within agencies, boards and commissions in line with what government departments are doing.

But, Mr. Speaker, I will say that since that announcement, I've had conversations with a number of the agencies who have indicated that they are interested in sitting at the table again and looking at the information that we need to look at and working with government. If that is indeed the case, we will determine what exactly is needed in the legislation. I feel it's more important in getting results than getting legislation on the floor of this House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I remind the minister, talking about results, you haven't hit the results or targets that you had in your *Budget 2017*. That's why he said he was going to bring in legislation.

I'll ask the minister: Are you backtracking what you said in your fiscal update and you're not bringing in legislation now related to these agencies and boards, which you indicated you were going to do in the fiscal update?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I will say I haven't ruled it out, but what I am indicating is that I want results. Whether that is through legislation or whether it's through co-operation, we need results.

What I will also say to the Member, I read his letter last week in the *Telegram*, Mr. Speaker. I could hardly continue to sit on my seat. I almost laughed myself off the seat. Spending in the province is down. Well, in the fiscal fall update, if you had read that, spending in the province is up by 1.2 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, household incomes are up by 2.1 per cent. Mr. Speaker, we're off our revenue targets by less than 1 per cent. Part of the reason for that is a decline in oil prices, something that they pointed to as their reason for not hitting their targets for years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

On November 30, the Minister of Transportation and Works sent an email to parents and guardians of Bishop Feild Elementary School pupils responding to their questions asking when the structural assessment of the school is to begin and how long they can expect the school to be closed to their children. Surely, the minister could have estimated whether the wait for the assessment to begin is days, weeks or months rather than merely offering broad strokes.

I ask the minister if he is ready today to give the very concerned parents and guardians a better sense of what to expect around timing than he did last Thursday.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I thank the hon. Member for the question.

Mr. Speaker, back on November 5 we had an initial report come back from Nova Consultants on their initial engineering assessment at the school, at Bishop Feild. We took a couple of weeks to look at that to make sure we are covering all the necessary engineering things that we need to look at. We are dealing with an 89-year-old building. We want to make sure we get this right, Mr. Speaker, because there's one thing we're not going to do: we're not going to send kids back into a school that's not safe, Mr. Speaker.

Nova Consultants will start tomorrow on the more in-depth engineering, Mr. Speaker, and we have to make sure we're getting this right because this is about the safety of the students.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The minister in his email talked about ensuring that all necessary steps are taken before allowing students, teachers or staff to return to the school. We're not complaining with that, but that open-ended statement does not bring any comfort to parents and guardians. They have no idea of what really is going on regarding the school and gossip is running wild out there, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister if he will notify the parents and guardians publicly about what exactly those necessary steps are in an effort to allay their concerns and their fears.

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

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

I thank the hon. Member for the question.

First of all, I would encourage her, like my grandfather used to tell me, stop listening to gossip.

Mr. Speaker, this is an 89-year-old building that we have students that need their education processes of this. It's important to us that we get this right. It's important that we make sure this building is safe for students. The engineering consultants are going to go in, we're going to remove all the ceilings in the building, we're going to look for what structural challenges there are. We're going to make sure this building is safe for our kids when they re-enter this building.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, the federal government announced it will be delivering its new legislation for persons living with disabilities in spring 2018, meaning all provinces must also be ready and have their legislation aligned.

As part of this process, presumably the minister will want to obtain real substantial input from organizations and people with lived experience to ensure this legislation is responsive to the real needs of people and has teeth regarding resources and enforcement.

I ask the Minister of CSSD: What is her process for moving forward on our provincial legislation, and what is her timeline?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for the question to talk about this important topic of disabilities.

We are certainly, Mr. Speaker, engaging with stakeholders. We know what happens. We've seen lots of examples in the past, when you go out and you rush to get something out the door and it's not done right. We will be engaging with a broad range of stakeholders right across the province. Staff in the Disability Policy Office is putting a lot of work into this, and something will be coming very soon. I say to the hon. Member: stay tuned.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, the national poverty rate for persons with disabilities is 23 per cent, compared to 9 per cent for people without disabilities. Poverty is growing for people with disabilities in the province due to lack of affordable accessible housing, low levels of income support, the cutting of home care hours, cutting the adult dental program and over-the-counter drug program.

I ask the minister: What is she going to do to lift the growing and debilitating burden of poverty experienced by people living with disabilities?

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to start by correcting the record. Last week, the hon. Member asked a question about what we were doing. I misspoke, I lowballed a number. In fact, Mr. Speaker, budget '17: \$270 million in more than 100 poverty reduction initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, I checked. It's actually the most money that has ever been invested by any government into poverty reduction initiatives and we're going to continue.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that's very sensitive to the needs of the low income, the marginalized. We're going to work with them; we're going to continue to build on things like the Premier's Task Force, our Health in All Policies and the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions.

So I say to the hon. Member: Stay tuned, there's a lot to be done, but we are doing –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees

MR. SPEAKER: I have something.

Pursuant to section 273(3) of the *Elections Act, 1991*, I hereby table the annual report of the Chief Electoral Officer on Election Finances for January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015.

I also have a document – pursuant to section 8 and section 10 of the *Public Tender Act*, I

hereby table reports of *Public Tender Act* Exceptions for June and July 2017 as presented by the chief operating officer of the Government Purchasing Agency.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table today the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 annual reports for the Newfoundland and Labrador 911 Bureau.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to section 26(5)(a) of the *Financial Administration Act*, I am tabling one order-in-council relating to a funding pre-commitment for the fiscal year 2018-19.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm tabling a document in response to a question posed last week by the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune to payments made to Mountain Consultants at the Marble Mountain Development Corporation. An ATIPP request was filed and it had outlined, and is publicly available, all payments since January 2015. This is a contract that has been in place for the last 20 years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: In the spirit of saving the best for last, I recognize the hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, who has tried four times to stand.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand today in accordance with the requirements of the Transparency and Accountability Act, 2006 to table the activity plan for the Council on Higher Education. This plan outlines the activities for the council for the next three years for the period from September 1, 2017 to August 31, 2020.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I, seconded by the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue, will be bringing forward the following PMR on Wednesday:

WHEREAS the provincial government recently released *What We Heard* document on social enterprises; and

WHEREAS supporting social enterprise development is vital for advancing development opportunities that benefit the economy, supports sustainability, tackles social and economic issues and encourage entrepreneurial models;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House take action to be responsive to the feedback received from this document to increase the number of social enterprises in Newfoundland and Labrador and to enhance services for existing social enterprises.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 63(3), the PMR just read by the Member for Bonavista shall be the one to be debated this coming Wednesday.

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

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Assembly as follows:

WHEREAS section 4 of the *Auditor General Act* provides that on resolution of the House of Assembly, the Lieutenant Governor in Council shall appoint an Auditor General;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Julia Mullaley be appointed as the Auditor General.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

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

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland 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 DHH children currently placed in mainstream schools receive only a fraction of a school day with a teacher qualified to instruct DHH 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 DHH

children by a committee of at least two independent and recognized experts in the field of DHH 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 DHH 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.

What an appropriate day, Mr. Speaker, to present this petition, a petition signed by people from the St. John's area, from the Bonavista Bay area, from the Southern Shore of the Avalon Peninsula, people who are concerned that the human rights of people and children with disabilities be recognized by this government in every way possible.

We continue to wait for legislation with regard to recognition of the human rights of people with disabilities and we continue to have parents fighting for the needs of their children in our school system, an inclusion school system which is excluding children at the same time as calling it inclusion, Mr. Speaker. It is very, very disturbing.

On the weekend I met with parents, again, who have children who are deaf and who have needs in our school system. One set of parents are very happy that finally their child will have a deaf teacher for the rest of this year, but told by the school board, well, we can't assure you that it will happen after this year.

The parents of children going to school, generally speaking, don't have to guess from year to year if there's a teacher for their child. But the parents of children with special needs, especially this child who is deaf, are being told he's got his teacher this year and we have no idea if he'll have his deaf teacher next year.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The petition of the undersigned residents humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS the inshore harvesters of Newfoundland and Labrador have serious concerns about their current union representation; and

WHEREAS the inshore fish harvesters of Newfoundland and Labrador want the right to vote on which union will represent them;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to request that government urge Newfoundland and Labrador Labour Relations Board to proceed immediately to a vote of the inshore fish harvesters to decide which union will represent them.

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

Mr. Speaker, like I said, I have this petition here again today. This one is signed from people from Red Head Cove, Bay de Verde, Port au Choix, Port Saunders, Summerside, Irishtown, Frenchman's Cove, Lark Harbour, Benoit's Cove, New Ferolle, Bartletts Harbour, Reef's Harbour, Castor River South, Plum Point and Lab City. Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is we have numerous people here throughout the province.

It's interesting that some of the Members over there find this petition funny. I can assure you that the individuals who are involved here, they certainly don't find it funny.

The fishery has certainly been the mainstay of our province for years and years; it's what brought people to this province. There are many areas of the province, many rural areas in particular, that still depend on the fishery. We've seen a lot of decline in a lot of the rural areas because of the challenges within the fishery. We know the fishery is important, not just to rural Newfoundland and Labrador, but to the province as a whole.

I look even in Mount Pearl and St. John's – you look at Mount Pearl into Donovans Business Park, as an example, there are many businesses there that exist because of the fishery. So it's important to us all.

The last thing we need, with all of the challenges we have, is a division amongst people within the fishery itself. Currently that's what exists, unfortunately. What the people here are asking is to solve the issue of who will represent the inshore fish harvesters, one way or the other.

It doesn't matter to me, Mr. Speaker. I'm not a fisherman; I couldn't care less which union it is. It's irrelevant to me, but it is important to put this issue to bed so that they can be united and everyone can work together for the benefit of the fishery overall.

That's what is being asked here. I was asked to bring it forward, that's what I'm doing and glad to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

This is a petition that I presented before and I'm going to present it here again today because I have over 300 names of people that came out and asked me to present this petition.

To the hon. House of Assembly in 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 the Bauline Line are maintained by the Department of Transportation and Works; and

WHEREAS these roads have very narrow shoulders, particularly 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 speedbumps, electric signage, et cetera, to reduce speed and ensure safety of all residents.

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

Mr. Speaker, like I said, I presented this petition now – either it's the third or fourth time. It's a very important issue, and I even expand it to other districts. I know it's important in my district and important in other communities because there are so many provincial roads out there that are basically maintained and controlled by the provincial government. A lot of these roads in particular are small roads, but especially on the Northeast Avalon where the growth over the last number of years, some of these roads have become major thoroughfares now.

Indian Meal Line, and the Bauline Line in particular, one time used to be mainly dirt roads and there was very little traffic flow on it, but an example for Indian Meal Line, it's a road that a lot of people will take between Torbay and Portugal Cove-St. Philip's. There are a lot of new homes and there are a lot of subdivisions. Like I said the last time, on Indian Meal Line there were probably 50 or 60 homes, 20 or 25 years ago. Now, I would estimate there are a couple thousand people, maybe 3,000 or 4,000 people living off those roads.

So it's very important. Provincial roads – most of the main roads have a shoulder on it that's probably about three or four feet where there is opportunity to push a stroller or walk a dog or anything like that, but on these particular roads, which government does control, does snow clear and does maintenance on these roads, it's important that traffic slows down.

We're going to do a bill later on today and it's about safety on the roads. Again, this is another part of safety. Mr. Speaker, what I'm talking about is that we need some mechanisms put in place. I know it works on roads in communities in my district like speed bumps or speed humps they call it and also signage, like electronic signage.

I know in the new school in Torbay there are electronic signs on each side of the school. When you come up to that sign and you see how fast you're going, it will help you reduce your speed. So I'm calling on the provincial government to look at these measures on provincial roads.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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 and 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.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know and we all know that an inquiry has been called, but there are still many people who are mystified as to why government didn't call for a forensic audit. It's now within the scope of the inquiry to call for a forensic audit, but government could have done

this, could have enacted this much earlier than it has. Now the people of the province will have to wait two years for a report from the inquiry.

Fair enough that the inquiry will take a long time for it to be able to do its work accurately and precisely, but the forensic audit, people are really concerned; they want to know what their government did, both in the previous administration and in this current administration. It's not only important for this project, but it's also about restoring the confidence of the people in government. Without that confidence, how can we go forward?

So, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to present this petition on their behalf, on the behalf of all the signatories. Again, this petition was signed before the inquiry was called. But I believe it's still relevant, because the people who signed this petition are saying they want a forensic audit – a very specific, targeted forensic audit – with the results to be released as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I will take my chair and thank you once again.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the Adult Dental Program coverage for clients of the Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Drug Program under the Access and 65Plus Plan were eliminated in *Budget 2016*;

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

WHEREAS those same individuals can 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.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we've had some discussion around this over the last number of years since the program was cut, and we're continuously hearing horror stories from individuals and family members about lack of access to dentures and the impact that's having around oral health, around quality of life and around dignity.

I only recently met with a constituent and their family. Their loved one has lost nearly 40 pounds because they haven't been able to access dentures, being able to eat certain foods and that has had a detrimental effect on them. Even their general practitioner doctor has intervened and said we need some specialized help here to be able to support them.

I'm happy to say that, within this community, they managed to fundraise to help out that individual, but that's where we've gotten. When we start looking at dropping quality of life and dignity for people to save a few dollars, yet it's going to be more costly from a health point of view, then I think we've got it wrong. We totally have it wrong.

This is about providing – particularly people at the 65-plus, those who have been contributors to our society, those who need a little bit of our extra supports. It's not a big drawdown on the Health budget of nearly \$3 billion; it's a small proportion for a small number of our citizens to be able to have a quality of life, proper health and dignity in here.

The impact, if you look at it, from an investment point of view, being able to address some of those issues to ensure that people are still eating the proper foods because of the dentures, that obviously has an impact on the cost associated with not having proper health care and the effects that may have. The other thing is about quality of life. It's about people having dignity, being able to be active in their communities. This has an effect mentally on people. They don't feel the same going out because they don't have dentures there. They hide away from stuff;

they don't engage in the same atmosphere as they normally would.

I think we, as a society, have a responsibility to ensure that everybody has basic access to certain things. So when you cross over health, proper dental hygiene and you cross over dignity and quality of life, then, Mr. Speaker, I think this is very important. The government should reconsider in reinstating this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 5.

I move pursuant to provisional Standing Order 11(1) that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, December 4, 2017.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion, please say 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

This motion is carried.

The Deputy Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, for leave to introduce a bill – sorry, I have to turn my page, Mr. Speaker – entitled An Act To Amend The Child And Youth Advocate Act, Bill 26, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled An Act To Amend The Child And Youth Advocate Act, Bill 26, 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 Children, Seniors and Social Development to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Child And Youth Advocate Act," carried. (Bill 26)

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Child And Youth Advocate Act. (Bill 26)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 26 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, for leave to introduce a bill entitled An Act To Amend The Independent Appointments Commission Act, Bill 28.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Independent Appointments Commission Act, Bill 28, 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 Advanced Education, Skills and Labour to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Independent Appointments Commission Act," carried. (Bill 28)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Independent Appointments Commission Act. (Bill 28)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 28 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper number 8, second reading of a bill, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2, Bill 27.

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that Bill 27, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2, be now read a second time.

Motion, second read of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2." (Bill 27)

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this hon. House to speak to Bill 27, an amendment to the *Highway Traffic Act*.

This is my second opportunity to stand during this session of the House to introduce amendments to help increase safety on the roadways in our province. I cannot state often enough how important it is that we keep the dialogue going on road safety.

It is also important that we, as a government, regularly review the act to keep current with changes in safety codes, vehicle design and other highway safety improvements, as well as responding to driving behaviours. A couple of weeks ago, I attended an event to honour the many individuals in our province who have lost their lives or been seriously injured on our highways.

The National Day of Remembrance for Road Crash Victims is a stark reminder of the significant toll that is taken on families and communities all throughout our province. I doubt there is anyone in our province who has not been touched in some way by a motor vehicle accident.

In many cases, it may have been the unimaginable loss or injury of a parent, a child, a sibling, a partner. For others, it may be a friend, a neighbour or a colleague. Whatever the relationship, individuals and families must live with the loss or suffering of their loved ones. I've met with individuals and families who have had their lives forever changed because of the incidents on our highways. It has affected me in a very profound way. It has certainly made the attention our government has been giving to road safety very personal to me.

Every time I have to consider making changes to strengthen the *Highway Traffic Act*, I am reminded of the people I have met and their stories of pain and loss. Words cannot express the devastation that families live with every day, and I commend people like Gail and Levi Thorne and the STAND for Hannah Foundation in their efforts to spread their road safety message despite their suffering. These are the stories and these are faces that we must keep front and centre every time we make changes to the act to help increase road safety.

In June of 2016, the *Highway Traffic Act* was amended to increase the fines for using a handheld cellular phone while driving a motor vehicle.

Mr. Speaker, in September, amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* came into effect, which include tougher penalties for impaired drivers in this province. I want to acknowledge the support of all Members of this hon. House for Bill 68. These amendments include new rules that would help steer our young people in the direction of safe and sober driving habits.

Just last month, I introduced further amendments to the act to increase penalties for a number of offences that were less than \$100. It is our expectation that increasing these fines will help deter a number of behaviours that continue to pose risks on our roadways such as driving too slow, driving with an obstructed windshield or illegally modifying a vehicle, but we also know there are many other unsafe driving practices that endanger lives every day.

Time and time again, we've all witnessed blatant disregard for safety on our roadways. We've seen the driver who carelessly weaves in and out of traffic, or heard the news stories about the person who has been caught speeding excessively. It is startling to know that an average of five people die on Canada's roads every day. This equates to over 1,800 people losing their lives every year and more than 160,000 people being injured, some very seriously.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we are continuing our efforts to improve road safety in our province. We are introducing amendments today to strengthen the act regarding: excessive speeding; street racing; stunting; Move Over provisions; creation of a new offence for driving without due care and attention or without reasonable consideration for other persons causing bodily harm or death; increase fines for the existing offence of driving without due care and attention and driving without reasonable consideration for other persons; modification to proof of insurance requirements; and, an addition of an appeal process for certain drivers' licence suspensions, as well as clarification that these suspensions are imposed by the legislation and not by the registrar.

Mr. Speaker, I will now speak to the specifics of each of these amendments. There are daily occurrences of motorists who travel at high speeds, which place the general public at risk. The posted maximum speed on a highway is determined by highway design and motorists are required to adjust their speed to suit the weather and road conditions.

Currently, under section 1(10) of the act, speeds exceeding the posted speed limit by more than 30 kilometres per hour carry the same penalty, unlike most other jurisdictions, which have more severe fines and increments above 50 kilometres per hour or 60 kilometres per hour over the limit.

Drivers who are convicted of speeding in the province have to pay a fine and depending on the rate of speed, will accumulate demerit points. Currently, drivers face fines of between \$50 and \$360 for speeds exceeding the speed limit by one to 10 kilometres per hour, between \$100 and \$450 for speeds exceeding the limit by 11 to 20 kilometres per hour, \$200 to \$600 for exceeding by 21 to 30 kilometres per hour, and \$300 to \$750 for speeds in excess of 31 kilometres per hour over the posted limit.

The changes we are introducing include separate speeding offences for 31 to 50 kilometres per hour and greater than 50 kilometres per hour over the speed limit. This also involves a 7-day driver's licence suspension for exceeding the posted speed limit by greater than 50 kilometres per hour to be effective on the second day after the notice of suspension is given.

Vehicles operated by drivers that exceed the posted speed limit by greater than 50 kilometres per hour will be impounded for three days. Fines for exceeding the speed limit by greater than 50 kilometres per hour will be set at a range of \$400 to \$850, while fines for speeding in school zones and construction zones will be set at \$800 to \$1,800.

Mr. Speaker, racing on a highway is a high-risk activity that disregards the safety of the general public. Unfortunately, we have witnessed tragedy on our roadways because of such reckless behaviour, tragedies that could have been avoided.

Groups like STAND for Hannah have lobbied government to strengthen the province's regulatory regime in order to deter racing and travelling at extremely high rates of speed on our highways. With these new amendments, a driver that is charged with the offence will receive a 7-day driver's licence suspension effective on the second day after the notice of suspension is given. Drivers who are charged with racing will also have their vehicles impounded for three days.

Mr. Speaker, currently there is no provincial legislation that prohibits the execution of a stunt on a highway or in a public area, such as a vehicle doing doughnuts or motorcycles travelling on one wheel. A separate offence for stunting has now been created with penalties being the same as those associated with racing on a roadway. A driver that is charged with the offence will receive a 7-day driver's licence suspension effective on the second day after the notice is given. Drivers who are charged with racing or stunting will also have their vehicles impounded for three days.

Mr. Speaker, we will also strengthen our Move Over provision in an effort to help ensure the safety of our first responders. We are adding a speed reduction of at least 30 kilometres per hour below the speed limit to a minimum speed of 30 kilometres or less for vehicles passing stopped emergency vehicles. We are also providing the ability to charge the registered owner for such offences.

Mr. Speaker, we are also creating a new offence under the *Highway Traffic Act* for driving without due care and attention causing bodily harm or death. With this new offence come new penalties as well. The offence will carry a minimum fine of \$2,000 and a maximum fine of \$20,000, or up to two years in prison or both. It also includes a licence suspension of not more than five years and six demerit points. The fines for the existing offence of driving without due care and attention and driving without reasonable consideration for other persons will rise from a range of \$120 to \$480, to that of \$300 to \$1,000.

We're also modifying insurance provisions so as to place the onus on the driver to prove the vehicle they were driving was insured at the

time the offence occurred. This will also include placing the onus on the person charged with an offence to prove there was a valid insurance policy when the offence was committed.

Mr. Speaker, another amendment we have made to the act involves an appeals mechanism to appeal a 90-day driver's licence suspension for impaired driving. The *Highway Traffic Act* provides authority for peace officers to require the roadside surrender of a driver's licence for impaired driving, alcohol and drug, and sets time periods for suspensions. The act does not currently provide an avenue for a person to appeal a 90-day driver's licence suspension, blood-alcohol content of 0.08 or greater, or failure or refusal to provide a sample; however, highway traffic legislation in all other provinces and territories contains provisions for review of driver's licence suspensions.

In October 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada released a decision in which it held that the fail provisions of British Columbia's automatic roadside prohibition scheme infringed section 8 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* because a 90-day suspension could result from an ASD rating alone. It also stated that the limited review mechanism available did not allow an individual to challenge the accuracy of the ASD result, even though there were potential concerns about the reliability of ASDs.

The *Highway Traffic Act* now provides a mechanism for drivers in Newfoundland and Labrador to appeal a 90-day driver's licence suspension for impaired driving. Grounds for an appeal will be identity of the driver or medical explanations for failure or refusal to comply with a demand. The appeals process will not be retroactive.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, the amendments put forward today help us continue our ongoing focus on strengthening road safety in Newfoundland and Labrador. They are further proof of our government's dedication to making public safety a priority.

I also want to recognize the input of groups such as the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services and their president Duane Antle. Input from community stakeholders like his association, STAND for Hannah, individuals

whom I have personally met with, as well as law enforcement personnel in our province is all very important as we continue to develop amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act*.

I want to express my gratitude for their willingness to continuously work with us in our efforts to improve road safety in the province. Through the changes we have introduced here today, along with other changes to the act, our objective is to help the people of our province develop safe and sober driving habits.

I respectfully move these amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* to ensure continued support of road safety for everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It's indeed a privilege to get up here today and to speak to this new bill. I have to say before I start and talk about the bill, times in society that we have people that advocate for different reasons, they work on different projects and I really want to applaud the groups that are here with us today. It's because of you people that we're doing this today. I understand that loss of life in families is so hard. What you're doing today, your loved ones will always remember and be with you to know that you're making a difference.

On behalf of everybody here in the House of Assembly, I would really want to thank you for your advocacy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: I personally don't have a family member or anybody, but I do have friends that through highways and excessive speeds and everything else have lost members of their family, and I'm sure we all do here in the province. We understand what we're doing here today. I applaud the minister. I have a fine lot of

questions for the minister later on when we do get into Committee about this act. It's not to criticize or anything, but it will just be some clarification basically.

I also want to advocate to the minister that as we do the *Highway Traffic Act* – the last time we did it, it was Bill 68 and everybody in this House supported it – we need to do things now to make sure that the general public understands what we're doing as a House and what we're doing out there. Advocate groups like we have here today, I know they've been speaking out. We've heard them in the media. We've heard them everywhere. Now it's time for government to really put this forward and let people understand that these are the reasons why we're changing and making changes to the *Highway Traffic Act* is to protect our loved ones so that when people go home in the nighttime they are assured that their children come home after them or before them and are safe on our highways.

We had a very hard year in this province, a very difficult year in this province when it comes to fatalities on our highways. Mr. Speaker, one is too many, and this year we've had way too many. We need to address it. Part of this is what the minister is introducing here today. If this saves one life, we're all in it for the right reasons and it would be great for this province.

The bill itself, I'm just going to go through a couple of the amendments, just a couple of the new things that are in the bill. We're talking about stunts. Sometimes it may be done in fun. I meet it all the time; you meet a bike on the road and they're on their back wheel. Like the minister said, there are all kinds of – doing donuts and stuff like this. We saw it last year on Kenmount Road.

If people really took the time to look to see what they're doing, they're putting not only themselves, but they're putting so many other people in jeopardy of either injury or some damage they may do to a person. Please God, not death, but it's something that we really have to address. That's what we're trying to do here today.

As you look through this bill, it has an explanatory note just to explain to the people here today, each one explains why we're doing

what it is. Under the explanatory note, this is a new offence, this one here and it's associated with penalties. It includes car suspension. It's all about stunts. So this is something new that the province has brought in. It's a good piece of legislation because it's something we really do need to address.

The other part, which is also pretty new, is excessive speeding. We always do have fines for excessive speeding, but this one really emphasizes it. I travel the Outer Ring Road sometimes and I drive as close as I can to the speed limit. I see vehicles passing me by. It's like I'm stopped. Now, I'm going 100 kilometres an hour and they're passing me by like I'm completely stopped. I believe, Minister, it's from 51 kilometres on is what the new regulations are bringing in that the car can be impounded and suspensions can be brought in also.

We all see it. We all understand how dangerous it is for cars to be travelling on our highways at the speeds – and it's not only the Outer Ring Road. It's Torbay Road sometimes. Sometimes it could be a road going through a community. We've seen lots of that through our province where excessive speed kills.

If somebody is travelling at 51 kilometres over the speed limit, whether it's 100 kilometres or it's 60 kilometres, it's way too fast. Again, I think, Minister, this is another really important part that we get out to general public and let them know, listen, we're not tolerating this anymore; your car can be taken from you and you could be suspended. You could be going to jail because of it, and that's what we really want to emphasize to the general public.

The other thing is – I know that there's a group here today and this one here is important to them – causing death or bodily harm. Sometimes things that we do on the highway – and I hate to bring it up – there can be something in a vehicle. It can be something that is not secure. It can be something that was just not thought of before a person really gets in that vehicle and makes the decision whether to drive on the Trans-Canada Highway or drive up where I'm from, Torbay Road.

People have to understand that you're responsible for that vehicle. It's your responsibility that that vehicle goes to wherever you're going to and it's your responsibility that you really have to caution what you're doing and making sure that anything you have in that vehicle is your responsibility. So that's another part.

The other part of this legislation – I'm just going to go through a little bit here now – is racing. Again, too many times we hear it in the news, we hear it in the courtrooms and we see it on TV that this causes death. And usually the death that we hear of is younger people. I know that there are all kinds of awareness, schools have it, we have Young Drivers of Canada, we have different driving schools and everything else; but sometimes I don't know if it's emotion, someone in the car with you or whatever happens, this seems to occur and there's never a good result.

Again, I really call on the minister to – I think while this is a great piece of legislation, that suspension can be done, there are new penalties, any grounds to believe that a person is racing on the highway, traffic enforcements can come out and say listen, this is what it's going to be, you're going to be suspended and stuff like that; but again, it all comes back to education and it comes back to making sure that our young people are well educated.

I know that once a tragedy happens everybody realizes then that it's too late, maybe this should have been done, maybe that should have been done; but we really want to emphasize that while there are penalties in place, suspensions and taking vehicles, there is more to it than that. We should let everybody know but, in particular, it seems to me that we see it's usually young people that are involved in this. Again, as a parent and most of us are here in the House, we all look forward to our children coming home every night safe and sound. So it's really important.

I want to talk a little bit about the Move Over legislation. Again, it's an important part. Minister, my understanding is that say if you're in a 60-kilometre zone, it will drop down to 30, but if you're in a 50-kilometre zone, it still drops

down to 30, I think. So the speed limit in those different zones is 30 kilometres.

Sometimes we go through the 30 kilometres, but if there are people there that are working and you're in close proximity, just crawl through them because these people probably have other jobs to do and they're looking at doing their work on the road. It could be an accident there and it could be our law enforcement officers which we have here today also and I want to applaud them. They need to be able to do their work, they need to be in a safe environment and we need to make sure they're protected.

We've talked about school zones here in the House of Assembly now for the last number of weeks. We brought in a private Member's motion last week, and the Member before that, and it was all to do with school zones. Sometimes in our communities, we're dealing with children. Sometimes we don't really realize what they're doing and we don't understand whether – sometimes they can run out, maybe it's not a crosswalk, maybe there's a friend across the way. But it's important that we make sure these regulations are put in place and that people really do slow down in these zones.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation also talks about insurance and proof of insurance. While a person is driving a vehicle, sometimes somebody else could be driving that vehicle. It's important that the vehicle is insured itself. I guess that's where the minister is coming through on a bit of this here also. It requires the insurance policy be produced to the police. So it's making sure that vehicles are insured. Too many vehicles are on our roads today that are not insured. I mean, there's no excuse for that whatsoever.

When it comes to the appeals process, I think this has more to do with the Charter of Rights – and I'll talk a little bit about it later on, the 90-day appeal process. It allows for there to be an appeal, and there are different reasons for them, which I'll read right now in a few minutes.

I'm just going to go through the overview of each amendment that the minister introduced. On Bill 27, it increases the fines for driving without due care and attention or for driving – a reasonable consideration for persons from which

the current range now is gone; the fines are gone now from \$120 to \$480. They're gone to \$300 to \$1,000. You'll find these in section 1. Some of this bill there are different sections that talks about two or three different things. So it's important to know where they're coming to in the bill.

Causing death or bodily harm; this is a new offence for driving without care and attention or without reasonable considerations for persons causing death or bodily harm. It sets out the following penalties: a minimum of \$2,000 and a maximum of \$20,000. Up to two years imprisonment and licence suspended for not more than five years. Again, accompanying regulations will also outline that you lose six demerit points.

Mr. Speaker, bodily harm sometimes can be – there's a definition that's in there, bodily harm sometimes can be hurt or injury of a person of their health or their comfort is what it's called. Any time there is some injury that is involved, this is important because while people don't realize what their actions are and the causes of these actions, so it's important that we introduce that also.

Excessive speeding; in this bill, there are a lot of clauses in here where it talks about excessive speeding. It is clauses 6, 8, 9, 10, 14 and 16. The bill includes a separate speeding – and it's for offences from 30- to 50-kilometre zones and then greater than 50, which means 51, past the posted speed limit. Some of the fines for greater than 50 kilometers an hour posted, there would be up to \$400 to \$850 and now fines will be set at \$800 to \$1,800 for construction zones or school zones.

Again, like I just spoke that time, Mr. Speaker, it's important for people to realize that when you're in a school zone there are children around. When you're in a construction zone there are people around also that are doing construction. They're going to work in the morning. They have a job to do. It's important that we slow down and make sure of the safety of these people. Again, too often we've heard of accidents and reports of people being injured in both of these zones.

It also imposes a seven-day driver's licence suspension for speeding greater than 50 kilometres an hour. Again, Mr. Speaker, this is something that I really find myself. I know travelling our roads and travelling –whether it's the Trans-Canada going as far as Whitbourne, where I go to quite often, that going along the highway and you're going your 100 kilometres an hour and someone passes you by like you're stopped. I mean, it's just so unsafe and for everybody else that's on the road. You often heard the term it's an accident waiting to happen. Well, that's what has happened here. It's important we bring it in, but it's also important that we educate the general public that we're not going to tolerate it.

Other regulations will make it so that vehicles can be impounded for three days for speeding over. That's pretty important because once you take a vehicle away from a person hopefully it sends the right message to them also.

Mr. Speaker, racing on our highway in this bill is clauses 12 and 16 and it poses additional penalties. In the legislation there is a section on racing. It's not new, but this is new of the penalties of what we're putting in. There's a seven-day driver's suspension for racing on a highway, and effective the second day after the notice of suspension.

I have a question for the minister when we get into Committee on that, just to get an understanding. I know during the briefing it was explained, but there are a couple of questions I have to ask about that also; also, impounding the vehicles for racing, up to three days. Hopefully, this will send a message that we need to send out there to society that we're not going to tolerate it.

Stunting is in clauses 13 and 16. The bill creates a new offence for what department officials call stunting. As the minister explained, that's someone doing wheelies or doing some kind of unforeseen driving act that you shouldn't be at on a highway, and you're putting other people in danger. Again, this is new. It will impose a seven-day driver's licence suspension; again, the fact is on the second day after the notice of suspension has been given. Added to the regulations is making authorities being able to impound vehicles for up to three days.

Again, when it comes to stunting, reading the bill, I'd like to see a little bit more. I think if we talked to our law enforcement officers or talked to the people out in the general public, there's a whole list of things that we should inform the general public that you're just not allowed to do this.

Sometimes stunts can be like – again, you'll see people sometimes on motorcycles going on their back wheel. Another stunt is you'll see them weaving into traffic and out of traffic, and going back and forth like this. It puts everybody in danger because it takes the attention away for people who are actually driving. I believe something like this should be – anything that takes my attention or driver's attention away from what another person is doing, maybe that could be some consideration of what it could be also.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke a little while ago about the Move Over one, but I'm just going to talk about the – and this is under clauses 11 and 15. The bill strengthens Move Over provisions, adding speed reduction of at least 30 kilometres per hour. That's at least a minimum speed 30 kilometres over for vehicles to pass emergency vehicles and designated vehicles.

I know sometimes on the highway we come upon very unfortunate scenes. We're so lucky to have the emergency response people that we do have, because sometimes, I don't know; I have friends who are ambulance drivers, I have family members that are firefighters and I know a lot of police officers. I tell you, I don't know how sometimes they do it when they come upon a scene as what they see every day and what they see on our roads and stuff like this.

So while they are attending people and people who really need their help, we really need to make sure we pull over or just let them do their jobs and be careful when we're going through zones. When we see an ambulance or a fire truck or a police vehicle coming towards us, I have a tendency to almost stop and pull in to make sure they have lots of adequate room.

Sometimes you'll see people, they drive on a four-lane highway and they think if they're on the inside lane that they can go on and give it to

her, you're okay, he's out in the outside lane; but listen, just take your time, slow down and make sure these people get through because you don't know what another driver could do, maybe somebody is going to come up and pass, but just get over so everybody realizes it's an emergency vehicle. It's important that somebody here may need to get to hospital really, really quick or it could be a vehicle that's going to a scene where a life can be saved.

Again, I applaud these people. It's something that I know from speaking to friends of mine who are involved in it that it takes a special person to be able to go and be able to be on these scenes, to see what they see and be able to do what they do to make sure that we're protected and our loved ones get all the due care and everything else they need because minutes save a life. Every minute that they can either get to a scene or a minute they're coming away from a scene or while they're at it, they don't need to worry about oncoming traffic or anything else so it's important that we do that.

Mr. Speaker, proof of insurance: Bill 27 modifies proof of insurance provision. What it does is it puts the onus on the driver to prove the vehicle they were driving is insured at the time, when requested. I'm not sure, the minister can probably correct me on this, before it was either the RCMP or RNC had to prove that you didn't have it. This is proof that the vehicle itself is insured. If you don't have that proof in your vehicle then it's their jurisdiction to say, okay, there are going to be fines at their request. It also places onus on persons charged with an offence to prove that insurance was on that vehicle at that time, so that's important.

These are some of the safety reasons and, like I said, proof of insurance is a safety reason because everybody should be insured and now an appeal process is also added in this. There is a huge section in the bill that just takes out the word "registrar" and that's just, as we say in the House, basically a housekeeping type thing.

The bill adds the process where there is an appeal to the registrar of 90 days for an impaired driving suspension where a blood alcohol of 0.8 or greater, refusal or failure to provide a sample. This is added as there is no appeal process in the act. The absence of an appeal process as a

mechanism could result in a challenge to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In a model in Ontario, which has had the effect for a number of years, there's no successful Charter challenge to date.

Grounds of appeal: Now, I don't know how it will be appealed, but I guess it's more or less that there is a mechanism in place so that there is an appeals process. That's why it's done. Grounds for an appeal could be: Identify the driver. Maybe there's a medical explanation for failure for proof of example or failure to refuse your blood sample. Again, Mr. Speaker, I think it's something that has to be added to the bill with the appeal process because someone can appeal under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Like I said, most of the legislation is to impose operation of the legislation and not the registrar itself. Mr. Speaker, the last part of this bill is to do a lot with timing; amendments to be clarified, as mentioned, proposed operations, legislation. Most of the registrar will come in force under Royal Assent. The appeal process will come into force 30 days after Royal Assent and the rest of the bill comes in six months after Royal Assent.

Mr. Speaker, that's just a background of everything that's in this bill. It's a pretty intense bill. I just want to go back to how I started speaking about this bill. Anything that we can do in this House so that people are not at risk when we're on the highways, to make sure that our families get home safe to us in the evenings, to make sure that we don't hear of incidents of people doing stupid things, really, that are costing people's lives.

Some of this stuff that's brought in here today, I hope that the minister and this government will do a lot more education. I think that the consensus, everybody out in the general public, really does a good job. There's a very small minority that are on our highways today that are not abiding by the rules. As we get into the winter months, sometimes you'll see incidents where black ice is a huge problem. Later in the mornings and early in the evenings when the sun goes down, that kind of happens. People have to slow down. I really believe it because we all want to get home safe and sound.

I know that a police presence is a big part of our highway safety. I know we had questions here today in Question Period and everything else, but I believe that our law enforcement and our RNC, the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, really have to be given the resources to do what's needed to be done out there to make sure that our roads are very, very safe. I do believe in police presence. I think police presence does make a difference, really makes a difference. I know this summer I travelled on the highway and I just notice it all the time – I really do. If I go and I drive to Clarenville or I drive to Gander, I always note if I met a RCMP vehicle on the road and I know there's other people out there that do that also.

So there's a lot that we can do as a society. There are a lot our law enforcements – because we really got to get the minority of people that are going too fast on our highways and not doing it with dear care and control of the vehicle.

Again, we have groups here today that are paying the price for what happens on the highways. I applaud them. I started by thanking them for all that they do. Your advocacy work is noticed and we really appreciate it, the general public, not only politicians. I appreciate it as a parent and I appreciate what you do for us. It's unfortunate that you were put in a situation that you have been put in, but I really appreciate everything you've done to bring this bill in here today.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm delighted to stand here and join my hon. colleagues on this very important topic of road safety. Thank you to the hon. colleague from across the way for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis for support of this legislation. As always, he's very well read on his bill, which is great and he's done a great job of going through it.

As the Minister of Service NL said earlier, this is our second opportunity to stand on our feet in this session of the House to speak to amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* – a topic that has great impact on all the people of our province. Service NL is committed to doing what it can to make the roads as safe as possible for the travelling public and part of that commitment is to periodically review the amendments of the *Highway Traffic Act*, as required, to ensure it keeps current with the purposes of protecting highway safety on our highways.

We are all too familiar with the devastating effects that accidents can have on our roadways, with the many individuals and families and friends who've had their lives drastically altered as a result. Over the past several months, I've had the opportunity to attend a number of events that recognized and honoured the individuals in our province that have lost loved ones or suffered great injury on our roads. This is devastating to see and I could only imagine how the families feel and how they cope with this devastating occurrence.

I've seen many tears shed. I've looked at the many photos of people whose lives have ended far too soon because of the actions of those people behind the wheel. I read the comments by one family member who talked about the crash that took the life of a loved one out of their lives instantaneously and that it was 100 per cent preventable, which is the hardest thing to take.

Since coming to Service NL, I cannot tell you the impact that these many stories of loss and injury on our roadways have had on me. I've met many individuals and families who have had their lives forever changed because of incidents on our highways.

That is why it is so very important – and it seems we have great consent in the House – that we continue to take action to promote awareness in an effort to improve safety on our highways and roadways. We know there are many unsafe driving practices on our roadways that are putting our people in danger each and every day. When you hear statistics like the minister provided which states in Canada approximately 1,800 people lose their lives each year and over

160,000 of those Canadians are injured on our roads, that's startling.

I recently read information provided by the World Health Organization that says more than 1.25 million people throughout the world die each and every year as a result of road traffic crashes. Road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death among people aged between 15 and 29. Nearly half of those dying on the world's roads are vulnerable road users, meaning pedestrians, cyclists or motorcyclists.

It also states that without sustained action, road traffic crashes are predicted to become the seventh leading cause of death by 2030. Mr. Speaker, that is unacceptable. That is why our government will continue to make public safety a priority.

Mr. Speaker, we made a commitment to continue to identify opportunities to improve highway safety with input from community stakeholders and law enforcement at every step of the way. We have developed strong working relationships with the STAND for Hannah campaign, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services and many, many others who have offered different views on what amendments were needed.

We're happy to take their opinions and suggestions into account when making legislation because it can only make our legislation stronger. This is exactly what we're doing here today. When you look at the areas that are covered with these latest amendments – I'm not going to go through all of them, but I will go through some – you realize how necessary these changes are to help improve road safety.

Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at racing on highways as an example. This is completely avoidable action and needs to start educating people as soon as they get their licences about the impacts this can have on people's lives. This action is one that disregards – total disregard for the safety of our residents. The new penalties will hopefully deter such behaviours, but it's our hope not only that – I hope nobody receives any fine for this because I hope it never happens

again, but that's pie in the sky, I guess dreaming, but we will make a difference by bringing forward legislation like this.

With these changes, a driver that is charged with an offence will receive a seven-day driver's licence suspension and their vehicle will be impounded for three days. This is meant to discourage people who street race and keep new drivers from ever thinking about trying it.

Another action that disregards safety on our roadways is stunting. Everyone remembers the individual in the corvette on Kenmount Road. I think it was in the District of Mount Scio, in May of 2015, doing donuts in the middle of Kenmount Road. It's unacceptable and this cannot happen. I know the individuals that are in a corvette club spoke out heavily against that at the time. We need more people to make sure that this is unacceptable behaviour.

Before these amendments, there was nothing in legislation to deal with this action on our roadways. Bill 27 creates a new offence for stunting on our highways, and I'm very happy to applaud this addition.

As with street racing, drivers who are charged with stunting will also have their vehicles impounded for three days and face a seven-day suspension of their licence, a significant addition to the legislation in this new offence for driving without due care and attention or without reasonable consideration for other persons causing bodily harm or death. Undoubtedly, every Member in this hon. House will agree to the necessity of such a change in our legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this fine carries a minimum of \$2,000 and a maximum fine of \$20,000, or up to two years imprisonment or both; licence suspension for not more than five years and six demerit points. I hope we never again see anything like this happen in our province, but this sends a clear message.

I'm also pleased with the changes for the Move Over provisions. Unlike previous amendments, which did not specify how much someone should reduce their speed by, now they have to reduce their speed by 30 kilometres per hour to a minimum speed of 30 kilometres per hour. The Move Over legislation, officers are now able to

charge the registered owner of the car with failure to move over. This means there's no chase or distraction from the initial move over. They are able to send out a ticket when they return to their office.

We all know the great risk that first responders face each and every day when they're called into action. It is incumbent upon us to do our part to ensure they're not put in any further risk while carrying out their duties.

Mr. Speaker, one of the discussions we talked about earlier was excessive speeding on the highways in our province. I would tend to agree with both the minister and the Member for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis. Many times you're on the highways or on roadways in our province and you're passed like you're standing still. That's unacceptable. We've tried to address some of those concerns within this legislation. Especially on the Outer Ring Road, people can be careless. I want the public to know the consequences of their actions.

The updated *Highway Traffic Act* increased the fines for excessive speeding and introduces a three-day impoundment for cars caught doing over 50 kilometres an hour, which is new. The current fine for excessive speeding ranges between \$300 and \$750, but the change has been made to raise that to \$400 to \$850 and having them up to \$1,800 in school zones and construction zones. We all know that's very important to focus on those two areas in particular. These are only a couple of the highlights of the amendments that were put forward today, but there are many others that will have great impact on the travelling public and in our province.

As with the changes to drinking and driving regulations, we are trying to make generational changes. Safe driving should not be limited to when you have company in the car; it is our goal to live in a province of safe and defensive drivers.

As I've said, Mr. Speaker, these amendments are another important part of the evolution of the *Highway Traffic Act* to ensure it provides the protection needed for the people of the province who use our roads each and every day. Driving is a responsibility and we need to be cautious of

what can happen when we're not abiding by the law.

I heard the Minister of Service NL state over and over again how important it is to keep the conversation of road safety going, and continually look to ways to improve safety in our towns and communities right across our province.

Within a few short days the Christmas season will be upon us, and the number of individuals and families travelling on our highways will increase dramatically. It is crucial that every one of us helps reinforce the need for safety on our roads and the need to make responsible decisions each and every time you sit behind the wheel.

I am very pleased to have been part of the discussion here today with the amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act*, and I pass on my deepest condolences to all those families that have experienced these great losses. There's nothing we can do here in this House that can fix that, but we're hoping today we'll have the ability to at least hope it doesn't happen in the future.

I encourage all Members in this hon. House to support this legislation today.

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 pleased to have the opportunity to stand today and speak to Bill 27, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act No. 2. I join with my colleagues in offering condolences to people who are present in our galleries today and to others out in the general public who have suffered the loss of family because of reckless and careless driving on our highways. We can never say enough to them in saying how we feel for them.

It's interesting how something from the past can come back, but I haven't thought about one of my uncles – I think about him, I guess, but not in this way – in a long time. But I had an uncle, my mother's brother, who when he was around 40 was knocked down at the top of Casey Street crossing over Lemarchant Road because somebody raced up Casey Street to get through a red light, and his life was changed for the rest of his life. He was physically incapable of working again for the rest of his life. So he became our Uncle Charlie, very close to us, because he was walking home on a Friday night – he would spend Friday night with us. He loved watching wrestling; he didn't have a television himself. He'd watch wrestling with us and then walk across Lemarchant Road to go back to where he lived on Springdale Street.

I think about Uncle Charlie now – he became a very special part of our family. He was always there. He babysat us. He babysat nieces and nephews, but he could never physically work again. I remember my Uncle Charlie today. I never thought I was going to stand and say this, but he's sort of present to me, and I guess as a young adolescent, I never really thought about the impact on his life of that crazy driver who wanted to race through the red light 10:30 at night. Why, who knows? But that's what we deal with and that's what this piece of legislation is dealing with, the craziness of people not thinking, people not caring.

I'm not going to go through all of the bill. The minister did that and my colleagues have done it as well. I'm not going to use my time to do that. It's quite clear that we have a piece of legislation whose goal is to try to cut down on the craziness that's going on, on our highways, in the streets and our cities and strengthening the existing provisions with regard to fines and with regard to additional penalties by suspending licences and for impoundment of cars, et cetera – all of that is extremely important.

Of course, what's even more important is that there be public education like groups like STAND for Hannah are doing, but like government has to do as well in getting people to understand why they have to stop speeding, why they have to stop doing crazy things like stunts on the highways or on our busy city streets, why this has to stop.

Unfortunately, I think we all know that the provisions we have now, I don't think they're not working because they're not strong enough – I'm hoping that strengthening is going to help – but I think one of the reasons they're not working is because we're not putting enough resources out there to help out with prevention and with enforcement. And I think education is a prevention piece. We have to hope that if we have more education going on that it's going to help. We have to hope that as we educate younger drivers who are coming into the culture of driving, that we're helping them to become better drivers than those who are ahead of them. We have to hope that education is going to help cut down on the speeding – period – so that the provisions that are put in place won't even be needed.

But even with the education that we'll do, even with the work that will be done to inform people, the person who was driving crazily yesterday on our highway is probably not even going to be aware tomorrow of the changes in the provisions that this act is bringing or this bill is bringing in because they don't care. They're out there not caring anyway. They're not going to pay any attention, so how do we get through to them?

I think one of the ways we have to get through to them – one is through the education and that has to go on. I'm not saying it doesn't have to go on, it does have to go on, but it's also through enforcement. We have to have enough resources out there to get people to understand they're going to get caught. If education doesn't mean anything to them and they don't care, they're going to get caught and they're going to suffer. They have to know they're going to get caught because they won't suffer until they get caught. That's the thing we have to be looking at. Enforcement is really, really important. Enforcement requires resources.

I've had a couple of incidents recently. I've had friends from – actually, in both cases – Ontario visiting. Two were a couple and I was so happy to see them. One of the things they commented on – they were so happy to be back in Newfoundland and Labrador. They hadn't been here in about 20 years and they were loving every minute. They were loving being in the city.

One of their comments to me when we went out to dinner was: Lorraine, we've hardly seen a police car on the streets. We're walking all over the place and we haven't seen – and at that point in time they'd been here in the city for a number of days. They're walking all over and they said we haven't seen one police car. They really questioned it.

Then the other day I had a friend visiting. We were just driving along Prince Philip Parkway. That friend said: Lorraine, I can't get over how fast the drivers in St. John's drive. These were observations; uncalled for, just coming from friends who were visiting from Toronto, mind you. That was the interesting thing – from Toronto. Not like from a small place where they weren't used to fast drivers, but they were noticing things like, one, no police around. How do you enforce traffic laws? That was the question that was put to me, and then secondly, how fast drivers drive.

What my colleagues are saying is true, not just on the major highways, but in the cities as well, here in St. John's in particular. The other day on the Parkway I was being driven by a shuttle from the garage back here to the Confederation Building. We were at the red light by the Arts and Culture and we were turning left onto Allandale Road to go to the building, and we were stopped in the left turn lane. The red light was already there, and this car passed us. It had to be doing at least 100 or more as it passed us and went through the red light. Now, not everybody is always going to have a police car sitting around seeing all of that. I realize that, but the incidents I believe in the city are getting worse, and they're getting worse on the highway as well.

We can have all of the penalties we want – we already have penalties. These are going to strengthen it, and they're important ones. We can have all of those, but unless we catch people who are driving this way, then the penalties aren't going to mean a thing. We have to have the two pieces in place and government is going to have to take seriously the thing around the resources with regard to the traffic control. The resources that are needed by the RNC in particular and the RCMP as well, these resources are needed in order to enforce

because, without enforcement, people will not get caught.

I think we all know that the mentality of people who do this kind of thing is: I'm going to do it. I'm going to try not to get caught. I'm not going to get caught. I'm going to do what I want to do. I'm going to drive the way I want to drive and I'm not going to get caught. Because they don't see enough people getting caught, and that's something we have to deal with. I'm really pleased with the changes that are being made, but as I'm saying, it's not enough.

I'm pleased, for example, in particular with the change that's happening in the Move Over legislation. Back in 2013-2014, we were dealing with the amendments to the act and we were dealing with the Move Over legislation. I think that Move Over legislation was in 2014. I raised in the House at that time, I asked how come there was no speed limit attached to the legislation. It was explained to me that really couldn't happen and you really didn't need it. Just telling drivers to slow down was going to be sufficient.

Well, I'm glad I was right in 2014 and I'm glad we're finally doing what should have happened then. I'm happy with the changes that are here, but I can't impress enough on all of us the need for resources to enforce, to make sure that people who are out there who will continue doing the stunting, people who will continue driving at 150 and 160, that these people know they are going to get caught. I mean, thank goodness the person who last week – I heard this on the news – was driving 120 in a school zone got caught. Can you imagine that even thinking – not even thinking – they can just speed that way in the city, outside of the city? It doesn't matter where.

Obviously, I support the legislation. The issue of enforcement is not something that goes into this legislation, but the issue of enough resources to those who control our traffic, enough resources so they can really make sure that they can enforce the rules and regulations with regard to driving, that those resources are in place; and, secondly, that resources are in place from government, both from the government's own systems to do education, to inform people and also resources for groups like STAND for

Hannah, that the resources are there to do the education that's needed because the two things are needed.

I think I've made the points, Mr. Speaker, that I wanted to make. As I said, I will obviously be supporting the legislation, but I do urge government to realize that we have to do something about making sure that not only do we have the rules and regulations on paper, not only do we have the penalties on paper, not only do we have things like suspension of licences and impoundment of cars on paper, but that we have enough resources out there to catch those who are still going to be breaking the law so that they feel the brunt of the new regulations and that will stop them.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I haven't heard Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair for a little while. That sounded nice in the House, actually.

I'm only going to speak for five minutes, Mr. Speaker, to Bill 27. I didn't plan on it when I came in the House, the bill that would amend the *Highway Traffic Act* to strengthen road safety in the province.

I guess listening to the minister – and I want to throw a bouquet to my colleague, the Minister of Service NL, who's done a really great job bringing this to the Social Policy Committee, discussing the details, trying to determine what direction we needed it to go, bringing it to Cabinet and getting support there. She's done a great job. Sometimes these things don't move through the process as fast as we would even like as ministers, and then it goes to the Legislative Counsel to be drafted and things like that. There's been a lot of work put in to get this bill in. We know how important it is.

When the hon. Member was speaking about her uncle – I guess we all have many, many stories we could talk about – you reminded me. I'm an only child, as most of my colleagues would know, and my mother lives on the other end of

the country. In 2008, she was coming from an eye appointment, swinging her glasses, just before Christmas, around this time of year – next week is the anniversary – thinking about: I have to get a turkey, I have company coming, and all of a sudden my mother, who's only 100 pounds, went into the air because somebody went speeding down, struck her on a crosswalk. She came down shoulder first – I guess is what saved her life – in through the windshield of that vehicle.

It has been a long road to recovery, Mr. Speaker. They told her she'd never walk again, but my mother doesn't take those things. She's pretty feisty and determined. She had a major brain surgery in 2008 and it's been a long road back. That's because somebody was in a hurry, I guess, to get somewhere, on a crosswalk, not paying attention and there have been permanent changes in her life because of that, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not going to talk about the things other people have mentioned, but when we talk about increased fines, licence suspension, vehicle impoundment, it's all heightened things – heightened things to hopefully prevent, as my colleague said, five people a day losing their lives.

Mr. Speaker, if someone loses their life, that's a minute on the evening news clip – a minute. As an individual, I know from my husband's hometown on the Northern Peninsula, a man who had twin daughters lost them both in a highway accident. He said until that comes into your home and until the furniture is moved around in your home, you really don't realize the impact of that.

There will always be people who – there are a lot of grieving people out there and people will wish we had gone further and we'd done more. I can't say I'm pleased to see this. It's a difficult bill to speak to, but I am happy to be a part of a government that saw a need to do more than we were doing.

The current Speaker right now, when he was the Minister of Service NL, made some positive changes around impaired driving. That's another big issue, Mr. Speaker.

I represent a district where we are just getting new pavement. We had gravel road for a long time in half of the district and it got finished maybe last month. The speeding tickets that have been passed out there in the last few weeks have gone up, I don't know, maybe 500 or 600 per cent. People driving 165 and children in the vehicle, was one story that just came out. It's not a runway, it's a roadway.

Like many here, I have a daughter 21 years old. I worry about her when she's on the road, leaving university and she's driving home to Labrador, because as one of my pilot uncles used to say – and the Minister of Health would appreciate this – in the sky you've got the whole sky, but on the road you've just got that one line for someone to come across.

As the bill is being debated, I'm thinking about good friends of mine on the West Coast. Their daughter Karen was a teacher out in Burgeo – La Poile area driving in, alone in the vehicle, went across the road into a tractor trailer, lost her life. I have another very good friend, beautiful daughter Stacey who worked with me as a summer student. Stacey was driving to Corner Brook two, three years ago to surprise her mother on her birthday. It was near Springdale and she lost her life, Mr. Speaker. Alone in the car, we won't really know what happened, but we've been hearing about education today and that's where it all starts.

I remember going back about 10 years ago, we went to visit some friends in a cabin in Howley and I was relaying to them about a young guy in my community that had been impaired, took his father's truck, went up in the gravel pit, went off the road, which was probably the best thing that could have ever happened, and my daughter only in grade six at the time, that I didn't even think was paying attention to the conversation, she said, and it's not like we don't know any better now because we get presentations on those things in school.

I never forgot that, Mr. Speaker, because sometimes when you get older, you get set in your ways and you develop bad habits, but it goes back to the younger that we can do this, if we can reach out so that then we're going up through as a preventative thing – and I do know now as a mother of a 21-year-old, there are lots

of times I'm surrounded by people in the later adult and early teens, they've taken things like impaired driving really seriously because they know because they were educated and they always call for that designated driver and things like that.

I just want to lend my support, Mr. Speaker, to this bill. I was thinking about the timing of the bill. When you lose a significant person in your life, a birthday, an anniversary is a day to get through. Christmas is a very, very difficult time for grieving families to get through because it's like it goes on forever.

I'm speaking tomorrow night at Eastern Health under coping with loss through the holidays, an annual event. This will be my third or fourth time speaking there. Not that I'm pleased to, but when I get asked, maybe a number of my tragic life experiences, if you can help someone else a little bit on that journey, it adds a little bit of meaning back or makes some sense of the loss that you've had yourself.

The point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, every year in that auditorium at Eastern Health it's full of people with fresh grief, full of people trying to get through that first Christmas, that first birthday, trying to make these big adjustments. Mr. Speaker, my parliamentary secretary, they're going through a very difficult time now, best friends of his, lifelong best friends, their daughter on her way out to a christening on the highway and I believe it was another vehicle that swerved across the road, and that young lady, life cut short, just like that. A moment, again, on the news, but a lifetime of change for the family that's impacted as they try and adjust to a new normal. So anything that we can do.

I was thinking, too, Mr. Speaker, about there are politics always at play and spirited lively debate in this Legislature, and that's important and that's necessary, but there are some things that come to the House that you take the politics out. We all want to make our little corners of the world better, we want infrastructure, we want capital works, but if our people aren't well, if our families aren't safe, the rest of it doesn't matter. Bills like this today are the things of value that we can play a little role in.

So I'm very humbled to have the opportunity to speak to the bill, to support Bill 27, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act and, hopefully, lives will be saved because of the extra measures taken here. I think the onus is on all of us as we move about our lives to say did you know if you do that, you can have your vehicle impounded, suspended and all of these different things. Hopefully the message will come and will continue that these violations will be less and less and less.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

I appreciate the opportunity to speak this afternoon to Bill 27. I've been listening and paying attention to some of the comments by Members of the House on what, no doubt, is an important bill to many people in our province. My colleague for Cape St. Francis spoke earlier. He commented on some of the people who make an effort on a daily basis to continue to create the discussion about highway safety. People who either experienced loss themselves, or in some cases – we know he had representation from the provincial fire service here today. The fire service in our province experience serious incidents, destruction and sometimes death on a daily basis, Mr. Speaker. Not death on a daily basis, thank goodness. We know that this happens far too often – once is too many, but they do deal with difficult circumstances on a daily basis throughout our province, and I know that they're here today and have an interest in this bill and these changes.

Just a short comment on the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development who just commented a minute ago. There is great value in what she said, and listening to her, and I know she was talking about her own experiences, she was talking about she's going to talk to a group on coping with loss herself. There's nobody in a better position to speak to these matters than someone who has experienced it themselves. The same would hold true to someone who has experienced a serious

illness, a serious medical issue and quite often that's the best people to be able to speak about those particular matters, offer support and lend support.

And for the people who are watching this here today either at home or in the gallery, have that vested interest in it, they have, in many cases, earned the right to be considered to be experts on the impacts of these types of circumstances.

What we saw in Bill 13 a few weeks ago were increases in some fines. While we saw some changes in speeding fines and so on at that point in time, there are further changes today, but I was trying to determine why some of these changes in the *Highway Traffic Act* are coming at this point in time and why some of them came just a couple of weeks ago under a different bill. Maybe the minister can provide more information on that when we get to Committee, but the ones we changed earlier on some of those *Highway Traffic Act* offences such as speeding, construction, in school zones and so on, when I think about those, my experience, it was 25 years that I wore a uniform, most of those years as a uniformed officer in the province, everybody knows it and is quite aware of that.

Some people think I spent my entire career as a media relations officer, but I didn't. It was only the last four years of my career. But I spent most, by far, almost all of my career or the vast majority of my career as an operational officer on the street either in uniform or in plain clothes. When you hear about vehicles passing a school bus and driving too fast through construction zones and so on, in some way that's neglect and that's becoming somewhat complacent in not driving with the care to say I'm paying attention to what I'm doing; I'm going to slow down and drive safely and so on. Sometimes they're complacent and it's wrong for that to happen. It's wrong for someone to do that.

Some of these changes we see today such as adding a section regarding stunting, as it's referred to, which the act uses the phrase: "performing or engaging in a stunt or activity that is likely to distract, startle or interfere with users of the highway." That's not that. That's not complacency. That's not just someone saying, well, I'm going to drive 10 or 15 or 20

kilometres over the speed limit because everyone else is doing it, or I'm a couple of minutes late, I'm going to try and make up that time and I speed through a construction zone, or I've got my phone out and I'm typing, well, I've just got to check that text while I'm going through a school zone.

That's not acceptable, but stunting is so much more than that. I've seen it over the years with motorcycles who like to do stunting. We saw one very visible public circumstance in the last couple of years on Kenmount Road outside a take-out where a person in a sports car pulls out on Kenmount Road where there are five lanes of traffic, one of the busiest roads in our province, early in the evening and does a bunch of donuts on the street with lots of people around, because that's the night for people with cars and so on, and I respect that.

I've been out there myself looking at cars and seeing who's out there with motorcycles and so on. I know a lot of them myself, but to get out when there's so much traffic on the roadway and do that. It was not an accident; it wasn't complacency. It was a direct act that could potentially have caused significant damage or injury or harm to others; fortunately, it didn't.

Mr. Speaker, over the years, and Members talked about some of their own experiences. I remember as a teenager, which it was my first recollection of seeing or being at a collision that involved a fatality. I remember it very clearly. I know it was a long time ago since I was a teenager, but I remember it very, very clearly. When I think about what I remembered most, Mr. Speaker, I remember the emotion. I remember the upset. I remember the impact that had on the people who were around there to experience it.

Later in life when I became a police officer and over the years, I wouldn't be able to begin to think how many times I've experienced in different forms, but experienced loss of life and devastation and so on. In the times that first come to my mind, I remember the emotion. I remember the upset. I remember the impact on families. I remember as I'm standing here now, I remember sitting in a living room talking to a family member. We do that. Police officers do

that and do the work they have to do, notifications and dealing with family.

It's not unusual, there are many people in a vehicle and one person has significant critical injury or loss of life. The rest of the family quite often, or some other family members that they are dealing with and have to deal with the aftermath, not only that, but they deal with it for the rest of their lives.

It is one thing for a police officer to have to do a notification or to attend a scene. It can be harmful on anybody who's impacted or experiences that, but families have to live with that the rest of their lives. I don't know what that's like. I don't know what that's like for a family member.

We do have a responsibility as a society, and government has a responsibility and we as legislators have a responsibility to look at ways to improve safety. We know there's always a balance between improving safety, making our highways safer for everybody and balancing that with what's acceptable, what's reasonable, what people abide by, what people will not abide by.

It's no good for the government to bring in a law and people just say, well, we're not doing that. If government decided today there's going to be a prohibition starting today on alcohol, it's not going to happen. There still will be alcohol use and people will find ways to fill it because it's just not going to happen. So government has to slowly move the bar on safety and what people are expected to do, and slowly continue to move that bar.

I remember as a child not wearing a seat belt because they were tucked down in the seat or they were strapped up above the door in the driver's door because they were clipped up there, and you were never allowed to take them down because it was too much work to put them back. You were never allowed to take them down because if you pulled them down and put them on, it took my father half hour to figure out how to pack them all up there nice and neat and out of the way again. So you'd never take them down. You would never think about it.

Then the laws changed to say cars have to have seat belts. They have to be a different design

where they could be easily put on and easily taken off, and they're on safely. They won't let go, break in a crash and so on. Then the laws slowly changed to say, well, not only do vehicle manufacturers have to put in seat belts, but slowly over the years now you have to wear them.

The children have to be in car seats – not only in car seats, they have to be in car seats that are acceptable to federal regulation. Federal regulation makes those more stringent as time goes on. The car seat you bought 10 years ago may not be acceptable today because rules and laws change and so on.

That's the movement of what legislators and governments do when they enforce laws on people. You can't go from here to here overnight quite often. You have to go through step by step by step.

I've said here in the House before, Mr. Speaker, that if everything was solved and the legislation was finalized and that was it, it was done, well, we wouldn't need a House of Assembly. We wouldn't need a Parliament in Canada to change the laws and progress as times change. Technology changes, and people's expectations change and government's responsibility changes and continue to evolve. That's why we're here, because things continue to evolve.

What the government has done on this bill is taken a number of aspects that we've seen recently in our society. We've seen over the years, but recently we've seen a bit of this in our society, too much of it in our society, whereby there's been loss of life and there are things that can be done to change some of those rules and also what the impacts would be. There's no greater impact than having to live with loss of life, no matter if you're a family member or a person that is involved in another manner.

The laws at least can change to try and encourage safer operation of motor vehicles. We now have a law that says you can't use your cellphone. I've got on my cellphone, my most recent update on my iPhone, there's an option whereby now I can activate it so that when I'm driving, if someone sends me a text message, I don't get notification that someone sent me a text message. It doesn't come on my phone, but

the person who sent me the message gets an automatic reply that says: Hey, I'm driving, and when I'm no longer driving I'll have a look at your text message – or words to that effect. So you're not tempted anymore to be: Where's that phone, I just heard it beep or buzz or ring or whatever.

I have that activated on my phone, and people can activate that. That's the kind of transitions that continue to happen so people aren't tempted, because quite often it's the tempting: oh, that's a message. I was waiting for a response from so and so. I never got it before I left my office or home or whatever. I'll have a quick look to see. Sometimes it's a quick look and a momentary look that will cause a collision and potentially devastating impacts to people.

Mr. Speaker, listening to debate today, when we get to Committee I may have some questions to ask the minister just on clarification on a couple of matters. Some of it has been cleared up in debate, and as I'm doing further research and reading through the bill, it's clarifying some of that for me, but there may be a couple questions I have for her in Committee.

This is the second *Highway Traffic Act* amendment this fall. I would say if government was to check – or maybe I should get officials in the House to check, but really I suppose it's academic at this point in time – would probably find the *Highway Traffic Act* is probably one of the most modified pieces of legislation in our province. It's not unusual during a session of the House to have more than one amendment to the *Highway Traffic Act*. There may have been times when we had three or four. We make an amendment to insurance regulations or another one changed to speeding or so on – maybe there's a change in technology that allows for a change.

I remember when we introduced and brought in the change to the *Highway Traffic Act* in this province that allowed for a police officer to stop a vehicle to ensure the driver and vehicle are in compliance with the law. There was a big discussion and debate about it. I remember a big discussion about it. Are you violating people's rights by just arbitrarily stopping them and so on?

We know places in the world, in North America, in Canada and the United States, we hear sometimes allegations of police doing inappropriate targeting of individuals and there was concern that was going to happen. I haven't heard any of that concern, but the police in Newfoundland and Labrador now can stop a vehicle to make sure the driver has a driver's licence. To make sure they have a proper insurance policy in place that's required and, very importantly, to make sure they're driving a vehicle while not under the influence of alcohol or a drug, which can be one of the most devastating factors involved with serious crashes in our province and beyond as well. Police officers can do that today. Some of the changes that are here will impact and improve what officers can do and give them more options. But what's really important to this, as well, is to make sure the public is aware of it.

I believe there was a press release issued by the government this afternoon saying that this bill was now before the House. When it's completed, they'll probably do the same thing. Sometimes your local news agencies will say, hey, there are some new laws around the *Highway Traffic Act* now regarding stunting and racing on the highway, which is not new. For speeding over 50 kilometres an hour above the speed limit, there's going to be a higher fine for those types of cases. There's a change in driving without due care and attention, without reasonable consideration for others. It's a good thing to let people know that. Not only should it happen in the introduction of the bill and when it passes, but the government has to find a way to continue to tell people.

We hear comments and discussions fairly regularly in public: Don't use your cellphone when you drive. Sometimes those discussions are raised. Don't drink and drive is another example and they're raised by stakeholder groups. MADD, as an example, has done a really good job of continuing to raise the discussion about not drinking and driving, not driving while impaired. They've done a really good job of that.

There are other groups, and not only groups, but individuals, who continue to spread the word on those. I hope that happens with some of these changes as well, that we remind people that the

police are going to check you. If they do check you or find you've been acting in a way that's inappropriate – a lot of these are moving violations. The last act was mostly non-hazardous; some of them were hazardous moving, but some of them were not. Hopefully in this one, when you have people operating stunting, driving without due consideration for reasonable consideration for others and so on, that people will be aware that – you know what – there are big fines for that today – big, big fines.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague for Cape St. Francis talked about the importance of having police officers on the highway. Yes, we had a discussion about that here today. It's not the first day we had a discussion about police officers on the highway in the House and in Question Period about having adequate resources.

In no way, shape or form – just to reiterate, in no way, shape or form – am I trying to assert or say that a lack of resources, because of the deployment in Labrador of police earlier this year in the summer, were directly related to loss of life on our highways. But I used an example the other day when the media contacted me and asked to speak to me. I used this example the other day: If a person travels, say, from Conception Bay North, from Carbonear or Victoria or the Bay Roberts-Harbour Grace area to metropolitan St. John's or greater St. John's area for work every day – and, Mr. Speaker, thousands do that every day. There are thousands of people coming in over the Trans-Canada Highway, over Veterans Memorial Highway every day to come to the greater St. John's area and Mount Pearl for work and they go home every evening. They come in to go shopping and they go back in the evening.

If they're coming in the highway and they're coming across the Veterans Memorial Highway and they see the police car on the side of the road and they get down and they're on the Trans-Canada and they're coming in through the Trans-Canada and they see a second police car on the highway or driving on the highway – going east or west – or see a police car and they see a third police car and they get in, they are going to say: Well, I just saw three police cars today. It's going to be on their mind; they're

going to see it, just as my colleague for Cape St. Francis said.

Mr. Speaker, if tomorrow or on the way home, they see one or two or three police cars and tomorrow on their way to work they see one or two or three police cars and on the way home tomorrow night they see one or two or three police cars, the person very quickly is going to say: Do you know what? I should slow down. Not because it's safer to slow down. They think I'm going to slow down because I don't want to get a ticket; I don't want to be charged for speeding. That's why they slow down.

So there is a significant impact on drivers when the police are visible on our roads. There's a significant impact. The RNC this year had a 10 per cent reduction – I believe the number I saw was 10 per cent reduction in accidents so far in 2017. But I also know they're doing targeted enforcement on the highways. You see them now with the new radars, it's like looking through a scope, and they can target their lasers and they can target the vehicle in a group of cars, group of traffic. If one's going faster than the others, you can actually pick it out with this new technology. And they've been targeting that and stopping people and so on. Now, is that an impact? Well, it may be. All that they do is an impact.

To go back to my Conception Bay North scenario for a moment, if every day a driver comes in and you don't see a police car, you go home you don't see a police car, you come in in the morning and you don't see a police car and you go home the next day you don't see a police car, then you're going to say: Well, I can speed up a little bit today because I am late. I can drive a little bit faster today because I am late, and I don't see a police car and there's a good chance I'm not going to see one because I've been doing this every day for 10 years and for the last six months I've seen one police car. Good chance I'm not going to see one at the very time that I'm speeding going in here today, as an example.

That's an important part of this as well. I have full respect for women and men who provide policing services in our province. I am concerned about the level of resources, especially on our highways and people off and

vacant positions and so on. We are concerned about that. This can't happen in isolation by itself and there's a combination of things that has to happen. I know the government are doing other things as well. But you have to have the resources in order to enforce the laws. People have to be out there and seen. Police officers have to be out there and seen in fully marked patrol cars. There's a reason why they're fully marked so you can police all over them. One of the reasons is to deter people from driving inappropriately. One of the reasons why they are there is to deter people from driving inappropriately and causes them to drive in a safe manner.

Mr. Speaker, I leave on that comment. I thank the people who have worked with the minister and provided input on these changes. Like I said, I might have a question or two for the minister, but I expect as well that as time passes, there'll be further changes and further improvements. I fully would invite any person in the province who may be watching this or listening to this, or looking at the bill or looking at legislation and has any suggestions for the minister, I'm sure if you send it to the minister that she'd be more than happy to have a look at them and include them at some point in time, if appropriate and beneficial to do so.

I thank the people in the gallery who are watching, people at home who have an interest as well. I thank the minister for bringing it forward. I thank you, Sir, for the time to speak to it this afternoon.

Thank you.

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

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

I, too, want to stand today and represent the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave on speaking to this bill. I believe it is certainly an important bill. As my colleagues have said, amendments to our *Highway Traffic Act* are something that will be ongoing forevermore, for as long as we utilize roadways.

We can all attest to how it would change someone's life, to lose a loved one. If not

directly, indirectly, I would say that every Member in this House of Assembly has been affected by a fatal collision at some point in time. I'll reflect on a time when my life was changed. It was one of my best friends who was actually killed tragically on the Veterans Memorial Highway and it was just following our first year of high school. It was just gearing up for Christmastime. There were two vehicles involved in that. Weather conditions certainly were a contributing factor, but it was indeed a fatal collision.

I'll never forget that day. It was a Sunday, I remember. My friend, his name was Lloyd Morgan; I've talked about him here. He is from Port de Grave. He and another friend were driving on their way to do some Christmas shopping in St. John's at the Avalon Mall. They were travelling on the Veterans Memorial and it was just before reaching the Makinsons bridge in that roadway where they had a head-on collision. My friend died instantly, and I'll just never forget that.

His family, to this very day, they carry on, they do what they can to continue with life for their children and for now their grandchildren and the other family members, but their lives have been changed forevermore. It's something, of course, that we'll never forget.

Unfortunately, there have been a lot of fatal collisions in the region where I come from, where I represent. Also, family friends Adam Rose and Wade Hawe of Clarke's Beach and Port de Grave were also fatally killed in Makinsons one night, and it was a single-vehicle collision. They happened to hit a pole, a single pole that happened to be in a field. We're uncertain as to what caused the accident, whether something had come out in the roadway. We also have to contend with moose here, our wildlife.

Myself, I came pretty close to hitting a moose on the Veteran's Memorial just a couple of weeks ago, Mr. Speaker. It was at nighttime; I happened to be driving slower than the posted speed limit at this time, given to the road conditions. We always have to be focused. This day and age there are many distractions such as our cellphones, such as the texting. You also have to be mindful of the drivers around you.

When I stopped abruptly to avoid hitting this large moose, a driver behind me pulled out and passed and swerved to the other side of the road to avoid hitting the animal. So common sense, when someone stops abruptly on a highway, whether it be nighttime, whether in the daytime, chances are it's for a reason. This time it certainly was for a reason.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to commend the minister for bringing this bill forward to making the amendments to again Bill 27, for our viewers at home, amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act*. I can speak from experience with my colleague, when she gets a bee in her bonnet or when she has, of course, when there's a good cause, she certainly puts her heart and soul into this. I can remember a time when she told me how in her former profession as a nurse and had come upon a fatal accident. Again, even just coming upon those accidents and seeing them, it has an impact that never leaves you.

In my former career as a journalist – and I've also worked with my hon. colleague across the way, the Leader of the Opposition, who was then the media relations officer for the RNC at the time. Of course, I was a journalist and we'd often work together, and I've had to interview him on some fatal collisions as well. One that comes to mind, it happened on Kenmount Road. It was in the late hours in the evening. I do know speeding was involved, but this vehicle veered off the road and hit a tree, and two people's lives were lost. Again, it's the family members who are left to cope with that every day, to get up and to face the day. So again, I won't take too much time. I certainly call upon on all Members in this hon. House, on all sides of the House, because it is certainly our obligation to work together. And we're here for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I know the minister was inspired by a family impacted in her district to bring this forward. Again, it's great to see good things happening. There are lots of things happening that, unfortunately – every wish can't be granted, but when we can do something like this and make some amendments where need be, where it would improve safety for all people, everyone across Newfoundland and Labrador, certainly it's to be commended. It's great to see people working together all times of the year, but

especially, of course, coming upon the Christmas season.

I do look forward to all colleagues voting in favour of this amendment. Again, thank you to the minister for bringing this forward. I certainly will be supporting this. I look forward to the support of all Members.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not going to take too long, but I will just take a few minutes to speak to Bill 27. Mr. Speaker, I think that as everybody has said – I'm not going to repeat everything that's in here. It's been said now over and over again, but I just want to add my voice to the conversation that, obviously, like all of my colleagues on both sides of the House of Assembly, I support this 100 per cent.

I think this is one of these pieces of legislation – and we've seen others this government has brought in that have been very positive pieces of legislation. Whether it be the *Highway Traffic Act* or other things they've done. I've said many times that when good legislation comes forward, I'll definitely stand up and support it. I think this is a good move.

I do want to comment, though. The Leader of the Official Opposition did make a good point in comparing these amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* to the previous ones that we supported unanimously a couple of weeks ago, whatever it was. The fact that many of the amendments that were made in the previous bill, to the *Highway Traffic Act*, there's no doubt it was about safety, most of it was.

Certainly, some of the things, like speeding and some of the other things that were there in the previous bill, were things that it was important to recognize them, it was important to put stricter enforcement in place because they still centred around unsafe acts. But, I guess, the big difference is that some of the things that were dealt with in the previous amendments were things, as the Leader of the Official Opposition

said, mistakes that anybody could make. They weren't deliberate acts per se.

I don't think there's anybody in the House of Assembly, or anyone out there, for the most part, that can say there wasn't a time that perhaps they went a little bit faster than they should have. There wasn't a time where they may not have been as diligent behind the wheel driving a vehicle as they should have. We're all humans and humans make mistakes. Sometimes whether it be for the fact that we're distracted, we have other things on our mind, we're trying to get somewhere in a hurry, things like that, everybody from time to time make errors in judgment.

There's no doubt that a lot of the changes made in the last bill on the *Highway Traffic Act* dealt with those things, things that anyone could make those mistakes, it still has to be recognized, still has to be dealt with, still has to be appropriate measures in place to deter that activity. But a number of things that we have here in this one, whether it be the new provision there for somebody who is stunting, whether it be dangerous driving, dangerous driving causing bodily harm, causing death, things of that matter, drag racing, some of these things, this is not something that the average, law-abiding citizen here in Newfoundland and Labrador is going to do.

When the House of Assembly closes today, I doubt very much that any of my colleagues are going to leave here, go out on the Parkway and get into a drag race. I doubt very much that they're going to go down the Parkway and one of my colleagues are going to decide we're just going to spin around and do some donuts in the middle of the Parkway. I just don't see that happening. I don't see that happening with the average, law-abiding citizen either.

The activities that we're talking about there are deliberate acts by individuals who have absolutely no regard whatsoever for the law and they have absolutely no regard whatsoever for their safety or for the safety of other people. Those acts should stand out in a category onto their own and the penalties for those acts should be extremely strict.

I'm very pleased to see that a number of those things are being addressed in this bill, as they should be. I certainly commend the minister and the government for recognizing those things. No doubt, they've been lobbied by groups such as the groups and individuals that were in the House of Assembly today lobbying for some of these things because they've experienced the unimaginable tragedy of losing a loved one as a result of some of these deliberate, intentional, ill-thought-out, I will say stupid acts. It really is. There's nothing but pure stupidity for someone to do some of those things, and families have felt a loss as a result of it.

It never should have happened and there's nothing we can do, as has been said, to bring back those who have been lost, but we can certainly do something to strengthen the legislation, to strengthen the penalties to deal with individuals, in particular, who think for whatever reason that it's okay to go out on the road and put the lives of people at risk in a very, very significant way. Whether that be doing doughnuts out on the road, whether that be drag racing down the road, whether that be travelling in excess of 50 kilometres over the speed limit, those acts need to be deterred. I think it's a positive move here today that we all agree with in putting in legislation to address those matters.

Now, there are a couple of things that have been said and I will echo those points. One is education. I'm not going to get into a big speech on education, it's already been said, but I would agree with those points that we must ensure that we educate the public on safe driving and on these new measures so people understand that this is not going to be tolerated and some of these things are going to be dealt with in a much harsher fashion. So that has to happen.

The issue of enforcement has been raised. Obviously, this legislation, like any legislation of this manner, is not worth the paper it's written on unless it's enforced. So it's obviously critical that our law enforcement agencies have the tools and resources to enforce this legislation. I think we all recognize that.

The other piece, though, that I haven't heard anybody speak about but I think is a very relevant point is the fact – again, I want to go back to, it is not your average law-abiding

citizens that are committing these offences. Quite often it's the repeat offenders. It's that small group. It's the 2 per cent or 3 per cent or whatever it is, but that small percentage of the population who just don't agree with the law, period, whether it be the *Highway Traffic Act*, whether it be the Criminal Code. No matter what it is, they feel they're going to do whatever they want to do when they want to do it and the heck with what the law says, the heck with public safety, the heck with the enforcement agencies, the justice system. They're going to do whatever they want to do.

It's one thing to catch them, but one of the big problems we have is that this select few people who get caught – and we hear about them in the media all the time owing \$20,000 and \$30,000 and \$40,000 in fines because they've been driving erratically and dangerously, driving with no registration, no valid driver's licence, no insurance. They get caught and they get fined significantly. The car probably gets taken from them. Then, they go out a couple of weeks later or whatever and they buy another heap of junk. They get aboard that heap of junk and they drive around dangerously for another two weeks or a month or two months, however long it is, until they get caught again. Then they get another bunch of fines and then they repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat.

It's fine for us to make these changes; I support them 100 per cent. It's fine to have enforcement, which we all, obviously, support and we encourage as much enforcement as possible. I say to the Minister of Justice and so on, one of the issues we need to deal with in this House of Assembly that's not part of this bill but it's related – I'm sure he agrees with me – is what we do to deal with these habitual offenders, what we do to deal with that 2 or 3 per cent of the population that doesn't care what the law is. They keep getting caught over and over again. They keep getting fines. They don't pay the fines and they're not held accountable.

I've heard people talk about maybe the licence plate, for example, should go with the person, not the car. That could help identify these individuals. Now, no doubt they could steal a licence plate off someone's car. That's also a possibility. We know that. They're already stealing stickers, but it's still one thing we can

do to look at dealing with those people is the plate with the person.

The other thing, of course, is appropriate punishment because they're not paying the fines anyway and you can't get blood from a turnip. So they owe \$30,000 now and then in six months' time it's \$40,000, then it's \$50,000 and it keeps on going up. They don't care; they're not paying it anyway. We need to find more effective ways of dealing with those individuals.

I've heard some people talk about community service. I know at one point in time we used to have, I think it was called, warrants of committal was the term, for people that owed all these fines. If they didn't pay them, they would be put in the clink for a period of time and they would do time in jail. I understand the challenges around that, because there's no room at the inn. I get that, and maybe that's something we need to look at as well.

Maybe we have the facility out there in Whitbourne that's hardly even being used for young offenders. Maybe that's something that could be utilized to deal with the more minor offences, similar to what we used to have in Salmonier Line at one point in time. It was part of corrections. People that were charged with impaired and things like that would serve time out on Salmonier Line on the farm and so on. Maybe we need to look at something like that to deal with this small percentage of repeat offenders.

Again, we could have all the legislation we want and we can enforce it, but if it's the same people and those people are not being punished, then they're only going to keep on doing it over and over again. Until we deal with those people, we're going to continue to have these types of things happening, because it's not the ordinary, law-abiding person that's committing many of these acts.

Yes, the ordinary, law-abiding person can have a bit of a heavy foot, guilty as charged, guilty as charged. I've gotten a couple of speeding tickets in my life – guilty – on the highway. Easy enough, right? When you go out on the highway, you pass somebody, it's a nice clear day or whatever, it's easy enough to go 10 or 15 over or whatever. It happens all the time, but I'm

certainly not going 50 over. I'm certainly not going 50 over, or certainly not doing doughnuts, certainly not drag racing.

Those are the things we need to deal with. Like I said, it's the individuals that are doing them are the ones we need to deal with, and we need to find an effective way of dealing with them because that's really what much of these changes are about, that group. We can put whatever we want on paper, they don't care. They don't care about the laws there now. They're not going to care about this either, couldn't care less. They really couldn't. So I just put that out there, I think that's an important consideration.

I do applaud what's being done here overall. I certainly congratulate the minister for bringing this forward. As has been said, I certainly congratulate the groups that have been vocal on this issue, bringing it forth to government, lobbying for it. It really is a shame that it had to take the loss of life and so on for some of these issues to come forward. I know it must be very painful for the family and I certainly offer them my sincere condolences.

We are doing something about it now. We're going to try to, at least. This is one tool in the toolbox, we need more tools, but at least this is one and it's a step in the right direction. Kudos to the government for doing it. I support the bill 100 per cent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The proposed amendments we have introduced here today are an important part of our government's public safety agenda. These amendments help us continue the dialogue of enhancing safety for the travelling public and help ensure our roadways are as safe as they possibly can be.

The *Highway Traffic Act* is a substantive piece of legislation, which includes 215 sections, plus a schedule of penalties. The amendments represent one more step in our ongoing efforts to improve safety on roadways in every town and in every region of Newfoundland and Labrador.

There are a number of changes to the act that deal with increased fines, seven-day suspensions of driver's licence and three-day vehicle impoundments, along with amendments that deal with modifications to proof of insurance requirements and the addition of an appeals process for certain driver's licence suspensions.

I'd like to close debate by specifically highlighting a few of the amendments we will be making, namely: street racing, stunting, Move Over provisions and the creation of a new offence for driving without due care and attention or without reasonable consideration for other persons causing bodily harm or death.

Groups like STAND for Hannah have lobbied government to strengthen the province's regulatory regime in order to deter racing and travelling at extremely high rates of speeds on our highway. With the new amendments, a driver that is charged with the offence will receive a seven-day driver's licence suspension, effective on the second day after the notice of suspension is given. Drivers who are charged with racing will also have their vehicles impounded for three days.

In terms of stunting, there is currently no provisional provincial legislation that prohibits the execution of a stunt on a highway or in a public area, such as a vehicle doing donuts or a motorcycle travelling on one wheel. A separate offence for stunting has now been created with penalties being the same as those associated with racing on a roadway. A driver that is charged with the offence will receive a seven-day driver's licence suspension, effective on the second day after the notice is given.

Drivers who are charged with racing or stunting will also have their vehicles impounded for three days. We will also strengthen our Move Over provisions in an effort to help ensure the safety of our first responders. We are adding a speed reduction of at least 30 kilometres per hour under the speed limit to a minimum speed of 30

kilometres or less for vehicles passing stopped emergency vehicles. Certainly, we heard the concerns of Duane Antle's group and the issue they face as first responders.

We are providing the ability to charge the registered owner for such offences. We have created a new offence under the *Highway Traffic Act* for driving without due care and attention causing bodily harm or death. With this new offence come new penalties as well. The offence will carry a minimum fine of \$2,000 and a maximum fine of \$20,000, or up to two years imprisonment, or both, Mr. Speaker.

It also includes a licence suspension of not more than five years and six demerit points. All of these charges would not be possible without the input we received from numerous community stakeholders and law enforcement personnel in this province.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to Gail Thorne and Levi, to Duane Antle and to the numerous other individuals and groups with whom I have met, and their willingness to continuously work with us in our efforts to improve road safety in the province. I cannot state often enough how important it is that we keep the dialogue going on road safety. Mr. Speaker, I stand in this House today and I wear Hannah's picture on my lapel. I know Levi and I know Gail; they're from my district.

It is also important that we, as a government, regularly review the act to keep current with changes in safety codes, vehicle design and other highway safety improvements, as well as responding to driving behaviours. We've had numerous changes to the *Highway Traffic Act* in the recent past. In actual fact, Mr. Speaker, this is the sixth time since we were elected in December 2015. In June 2016, the act was amended to increase the fines for using a handheld cellular phone while driving a motor vehicle. In September, amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* came into effect, which include tougher penalties for impaired drivers in the province.

Just last month, I introduced further amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* to increase penalties for a number of offences that were less than \$100. The amendments we will put forward

today in the House of Assembly help us continue our ongoing focus on strengthening road safety in Newfoundland and Labrador. Every person who gets behind the wheel of a vehicle must realize that it is their responsibility, Mr. Speaker. Every single one of us must make sure that we abide by the rules of the road and make decisions that will help us improve safety on the roadways of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want to conclude by thanking all hon. Members for contributing to this debate today. We must all remain committed to making public safety a priority.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

The motion is that Bill 27 be now read a second time.

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.

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

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

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, “An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2,” read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 27)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Service NL, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 27.

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 now considering Bill 27, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2.

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

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

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

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

I have a few questions and I guess I’ll ask them here now.

Mr. Chair, this new bill is a new section and it’s called stunting, people out doing stunts and stuff like that. When I did my speech today, I spoke a

little bit about it. I know the minister gave some examples, but there's no definition in the legislation at all. There's a new definition for bodily harm, but there's no definition for stunting.

I'm wondering if the minister has a definition or what the process will be when it comes to law enforcement and who decides what stunts are and what's going to be done.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Service NL.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Stunting will be understood to mean a person showing off, trying to get attention by performing an elaborate act. Such a thing could be determined by eyewitness, a police officer, video surveillance, smart phones. It's the act of showing off and performing behaviours that would not normally be performed with the vehicle.

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Just to continue on your answer there, Minister.

If somebody sees something that's happening, it could be somebody hauling out of a convenience store, for example, and screeches tires over the road or does fishtails or something like that, is that what's considered? If you catch it on your camera or you report it? If you do report it, there's a time frame on once notice is given. Does a charge have to be laid or does the person have to go to court to prove it? When does the suspension come into effect?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: It's defined as an elaborate act. If somebody is hauling out and they're performing their vehicles, screeching their tires, going over into the other lane. Elaborate behaviour that you would not normally do in a vehicle, then the information will be portrayed to the police or the eyewitness would put forward. It would follow with any other procedure for people who are caught speeding if the police pull them in.

Is that what you're asking?

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Either the Minister of Justice or someone can answer this one. When someone notifies somebody that something has occurred, for example, the person is out in the middle of the road doing donuts or whatever they're doing and I report that to the RNC. They come down and do an investigation. Does the investigation have to be completed before that person is charged? Do they have to go to court or does it happen immediately that they lose their vehicle?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

I appreciate the questions from the Member opposite. They are important questions to ask.

Just looking through the legislation here – this might go back and elaborate on the first question asked – it says: “A person shall not drive a motor vehicle on a highway while performing or engaging in a stunt or activity that is likely to distract, startle or interfere with users of the highway.”

The second part is: “Where a peace officer has reasonable grounds to believe that a person has committed an offence under this section, the peace officer shall give the person a notice of suspension.”

So suspension can happen. That being said, a person has the right to contest these tickets. Then that's when it gets – you go to court and there's evidence. In some cases, I think the Kenmount Road one, there was video evidence, which is certainly a lot different than just, say, the eyewitness. So a peace officer would have to have reasonable grounds and then they would serve the notice.

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Yes, I want to thank the minister for that.

It's just my understanding would be that if somebody reported something and they're not necessarily guilty, it will be based on the evidence they showed the peace officer. Okay, that's fair enough.

Another question I have for the minister, and it's under impoundment. Once a vehicle is caught for racing or doing stunts or anything, there's a second-day notice, is what it's called in the legislation. Why is it the vehicle isn't taken right away? You can compare it to an impaired driver. I know they're not impaired or whatever, but why the second day? Just give me a reason for that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Well, first of all, most other jurisdictions would take the vehicle upon conviction. We're actually going to take it the second day. So that's an improvement.

Secondary, the individual, unlike an individual who's impaired and is a danger to society at that time, that particular individual is not a danger to society. So we would allow them to get their vehicle home or if it's dad's vehicle or whatever, and then the next day they would lose their licence and the vehicle would be impounded.

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Okay, that runs me in to my next question.

Minister, sometimes, a lot of the times, a case will come that is not tolerable, these accidents, racing and stunting and everything else. In a lot of cases it could be a family member or it could be somebody borrowing a vehicle, which they got all the right in the world to do. It could be somebody borrowing a truck from me to go to the dump and they do some act that is deemed either racing or doing a stunt and the vehicle is taken for seven days.

The owner of the vehicle doesn't have – is there anything in the legislation or is it just automatic that that vehicle is gone? There's no consideration given to whether the family member has to use it to go back and forth to work or it's a vehicle that is used for different

things. The onus doesn't necessarily go on the person committing the act. It goes on the person owning the vehicle, when you talk about impoundment.

Could you just talk about that?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Under section 17 of the *Vehicle Seizure and Impoundment Regulations*, there is a process that exists where someone can apply to the registrar for early release of their vehicle from impoundment due to undue hardship.

So that process presently exists that you can apply, but otherwise you would lose the vehicle.

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Again, we're talking only a seven-day period, Minister. Is there a time frame that would be rushed up or is there something that can – is there a part in the department that somebody, that if this happens and it's a vehicle belonging to a parent who needs it to get back and forth to work or whatever, what mechanism do they have? In some cases, by the time you go through all the rigmarole to get to where you need to get the vehicle back, seven days the vehicle comes back.

My question is: Is there someone designated in the department to be able to handle this immediately?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Yes, there are staff that deal with section 17 of the act. So there is someone available to accept an application under section 17 of the act.

The whole idea here is the fact that an individual is driving the vehicle, the vehicle they are driving is impounded. It's to teach a lesson. If Sonny is driving dad's vehicle and he loses it, well, he's going to lose it; but, if there is capacity to present undue hardship, you will get it back early.

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

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

Also, when we spoke today about these amendments to the act, we all understand the importance of it. I think most people in the House really do realize the importance of this act. It's about safety on our roads and ensuring that people abide by rules and regulations that are out there.

I mentioned in my speech today, I really think it's important. Are there any plans from either the Department of Justice to increase enforcement on our highways? Just in saying that, there are a lot of people out there. Again, I gave an example when I spoke today earlier that I drove from Flatrock to Plum Point, I stopped in Grand Falls along the way, but I drove the whole way and I never saw a vehicle on the road. I really do believe police presence plays a major role in safety on our roads. When people see them they tend to slow down a lot more. They let other drivers know, well, there are police cars on the road there by Clarendville. People do slow down. I really do believe that.

I'm wondering, in bringing this act and enforcements like we're doing – again, sometimes when I see on the Outer Ring Road and other roads when a car passes me by, I'm doing 100 and they're cruising. I really believe that we do need to enforce this because it's a danger not only to them, but everybody on that highway.

The only way to slow these people down is to have enforcement on our highways. I'm just wondering, is there a plan to increase enforcement on our highways?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

I'll just take issue with the vernacular at the end of the comment. I know what he was trying to say, but I don't agree with the statement that the only way to do this is for more enforcement, but that's just a figure of speech.

What I would say is we're constantly working with the RCMP and RNC. In fact, I've had meetings with both agencies to discuss highway safety. If you look at some of the statistics, the fact is it's actually not that much higher this year than it was last year. I think in this case, when you have so much tragedy within a shorter period of time, it's a more pronounced episode basically. That's a lot of what we're seeing, but when you look at the stats they're not good.

The other thing, though, it's not just about enforcement. There's a personal responsibility here that in many cases we're not maintaining. When I look at seat belt usages being the cause of some of the fatalities, and when we look at our numbers have declined drastically in terms of people using their seat belts – we used to be amongst the national leaders, and now that's gone down. There are such a number of factors, but I appreciate the point the Member is making, which is that we all want to see enforcement. I'd like to thank the men and women of the agencies for the work that they do, and we're working on new ideas to figure out is there something innovative we can try; we're working on other technology that can also help with this as well.

In fact, I had a really good telephone call recently. It was about photo radar, talking to some individuals that are trained in this; this is what they do. Unfortunately, one of the issues we have with all this is there is a cost. There's so much we can do and it's about figuring out the cost implications of this. We spend a significant amount in public safety. We never spend enough. I haven't spoken to a community yet that said they had enough police officers or had enough enforcement. Everybody wants more; we all want to see that. So we're working on that.

We're very lucky to have, again, when you talk about the RNC and the RCMP, fairly new leaders there. Peter Clark for the RCMP has been in for just under two years here. Joe Boland just came in this past summer. And they're willing to work with us and work with community groups to figure out different measures we can take.

So I appreciate what the Member is saying. That's something we will continue to do, along

with other technological advances that may assist the same goal.

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Yes, I want to assure the minister I wouldn't say "only way," because there are so many different aspects of road safety and we all play a role. Every individual who is on the highways today play a role in making sure our roads are safe.

Again today during the minister's speech and every colleague here in the House that spoke on this today, I think education came up and informing the public of these new rules and regulations. Is there a campaign that's going to be out there so the general public will have a good understanding? Maybe that's another mechanism along with enforcement and more officers on our road. Maybe education is another step, along with many steps that we can do.

Is there a plan for educating the public?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Well, there are a couple of things. The debate today is going to bring attention to this, of course. The media release will have all the information. But also the Department of Transportation and Works has awarded the STAND for Hannah group a grant so they can do some educational component in the school system. So, yes, we are moving forward.

Also, gov.nl.ca/drive, we'll have information on that particular website. But it's very important the STAND for Hannah group are going to get into the schools – they've already started – and they're going to start to educate at that level. That's our young drivers; that's our new drivers. Get in there, develop the habits when they're young, and as they grow older they will have better habits than some of our generation have had, as we move forward. So yes.

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

MR. K. PARSONS: I want to thank the minister for her answer that time. It's great for

STAND for Hannah and groups like this because we really do have to applaud those people that advocate for safer roads. It's unfortunate what has happened to those. We don't want it to happen to other individuals.

You mentioned the school. I was just wondering if the Minister of Education was going to offer anything, probably somewhere we could go, because younger drivers, I feel, need to be more aware of what's happening. I know when my children were at driving age, they drove my vehicle. If they understood the different results now of their habits or whatever they're doing now, maybe that's where we should be, is at the young driving stage so they'd understand most of these rules that are in place.

It's so important that everybody understands what we're trying to do here and make our roads safe. But it's about awareness, too, and the more people are aware, the habits will change a lot.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

I won't speak just necessarily on behalf of the Minister of Education. What I would say is that changes to the *Highway Traffic Act* are so frequent that it would be quite difficult to do new education training every time one comes in. Another thing is that not everybody within the school is getting into driving.

What I would suggest is that he's right in the philosophy that we have to get at the people the youngest. That's why I think all drivers that are doing training, that are going through the process, that are going through the licensing, especially if it's through the DMV or whatnot, it's on them to be learning the rules of the road. We start with the youngest, I think, so I agree with the concept that the Member says.

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

MR. K. PARSONS: I want to thank the Minister of Justice for his answer because he half answered my question that I was just about to ask. That's where I want to go to.

Today, most young people – and I'm not picking on young people because it's not only young people that have bad habits. There are a lot of other people that have bad habits. But I believe it's like anything, if you get them at an early age, the practices will go on and they teach us a lot. I'm not picking on the young at all because there are so many different age groups that have habits that are not very good on our roads.

My question – and the minister half answered it. Most people today take driving school lessons because it's a reduction on their insurance costs. I'm wondering if there's a way that we could have people that instruct young drivers or different driving schools to implement some kind of a plan in their process so that people would understand these new rules.

As the minister just said, I understand that you cannot bring it in every time that we have changes to the *Highway Traffic Act* because being the critic for Service NL for the last number of years, there have been a lot of changes, but I think a lot of these changes this time is being very direct to the *Highway Traffic Act*. They are something that everybody in the province should really know what's happening here so that everyone is aware and hopefully our highways will be a lot safer.

My question is: Are you planning on putting it to educational groups like Young Drivers and different groups that teach driving skills?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: The Motor Registration Division presently works very close with the driving schools so when these things change, yes, we do provide them with the educational updates.

CHAIR: Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 18 inclusive.

CHAIR: Clauses 2 through 18 inclusive.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 18 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2.

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 27 carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: I move, Mr. Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bill 27.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 27.

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 Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee.

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 27 carried without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 27 carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Order 6, second reading of Bill 23.

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

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

I believe the last time in debate I finished off, or we ended sitting for the day and I had some time left on the clock. I was up speaking on second reading to Bill 23, and we had some time left to do so.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: Oh, really? Oh, very good, okay.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: Lots of time.

MR. P. DAVIS: Lots of time, thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is to amend the *Liquor Control Act*. What the government has brought forward here is a bill that changes the *Liquor Control Act* regarding the sale of cannabis. It would make an amendment to authorize or to provide authority to buy, import and sell cannabis. It would also provide authority to control possession, sale or delivery of cannabis. It also gives authority to establish, maintain and operate cannabis stores; and to issue licences for the possession, sale and delivery of cannabis. The bill would also give the minister authority to set fees and establish forms for the purpose of the administration of the act.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have a number of comments I'd like to make on this, but first of all – and when we get into Committee as well, I'm sure we'll have a more in-depth discussion. Because, quite often, Committee is where the government, the minister and the Opposition have an opportunity to ask for clarification, propose amendments and so on. We get down more into the details.

Mr. Speaker, the bill actually, in the amendments, one of the first things it does, which is not uncommon, is to define what cannabis means. It refers to cannabis as a plant. Well, we know it's that. It's any part of a cannabis plant, including the phytocannabinoids produced by, or found in, a cannabis plant, regardless of whether that part has been processed or not, other than a part of a cannabis plant referred further in the section.

It also refers to any substance or mixture that contains or has in it a cannabis plant. We know sometimes people will mix cannabis with other items. But it doesn't include a non-viable seed of a cannabis plant. And we'll get into details of how that would be determined on a reasonable basis.

It also talks about a mature stock, which is not included, and some other items that are not included as well. It defines a cannabis store, which means a store established, maintained and operated by the corporation under the act to sell cannabis. It refers to a conflict of interest. It's making a change to the conflict of interest rules under section 11 which, again, appears to be adding not only alcohol, but amending it to include cannabis. The act is changing not only for alcohol, as the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation has been, but also to cannabis and the conflict rules would be added to that.

Corporation under section 33 – and, again, throughout the act we see many changes where it adds cannabis to where it also relates to alcoholic liquor. This is the section that gives the corporation authority to buy, import and have in its possession for sale and to sell not only alcohol, but cannabis or articles associated with alcoholic liquor or cannabis in a manner set forth in the act.

What it does, Mr. Speaker, where the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation is currently legislated to have the ability and authority to buy, to import and possess for sale and to sell alcohol, they will now be able to do the same thing with cannabis.

The section also indicates the corporation may “control the possession, sale and delivery of all alcoholic liquor and cannabis in accordance with this Act.” The corporation may “manufacture, blend, package, mix, dilute or otherwise prepare for sale alcoholic liquor.” The part here, Mr. Speaker, that catches me, I have to go back to (b) for a second, the corporation may “control the possession, sale and delivery of all alcoholic liquor and cannabis in accordance with this Act.”

The next section (d) deals with the corporation may “with the prior approval of the minister, (i) establish, maintain and operate liquor stores at the places in the province that may be considered advisable for the sale of liquor in accordance with this Act.” Also, then it goes on to talk about cannabis: “establish, maintain and operate cannabis stores at the places in the province that may be considered advisable for the sale of cannabis”

Also, it establishes “liquor stores, cannabis stores and liquor agencies in the same locality.” Mr. Speaker, while it refers to manufacture, blend, package, mix, dilute or otherwise prepare the sale of alcohol it doesn't say the same for cannabis.

I know in Question Period today in conversations in the question with the minister, he referred to the fact that the federal government holds authority over the production and licensing of producers of cannabis. It was an interesting comment because that differentiates on the control of alcohol where the corporation, being the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation, can manufacture, blend, package, mix, dilute or otherwise prepare for the sale of alcoholic liquor, but the amendments do not give the same rights when it comes to cannabis.

We asked questions about that today and asked the Premier actually if government plans on providing or partnering with an outside organization for the production of cannabis. The

minister said, first, there's no decision made and then he said there was no deal done, and I suggest that maybe they are a little bit different.

Having a decision made by government to partner with a company to produce and having a deal done are two different things. The government could have made a decision to partner with a company; it doesn't mean that an agreement has been reached. My questions today were on the decisions that the government has made.

Mr. Speaker, when I move over to section 4 of the bill, where it says "The Act is amended by adding immediately after section 34 the following," it also provides authority that the board may grant to a person –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Can we have some quiet, please?

Thank you.

MR. P. DAVIS: "The board may grant to a person a licence to possess, sell or deliver cannabis. (2) The board may issue different classes of licences and set out the terms and conditions of a licence."

While the federal government holds the rules on production, manufacturing, growing of cannabis and production and packaging of cannabis, the province actually holds the ability to license sellers in the province – "... may grant to a person a licence to possess, sell or to deliver cannabis."

The province holds that licence, that power. One of the common discussions that are happening in the province today is that provinces have expressed concern over if there's too much of a rush happening here. While we know the federal government has mandated the legalization of marijuana, the province still has to take the time to put in place the legal processes to allow for the sale, distribution, manufacturing – or not manufacturing, because the federal government has that, but the distribution and sale of manufactured products.

"The board may issue different classes of licences and set out the terms and conditions of a licence. (3) An application for a licence shall be made to the board in the form and manner set out by the board. (4) A licence shall only be granted under this section to" the *Liquor Control Act*.

"An individual or a group of individuals, where that individual or each member of the group of individuals is at least 19 years of age." So that's included there as well.

Also, it lays out that "a corporation or partnership authorized to carry on its business in the province whose officer or agent in charge of the premises for which the licence is required is at least 19 years of age." So that sets the age, which provinces are required to do.

Mr. Speaker, provinces in the county have expressed a concern that this is being rushed. It's happening too quickly. From the province's perspective here is they're going to be ready. There is much concern about not only having the proper legislation in place, but also have in place the training and the resources to make sure it's done properly.

There has to be an understanding about the use of cannabis in workplaces and how it's used in public places. There has to be an education process. Are people allowed to use before they go to work or at workplaces? There are occupational health and safety requirements that have to change. There have to be developed proper means of enforcement from the *Highway Traffic Act* and also from the *Criminal Code of Canada* for persons who have consumed or used cannabis prior to operating a motor vehicle. We certainly don't want to see circumstances whereby there's a concern on our highways for safety of our people.

The last bill brought here in the House that we talked about this afternoon was the *Highway Traffic Act* and about strengthening the *Highway Traffic Act* to improve safety on our highways. We don't know, yet government says they're going to be ready. We haven't seen that yet. Are the people going to be ready? Are the people of the province going to understand the rules? Also, are police going to be ready and able to properly police our streets and our highways and

our communities to ensure the safety of citizens of the province?

This change here in the *Liquor Control Act* as amended under section 23, I suspect will be the first of several bills to come to the House. I've asked here in the House of Assembly for a master plan, an overall strategy of what the government proposes in order to roll this out in the coming months. They haven't provided that. They say they have a plan and are moving forward with it, but we haven't seen the plan.

We don't know what the plan is. I'm sure as it rolls out piece by piece maybe we're going to see it, but there may be some benefit if we knew the bigger plan now while we're debating each of these bills. We don't know what that is, Mr. Speaker, or how that plan is going to roll out. We do know the government wants to continue to be ready for July of 2018.

Mr. Speaker, we know federally there were some concerns raised about conflicts involving producers. We know the national media had attention over the last number of years on production nationally and so on. It was interesting that the minister today said production was actually going to be the responsibility of the federal government when we know there were some strong political ties involved with producers.

We wanted to make sure and understand exactly what's taking place there. That's why when I asked the minister today about decisions and, particularly, I even went as far as to say last night that – he may have made decisions last night, asked about that. He said no decisions made, no deals done and he clarified that today.

We look forward to seeing what decisions have been made and how they're going to proceed with that. Manufacturers here – I know some who want and have an interest in manufacturing here in our province. They're looking for opportunities and looking for opportunities to partner with the government. Maybe there is an opportunity to provide a local business, company owned and operated here in the province that are here today, to transition into the manufacturing of marijuana for sale by the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation, which is the bill that we're talking

here today to amend the *Liquor Corporation Act*.

So we hope to hear more of that. I'm sure we will, Mr. Speaker, as time goes on. I know we're going to ask further questions and look for more information as time goes on about how those processes happen and how those decisions were made, what producers and growers – how they're selected.

This act provides for actual sellers to be licensed by the Liquor Corporation. Under this act they'll be licensed here, but there are still a lot of unknowns about where they're going to get their supply from and how that's going to happen. Where are they going to get the supply? Under the *Liquor Control Act*, where is Newfoundland and Labrador going to get the supply? How is it going to be monitored?

The minister says it's done federally but, at the same time, they're talking to producers. So I'm not sure how that's going to work in the province, especially if they're going to provide incentive to some producers, but not to others on set-up and operation and also delivery of what will be a carefully produced and monitored for quality control and so on, product here in the province.

I would expect, being a drug, the same type of quality control that exists if you go to a pharmacy and purchase a drug. Marijuana is available; cannabis is available by pill form through pharmacies. It's a very restricted, controlled environment in drugs and produced in a very restricted, very careful way. I'm sure that this marijuana is going to be the same way.

People want to know everything is going to be safe and it's not going to be a danger, not going to be a cause for concern and it will be the same kind of standard that people buy alcohol today. They know what they're buying; they know what the label says. They trust what's in it and trust that the Liquor Corporation is managing those affairs.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take my seat, having spoken to this bill. It's not a big bill. There are only a half dozen or so pages of actual amendments. They're not major amendments, only to add cannabis and the sale of cannabis,

cannabis stores and so on to the *Liquor Control Act*. I look forward in Committee where I'm sure we'll have questions, as we have in other bills as they come forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this this afternoon.

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

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

I'm very happy to stand and to speak to Bill 23, An Act to Amend the Liquor Corporation Act.

I believe this relates to the production and the distribution and the sale of cannabis – mostly known by most folks as marijuana. This has been a long time coming. We know in many cases over the years peoples' lives have been ruined by participating in the sale of cannabis, by participating in the production of marijuana plants, whether it be in their own homes or in a larger format, that people were imprisoned. It's been a real long and rocky road.

So I believe at this point there's much celebration about this legislation, or the promise of this legislation, and the legalization of cannabis for early July. Also, I believe in some corners there's some fear. In other corners, there's misunderstanding. So it's a bit of a mixed bag.

I believe one of the things we should look at is the opportunities, the potential opportunities here for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We know the federal government will be handling the production and all legislation that deals with the production of cannabis, and that the province will be dealing with the distribution and the sale of cannabis and how that's best rolled out in our province.

The opportunities that I would like for us to take a look at, will there be a windfall of money? Perhaps, perhaps not. We don't quite know yet exactly how much money will be involved in terms of the revenue from taxes, the revenue from production, the possible profits from production, the revenue in retail sales, the taxes

involved in retail sales and also the potential of profits in retail sales.

What we really need to look at is: What are the potential opportunities for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? We heard my colleague from the District of Topsail – Paradise ask a number of questions today in the House asking government, has government made any deals at all with any outside companies for the production, for the sole, exclusive production of cannabis to be supplied to the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation? His questions were pretty clear; he asked a number of them. We didn't get a real clear answer about whether or not government has made any deals with anyone, but we certainly know there haven't been any contracts.

We're going to assume at face value that government hasn't made any deals with any outside companies, but we know when we look at the stock market, when we look at the growth of companies that are either in the production or whether it's growing the marijuana or cannabis plant, but also producing forms of cannabis that can be ingested rather than smoked, it's big business. We know it is big business. We can watch and see what's happening on the stock market in this area. So we do know it is big business.

Will it be big business in Newfoundland and Labrador? We're not so sure. There is a potential there that it might be. We also know a lot of the money made through the distribution and production of cannabis in the province has gone via the black market or small independent, albeit illegal operations, but certainly local operations.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to think that – we have to work very quickly, because the legalization will be early July. That really is only six months from now. Six months from now we have to roll out all the legislation that will deal with a number of aspects of the introduction and legalization of cannabis. Then we also have to deal with legislation about the production and about the distribution and about the sales.

I do believe there are some opportunities there, but there's a lot of information missing. I would like to see grown right here in Newfoundland and Labrador, made right here in Newfoundland

and Labrador. Providing those opportunities to the people of the province to produce marijuana right here in the province in a locally owned company so that not only do we provide well-paying jobs, but also we can ensure that any profit made from the production of cannabis will stay right here as well.

We know what happens when we see large national or international companies, what happens when there is a profit. That those profits go outside the province. In our current economic situation, is this an opportunity for more money for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? In a time when we know we need more jobs, we also need more money in our economy. We need more cash flow in our economy. Is there a good opportunity here for local companies to be able to take advantage of the opportunities that are presented to us through the production of cannabis?

Part two, the retail and the sales of cannabis. We know the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation will be handling the distribution, but what about the retail sales? Now, we can look at a number of companies that are in our province that sell pharmaceuticals, and they are large, national companies. Some of them are international companies. They do provide jobs. Often the jobs are minimum wage. What happens? Any profit made by those companies leaves the province once again.

Will the retail sales of cannabis, of marijuana provide opportunity for stable jobs, for well-paying jobs, for jobs with benefits and opportunities for the profits rather than being taken out of the province by national or international companies? Again, there is a thought that this is big money. We see it on the stock market. This is not small potatoes, this is not just change. Is there still opportunity for the possibility of keeping those profits here in the province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if I need to sit down now and continue after the supper hour. I'm looking for direction from you,

Mr. Speaker, as to what I should do, whether to continue or will we be taking a supper break?

MS. MICHAEL: We have to stop at 5:30 today.

MS. ROGERS: Okay, I'll stop at 5:30. Okay, thank you very much.

So I'll keep on until 5:30.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. ROGERS: I'm getting mixed messages from the floor here, Mr. Speaker. I'll sit down until that is clarified.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, I think, Mr. Speaker, we gave notice that the House shall not adjourn at 5:30.

Given that the Member is speaking, I figure we'll let her continue on with that and then we can make a decision as to whether we shall recess and then continue on after.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So when we look at the pros and cons, and I'm not so sure how much –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I'm finding it –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much.

We do not know what kind of analysis has been done by government to look at both the pros and cons of having –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We do not know what kind of analysis has been done by government in terms of the pros and cons of having local companies be the producer of cannabis. We also do not know what kind of analysis has been done about the retail sales of cannabis in the province.

I believe analysis needs to be done in order to make decisions that the minister earlier today, in response to the questions from the Member for Topsail – Paradise – the minister said: We will make decisions that are in the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. If that is accurate, I would assume in order to make the best possible decisions in the interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that the analysis needs to be done.

We already have a well-functioning, profitable distribution system and retail system in the province by the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation. The Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation has a few ways of selling alcohol in the province: their own retail sales stores. Then, they also sell through and give licence to local smaller operations in smaller communities where it's not feasible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation itself to open up a big store.

It is a successful operation. It has been successful over the years. It reinvests profits back into the province. It provides unionized jobs. Some people turn up their nose about unionized jobs, but what does a unionized job mean? It means that people are paid a fair wage for the work they do. It means they have stability. It means they have benefits that extend not only to the worker itself, but to the family of the workers. It also means they have pension plans; they have health care plans that take care of their families. That's a positive to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would think, Mr. Speaker, if the analysis was done, which I'm not so sure it has been done because we haven't seen any evidence of any analysis to show whether or not it would be more advantageous to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to have the retail sales of marijuana done through our already existing infrastructure, through the

Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation. Again, it provides well-paying, stable jobs, which is good for the individual, good for their families because there are benefits included in those jobs, benefits that take care of their whole family. And they're good for the community because we have people who are making good wages and that money recirculates into the provincial economy because people will spend their money here in the province.

The other thing is that the actual profits from the sale of alcohol do not leave the province. They are reinvested in the province. They go back into general Treasury, so they're included in our health care system, they're included in our education system and they're included in our roads and infrastructure system.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that would be the ideal way to undergo retail sales of marijuana in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We know that's what Ontario has done. They have chosen – and again, they have taken more time because they've already made that decision. They were ahead of the ball here. Here we are, again, we only have six months to try and pull this together if, in fact, we are going to be ready to provide retail sales of cannabis to the province once the federal legislation changes.

Really, in order to make those kinds of decisions, analysis has to be done about whether or not this would be in the best interest of the people. At face value, it looks like it would be in the long run. Of course, I can imagine that what the government are trying, perhaps making hasty judgments, because they're thinking what about the cost of infrastructure. We know also there's been a recommendation that the cannabis is not sold in the same premises as alcohol.

What does that mean for the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation? It means then that they may need extra infrastructure. How can that be done? Well, there are a number of ways that that can be done. It can be done by prefab modules that can be attached to already existing Liquor Corporation's retail outlets and stores, or perhaps there are ways of cordoning off and sectioning off existing stores so that it is separate.

Mr. Speaker, we really don't know what is in the best interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador if, in fact, that analysis hasn't been done. Again, my concern is that government will make hasty decisions because they have to be ready for July 1, or July – whatever it is; it's very early July.

So, Mr. Speaker, this may be an opportunity for creating more jobs, stable jobs, jobs with benefits, jobs that are well paying for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. This may be an opportunity for keeping the profits from the sale of cannabis all across the province in the province, rather than handing them over to some national or international corporation that will swallow up the profits, probably pay minimum-wage jobs, with no benefits, precarious work, probably not full-time work, because we know how large corporations try to avoid that so they can avoid paying benefits.

Is that the choice this government will make? So far they're indicating that's the direction they will go in, although this legislation allows them to have the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation to retail. But they're saying basically it seems, from this legislation, that the direction they're going in is they will do retail in smaller communities where nobody else wants to set up a retail operation.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we can do this, that we really can do this in the best interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have infrastructure. We have a successful corporation whose main goal is the safe distribution and sale of alcohol, but also to make money for the province, and to keep that profit and that money in the province – and they provide good jobs. They provide jobs with benefits. They provide jobs with security. They provide jobs that are good for the economy and good for working families, again, because of the benefits and the security and the pay that comes along with those jobs.

Are we going to miss out on that opportunity? I'm concerned; I believe government may miss out on that opportunity. Again, has that in-depth analysis been done? We know there are a lot of unknowns, because cannabis has not been sold legally in this province ever. So it's new ground for us. Are we going to miss the opportunity of

having all the profits from marijuana leave this province and go into the pockets of businesses whose main interest is only profit? That's okay. That's the main interest and goal of many corporations, but this is an opportunity for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. This is an opportunity for the province to make money, to provide the safe sale of cannabis in an infrastructure that we already have.

I would hope, Mr. Speaker, and I plead with government to not act hastily, to do a full and in-depth analysis on, in fact, what would be in the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I believe that we can go in that direction. I know there are infrastructure complications, but I also believe there are innovative ways of dealing with that.

If there are corporations that are willing to come in to set up retail sites, you know they're going to do that only if they are sure there would be significant profit, because this isn't an easy substance to deal with. It's the same that alcohol is not an easy substance to deal with. They are regulated substances.

When we look at our Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation, they have staff that are well trained, that know how to deal with regulated substances. I believe that culture of responsibility and expertise can be extended to the culture of selling cannabis.

I would hope, once again, that this is providing opportunities. So let's not work in haste and miss the opportunities for increased wealth for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm willing now to take my seat, Mr. Speaker. Again, I believe that much more in-depth analysis needs to be done. We have to be careful not to throw away and miss this opportunity that might be facing us as a province.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: If the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board speaks now, he will close debate.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not going to drag out the closing remarks in this because we are getting into Committee and I'm going to allow all Members to ask questions. I'll be happy to answer questions as we get into it.

I will say this is a necessary first step, this piece of legislation, in allowing the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation the ability to put in place regulations to set up a distribution network, to put out an RFP process to allow private businesses to set up storefronts and sell cannabis products in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

So there's been a great deal of work put into this by many departments within government. We had a committee of several departments working on this to take into account the legal implications, the enforcement implications, the social implications and, as well, the regulations to allow for businesses to sell and businesses to grow within this province, cannabis products.

We've looked at all models, Mr. Speaker, to allow for private business to set up, create employment, to create opportunities for the people of the province and to create revenue for the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation, as well as taxation revenue and the tax put in place, the excise tax by the federal government, of which we'll get our share.

On that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude remarks. I look forward to the questions at which point we will get into greater detail.

Thank you.

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

The motion is that Bill 23 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: A bill, An Act To Amend The Liquor Corporation Act. (Bill 23)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has now be read second time.

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

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

MR. SPEAKER: The Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: What I would suggest is normally I would say now, presently. What we're going to do, with the consent of my colleagues across the way, we will break. Now we will recess until 6:30, given that we've invoked the Standing Order.

So we'll come back 6:30 and at that point we will proceed into Committee on this bill.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Liquor Corporation Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 23)

MR. SPEAKER: This House stands in recess until 6:30 o'clock p.m.