



Province of Newfoundland

FORTY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND

Volume XLI

Second Session

Number 71

VERBATIM REPORT
(Hansard)

Speaker: Honourable Thomas Lush

Tuesday

[Preliminary Transcript]

6 November 1990

The House met at 2:00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker (Lush): Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations.

Ms Cowan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask you today for the House, if you would, to send condolences to the family of Hugo Tims. Hugo Tims was an international representative with the United Food and Commercial Workers for Canada, and unfortunately died in a car accident over the weekend. He was known throughout the union movement as a man who was very, very dedicated to his workers, he had a great deal of compassion for the people he came in contact with and was an untiring worker for his union. So, I would most appreciate it if the House would, indeed, agree to send condolences to his wife, Maria and family, and, as well, to the UFCW Canada.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

Mr. Doyle: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we certainly want to be associated with the remarks of the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations regarding the late Hugo Tims. He was, indeed, a very capable organizer for the Commercial Workers Union, I am told. As the Minister said a moment ago he was, indeed, a very compassionate individual and a great negotiator as well. He will undoubtedly be missed by the Labour Movement of Newfoundland and Labrador. We join with the Minister in expressing those condolences to his family.

Statements by Ministers

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations.

Ms Cowan: Mr. Speaker, today, I am proposing steps to address concerns that have been ongoing for some time, particularly in the construction industry. Consistent with our campaign promise of last year to look at such problems as double breasting, I will, in the near future be proposing to this hon. House amendments to The Labour Relations Act, 1977.

The issue of double breasting will be addressed, as will be the need for a jurisdictional umpire for the construction industry and the concept of multi-trade bargaining. I have completed a series of meetings with groups who will be affected by these changes, and I have provided a copy of this statement to the Opposition Office.

People in the construction industry are quite familiar with the terms, double breasting, jurisdictional umpire and multi-trade bargaining, and recognize them as problems of a persistent and aggravating nature.

An example of double breasting would be a construction contractor who is operating under a certification order or collective agreement and who establishes another company which is non-unionized and operates in basically the same line of business, while the unionized company lies dormant. If this is done as a way of getting around obligations imposed by a certification order or collective agreement, the proposed legislation will, I hope, prevent such practices.

The establishment of a

jurisdictional umpire would provide a mechanism for the resolution of disputes among trades as to the appropriate trade to perform a particular type of work.

The introduction of multi-trade bargaining would provide more stability in the industrial and commercial sector of the construction industry as they would require the establishment of a council of trade unions to act in negotiations for all trades collectively. The present practice of each trade negotiating individually with the Contractors' Association would cease.

These changes, Mr. Speaker, are designed to encourage a healthier framework for labour relations in the construction industry and to promote a stable climate that will benefit all contractors and trades.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

Mr. Doyle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Minister as well for the advance copy of her statement. Overall, Mr. Speaker, I view the Minister's statement as being a very positive one, and one which I feel will be received well by the Building Trades Council of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The whole issue of double breasting has been a very, very sore point in the construction industry for far too long, and the Minister says she is hoping the amendments to the Labour Relations Act of 1977 are going to solve that particular problem. I would hope that the legislation is made sufficiently strong enough, Mr. Speaker, to prevent that practice from occurring again, and this is

where the full co-operation, I believe, of the NCLRA will be vital in this regard, as well.

I will caution the Minister to consult fully with the Building Trades Council and with the NCLRA on this issue before the amendments are brought into law. And it has to be made clear that no one is preventing the non-union sector from existing.

What the legislation will do, hopefully, is prevent the practice of a contractor who is operating under a certification order or a collective agreement from circumventing his duties and responsibilities under the terms and conditions of that collective agreement, and I support that fully. I think it provides a level playing field, if you will, for all people involved in the construction industry.

The multi-trade bargaining part of it, hopefully that concept is going to be received well by the construction industry also, because it, too, has a tremendous potential to avoid, if you will, the number of strikes and walkouts we have in the industry from time to time.

The reason why I say hopefully, is because what multi-trade bargaining does, for the benefit of those who may not realize, is take away a certain amount of the autonomy of a particular union to negotiate its own individual collective agreement. And what will happen, of course, is that the Building Trades Council will now be the bargaining agent for the union, and you will have the NCLRA which will be the bargaining agent for the employer and -

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. Member's time is up.

Mr. Doyle: - will negotiate all fourteen collective agreements. So, Mr. Speaker, I hope the legislation will prevent a lot of strikes and lockouts in the future and provide better and healthier labour relations, finally.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Oral Questions

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, yesterday on the news the administrator of the Western Memorial Hospital, Dr. Watts, in response to the directive issued by the Minister of Health on October 15, advising that their budget will be frozen to approximately equal the current fiscal year, confirmed that the implication for their organization is the effective loss of between \$4.5 million to \$5 million next year. I want to ask the Premier this, will he finally admit that the professionals who are responsible for the running of these institutions have indeed correctly calculated the fiscal and financial effect of the Budget freeze - that there will indeed be cuts? Or does he continue to maintain the fiction that nobody knows that there is this great conspiracy among hospital administrators, school boards, teachers, unions, the Opposition, the media to fabricate the truth?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: For the twenty-first time, maybe twenty-second time, yes, I did it this morning on a radio program,

for the twenty second time, Mr. Speaker, no decisions are made, therefore no announcements can be made, no confirmation can be given. I reaffirm the Minister and other Ministers have asked the agencies for which they are responsible to give us advice as to what would be the consequences if they had no more money next year than they had this year, and that may well be the possibility, but it may not be. We do not know yet because no decisions are made.

Now let me repeat, no decisions are made. I do not know what it takes for hon. members to accept that statement that no decisions are made. We are simply gathering together information. Now if we are to deal with the financial consequences of the national economic recession, and I just saw today in the newspaper, an article that indicates the economists now believe that the recession will be - Stats Can sees no sign that the recession has hit the bottom. Mr. Speaker, we have to be responsible acting for the taxpayers of this Province, and we intend to be. And we will make the decision when the time comes, but no decisions are yet made. Whether the Department of Health's budget is going to be frozen at exactly what it is or not is still not decided. There may or may not be massive reduction. There is no definitive decision. We have asked each of the agencies to tell us what would be the consequences of freezing the Budget at this year's level. When we get the information back we will make the decision.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On a supplementary, the Premier says that no decisions have been taken. I mean everybody in the world understands that the directive has been issued that their budgets will be frozen next year. Now, Mr. Speaker, if the Premier continues to take this position that there are, in fact, no cuts and all the rest of it, can he explain then why his own Minister of Health in an interview in The Telegram on October 17 confirmed \$60 million will be needed from hospitals and homes. And he went on to say, and I quote, 'I am not naive enough to believe we can make these kinds of cuts without hurting the system.' His own Minister using the cut word himself, Mr. Speaker.

So I want to ask the Premier this: Is his own Minister fabricating the truth? Is his own Minister part of this conspiracy that he refers to all the time? Why does he not admit there are going to be severe cuts? Why does he not stop skirting around the issue?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, the Minister and I have been saying the same things. If we are to deal with this problem we have to make some substantial changes in the way in which we deliver services, in the level of services, the number of employees, or some combination of it. We do not know yet what that will be. We are not so naive as to think that you can operate all agencies and departments of Government in the next fiscal year for approximately the same amount that we have available this fiscal year without making some significant changes. Now those changes may

take a variety of forms and we do not yet know what the form will be. It may be substantial reductions in jobs, it may be substantial reduction in services, it may mean no reduction in jobs. For example, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's office is one example. It is not exempt, it is subject to the same thing. We will live within the Budget of the Premier's office this year. There will be no increase budgeted for the Premier's office for the coming year. Now, we have made the commitment to do that. I do not think there will be a single job lost. I am not dead certain of that yet but as I see it now I do not think there will be one job lost, but we will not spend any more money than we are spending this year.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, I think it is time for the Premier to take his blinkers off, or at least call his Minister of Health in and have a chat with him, because everybody saw the news last night and the Minister of Health virtually confirmed that the freeze was on. There is no question about it in anybody's mind. Having seen that news story I want to ask the Premier this, is he now going to sit back and allow the Burgeo hospital, for example, to close, losing twenty-five jobs, to allow the Bonne Bay hospital to change its use, losing another ten jobs, and to allow the closing of beds and the reduction of services at the Western Memorial hospital, as said last night, losing another 100 jobs? Is he going to allow that to happen? Is he going to tell the public what the truth is?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, I can understand that perhaps the Opposition may be motivated to try and make life as difficult as they can for the Government. I understand that motivation, but what one cannot forgive, Mr. Speaker, is causing great difficulty, uncertainty, pain, and discomfort, for the people of this Province. Everybody knows what the position of the Government is. We have made it clear. We do not know what will be the extent of the reductions yet. I cannot believe that the members opposite can be so incompetent as not to accept and understand that. It must be motivated to cause some other difficulty, and I regret they are doing that, because they are causing great discomfort and concern to the people of this Province. We expect there will be some reductions. We are not so naive as to think there will not be an impact on the way in which Government has delivered services. We are trying to cut out every ounce of fat that there is in the system, and trying to provide the people of this Province with the maximum level of services at the lowest possible cost. When we have all the information we will make the decision and we will tell everybody in the Province what those decisions are.

Mr. Simms: A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the Premier that the announced freeze by the Government has already caused great difficulty for the Province, not from what we are doing, I can assure him of that. The more we

hear the Premier twist and turn, Mr. Speaker, the more I am inclined to call him a Pinnochio.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. Member is on a supplementary.

Mr. Simms: Let me ask him this then: Is he aware that the announced budgetary policy of the Government has started an exodus of young nurses and graduate nurses from our health care system already, who are leaving in anticipation of layoffs? That is a fact. And also, does he not recognize that the hard-to-get trained medical specialists will leave because their operating time is going to be reduced and hospital beds are going to be closed?

When is he going to open his eyes and tell the people what they should be told, the people who elected him to govern?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, that was the situation before we took responsibility for governing and provided for increases for nurses. That was indeed the situation. That was the justification for the increase that we provided to nurses. Because they had been so unfairly treated by the former government for so long!

Some Hon. Members: Hear hear!

Premier Wells: We took steps to correct that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Speaker: Order please! Order please!

Premier Wells: Now Mr. Speaker, I am aware - I saw the TV interviews as other people did - that there happened to be a recruiter here in the last few days from Florida, recruiting nurses with great proposals for even higher pay than the very substantial increase we gave to nurses, even higher pay, and with all kinds of extra amenities to offer in terms of the Florida sunshine and other things that would attract young nurses to Florida. So one can understand the difficulty that the Government has in making sure that we have an adequate supply of nurses. That is one of the reasons why we had to correct the great disservice the former government did to the nursing profession, by providing for this increase and, Mr. Speaker, will continue to so provide.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Grand Bank.

Mr. Matthews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Premier. On October 23 the Leader of the Opposition raised a question about leasing of vehicles to the Economic Recovery Commission. The Premier replied that the Economic Recovery Commission has neither purchased nor leased any vehicles. In a supplementary question the Leader of the Opposition asked the Premier to check out car leases for executive personnel at Enterprise Newfoundland or NewCorp, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Development Corporation - all agencies established under the Economic Recovery Commission.

Is the Premier now able to provide full information on this issue to the House?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, I have to confess that I had forgotten about it. I asked to have the information obtained and I had forgotten about it. The Minister just tells me that in Enterprise Newfoundland and Labrador, it is exactly the same number of vehicles that they had when it was part of the Department - in NLDC. There has been no change. But they changed one lease vehicle, traded in one on a leased vehicle. But I will get the detail. I apologize to the House that I did not get the detail. I will get it and submit it in writing. I will have it tomorrow at least.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Grand Bank.

Mr. Matthews: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier said, no, last week when asked specifically about the vice-presidents, as I recall, of the various corporations.

Supplementary to the Premier. When he is checking out this information and ready to give it to the Legislature, would the Premier check a 1990 black Chrysler Dynasty, license number AOG 1S0, registered to Newfoundland and Labrador Development Corporation, and driven by Mr. Fraser Lush, Central Regional Vice-President of NewCorp? And as well would he check a grey Chevy cab pickup, license number GPF 033, registered to the Department of Development and Tourism, and driven by Mr. Marshall, Vice-President of NewCorp in Labrador, as I understand it. Will he undertake to check these things out?

Premier Wells: He will.

Mr. Matthews: He will? Is the answer, he will?

An Hon. Member: He said he will, yes.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Grand Bank.

Mr. Matthews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is obvious that these vice-presidents, besides receiving what Newfoundlanders would consider a very good salary, I suppose some are within the \$65,000 to \$75,000 range - it is just a guess from looking at the Department of Development's ADM budget of, I think, some \$350,000 for five ADMs. Can the Premier then justify to the Legislature and to the people of this Province how people being paid these high salaries can get additional perks in light of the severe cutbacks we are seeing in Education, Health, Transportation and so on in this Province? How can that be justified in this time of severe cutting by the Government?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, we found when we got in and got control and took a look at it, that there were 1,400 cars in different Government Departments, cars and pickups put there by the former administration. I can assure the House, Mr. Speaker, that if that is not cut in half, I may have to eat a shirt or two, and I hope I get to shrink it before I eat it. But our objective, Mr. Speaker, is to eliminate those to the maximum extent possible. Now we found 1,400. We know that some people do need automobiles, and I can say to you, Mr. Speaker, I do not know if there were any new cars bought lately, but if somebody has bought

a new car in Government lately there is going to be some trouble. Because nobody should be buying, no Government department or no Government agency should be buying or leasing new automobiles, at this stage. None should be. And, Mr. Speaker, if that process is still in place, we will get it stopped in a hurry.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Premier Wells: It may be. I am not saying that there is perfect control of everything. It may well be that that has occurred. But, Mr. Speaker, we will track it down wherever we can and it will be stopped. Because the Government will have ample surplus vehicles for sometime to come, because we are going to cut that monstrous expense of millions of dollars that the former administration had in place and save the taxpayers of this Province some money.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Grand Bank.

Mr. Matthews: A final supplementary to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. Would the Premier seriously consider cutting and eliminating that unnecessary expenditure known as the Economic Recovery Commission?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: The reliability of the economic future of this Province may be dependent upon the Economic Recovery Commission. And let me just say to the hon. members opposite, Mr. Speaker, that if we do not create ten times as many jobs as the former Government attempted to create and failed with the Sprung expenditure in half the expenditure on the

ERC, if we do not create ten times as many jobs, I will come before this House and ask to have it disbanded. Not ten times as many as they did create, ten times as many as they proposed to create. They proposed to create 200 jobs with Sprung and blew some \$24 million of the taxpayers' money against all advice.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if we do not create ten times that many with less than half the expenditure on the ERC, I will come before this House and ask for the repeal of the ERC legislation.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

Mr. Doyle: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Energy indicated a couple of weeks ago that there was some danger that some of the major oil companies could very well be using the situation in the Middle East to gouge consumers into paying higher prices for heating fuel and gas and what have you, and the Minister said Government would closely monitor and meet with the oil companies to ensure that everything was aboveboard. Now, the Minister is aware that each time the price of gas increases the provincial coffers grow correspondingly because of the ad valorem tax that the Finance Department charges on heating fuel and gas. Given the fact that the gas is going up today - I believe gas has gone up again today by three cents a litre - would the Minister agree to immediately freeze the ad valorem tax at its current level and give the consumer a break?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

Dr. Kitchen: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Windsor: You are not even going to consider it?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

Mr. Doyle: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary for the Minister of Energy. The Minister of Energy recently made reference to the fact that he would possibly look at the Public Utilities Board as being one avenue to regulate or control or monitor the price of fuel and gas in this regard. The PUB has been less than effective in regulating electricity rates, and in view of the seriousness of the situation, would the Minister consider the establishment of a separate agency or a board to take on the responsibility of consumer watchdog on this one issue? Because, this winter, people in the Province are really going to take a beating on the high price of fuel, at a time when they can least afford it?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Dr. Gibbons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have been reviewing the pros and cons of all options over the last few weeks and we have been meeting with the oil companies. This morning I met with the President of Ultramar, the third of the majors, and this afternoon I will be meeting with the President of Irving. That will conclude our round of meetings.

After that time, I expect that Minister Dicks and I will be putting something together which we will bring forward to our

Cabinet colleagues over the next few weeks or months, and look at all the pros and cons of whether there should be regulation, whether we should leave things as they are.

I do not mind reporting to this House of Assembly that as of this morning the total increase in regular unleaded gas in Newfoundland now stands at eight cents per litre from what it was before the crisis. The increase in New Brunswick also stands at 8.0 cents per litre since before the crisis, and in Nova Scotia, where there is a Public Utility Board regulation in place, the price stands at 8.0 cents per litre above what it was before the crisis. So, at this time, we are consistent with what the situation is in the regulated area of Nova Scotia, and this same thing pretty well applies in the other types of fuels. In the meantime, we are monitoring it very, very, closely.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

Mr. Doyle: I would say to the Minister, Mr. Speaker, that monitoring is not good enough. The consumer needs some protection at this point in time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Doyle: I have a supplementary for the Premier. I had it for the Minister of Justice but he is not here, so I will direct the supplementary to the Premier. Currently, we have seven Consumer Affairs offices in Newfoundland: You have three in St. John's, one in Corner Brook, one in Gander, one in Grand Falls, and one in Goose Bay. The Consumer Affairs office in Grand Falls, the consumer rep who was at that

office has now been transferred to the Department of Labour and the secretary is serving that office. The one in Goose Bay, the consumer rep has gone to Social Services and that is being served by code-a-phone. Now, surely in these times of high gas prices, high oil prices, heating fuel and what have you, the consumer needs all the protection he can get. I would ask the Premier why is the Government downgrading these Consumer Affairs offices, and is it the intention of Government to continue the downgrading of these offices, to the point where all seven offices are going to be closed in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: I would hope that the implication from the hon. member's question is not that there would not be this kind of gasoline price increase if there was a consumer rep in Goose Bay and one in Grand Falls. That appears to be the thrust of it.

An Hon. Member: Answer the question.

Premier Wells: Okay. Here is the question as I understand it. In these times of high increase in gas prices, will the Premier tell the House why they are reducing consumer reps in Goose Bay and Grand Falls? Because it can have no possible bearing whatsoever on the price of gas.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

Mr. Doyle: Mr. Speaker, that was not my question to the Premier. I realize that the closing of a Consumer Affairs offices can have very little effect on the price of

gas and oil in the Province, but if you have a Consumer Affairs office at least the public have the avenue and the opportunity to make their concerns and views known and they can expect some protection from a Consumer Affairs office.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. member is on a supplementary.

Mr. Doyle: Now, as I asked the Premier a moment ago, why is the Government downgrading the Consumer Affairs offices in both Goose Bay and Grand Falls? And is it the intention of Government because of budgetary cutbacks and all the rest of it, to close down all Consumer Affairs offices in the Province, or any of them?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, I will undertake to get the information relating to what he calls the closedown, because I do not have personal knowledge of it. I will undertake to get it and provide it to the House. Otherwise, I will have the Minister of Justice, who is the Minister responsible, answer the hon. member's question.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Green Bay.

Mr. Hewlett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Education said he was following the Auditor General's advice in applying the fine print of student aid regulations by only issuing student aid grants to cover courses for which a student was registered. The previous PC Government pursued a policy that

treated any student taking three or more courses to be full-time and thus eligible for a full student aid grant. A student taking three, four, or five courses would get the full grant. That was our policy. Will the Minister not admit at this time that matching the grants given with the exact number of courses taken is indeed a real policy change on the part of this Liberal administration?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, there have been no cuts in student aid.

Ms Verge: Oh!

Dr. Warren: May I repeat, Mr. Speaker? There have been no cuts in student aid. There have, indeed, been substantial increases in student aid in this Province.

Mr. Simms: Tell that to the students.

Dr. Warren: There have been no cuts in student aid, Mr. Speaker. What has happened is that students who pay less in tuition get a little less in student grants because the tuition is part of the package that makes up the needs that result in a grant to students. If a student pays \$135 less -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Education.

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, if a student started off by paying for a full load of courses and reduces the load and subsequently the tuition is reduced, that student

gets precisely the same reduction in the grant. If the student paid it up front, they get a refund from the university and they get less from us. If they do not pay, we pay less to them, the exact figure that the tuition is reduced. That is precisely the situation. There has been no cut whatsoever in student aid.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Green Bay.

Mr. Hewlett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think what the Minister is indicating is that now with a new computerized system, we can accurately check on people very quickly at any given moment of any given day or week.

Mr. Speaker, that being the case, the President of the Student Union at Memorial sits on the Student Aid Advisory Council. Why was the President not informed of this new policing policy, this computerized policing policy so that students could have a reasonable time frame of warning in order to prepare their personal lives for these cutbacks?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, I might add a little more general information. Only students at Memorial have been affected. The thousands of other students in the Province have not been affected in any way. There are, I gather, about 700 or 800 students at Memorial who have been affected; adjustments have been made. All students know, and I have met with students. Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I met with the Newfoundland Federation of Students. I am meeting the President of the Student Council, I think tomorrow

morning or on Thursday morning, to discuss this. Most students know that the amount of grant they get and the loan is determined by their expenses. And if expenses are less than the amount of the grant, then the loan will be less. Students know that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Green Bay.

Mr. Hewlett: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister says students know. I spoke to two or three different students yesterday, including the President of the Student Union. This policy change by this Liberal Government was a complete surprise to these students. Will not the Minister admit that to this House?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Dr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, there has been no policy change. We are a little more efficient than the former Government. And, by the way, the students of this Province appreciate what we have done for student aid in this Province. Mr. Speaker, we have increased the grants, we have increased the book allowances, we have improved the delivery of student grants, we have done tremendous things in student aid in the past year and the students of this Province know it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Humber East.

Ms. Verge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Since October 1 the Premier's Government has been treating maintenance as non-allowable income and the Department of Social Services has been subtracting maintenance and

child support dollar for dollar from social assistance pay to social assistance recipients. As the Premier should now realize, this has cost close to 1,000 single parent families up to \$115 a month each. The change was made without any warning to them.

Last Thursday, when the Premier was in Labrador, the Minister of Justice admitted to the House of Assembly that the Government did not amend the Social Assistance Regulations to give legal authorization for the deductions that have been made since October 1. Outside the House the Minister of Justice said that -

Mr. Speaker: Would the hon. Member please get on. It is a rather long preamble.

Ms Verge: Yes, it is a long preamble.

Mr. Speaker: I will ask the hon. Member to get on with the question.

Ms Verge: I am pleading to one question, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Justice told reporters that the Government may amend the regulations retroactively so the Government, as it were, may cover its tracks. My question to the Premier is, since the Premier is an experienced lawyer and a person who prides himself on doing things correctly, will the Premier assure the House of Assembly that he will be no part of retroactive lawmaking, costing poor people money? And will he assure the House he will be no part of a covering of tracks?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member knows that when she was Minister of Justice it was

occasionally necessary to have legislation passed with retroactive effect. It was occasionally necessary to do that, whether it was by legislation or regulation.

As a matter of fact, the statute, the Social Assistance Act, that was brought before the House by the former government provides in Section 28 (3) as follows: 'Regulations made under subsection (1) and/or (2) shall be laid before the Assembly within fifteen (15) days after they are made, or if the Assembly is not sitting'... I am sorry, I am reading the wrong one - Subsection (3): 'Regulations made under (1) and (2) shall be published in The Gazette and have effect from the date of publication or such earlier or later date as may be stated in the regulations.'

So it contemplates that possibility, and the hon. member knows that this is not an unusual event. If it becomes necessary to do it with an earlier effect, the Government has announced its position, the Minister has made the situation quite clear, so I see nothing wrong with it.

Mr. Speaker: Question Period has expired.

Petitions

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

Mr. Warren: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The petition I have here today could be, and I stand to be corrected by the Clerk of the House, who has probably been in this Legislature longer than any of us, but it could probably

be the biggest petition every presented, Mr. Speaker. It contains 16,813 signatures, plus a letter from the Newfoundland and Labrador Wildlife Federation of which I quote a paragraph which says: 'The Board wishes this letter to be used at the advice of our entire membership of hunters and fishermen in support of your cause on Sunday hunting.'

Mr. Speaker, this petition was delivered to me a few days ago. I wish to compliment Mr. Gordon Rice and Mr. Art Miller, two individuals who, for the last number of months, have worked diligently in getting this Government to address the Sunday hunting issue.

Mr. Speaker, the Sunday hunting issue is a law that has been on the books since 1863, 127 years ago. I think this Government now has the opportunity to change the law, to either have Sunday hunting or no Sunday hunting or to partially lift the ban. Above all, Mr. Speaker, what I find most disturbing in the whole idea of Sunday hunting is the penalty. Any individual in this Province who received a big game licence will indicate that it is from a period, for example, from October 15 to December 31. That licence does not indicate that you cannot hunt on Sundays. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, if a hunter is caught hunting on Sundays, he or she is treated as a poacher.

An Hon. Member: And so he should be.

Mr. Warren: Mr. Speaker, let me say to my hon. colleague, the Minister of Social Services, I believe it should be the choice of the individual whether that person wishes to hunt on Sunday or not.

I think it is time for us as legislators to come to grips with the issue. We can do one of two things, Mr. Speaker. The Premier always says he believes in fairness and balance. Why not have one of the Legislation Committees go throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and get the views of the people. That is number one.

Number two, which I think should be done, Mr. Speaker, there are members in this Legislature on both sides of this issue, and it is time for us to be able to stand up as men and women and be allowed to have a free vote in this Legislature on this very important issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Warren: I think this issue is important enough so that each one of the fifty-one of us, and if there is a tie the Speaker can vote of course, but to have this issue settled once and for all and let the many thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians out there who wish to either hunt on Sunday or not at least know that the Legislature of Newfoundland and Labrador, in the 'nineties, has made a decision that everyone would have to live with. With that Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask you Sir, to have this petition presented to - I would say to the Department to which it relates, but looking at all the petitions here, it is addressed to the Premier of the Province. It is addressed to the Premier of the Province and wishes that the Premier, who has advocated time and time again that he will do what is fair and balanced, will do so. With that, Mr. Speaker, I support the petition as presented and ask this

Legislature to have a free vote on the issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Before recognizing the Premier, if hon. Members would permit the Chair to make a few general comments about the presenting of petitions, so that we avoid confusion and abide by the rules of the House with respect to the presenting of petitions.

In many instances in the last few days particularly, hon. Members have failed to read the prayer of the petition. I know the hon. Member referred to a letter, but it certainly was not the prayer of the petition. It makes it easier for the Chair to judge how the debate is taking place because, as hon. Members know, in speaking to a petition the rules are fairly firm: we are only to speak to the signatures and the numbers and the material allegations of the petition.

I would ask hon. Members in the future to read the prayer so that it gives the Chair some guidance and direction, and I ask hon. Members to certainly try to adhere to these rules.

The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, 16,000 signatures is impressive. Is it 16,000 the hon. Member said, or 6,000?

Some Hon. Members: Sixteen.

Premier Wells: Sixteen. Yes, that is an impressive number of signatures. And I suspect it reflects the views of a good deal more than the 16,000 that are

signed, because there are a lot of people who would hold the same view who have not signed it, obviously. So it is an impressive number and probably indicates that it reflects the views of a very significant number of people.

The striking thing, Mr. Speaker - I know the pressure being put on by the hon. Members opposite with respect to Sunday hunting - is that they could have been so aware of it for so long and did nothing about it when they had an opportunity. But leaving that aside for the moment, Mr. Speaker, there are two sides to every issue.

An Hon. Member: He cannot answer without blaming it on somebody else.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, the hon. members have had their say. I would like to have an opportunity without the dull roar they create over there by those noises. Mr. Speaker, I do not think anybody would deny that the prohibition against Sunday hunting that was put into effect, as the hon. Member says, in 1863 was put into effect for religious reasons. Now I have no doubt that that was the original motivation.

I can say to you, Mr. Speaker, that if there were no such ban or prohibition in existence today, I do not think anybody would be allowed to put it into effect for religious reasons today. But they may well be allowed, and it would be quite proper to put it into effect, a prohibition against hunting at certain times of the week or certain days of the week for other good and valid reasons: either proper management of stocks, or to allow people who are not hunters to use the outdoors without the apprehension of being

hurt or without the fear of that being of concern to them. So there are a large number of people who have those concerns.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have no personal aversion to Sunday hunting, none whatsoever. From my personal point of view, I think we do a lot worse to offend God's law on Sunday than hunt - a good many of us. So, Mr. Speaker it is not a question of Sunday hunting. But there is a large number of people in this Province who want one day a week to feel confident that they can go into the outdoors of our Province without being apprehensive about what could happen to them. So I have a concern about them. Maybe we can change it from Sunday to Saturday or Wednesday. Or some other day it could be done. But I suspect they would want either Saturday or Sunday, because that is the day when they also have their weekend off. So I can understand the way a large portion of our people feel, and no doubt the petition presented by the hon. Member represents an opinion significantly larger in number than the 16,000 who signed the petition.

But beside that 16,000 who signed the petition there are at least 554,000 other people in this Province, and, Mr. Speaker, maybe I am wrong, but it is my judgement that a significant portion of them want at least one of the two days on the weekend when they can feel free to wander in the environment without being apprehensive about what could happen to them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak in support of the petition presented by my colleague, the Member for Torngat Mountains.

Like the Premier and the Member for Torngat Mountains, I would like to commend the organizers who, I understand, are in the gallery today for undertaking such a gigantic effort.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Simms:
To obtain the signatures of nearly 17,000 Newfoundlanders from all around the Province is a magnificent effort. In addition to that, do not forget the covering letter from the Newfoundland and Labrador Wildlife Federation which represents somewhere between 12,000 or 13,000 more. So you are actually looking at representation from about 30,000 Newfoundlanders. The Wildlife Federation indicate that they speak on behalf of their body, so that is a significant accomplishment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Member pointed out that this is an antiquated law. It got its bearing, I guess, back in 1863, 127 years ago. That in itself should tell us that something should be looked at in terms of revision, that it has been there for an awfully long time. The last amendments, I guess, were back in the 1869-70 period. We all know that everybody - everybody - in the Province have their own opinions on the issue; it is like some other prominent issues with which we are all familiar.

However, Governments are elected to make decisions. Now, Mr.

Speaker, the Premier in response, of course, tried to somehow slough off the responsibility by saying, Why didn't the previous Administration do anything about it? Well, Mr. Speaker, I point out to him we never had a petition presented to us, certainly not one this size. I do not know if we ever did in specifics, to change the law.

There was a court case which went on for quite a while and, indeed, during that period of a year and a half or whatever it was, there was Sunday hunting in this Province. Eventually the Governments changed and this Government has the responsibility.

As I understand it from the organizers of this petition, one of their major problems with the Government is that when the Minister provided its response to their request to have a look at this law, the Government did not state the reason for taking the decision they did, which was to leave things comfortably as they are.

Now let me just add this, Mr. Speaker. The Government should review this matter again, since it has been raised and a petition referred to the Premier, and consider the arguments from its own professional employees, and I refer to the Province's Wildlife Hunting Education Co-ordinator who shoots down all the arguments that have been made about safety. He is a professional, and he, himself, has said that hunting and related firearms use is one of the most enjoyable and safest of all outdoor recreation activities, and belief to the contrary, he says, is misconception.

He also says the only firearm

accidents he can recall in game habitat during the past twenty years include the person carrying the firearm or the partner: not hikers, not berry pickers. And he said accidents involving firearms have indeed declined over the last thirteen years or so. And here is an interesting comment from the professional wildlife person. Of the 177 accidental deaths from all causes in 1985, firearms accounted for one, vehicle accidents took sixty-eight lives, and drowning accounted for thirty. So their own professional officials in Wildlife shoot down the argument of hunting and safety, Mr. Speaker.

Now, there are many other arguments, many other points which have to be made and should be raised while the Government is reviewing this particular issue, and I presume they will. One big argument is on behalf of those people who do hunt, and that is that many of them have only the weekend off to do their hunting. Many people hunt on Saturdays and Sundays. They only get the weekends off and they cannot hunt on Sundays, so they only have the Saturdays. That is discriminatory to those people who always want to go in and do their hunting and they cannot do it on a Sunday. It is a bit discriminatory. They have the right to hunt. Under their license they have the right to hunt but they cannot hunt on Sunday because they will be hit with a \$1000 fine, they will lose their vehicles, or they could be imprisoned, of course, for a second offence, and so on. The penalties for this particular activity are worse in many cases, or certainly just as bad, as somebody who is charged with poaching, which is a far worse crime, I believe, than hunting on Sunday. Mr. Speaker, for all the

right reasons the point the member is making is that people should have the right to chose, if they wish, to hunt on Sunday but they cannot do it because of the existing law as it now stands, and the Government, particularly the Premier, to whom this petition is addressed should give a commitment to review this matter, review this issue, and have discussions. At the very worst, perhaps take the advice, have a committee to have a look at it or perhaps have a free vote in the House and let us see where the elected members of the people stand on the issue.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Menihek.

Mr. A. Snow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to rise and present a petition to this House on behalf of 228 people, residents of Western Labrador who have signed a petition in their concern over the closure of the Motor Vehicle Registration office in Wabush. The prayer of the petition is to the hon. House of Assembly of Newfoundland in the Legislative session convened, the petition of the undersigned residents of Wabush and Labrador City: We protest the decision of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to close the Motor Vehicle Registration office in Wabush, and your petitioners urge the Government to reconsider this decision which will have the effect of eliminating an essential government service in our communities.

Yesterday, I also had the opportunity of presenting a petition in this House that was signed by almost 400 people, and

last night I was delivered another petition signed by 228 people who are concerned about the closure of this service that had been offered to the residents of Western Labrador for the last ten years, a service that the people of Western Labrador had fought long and hard to acquire from previous administrations. It means a loss of two jobs in Western Labrador, and one of those had sixteen years service with this Government. Yesterday the Premier spoke in response to a petition I had presented on the same issue and he suggested that they had saved two jobs. There were three jobs in total in the Motor Vehicle Registration office in Wabush, two of which have been made redundant. There is one left, not two. They did not save two jobs. They cut two jobs and left one remaining there, which is a driver examiner. I just want to correct that statement that the Premier made.

Premier Wells: (Inaudible).

Mr. A. Snow: No, that is not what you said. Or at least that is not what Hansard recorded you said. Also, yesterday the Premier quoted that in reference to mail, that the hon. member was wrong in the sense that the mail was slow in delivery to Labrador, and that was one of the concerns that people had. The method of issuing licenses to the residents of Western Labrador for the next year is going to be totally by mail because the service will not be in place to supplement, or to replace this service that had been there for the last ten years, so people will have to use the mails only, unlike other people in this Province who have the choice of going to their offices in Mount Pearl, Corner Brook, Grand Falls,

or Gander. In this particular case the Premier suggested that the mail would not have any effect, the slow delivery of mail would not have any effect. Well it will have an effect because the people may not get their licenses on time, and especially in light of the fact that this service, this new improved efficient service that they are talking about, is not going to be there for a full year before this comes to replace it, this new efficient service is going to be a year before it comes to be.

The Premier yesterday in speaking to the petition that I did present quoted 'that it was unbelievable that there should be any reaction or criticism to the Government taking the kind of approach to save money for the taxpayers.' Well the people of Western Labrador are not unaware of the problems of spending of tax dollars wisely. As a matter of fact they are quite prudent in recommending to their elected members, whether they be federal, provincial or municipal, on the expenditure of tax dollars. And one of the things why they are, I guess, prudent on the spending of those tax dollars is because they pay so many tax dollars to these levels of government. That is why they are so concerned. That is why they always express to me the utter amazement at this particular regime when they bungled \$1.5 million, they wasted \$1.5 million on a bridge in Labrador, on the infamous Ossok bridge. That particular \$1.5 million would have been able to keep that office open for the next fifteen years. The people of Western Labrador would be guaranteed this good service that they did have for the previous ten years for the next fifteen years if this particular

regime and this particular Minister and this department had been able to handle the contract that had been bungled over the Ossok bridge.

Mr. Simms: Right on.

Mr. A. Snow: So they are concerned about this saving of money.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. member's time is up.

Mr. A. Snow: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I would ask that the Government reassess their decision on closing the Wabush Office and have it open.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

I want to remind hon members that when I tell them that their time is up they should take their seat unless by leave of the House, of course, then the hon. member can clue up. I do not like to interfere with an hon. member when I know that I sense a feeling of finality, I will let him carry on. But ordinarily the member should take his place.

The hon. the Member for Fogo.

Mr. Winsor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to speak in support of the petition so ably put forth by my colleague from Menihék. The Premier yesterday indicated that only two jobs were being lost in the process. But I think what we have here is more symbolic than that because there is now a mindset out in the Province that the decentralization that was so talked about has now disappeared

and we see a centralization of powers occurring, we see it throughout all of the announcements in the Department of Transportation. We are very much afraid that what is coming is going to be even worse, that this Government has a centralist approach to doing things as opposed to decentralization. And we who live in rural Newfoundland where jobs are scarce are quite concerned that this approach that Government is now taking is going to have a further reduction in services, an erosion of services that existed for a long number of years.

The Premier yesterday in responding said that he had a responsibility to protect the taxpayers of the Province. I suggest to the Premier that perhaps no other place in this Province has contributed so much to the economy of the Province as Labrador West in terms of tax dollars.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Winsor: No other place. In fact, I recall the latest Stats Canada that did a Province analysis as per capita income. I think that section of the Province was the highest by far. And what do they get for it? They are now being penalized, the people who live the furthest from the centre of action here in St. John's are the people who get hit every time, small rural Newfoundland, isolated Labrador, and it goes on recognizing that the Government has some financial restraints that it has to impose on the people, is it right that we pick on the most vulnerable people, the people furthest from the centre, the people who can less defend themselves because they are not in

St. John's, three people cannot mount in fact a protest, not like the 1,000 teachers who could come to Newfoundland Hotel on Saturday. We do not have that luxury if we live in rural Newfoundland where there are only two or three people.

So I ask the Government to reconsider, to change this decision that has been made in the name of saving dollars that does nothing but further isolate the residents of Labrador and, indeed, most of Newfoundland.

Mr. Speaker: Are there any further petitions?

Mr. Hewlett: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Green Bay.

Mr. Hewlett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from a dozen residents of the small community of Sheppardville in the District of Green Bay. For the information of Members Sheppardville is a mile or two east of the Baie Verte Junction on the Trans Canada Highway.

The prayer of their petition is quite simple, Mr. Speaker. It goes as follows: Because an expenditure freeze in the health care system will mean layoffs and bed closures, we the undersigned residents of Green Bay District petition the Honourable House of Assembly not to approve such a freeze.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not mind standing here in this Assembly and indicating that during the last general election the residents of

Sheppardville did not support me at the polls. If my memory serves me correctly the Liberal Party got fifty-one votes in Sheppardville and the Progressive Conservative Party got thirty. But nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, I am their Member and they have asked me to bring their concerns forward. Obviously, in voting for the Liberal Party the residents of Sheppardville voted for what they thought was real change, which in terms of the agenda of the Liberal Party running in that election meant opening the hospital beds and not closing them down.

The residents of Sheppardville, Mr. Speaker, are served by the health care system that is headquartered in Springdale. And the impact of a freeze in the health care system in the Springdale area has been made known to the Government and to the public and to the employees by the administration therein. Specifically, a freeze from their point of view would mean closure of the only two childrens beds at the Springdale hospital, closure of twenty-four senior citizen home beds and the layoff of approximately twenty staff.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is a serious situation for people in Springdale and the surrounding Green Bay area. It is the nearest health care facility. The nearest one to it would be in Grand Falls, I guess, or the Baie Verte Peninsula which is probably even further away. The impact on the economy of the Green Bay area of the loss of twenty jobs and approximately \$600,000 or \$700,000 out of the local economy is, no doubt, of great concern to the residents in Sheppardville as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, I pass on the

concerns of the twelve signed residents and ask that the petition be tabled and referred to the appropriate department. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Are there any further petitions?

Mr. Hewlett: One further, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Green Bay.

Mr. Hewlett: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by twenty residents of the Green Bay area, teachers of Green Bay as a matter of fact. And the prayer of their petition is as follows: We, the undersigned teachers of Green Bay petition the House of Assembly to return the attached to Treasury Board - the attached, Mr. Speaker, is a batch of correspondence, I do believe, between the President of Treasury Board and individual teachers - we feel this is a waste of taxpayers money as the information was already presented to us. We also feel it improper of Treasury Board. That is the prayer of the petition.

Mr. Speaker, when I worked for the former Premier of the Province, as I have indicated in this Assembly on a number of occasions, I conducted public relations campaigns on his behalf when we got into major public policy battles with the Federal Government, other vested interest groups within our society, etcetera. But there was always one area of PR campaigning that was forbidden to me, and that was to do mass mailouts, targetted mailouts to individual union members. It was considered to be improper and I was told in no uncertain terms that it was

improper for me to go around the duly elected union membership, especially at a time when a collective bargaining situation was on the go. It was considered a breach of faith in the collective bargaining process to go around the union membership and go directly to the individual members - go around the union leadership I should say - and go directly to the individual members of the union.

Unfortunately, the Minister of the Treasury Board, I think, on two separate occasions now has seen fit to do that, to break with protocol I guess is the best way to describe it, certainly to break with past practice and to appeal directly his case to the individual members of a union when it is more properly done between the leadership of the Government and the leadership of the union affected. In this particular case, the Newfoundland Teachers Association.

So Mr. Speaker, I support this petition from the teachers of Green Bay, and I ask that it be tabled and referred I guess to the President of Treasury Board. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Grand Bank.

Mr. Matthews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take a minute to speak to this petition. There seems to be a number of them coming to the Legislature over the last number of days and I guess we are going to see quite a few more as the session goes on, because teachers in the Province have had their fill of, I guess, what you would call, disrespect for protocol. I guess that is how you could best sum it up. Lack of

respect for protocol by the President of Treasury Board.

And you would expect that that would not happen, being a former teacher himself, the old biology teacher himself, and being a member of the Newfoundland Teachers Association at one time, that you think he would understand protocol, and the way to go around things. And then when he is over there getting advice from two former presidents of the Newfoundland Teachers Association - the Member for Exploits and the Member for Conception Bay South - that you would really think that those two people would really be sensitive to proper protocol, as president of the Newfoundland Teachers Association and members on the executive and so on, and how teachers really feel strongly about proper protocol.

So I am very pleased, Mr. Speaker, to rise today to speak to this petition and to support the prayer of the petition and the teachers out and about who are a little annoyed and sore with the insensitive actions really by the President of Treasury Board and indeed by the Government in their contract negotiations. Because once again we are seeing here the Government is not negotiating. In essence they are making arbitrary decisions that are -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Matthews: The Member for Exploits says it is not true again. It is a funny thing that since the Member for Exploits became a Member of the Government that nothing is true about the Government. But when he was not a Member of the Government and was president of the Newfoundland Teachers Association then

everything that anyone said about the Government was true. Because the way things are most things said about governments when you are in disputes and on the other side, is for most times they are not very complimentary about the government.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support this petition. We are going to have many more come to the Legislature over the next number of days as the teachers throughout and about the Province become more and more annoyed with the treatment they are getting from the President of Treasury Board and the Government. And they are coming into all of our offices and into Government Members offices, even though some of the Government Members are denying that they have seen a letter -

An Hon. Member: Have not got one yet.

Mr. Matthews: Well, you have not got a letter about anything. Not only about the teachers. But anyway we will make sure that the Minister of Finance's remarks about not receiving a letter yet, that the Newfoundland Teachers Association will know. And I would not be surprised to see a Brink's truck now arrive any day - armoured car - to his office, to deliver a few letters. So having said that, Mr. Speaker, I support the petition of the teachers.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the President of Treasury Board.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Members of the Opposition make the point that there has been a change in

approach and so on. And I would like to simply confirm that there has been a tremendous change from -

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, a real change, a tremendous real change. Mr. Speaker, we, as all Members know, were faced with a huge problem in terms of the teachers' pension fund. The previous government knew about this problem, decided to do nothing about it, to pass it on to future generations to wait until the fund went bankrupt and then the teachers would have nothing in their fund and their pensions would be in danger. Just to let it go. And that was the attitude of Members opposite when they were in government. That was their attitude, a terrible, horrible attitude.

So, Mr. Speaker, things have changed. And we have a tremendous problem. And we have decided that we must correct this problem. Now Mr. Speaker -

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could have a little quiet for a few minutes, I do not normally want it, but -

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Baker: - in this case it is important.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Baker: So, we have decided that we must in all conscience, honesty, and decency, deal with that problem to guarantee that that pension fund is properly funded.

An Hon. Member: Nobody argues with that.

Mr. Baker: Nobody argues but everybody is saying, yes, that has to be done, so we are in the process of negotiating just that. As a matter of fact, during the last two days, Mr. Speaker, presentations were made to the conciliation board on behalf of Government, and on behalf of NTA, and I am assuming that three weeks from now when we get a conciliation board report - that is part of the negotiating process - the NTA asked for a conciliation board, was granted one, and we have gone through the process. Hopefully, three weeks from now something will come out of that process that will form the basis of an agreement. That is what both sides hope. Now in the interim, Mr. Speaker, there have been a lot of comments about the letter I sent out to teachers, and I do not apologize for that, because it is tied in with what I have been saying for the past two or three minutes. In March of this year we decided to take \$21 million of taxpayer's money, of money belonging to the fishermen, the loggers, the miners, and the people who work downtown, we took \$21 million of their money and put it into the teacher's pension fund as an extra payment, a sign of good faith, that we wanted to fix the problem, the first Government in the history of this Province that attempted to solve that problem.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker: Now, Mr. Speaker, let us come to the letter. In June a letter was sent out to all teachers in this Province from the NTA, specifically saying that we had not put one cent into the

teacher's pension fund extra. Mr. Speaker, I believe in the truth, and as long as I have to write letters to the teachers of this Province to explain the truth I will do so. I think it is only right and proper.

Orders of the Day

Mr. Baker: Motion 4, Mr. Speaker.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Fishing Industry (Collective Bargaining) Act, 1971," carried. (Bill No. 67).

On motion, Bill No. 67 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act Respecting The Creation Of Regional Service Boards Throughout The Province." (Bill No. 38).

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

Mr. Doyle: Mr. Speaker, I really do not have all that much time to speak on the bill. I believe I only have around three minutes left, but maybe what I could do in that couple of minutes available to me is to summarize the main points that I made yesterday. First of all, the need, the need to introduce the legislation at all to create regional service boards. I am just wondering about that because I do not know if the Minister was in the House yesterday when I spoke on this bill. Part 3 of the Municipalities Act seems to give, and I say seems to give, the Minister the authority and the power that he needs to establish a

regional service board, so I was wondering, and maybe that is a point he could make note of when he speaks in debate. As to whether or not we really need the legislation, because Part 3 of the Municipalities Act seems to give the minister the power and the authority he needs under that Act to establish regional service boards and to designate the powers and what have you.

Mr. Gullage: (Inaudible).

Mr. Doyle: The minister indicates no. Well, maybe I am wrong. Maybe the minister could indicate when he stands as to why specifically we need that particular bill.

The main points of contention the minister must be aware of by now, as has been heard by the Committee from council after council and individuals around the Province, is the whole feasibility study process, and we have discussed it at the Legislative Review Committee, as to whether or not there should be feasibility studies conducted, carried out before these regional service boards are put into place. I cannot see any great problem, any real problem in conducting a feasibility study. It is not a very long, expensive, drawn-out process, and I am wondering, and I hope the minister can address it when he stands, why the Government would not want to go through the process of a feasibility study, given the problems the minister knows he has had with the whole amalgamation process, and how that got off the rails there temporarily. So these are concerns the various councils we met with had with respect to this bill.

I guess the city of St. John's, on page eight of their report, probably said it as well or better than any other. On page eight of their report the city of St. John's said, 'I would suggest that the legislation clearly and unequivocally reflect the Government's intention not to apply the act in an arbitrary manner. To ensure this we would recommend that Section 3 of the legislation be amended to read, 'The Lieutenant-Governor in Council may by order on the recommendation of the minister, and subject to a feasibility study being conducted and with the concurrence of the municipalities affected by the said order, create a region and establish for that region a regional service board for the purpose of providing services under the act.'

Now, as I have said, Mr. Speaker, that is from the city of St. John's. They make the point, as well, that they feel feasibility studies should be put in place before the Government brings in a regional service board to an area. Some areas of the Province, I think, would do well by the creation of a regional service board. It is not a totally negative concept. Some of the councils, and one which serves my own district, in the CBS as a matter of fact, stated that they are not against the concept of establishing a regional service board, because the board could take over some of the services and probably more efficiently manage those services. But, again, they, like a number of others around the Province, would want to see some accountability to the people affected, to the councils affected. This is, again, the whole process of putting in place a feasibility process before it is

thrust upon the people. It cannot do any harm. I do not believe it can.

Maybe the Government will be willing to look at placing some of these amendments in the Bill at Committee stage. The Committee has made, I believe, seven recommendations in its report, and, of course, the minority report was presented as well with, I believe, nine recommendations. So I am hoping that some of these recommendations can be placed in that bill at Committee stage. If not, then, Mr. Speaker, I have some serious doubts as to whether or not the whole Committee system can function properly. I believe the Committee system is a good one. The Legislative Review Committee is a really good system, in my view, and I believe it can work. But, I mean, we have to have some terms of reference. We have to know what our authority is. Well, we have to know that Government is willing to accept recommendations from the Committee. That is some of concerns I have.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. member's time is up.

Mr. Doyle: Mr. Speaker, having said that, thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Placentia.

Mr. Hogan: I am delighted to have the opportunity to participate in this debate on the Regional Service Boards. First of all, I would like to preface my few brief remarks and concur with my colleague for Harbour Main district on Legislative Committee Review.

I think the Legislative Committee Review system is a good reform system, introduced by this Government. I think, there are, in these days of growing pains for that committee, some faults which we can identify. I think we should have the ability through these committees to have the results of committee hearings introduced to the House and tabled in the House before the actual legislation comes to the House.

By the same token, I recognize that the Government or the Legislature should also have the ability to introduce emergency legislation when required. So I hope the appropriate committee of the House of Assembly, when they are drafting the regulations or the procedures for the Legislative Review Committees, will bear that in mind and give us some advice or procedure to follow whereby legislation is not introduced, only in an emergency or in urgencies, to allow for the tabling of the reports of the committees.

The committee structure is not only one to allow and to facilitate hearing from the public and interested groups into legislation, but also must probably expedite debate in this House. A lot of contentious issues can be resolved at the committee stage and probably allow us to have more productive discussions in the House of Assembly if, indeed, recommendations are considered by the authors of this legislation before it is tabled.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, in addressing the legislation at hand I would like to say that there is a great need for some sort of mechanism in this Province to help

the various communities get the services they rightly demand and rightly need.

The previous Administration, through recommendations, I guess, of the Whelan Royal Commission, back in 1975, did attempt to undertake it, and I believe it was during that regime that Conception Bay South was formed. Also, I believe, previous to that the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl and I co-chaired hearings, unofficial hearings of course, to hear presentations on regionalization of Government or amalgamation.

I, at that time, had great discussion, great debate with the Minister of the day, whom I think was Mr. Windsor, on whether or not we should have amalgamation versus regional Government. So our predecessors in Government did consider a vehicle such as we are talking about here today, and for some reason they did not bring it full circle and introduce it in this House of Assembly. They should have been on the amalgamation road many, many years ago.

The amalgamation process is of great benefit to some areas, and the amalgamation process can be of great benefit, particularly in my particular district, if it is done in a fashion that is suitable and acceptable to the people, and will not -

Mr. A. Snow: Do you support (inaudible).

Mr. Hogan: Yes, I do. - put extra burden of taxation because of the amalgamation process on any one community that might be amalgamating.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my good friend

there from Burin Placentia West keeps interjecting, and I have to say I am sort of disappointed because he shared - as a matter of fact, let me see his notes, before he made his speech yesterday, during it, and after it. The arguments he had on paper were very good, sound arguments addressing this particular legislation. I did not agree with them all, but they were good, sound arguments. However, he did not show or did not demonstrate the ability of getting it across, and he kept up a steady parlay with pattering and mumbling and nattering and batting his gums to various members across here and did not introduce the recommendations he had.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I have to disagree with one particular point he raised, and that was on Section 5, Subsection 1. I have some reservations about a Chairman being appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, though I do not share the sentiments of the other speakers who think that particular individual would be appointed from outside the jurisdiction of the board - a non-resident I think they termed that particular person, or a political hack.

Mr. Tobin: No, the Member for Exploits said there was going to be a political hack. That is where that came from. (Inaudible).

Mr. Hogan: Are you finished?

Mr. Tobin: No, but you are, I can tell you that. (Inaudible).

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Hogan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An awful clap. A belch of wind coming in across the

corridor, and he don't even use Coke.

Mr. Tobin: You know what the Premier said today.

Mr. Hogan: Mr. Speaker, the other concern they addressed was that the Minister shall appoint to a board members from among councillors who represent municipal authorities included in the region. One of the recommendations, one of the things they were harping on was that the appointees must be councillors. That is what the legislation says, so they have no real concern there.

The other point raised, and I agree with them, I think there should be the ability in the legislation to have either feasibility studies and/or hearings. I think there might be some way of wording the legislation so it is discretionary on the proponents of the regional Government, either be it the Minister or the communities involved, so that they can opt into that; either or could call on these regulations to say we do not want it or we do want it if the ability is there. But I do not think the regionalization of services should be hampered by the need for a hearing. I know there was a number of undertakings in my particular area we wanted to take and we could not do them without going through the expense of a feasibility study and a hearing, monies for which our communities did not have the resources and the Government did not want to pay. So we did not get what we were looking for.

Mr. Tobin: What you are saying is that the (inaudible).

Mr. Hogan: If the Minister wants

it, yes. That it would be discretionary use by either the minister or by the communities.

Mr. Speaker, in order to introduce this legislation I think it would be necessary, and I would recommend to the minister that he consider whomever is drafting this legislation - I think he struggled with it, because I have mentioned it a couple of times and there have been some problems in drafting such legislation so that it would be a voluntary process or a discretionary process, as I am suggesting.

Mr. Tobin: What did you recommend (inaudible)?

Mr. Hogan: Pardon me?

Mr. Murphy: Feasibility and public hearings.

Mr. Hogan: The minister just said it. Read Hansard tomorrow. Read it over and you will be able to see it. I think it should be discretionary and voluntary.

Mr. Simms: That is not the committees recommendation, though, is it?

Mr. Hogan: No. That is my comment.

Mr. Simms: (Inaudible) break in government ranks.

Mr. Hogan: I am not breaking government ranks. I am still here aren't I?

Mr. Speaker, in addressing the recommendations of the committee the other one that -

Mr. Parsons: I knew that he was with (inaudible).

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Hogan: Could I have silence from the Member for St. John's East Extern, please?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Hogan: The old farmer, the ranch hand.

Mr. Speaker, the recommendations of the Committee read (a), that board members be drawn from among councillors or be appointees of council as addressed in the legislation. That compensation be paid to councils which transfer assets to the boards. That is another good recommendation, and it is a recommendation which also came from that side of the House, that somehow or other there must be a vehicle within the legislation so that the board - the Minister tells me, actually, and I hope he addresses it when he gets up to close debate on this particular legislation, that the board has the ability to compensate, or will have the ability to compensate communities for assets, and also have the ability to overtake liabilities. I think that came not only from the Committee but also from the so-called and infamous minority report.

That the deadline for submitting budgets be abandoned from December 31 to November 30. That probably is a good suggestion, even for councils. I know that both sides will agree that the Department had great problems with getting budgets in before the end of calendar year, the end of the fiscal year, so they could be dealt with adequately by the Department when they were preparing their budgets. But I think there should probably be

some strong policing and monitoring by the Department on communities who fail to get in their budgets.

On the recommendations that were submitted by the so-called minority report, they are not much different than those recommendations carried by the Committee. While I have reservations about the appointment of a Chairman by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, it is acceptable, it is not a departure from past practices and one that one can live with.

Section 5, to provide for the election of a Chairperson by the board from among the members of the board. That is adequately addressed in Section 5(1). The third recommendation was a means to provide the appointment of board members by Cabinet and persons designated by municipal councils, or elected at large, or to represent wards or a combination of elected and appointed members. I do not know what that recommendation of the Committee is saying, Mr. Speaker, because Section 6(1) allows for the appointment and restricts it to the appointment of board members from among councillors who are members of the represented municipal authorities.

An Hon. Member: Not the Chairperson.

Mr. Hogan: No, not the Chairperson. The fourth recommendation: to restrict the Minister's authority to prescribe the powers of a regional service board to those powers recommended in the report of the feasibility study and public hearings under The Public Enquiries Act. That may be of some value if, in fact,

feasibility studies, if the option or discretionary regulations are put in there for the use of the communities involved or for the Minister.

The fifth recommendation: to provide for compensation to municipal councils for municipal assets transferred to regional service boards. I think, again, that should be a discretionary thing to a degree, and a negotiable thing between the councils involved and the board. But it certainly should be highly stressed in the Act that it should take place. But, again, it should be one where either party can opt out.

Amend Section 13 to specify in greater detail the authority of regional service boards to raise revenues. I think it is on a user-pay basis, the way I read it, and there is no such thing as raising taxes, or involved in the assessment of taxes in any way, shape or form.

A new section requires regional service boards to co-ordinate regional planning with municipalities. I do not know if you need a new section in there, because I think the ability is there to do it. A new section which permits regional service boards to provide on request consultant and technical - I do not know if you need that in the regulations. That is part of the general duties of the board, and that is the purpose of the formation of the board. It would probably come out in a feasibility study, or in the hearing process. A new section which stipulates an appropriate level of accountability to municipalities for board revenues and expenditures. Well, if there are

members on that board addressing these particular items and they are members of the communities involved, they are going to look after their own interests, surely God, or they should not be on that particular board.

Mr. Murphy: They shouldn't be (inaudible).

Mr. Hogan: Mr. Speaker, except for these two points on feasibility studies and public hearings, and on the compensation for assets and acceptance of liabilities, I believe that people across the way are only posturing and carrying on a lot of useless rhetoric and interfering with the smooth passage of this legislation.

I would concur with these recommendations and hope that the Minister would take them under advisement and have them amended to the legislation. And I would emphasize that the hearings and the feasibility study be discretionary, voluntary or optional, whatever word you want to be put on it. Because I know that in a number of undertakings I was a party to there were instances where such hearings were, in fact, obstructionary, and there were times when it was necessary, such as in amalgamation of the communities, which is now taking place.

But we were involved in the recreation venture whereby we did get together and we had an ad hoc regionalization of this particular service. And if we had to go that route and a hearing was forced on us or a feasibility study, then it would take months and unnecessary cost when the communities involved were willing to -

Mr. Tobin: (Inaudible) the option

should be there.

Mr. Hogan: Yes.

Mr. Tobin: Are you prepared to do the amendment?

Mr. Hogan: I am asking that the Minister take it under consideration.

Mr. Tobin: (Inaudible).

Mr. Hogan: Mr. Speaker, would you ask old blunderpuss over there to quiet down?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!
Order, please!

Mr. Hogan: Mr. Speaker, I endorse the legislation and I would hope that the Minister - I will be speaking to him later on on this - will entertain whomever the writers of this draft legislation are to place the necessary amendments to allow for feasibility studies and the transfer of assets and liabilities for compensation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Quorum

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!
Order, please!

There is a quorum present.

The hon. the Member for Humber Valley.

Mr. Woodford: Mr. Speaker, the first time I saw the regional services board Act presented, the first time I read it, the first thing that came to mind was, why? Everything that is in the Act, except for the powers of the

Minister and the Cabinet as such, especially the Minister, is included in the Municipalities Act under, I believe, Section 3, dealing with regions. The only difference I see in the Municipalities Act with regards to the establishment of regions anywhere in a Province is the powers that it gives the Minister and the Lieutenant-Governor in Council.

Some Hon. Members: Right on.

Mr. Woodford: So that begged another question, Mr. Speaker, and that is, why? Now having gone through the announcement from the Minister pertaining to amalgamation and having listened to the discussions and the ramifications that came back from the municipalities on the subject of amalgamation, and looking at the number of communities that did come out after the feasibility studies were done, that decided in favour of amalgamation, I would have to say, Mr. Speaker, without a doubt, that the main reason for the regional services board Act, a new Act, is to do with this particular Act what you could not do through amalgamation.

Having said that, there are another couple of reasons. The one that comes to mind, and I do not think anybody would disagree with me, and I probably would agree with it myself, is the Metro Board - St. John's Metro Board - but then again it could have been done through the Municipalities Act anyway. But this would give the Minister more powers to do something with regards to the St. John's Metro Board. And in the back part of the Act it says there is no trouble, no, Section 44 (1) to (9), and you can tell some of the reasons why. Pretty well

every one of those amendments deal with the St. John's Metro Board.

I can pretty well assure people, as sure as I am standing in this House this evening, Members that are present can take note, that as sure as I am standing in this House this evening -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: If the Minister is so cocky about the St. John's Metro Board, let him get up and take his place and talk about it.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Mr. Woodford: Because if he knows as much about the Act as he knows about finance there will not be much to add to it. As I said before, Mr. Speaker, that if and when this Act is passed the people of Wedgewood Park will be one of the first groups in the Province gone as a municipality. You can be assured of that.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: That is the second one.

Mr. Tobin: What is that?

Mr. Woodford: That is the second one.

Mr. Tobin: Hear what the Member from Placentia said?

Mr. Woodford: Wedgewood Park would go under this Act as sure as the Act is on the desk today. And the Metro Board would be another one, well, that one I sort of agree with, there are a lot of things that can be done in that area.

But, Mr. Speaker, why when it it

is already in here, why bring in the other Act and give more powers to the Minister and the Lieutenant-Governor in Council? And going by some of the comments from some Members yesterday, the one that comes to mind is the Member from Exploits when he said in a response to the Member from Burin, that there was already room there in the new Act for feasibility studies. There is no such thing in the new Act. No room for feasibility studies. It will be done at the discretion of the Minister and Lieutenant-Governor in Council.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: Now Mr. Speaker -

Mr. Tobin: Listen and learn, will you? You think you know everything. You do not know enough to get in Cabinet so now listen and learn, you might get in there.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: Mr. Speaker, why the Minister would want more powers is evident. As I stated before he is going to do through the regional services board what he could not do through amalgamation.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: Now -

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, could you make the Minister of Labour quiet?

Mr. Woodford: Mr. Speaker, the establishment of regions under the Act today, under the Municipalities Act, categorically states that Cabinet order subject to a feasibility study and public hearings under the Public

Inquiries Act, that is already there. It is there, it is in the Act today.

The new one now says that Cabinet may by order, designate any portion of the Province as a region. No provision for public input, feasibility studies or consultation with municipalities. Now the Minister knows, if nobody else knows, the Minister, surely God, knows what happened when he announced his amalgamation package, that there was not going to be any feasibility studies, no consultation, we are going to amalgamate x number of communities in this Province, period.

Only because of pressure from municipalities in this Province did the Minister and Cabinet change their minds and hold feasibility studies as such, and even some of those studies were questionable. But having done that, the results that came back from the municipalities in this Province were evident, the fact was that they did not want to do it. They have their own autonomy, they raise their own taxes, they are responsible people and that responsibility should be left in their hands.

If the Government or the Minister, the Lieutenant-Governor in Council or the Minister wants to create a regional service board in this Province, they are able to do it today. It has been done in some places and in other places in the Province with true consultation with the councils, initiated by the councils that they have already done it with regard to the sharing of services and are paying on a per capita basis, that is there today, it is there in my district, Humber Valley and it is there in some other districts as

well around the Province and working very well.

One of the problems you are going to see with the creation of a regional board: I have seen it now just where it is on a voluntary basis, and you will see it more now if people are being told to do it, and that is, especially where there is another section here where there is no conversation, I think it is section 13 - Section 309 of the old Act and Section 13 of the new Act where there is no compensation to municipalities which were being regionalized, but in some areas, Mr. Speaker, for instance- I will use my own area again and it is a prime example.

You have Deer Lake Town Council, one of the biggest areas in the district, you have Cormack, Reidville Town Councils, you have Spillway, St. Judes, Nicholville with what is called an LSD district, a Local Service District.

For an example, if you want to create a regional services board there tomorrow, if it is not initiated by the councils in the area, and if it is, if it comes from the Government or comes from the councils, what do you have?

You have the Town of Deer Lake, for example and the other two municipalities that have been collecting taxes, property tax and poll tax for years, rolling all their assets and infrastructure into a regional services board.

Now, what municipality in its right mind, is going to say, look, to the three or four others who are doing their jobs for x number of years and the other three municipalities who are just collecting a fee, rolls it all into a regional services board,

where are the assets and what the committee recommended and what is in the Act are two different things.

I commend the committee for making that recommendation, it remains to be seen now, whether the Minister is going to accept it or not. Yes, you can have the powers of introducing regional service boards in the Province, yes, it can work, but no, if it is going to come as a directive from the Minister. It is not going to work. I do not think I have to tell anybody in this House, that when people, especially Newfoundlanders, are told to do something, they are not going to do it, no matter how good it is. No matter how good it is, they are not going to do it because they were told to do it.

Mr. Speaker, the example of regional sharing and regional service boards has been ongoing for years and it is something that has been -

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Woodford: - and it is something that has been done on a per capita basis with regards to municipalities in the area, incinerators, ambulance services, fire brigades, recreation facilities and last but not least, regional water services. That is one of the areas that can certainly be covered under a regional services board and with or without the sanction or the blessing of the Department of Municipal Affairs.

So some of the recommendations made by the Committee, Mr. Speaker: the bill as drafted would concentrate too much power in the hands of the Minister and the

Lieutenant-Governor in Council. That one as far as I am concerned should be changed because it seems to be a trend for whatever reason, I do not know, but we will go back to Bill 53, The Crown Lands Bill. You look at The Forestry Act, I think it is coming in now under Bill No. 11, if I am not mistaken, and we look at this regional services board Act and, wherever there is a recommendation for change to make it better, I do not think there is anybody in the House would want to see this one, is going to comment on this in any negative way at all, unless it is going to be for the good of the people they represent. We are talking about the same people in the municipalities in the Province that we represent here. I do not think anybody is going to do anything other than would be done on the local level.

But having said that there does not seem to be room for any change. We went through The Crown Lands Act - no, we will not take out, we will add, but we will not take out. The Forestry Act the same thing, we will add, but we will not take out. Now on this one, I am afraid, Mr. Speaker, that the same thing is going to be done. We will not take out, but we will add, and my questions is, why? And the first two recommendations, section 3 and section 5 alone, why they were changed I do not know, and for whatever reason, but I suspect, Mr. Speaker, it was because of the fact of telling certain areas in the Province, rightly or wrongly, that you have to get together and share your services and if you do not do it we will do it for you. I do not know of any other reason. If some other member can tell me why, I would probably be acceptable to it.

The second recommendation says that there should be feasibility studies. Well maybe we will see the Minister when he rises in his place to speak on the Bill to include that in his recommendations. The board members should be chosen from among elected councillors or nominees of the councils. Another example is the one I just stated, is how do you have, when you have three councils in an area and seven municipalities, you have problems right from the start because there are only three elected councils. The other people are not elected because they are local service districts, unincorporated areas, so you have a problem from day one. Do they appoint, like the Minister has already done, with regards to the local service districts or what? How do they do it then? Because you are going to create a problem right up front in a lot of areas.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: Yes, because they not elected. They are appointed in a local service district. It is all right where you have all councils.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: The Minister. In a local service district in a province they have their little election, so to speak, and whoever wants to run their names are sanctioned by the Minister. It is not like a council where you go in and you run for office.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: Yes, they can, but nine chances out of ten in a lot of those communities they do not have the elections and the

Minister usually puts in the names. So that creates problems in an area where you have say three councils and four local service districts, when you have a seven member board, for instance, a regional board and then you have to have a chairman, so you can see problems right away there because of the bigger municipalities.

While I am on that subject, Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to a speech given by the Minister early in the week.

Mr. Tobin: Last week.

Mr. Woodford: Last week. It really surprises me coming from the Minister himself. He said in a number of places in his speech, talking about towns and municipalities in the Province that have 2,500 residents or more, those are the municipalities in the Province - there are more municipalities, a lot of smaller towns with 2,500 population or less. That is the biggest areas in the Province, and they referred to them as rural areas.

But the Minister also went on to say that towns of 500 or 600 people it would be a lot better if it was 1,250 or 1,400. We will go on from there. Five hundred is nowhere near 1,250. That was said in his speech. So obviously we should bring together as many as possible on a formalized basis and this would make for better Government. Well, I can tell the Minister, and I am sure he is aware of it, and probably just to overstate this fact, but if he is not, I want to assure him that the municipalities in the rural areas of this Province are run and ran just as good as any urban center in this Province. They may not be getting as much money as the Mayor

of St. John's or the Mayors of Corner Brook or Grand Falls, but I can assure you they are doing a job, a job that should be commended by this administration and any administration before it. Because they are doing the work today, and did it before, Mr. Speaker, of the third level of Government in this Province and they should be recognized for it.

We have people, loggers, farmers, teachers, all kinds of individuals in the small municipalities in this Province who are running their communities. I can assure you here today that if the Government in this Province and Federally were run like some of those municipalities, we would be a lot better off today I can assure you. Because they are committed and dedicated. Whether the community is 300, 500, 600, or 1000, they are committed and dedicated individuals who are doing a job that is next to none, that cannot even be compared to some of the bigger municipalities in the area. Because of the fact they are not paid, because of the fact that it is all on a volunteer basis, they seem to do more work because they are always at it. It doesn't matter what hour of the day, because the work in any council is done between meetings and not at meetings. And if this is the intent of bringing municipalities together, and the Minister says that too, he doesn't pull any punches, he doesn't apologize, he says that in his speech, if we cannot do it through amalgamation, we will; whether unilaterally or asking the municipalities to come together as regional service boards I do not know, but that is what is stated here in his speech, if he wants to refer to that when he gets up.

When he is talking rural areas and municipalities with such small populations, I do not think there is any comparison when it does come, because we can compare at any time with a large municipality when it comes to managing your affairs. The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, and the Premier said it here today in a question from this side of the House on I just forget what, is efficiency. A lot of those municipalities are very, very efficient.

Granted, there are some areas in the Province, and some areas around my district, that could do with regional services. I do not know about the board, but regional services, and we are doing that. They made the decision to share and they are doing an excellent job of it. The only thing about it is they are charged on a per capita basis and usually if there is any funding to go after, for instance, for an incinerator or something like that, it comes from the biggest town in the area, in this case Deer Lake, but they pay their share.

An Hon. Member: They should.

Mr. Woodford: Oh, sure they should. I agree they should. But I have no time for anybody, whether it is Municipal Affairs or anybody else, going in and saying do this or do that. Consult. Ask. When this administration took over, a prime example was in the Humber Valley District, in Deer Lake. We had a feasibility study initiated for a regional water supply. The communities themselves identified that no way could Deer Lake go looking for \$10 or \$12 million, Reidville go looking for \$2 or \$3 million, Nicholville go looking for another \$1 million from Government

to put in water services, so they identified, got together and asked Municipal Affairs about doing a feasibility study to do just that. They instituted the feasibility study so that all the municipalities in the district could be hooked up to the Deer Lake water supply on a regional basis. Deer Lake is hooked up to Grand Lake. Now Grand Lake can pretty well supply, I do not know, but probably all the water requirements of the West Coast and the Northern Peninsula, and probably all of western Newfoundland. So it looked pretty foolish, Mr. Speaker, for just the town of Deer Lake to have an excellent water supply when all they had to do was shoot the lines across the Nicholville Bridge and then shoot it across the Viking Trail into the community of Reidville.

But when this administration took office, communities that were trying to do something for themselves, their feasibility studies were cancelled. So off the communities had to go, single-handedly, and start applying for money again; Reidville had to go their own way, Deer Lake had to go their own way, and Nicholville, which had a local service district spillway and so on, had to just forget about it, because they did not have councils.

Mr. Murphy: (Inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: This was initiated by they, themselves. Boards should be established at the request of the communities affected and not imposed. This view was expressed by the Exploits River (inaudible) and so on. Now that is another example.

If some of those things were added, those recommendations here made by the board are right.

Mr. Murphy: By the Committee.

Mr. Woodford: By the Committee, I am sorry. And if those recommendations were included in the Act, there probably would not be any question. But municipalities are asking themselves now, you know, are we going to be told to do this or told to do that? I mean, that is the question. And that is a big question hanging over their heads. It was bad enough through amalgamation with regards to the autonomy part of it, they did not want to be told what to do or when to do it, they did not want to lose their identity as a community. There are all kinds of questions before you get into the financial ones.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Municipal Affairs today, when you talk about amalgamation, you talk about certain changes now coming without a doubt, I would say in the next days, the next few weeks at the most, changes to the grant program - the minister also alluded that to that in his statements last week, changes to The Municipal Grant Program. All those things are going to force municipalities, whether they go through amalgamation, whether it is through a regional service board or not, are going to force them into one or the other. It has to. Because you have municipalities in this Province today who can survive on three mills without any funding from Government except for the three components that are in The Municipalities Act. A lot of community councils today, Mr. Speaker, are operating on the

three components. You have the social assistance component, the road component, and the per capita component, and that is all they are operating on except for their mil rate with regards to the property tax or their poll taxes, and social services. All those things make up the nucleus of a community, and they, themselves, can go to their annual meetings, the council who represented them can put it on the table, they can debate it, ask questions, and the answers are right there that given night. They are efficient. I can name several of them around my area which are very, very efficient and treating their councils like a business, and it should be run like that.

Mr. Speaker, another thing I would like to allude with regards to the Department of Municipal Affairs is why over a year ago the minister and his department, his staff, put out those so-called rating sheets? Now I do not know if any members opposite have ever seen one, but when I brought it up at a Humber Joint Council meeting one day in talking to some councillors, we were just talking about councils in general and all of a sudden this subject came up, and I explained to some of the municipalities involved which are claiming property tax that if you do not raise your mil rate, you can forget getting any funding this year. They were flabbergasted. They did not understand. They figured I did not know what I was talking about.

So we went through a little further discussion and got information from Municipal Affairs, and lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, the department had taken an average, and the minister can correct me if I am wrong on this,

I could be, but from analyzing the rating sheet and the point system, they had taken an average of all the property assessment in the Province, assessed by the municipalities, and come up with an average of approximately 1.29 per cent. Now, can you imagine applying the 1.29 per cent average in the community of Hughes' Brook, or in any community in the Premier's District of the Bay of Islands, or in mine? Can you imagine what that is going to do overnight?

If it came in on a gradual basis -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: I think I do know what I am talking about, by the way. What I am saying is that the Department of Municipal Affairs over a year ago -

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Woodford: Well, if the Premier doesn't know it his assistant does, because he was at the meeting one night when I was there.

Over a year ago, the Department of Municipal Affairs brought in what they call this rating sheets, one for water and sewer and one for road work in municipalities, the 60/40 and the guaranteed loan one. It goes on and environment is one section, 20 points, health is another one, and then it comes down to the bottom one, which is finances. That is the big one, finances. I think pretty well everybody can meet the requirements on the rest. But how they did it, the explanation I got, and it was right I think - it was wrong to do it and put it on small municipalities - was they took an average of the total

property assessment for the Province, all municipalities in the Province, and they came up with a figure of 1.29 per cent.

Now, it is alright for the city of St. John's, Grand Falls or Gander or anybody like that, they have no problems meeting the 1.29 per cent of their mill rate, of their total property assessment within their municipality based on their mill rate, but to do that in Hughes' Brook - I will take as an example Hughes Brook. If you use that percentage in Hughes Brook, which will have to go from four mils to fourteen mils just to come in to meet the requirements, because you have to get a minimum of seventy points even to be put on the priority list - even to get on the list you want seventy points out of those two papers - how in the Name of God can a municipality go from four mils, especially today, and I make the analogy, the GST, above all times to bring it in, now, when times are so hard, municipalities today cannot collect the four mils let alone go to thirteen or fourteen.

Whatever chance they had under the priority list before, Mr. Speaker, today they have no chance. No chance! Outside, I would say, Grand Falls, Gander, Mount Pearl and some other big towns, they have absolutely no chance to get on a list for funding for this year, none whatsoever, unless - unless - they went from the mil rate, the four mil rate in this case, to fourteen, and met the requirements. And then there is no guarantee that they are going to be on the list.

Let us take, for argument's sake, last year. What was it, \$50 or \$60 million, I believe, in capital funding, when we need \$200

million? And the question I ask is, what about if all those municipalities came in tomorrow, met the 1.29 per cent requirement, brought up their mil rates, how, then, would they be prioritized with regards to capital funding? That is the question I have, having said all this.

I think the Minister knows exactly what I am talking about, and he can correct me if I am wrong when he gets up with regard to the percentages. But I believe I am dead on on that. And the other question I would like to put to the Minister is, each municipality in this Province who are committed on a volunteer basis, why weren't they sent the sheets?

I had to ask. I heard about it, I asked, I got one. Municipalities, up until the Saturday before last, at the Humber joint council meeting in Howley, did not know and did not see one rating sheet that the Department of Municipal Affairs had in its possession.

Those people were giving hours and hours of free time doing up budgets. The Department was doing up budgets knowing full well that they were not even going to come in under the - there was no chance. So here they were going to put in a budget not knowing what the requirements were with regards to meeting these new percentages on the rating sheets Municipal Affairs had out, and their time was all down the tube, in vain.

Now that, to me, Mr. Speaker, is wrong. That to me is not only wrong, it is demeaning and it is belittling the people who serve on the community councils and town councils in the rural areas of this Province. That sheet was not

out and I can venture you to bet today out of the twenty-three municipalities that are represented in the Humber joint council over where I come from, not one - unless they got it since last Friday - got a copy of that sheet. I had the only one there. Why? That is the other question.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. Member's time is up.

Mr. Woodford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl.

Mr. Windsor: Mr. Speaker, first of all I am amazed that no other members opposite are going to address this bill. The Minister tried to pop up and close the debate. The Minister is the eternal optimist, Mr. Speaker, if he thinks this piece of legislation is going to go through yet. He has many hours sitting in this Chamber listening to debate on this legislation yet. I cannot believe that some of these members opposite are not going to participate in this debate - some of the members whose municipalities are being threatened by this. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, they have all been muzzled by the Premier on this issue as they have on every other issue when it affects their district. It is very, very obvious, Mr. Speaker. The Premier laughs at that because he knows it is true. The hon. dictator has put the word out. Only those members, I assume, who are on the committee are allowed to speak to this and they, of course, must get up and support it. It is just

like the Meech Lake free vote, Mr. Speaker. What a joke. What a joke.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Windsor: Now, Mr. Speaker, let's get on to this piece of legislation because there are important things that need to be said. I guess I could summarize this legislation by simply saying never in my experience in this House of Assembly have I seen a piece of legislation that is so totally unnecessary. So totally unnecessary from the point of view of those people that it affects, the municipalities and the people who reside in those municipalities in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, if you examine this legislation, and if you examined the report of the committee of the House that studied this legislation, and particularly if you examine the report of the minority - the minority report that was affixed to that - and the comments, leaving aside committee reports, the comments of those people who made presentations before the committee as summarized in the Chairman's report. Very clearly those people are saying this is unnecessary. Absolutely unnecessary.

All this legislation does, Mr. Speaker, is remove the requirement for public hearings and feasibility studies and give total power to the Government. That is all this does. It does not enable creation of regional councils or regional governments, whatever you want to call them, in any way, shape or form. Every bit of authority that is required - and the Premier need not look at me over his glasses - sits in the Municipalities Act. And I have a

special interest, Mr. Speaker, because I had the honour of introducing this Act in 1979. I put together about fifteen pieces of legislation that had been on the book for a long period of time, spent literally tens of hours in conference with officials of the department and in consultation with the Federation of Municipalities. The hon. Member for Placentia, I believe, was involved in consultations at that time. He nods his head and I thank him for that. Because there was considerable consultation when we put together this piece of legislation.

No piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, is perfect. And obviously amendments have been made since and amendments will be made as conditions change. But one amendment that I had not foreseen was taking away from the municipalities control over their future, and that is exactly what this legislation does. It eliminates the requirement for feasibility studies and public hearings. And we could end the debate there, Mr. Speaker, because that is really all this legislation does. It gives nothing to any municipality, it does nothing for the Province, absolutely nothing that is not contained in existing Acts except it gives unilateral power to the Minister and to the Government of this Province. And it gives them the authority to take away assets, the only thing that does need to be mentioned. To take away assets from a municipality without compensation, without any form of compensation whatsoever, even to the point of simply absorbing any debt that still remains. Now, Mr. Speaker, let us just consider that aspect for a moment. Let us take two communities, Municipality A

and Municipality B, side by side. I will leave the names out of it. Because we confuse issues by putting in names.

The Government proposes to amalgamate. And let us assume those communities do not wish to amalgamate. Or if they do it still does not matter. A proposed amalgamation, even under a regional council, if that were to be the case, alright? Never mind amalgamation, I will not confuse the concept of creating one municipality from two. But let us assume there was to be a regional service. Municipality A has a fully developed water and sewer system which has been put in place, paid for and supported over the years, by the taxpayers of that community.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Windsor: Not paid for by Government, I say to the hon. Member from St. John's South, Mr. Speaker, I will give him a small lesson. There are no grants for water and sewer. Those are Government guaranteed loans. The municipality has a responsibility for borrowing the money and building and installing the facilities. There are many communities in this Province that have done exactly that. All Government does is lend its borrowing power to the municipality. And it provides - and the roads to go on top - but on a sixty-forty basis. I am talking about a water and sewer system.

It provides that a municipality will not pay more than 20 per cent of their gross revenue toward that. And there are many municipalities that indeed do get benefit from that. They get

grants (inaudible) to meet the ongoing cost. That would change if the municipality's financial position changed in the following years, they would not get the grant. So it is not an outright grant. But it gives some control to those municipalities that have expensive water systems in particular. Because we must recognize that in this Province the cost of supplying water and sewer to municipalities varies. Very easy to run a water and sewer facility in a community like Cormack, which has beautiful soil conditions, you probably would not experience a rock out there. But try to put it down in Burgeo or in Gaultois where there is nothing but solid rock, and your costs per unit goes up.

There are communities in this Province where it costs more than \$100,000 per house. More than most of the houses are worth, in those particular communities, to get water and sewer services into. But that is not my point.

The point is that a municipality may well develop a water and sewer system and have been paying for it over the years. And they may have it paid off. May have no debt associated with it. The community next door may not have any water and sewer system, so a regional council is expected to come in and install a water and sewer system. And now the regional authority is expected to pay for the whole works. So those taxpayers who are living in Community A are now expected to share the burden of paying in Community B as well. Of providing the services in Community B.

Now let us assume that the facilities in Community A are not paid off. Let us assume there is

still 70 or 80 per cent of the cost of that system still on the books, a debt that has to be serviced by the community. This legislation provides, Mr. Speaker, that Government can establish now a regional authority. That regional authority can say: we are taking control of the water and sewer system, we will own and operate it, and charge a user fee to the communities involved, however many there might be. So that 70 per cent of that cost is still on the books, still there. Community A is still responsible for paying the debt on that 70 per cent of the cost of installing that water and sewer system, but now they do not have any assets. They can not charge water and sewer fees anymore. Because they do not own the facilities anymore.

So how do they service their debt now, Mr. Speaker? Now the question remaining here is, if this legislation were to go through will financial institutions ever provide funding again to these municipalities? That question will be asked.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Windsor: The Premier nods his head, shakes his head. I ask the Premier directly, then: Does he not think that a financial agency will say to a municipality when they go in to borrow \$500,000, fine, but what security do you have that next year after we loan you this \$500,000 and you build that system that Government will not come in with a regional authority and say thank you very much, we will take it? Now how will you pay back that \$500,000?

The Premier shakes his head. I cannot wait for him to get on his feet and explain it to me.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Windsor: It is a silly argument. Tell that to the 300 communities in this Province.

Some Hon. Members: Oh oh!

Mr. Windsor: Tell that to them. Tell me how they are going to pay for it.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Windsor: No, problem. I will yield to the Premier if he would care to get on his feet, Mr. Speaker, and tell us. I will yield for a moment, as long as he does not cut into my time too long.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: It is very simple, Mr. Speaker, we live in a civilized world. And what happens is, whether you do it at the corporate level by agreement between parties or Government does it or anybody else, if you take over assets and there are liabilities associated with those assets the body that takes over the assets takes responsibility for the liability as well. Very simple and straightforward, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Windsor: May I ask the Premier one question?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl.

Mr. Windsor: Is the Premier saying that that is what will take place in these circumstances? Is that what he is saying? Is he going to assure the House that?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Premier Wells: Mr. Speaker, if a

regional authority takes over stadiums, garbage disposal facilities and so on, whatever it is, and there is debt associated with it the regional authority must take that over and out of its own revenues, if it takes over responsibility in that way it has to be funded either through contributions on a per capita basis from the municipality or the imposition of its own revenue sources will take responsibility for it. It is a very simple, straightforward procedure. It is not complex.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl.

Mr. Windsor: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Premier very much, that is now in the record of Hansard and I assume therefore that an amendment will be forthcoming. Because the existing legislation, Mr. Speaker, reads as thus: and when I find the particular section dealing with it, anyway it says in here that assets can be taken and - without compensation, but including the assumption of the liabilities and obligations associated with those assets.

Premier Wells: (Inaudible).

Mr. Windsor: That is right. I thank the Premier. That is the existing Act. I ask the Premier to read the new Act. There is no reference whatsoever I say to the Premier, and I feel relieved, and municipalities all across this Province feel relieved at this moment that the Premier has now confirmed, and I hope that an amendment will come into clarify this, I ask the Premier will he be bringing in an amendment?

Premier Wells: I will but I do not think it is necessary.

Mr. Windsor: Well I suggest to the Premier, Mr. Speaker, that he look at that and I ask him please to look at that, as the Committee has recommended that an amendment be brought in. I think the whole Committee Report, not just a minority report, has indeed recommended. I think the minority report recommended compensation and assumption of liabilities, I believe the Committee recommended only an assumption of liabilities. I would urge the Premier to look at compensation as well because if a municipality, it gets back to the argument I was making, the example I gave, a municipality may have paid off 90 per cent of the value of that facility, the taxpayers of that community. It is hardly fair therefore then to take that from them after they having paid for, in many cases in the case of arenas as the Premier has put forward an example, in many cases through volunteer organizations making contributions. I could use the example in Mount Pearl, it is probably the greatest example in the Province of how volunteer contributions put that facility in place.

Mr. Tobin: People had deductions from their paycheques.

Mr. Windsor: In many cases deductions from paycheques. Any number of things. Irrelevant. The point being that I am trying to make, Mr. Speaker, is that funds having been paid should not be taken from those people without some compensation so that community A has 90 per cent of the value paid, they should get some compensation which would go back to the people by way of reduced taxation or improved services in other areas, so that they are treated equally with all

communities that are benefitting from that facility. So I would urge, I am pleased that at least the liabilities, at least we know now, the Premier has confirmed that the liabilities will be absorbed. That is a major step forward.

Premier Wells: Absorbed by whom?

Mr. Windsor: By the regional authority.

Premier Wells: Who is the regional authority?

Mr. Windsor: Whichever -

Premier Wells: The communities involved, so it rests where it belongs.

Mr. Windsor: It rests where it belongs, with those that now have the ability to raise revenue from those facilities. That is the point I am making. You cannot take somebody's assets and leave them with the liabilities with no mechanism to fund them. The Minister has finally returned to his place and I hope he heard what the Premier has confirmed and we will be waiting for an amendment to come forward.

Mr. Speaker, what really concerns me - that point was the important point that needed to be clarified. The point gets back to as I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, there is absolute no purpose of this legislation, absolutely no purpose whatsoever other than to remove the requirement for feasibility studies and public hearings. And I would like to know why are we doing that? For what purpose?

Is this Government afraid to have feasibility studies and public

hearings? I cannot, for the life of me, think that any Government would undertake creation of a regional government, or a regional council, or whatever you call it, if it was not feasible. Surely they would want to know that what they were proposing to do was feasible, it made economic sense. Feasibility also requires, Mr. Speaker, the goodwill of the people of the community. With or without feasibility studies any Government that were so foolish to force a regional authority on communities that did not want it is bound to fail. Nothing works if the people who are involved in it do not want it. I urge a word of caution to this Government, they may well force this legislation through this House of Assembly and take it upon themselves the unilateral power to create these authorities, and I say to them here now, that they will not work if the people in those communities do not want them. Why are we afraid of feasibility studies and public hearings? What is the other motive, Mr. Speaker? What are the motives? I realize you cannot impugn motives here. I understand there was a story on TV last night dealing with this particular region, the Northeast Avalon, the super city concept. I wonder what the Minister's agenda is here, Mr. Speaker? I point out to this House that the Minister sat in this House for many months when he was still a councillor in the city of St. John's, which in my view was a gross conflict of interest, and I would suspect that nothing has changed from that Minister, that he is still grossly in conflict of interest, and that he is really here representing the interests of his colleagues on city council. I am wondering if that is what we are heading into,

that the day after this legislation is rammed through this House - they will probably use closure on this, too, you never know.

Premier Wells: We may have to.

Mr. Windsor: Now, the Premier confirms that. An interesting concept, Mr. Speaker, a piece of basic legislation such as this, no great public urgency, there is no great outcry out there for this legislation to go through, nobody is starving to death, it is just that the Minister wants it and the Premier, the dictator, wants more power. The Premier now confirms that we may use closure, absolutely unheard of on a piece of legislation of this nature. Is every piece of legislature that comes before this House in future going to be rammed through using closure? And if they happen to faux pas, Mr. Speaker, if they happen to blow it and get caught with their parliamentary pants down they will overrule the Speaker and make sure they can jamb it through. Any mechanism at all using unilateral power, they are going to jamb anything through this House and what they are jamming through now is unilateral power to shove down the throats of municipalities a regional council that may not be wanted. The Premier stood in this House and he said, I want to assure this House - I cannot quote him exactly but I will paraphrase him, and he can correct me if I am wrong.

An Hon. Member: You have to do it exactly.

Mr. Windsor: I will try. But he will tell me if I am wrong, if he did not say that he would not force amalgamation on any community that did not want it.

Ah, he backed away a little bit and said, but the House might, Government will not but the House might. As if he was fooling anybody, that there is a difference between the Government making a unilateral decision in the Cabinet room upstairs, or whether they can come into this House of Assembly and have the courage to jamb it through the public chamber, which they undoubtedly will do, and have shown that they will do. There is a big difference if it is done democratically, but we have yet to see any democratic action coming from this Government in this Chamber.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister, is he indeed proposing to come forward with a super city. News reports are that there is a cabinet paper in the works that is creating a super city, strangely similar to the one that the Minister has been talking about for years.. I will not say for months but for years. I ask the Minister if that is what is about to happen here? Are we simply waiting for this legislation to be rammed through, and are we then coming through with a super city? Now, I hear there might be a plebiscite. That is interesting, a plebiscite, 100,000 people in St. John's versus the 50,000 people outside who are going to be amalgamated. Is this a plebiscite, or is this a plebiscite that says, we want to find out from all the people, and we will not force Mount Pearl into St. John's if the people of Mount Pearl vote as a majority that they do not want to be. We will not force Torbay in if the people of Torbay vote that they do not want to be. We will not force Conception Bay in if they do not want to be. We will not force

Wedgewood Park if they do not want to be or will it be a plebiscite that says, well the majority of all the people decide.

An Hon. Member: That makes more sense.

Mr. Windsor: Oh that makes more sense.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Windsor: That is right, that is the same kind of plebiscite that we see in this Chamber, when the hon. Gentlemen opposite, I will not use any other adjectives, hon. Gentlemen and Lady opposite, when they vote objectively in the plebiscite in this House as to whether this legislation is to be rammed through or not. Now, that is democracy at its finest. That is democracy at its finest, Mr. Speaker.

So the Premier has just confirmed that it is a policy of this Government that if a majority of the people in the region vote in favour of such a super city that this Government is prepared to proceed with it. It does not matter if 100 per cent of the people of Wedgewood Park say no, it does not matter if 100 per cent of the people of Mount Pearl say no, it does not matter if 100 per cent of the people in Conception Bay South say no, if 50 per cent or 60 per cent, or 51 per cent of the people in the city of St. John's say yes, then it does not matter what anybody else says. That is what the Premier has just confirmed.

Will the Minister tell us now about the Mount Pearl Fire Department, is he going to force that, is he going to force that one in? We have had a facility

there now, Mr. Speaker, for eighteen months, \$3 million worth, costing \$26,000 or \$27,000 a month in interest to the taxpayers of the city of Mount Pearl.

The Minister's own officials in the Fire Department and the Fire Commissioner have said that the city of Mount Pearl is not adequately protected, the Minister was very fortunate a couple of weeks ago, we had two major fires. We were fortunate there was no loss of life.

We do not know, Mr. Speaker, how much damage could have been prevented had the Mount Pearl Fire Department been in place. We can only speculate on those things, I am not going to get into that, but I say to the Minister, because I said it in this House many times before, if there is a loss of life and if there is any indication that life was lost because that Fire Department was not open, I will hold that Minister responsible and so will everybody in Mount Pearl.

An Hon. Member: It will be council's fault if they never accepted (inaudible).

Mr. Windsor: It is not council's fault. They have been bamboozled, they have been threatened, they have been intimidated by that Minister constantly, and not allowed to carry on in accordance with the legislation now in effect, which gives them the right and the responsibility to own and operate a fire department.

They had authority from the previous Administration to build that fire department, to buy state of the art equipment and it is sitting in there, not being utilized while the people of Mount

Pearl go unprotected. Now that is democracy.

An Hon. Member: Bunkum.

Mr. Windsor: Bunkum.

An Hon. Member: It is the council's decision.

Mr. Windsor: Bunkum, the Premier says, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tobin: What, are you sure?

Mr. Windsor: I take it back. The Minister is not responsible, but I will hold the Premier responsible.

Mr. Tobin: What did he say?

Mr. Windsor: I will hold the Premier responsible. More discrimination, Mr. Speaker, against Mount Pearl. I am sick and tired of looking at it, sick and tired of looking at it since the Premier said fairness and balance, fairness and balance. Because Mount Pearl might have had a few just rewards over the past number of years, that means in fairness and balance they will get nothing for the next twenty.

Mr. Tobin: Hear, hear!

Mr. Windsor: I challenge the Premier before he turns tail and runs, I challenge him to find one municipality in this Province that has paid as fair a share of their way as the city of Mount Pearl. I challenge him to find one, you will not find it. The Member for Mount Scio agrees, he is a resident of the city.

But hon. Gentlemen can laugh all they want, they can laugh all they want, there will be nothing special going into the city of Mount Pearl to which they were not

entitled, and that they did not pay more than their fair share.

There is not another municipality in this Province that has not had 75 per cent of the cost of their fire fighting equipment paid for by Government. The city of Mount Pearl has it in there 100 per cent paid for by the city of Mount Pearl, at least at the moment. Maybe one of these days this Government will come to their senses and cost-share it same for Mount Pearl as they have for every other municipality in this Province. And one of these days we will find out what authority they might have not to agree since the program is in place and since the municipality was given approval to borrow that money, which should automatically carry with it cost-sharing based under the formula - that is in legislation - cost-sharing formula.

Mr. Tobin: What is the Minister saying about his district?

Mr. Windsor: Will the Minister now table the Fire Commissioner's report that says Mount Pearl should have its own Fire Department, that it should not be part of a regional system, that regional systems have not worked in other parts of Canada and that it should be done without delay, and that the Minister sent it back to the Fire Commissioner and told him to change it, and he refused to change it and sent it back again.

Mr. Tobin: Oh, resign.

Mr. Windsor: Will the Minister table that report, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Tobin: He should resign, yes he should resign.

If you are interfering with the Fire Commissioner's office, that is serious.

Mr. Windsor: Asked him to change his report. The Fire Commissioner said, I am sorry Mr. Minister, this is my professional opinion and I will not change it. Will the Minister not confirm -

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs on a point of order.

Mr. Windsor: Ah, we got him out of his shell.

Mr. Gullage: Mr. Speaker, I can take so much rubbish to a point, and finally on an outright, blatant untruth, I would ask the Member to apologize on the fact that he is telling an untruth to the House.

Mr. Windsor: What is it?

Mr. Gullage: I did not ask the Fire Commissioner's office to change or retract anything that was in any report, or any letter or any other document. I would ask the Member to apologize to the House.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Windsor: Mr. Speaker, obviously that is no point of order -

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Mr. Windsor: - I withdraw nothing because -

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Mr. Windsor: - it is truthful.

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Mr. Windsor: And if the Minister says it is not truthful -

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

I have not ruled on the point of order. It is just a disagreement between two hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Mount Pearl.

Mr. Windsor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You are quite correct, it is a disagreement -

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Tobin: For some reason he can do what he like.

Mr. Windsor: Some water here, please.

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible).

Mr. Speaker: I recognized the hon. Member for Mount Pearl.

Mr. Windsor: Thank you Mr. Speaker, you are absolutely correct. It simply is a disagreement. If the Minister thinks that I am wrong, let him show me to be wrong. Let him table that document. Let us see that document in this House as to what the recommendations of the Fire Commissioner are.

An Hon. Member: Prove you are right.

Mr. Windsor: Let us see them.

Mr. Gullage: Point of order.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs on a point of order.

Mr. Windsor: Ah, I have hit a

tender note, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gullage: If the Member is going to persist with his nonsense he should produce the document and produce the evidence he is talking about.

An Hon. Member: Hear hear!

Mr. Windsor: Was that your point of order?

Mr. Gullage: That is my point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would challenge him to put on the floor of this House the document and the proof he is talking about or resign, which he should do anyway.

Mr. Speaker: No point of order.

The hon. Member for Mount Pearl.

Mr. Windsor: You ruled, Your Honour, did you, that there was no point of order? Thank you, Your Honour. You are quite correct again, of course.

Mr. Speaker, how can I table a document when the Minister will not release it to me? The Minister has got the document.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Windsor: And I will not ask him to resign, Mr. Speaker. I do not need to. They will eventually get the nerve to call an election and he is going to get his comeuppance in the next election, so we will suffer through him until then, if he does not destroy every municipality in the Province between now and then.

An Hon. Member: You will not be around (inaudible).

Mr. Windsor: The Minister of Finance should not have much to

say. Bill 66 is here. We will have a chat with the Minister of Finance on Thursday. I thank the Minister of Finance for giving me this opportunity. That is going to be a dilly.

Mr. Tobin: What is that?

Mr. Windsor: For confirming once again everything I said last week was true.

Mr. Tobin: What was that? What (inaudible)?

Mr. Windsor: On the Economic Recovery Team, they have blown an extra \$31 million over and above their budget.

An Hon. Member: What?

Mr. Windsor: I said that in the House a week or so ago, that they had gone out and lost absolute control. I didn't know the difference.

Mr. Tobin: \$31 million (inaudible).

Mr. Windsor: \$31 million right there, in six months.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible) what we are paying on?

Mr. Windsor: That is off the subject, Mr. Speaker. This is totally out of order. It is totally irrelevant to the debate on this particular piece of legislation. I will have another day, several days in fact, to debate that one.

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line here is that this is nothing but the greatest threat to democracy that we have ever seen in this Province. It is taking away from municipalities all democratic

rights enjoyed in any free society.

Putting in legislation, Mr. Speaker, a dictatorship is what we are doing here. A dictatorship! Giving the minister authority to go on his own hidden agenda, whatever that might be, to create super cities, force cities to amalgamate, steal from under the noses of taxpayers assets they have paid for over the years with no compensation, although the Premier now indicates that perhaps that will not be the way it will be done. I hope the minister will bring in an amendment to deal with that. Is the minister going to bring in an amendment?

An Hon. Member: How did you stay elected for so long?

Mr. Windsor: The member would like to know. I advise the hon. member that I have been in this Chamber longer than any other member here. Longer than any other member here! I am the Granddaddy!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Windsor: I am the Granddaddy. He should follow me. He might find out. He is going to have to change his ways, Mr. Speaker, if he even hopes to come close to the length of time that I have been here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Windsor: Mr. Speaker, you know, it is interesting. I wish I had as many calls from my own district as I get from the minister's. I get calls every day. For every call I get from a constituent of mine, I get two from the minister's district saying I cannot get hold of the minister. Or, otherwise, and this

is true, I say to the minister -

An Hon. Member: How would you like to prove that, too?

Mr. Windsor: I can document that.

Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely true. I get calls from the minister's district saying, 'well, I called Mr. Gullage's office and they said call the Member for Mount Pearl.' I say it to the minister to try to help the poor hon. gentleman, Mr. Speaker. His staff does not even know the bounds of his district.

An Hon. Member: (Inaudible).

Mr. Windsor: In your own interest get a map of your district and give it to your secretary so that she knows what your district is. I am quite serious about this. Hon. gentlemen and ladies may laugh and think this is funny, but I am quite serious. I am tired of getting calls and doing the minister's job for him.

Dr. Kitchen: Put your seat on the line.

Mr. Windsor: I would be quite happy to do it, of course.

Mr. Tobin: You should put your's on the line.

Mr. Windsor: I certainly will, Mr. Speaker. If the Minister of Finance will run against me in Mount Pearl, I will resign tomorrow and I will run in a by-election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Windsor: Any day of the week. If the Premier will confirm that the Minister will be the candidate against me in Mount

Pearl, I will resign tomorrow. Or the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I will take him on in there, too.

Mr. Gullage: You wouldn't save your nomination fee.

Mr. Windsor: I beg your pardon? I missed it. What did he say?

An Hon. Member: You wouldn't save your nomination fee, he said.

Mr. Windsor: Come on! They cannot even find you any more. I am sick and tired of going to functions in the district and hearing they say, when is Mr. Gullage coming? And as a gentleman I have to cover for him and say Mr. Gullage must have gotten tied up in traffic. I left him at Government House there a couple of weeks ago and went in to open a soccer tournament; the minister had confirmed that he would be there as Minister of Recreation, a national under sixteen girls soccer tournament. The Minister did not show up, and I had to go out and speak on behalf of the Government and apologize that the Minister got tied up presenting the Duke of Edinburgh Awards at Government House and could not get there. I do not know what the reason was yet.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Windsor: I do not know what the reason was yet, but the Minister should thank me for at least covering his tail on many occasions. The people of Mount Pearl are tired of having places set at the head table for the Minister and his good wife, and having vacancies occur.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. member's time has elapsed.

Mr. Windsor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again let me say the most useless, unnecessary, undemocratic piece of legislation ever introduced into this Chamber.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Are we ready for the question?

Ms Verge: Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Member for Humber East.

Ms Verge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I hesitated because I thought the Member for St. John's South was going to rise and contribute to this debate on The Regional Service Boards Bill.

Mr. Simms: We will force him up yet.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please! Order, please!

I recognized the hon. the Member for Humber East.

Ms Verge: Mr. Speaker, I concur with the remarks made by my colleague, the Member for Mount Pearl, about this Bill. With respect to his representation of citizens in the District of Waterford - Kenmount, let me add that I, too, have been getting calls from members of that constituency. Just Friday I had a call from a single mother on social assistance, living in the St. John's part of Waterford - Kenmount. That woman is one of the victims of the social assistance cut. Her income, the money she gets to look after

herself and her children has been reduced by about eighty dollars.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please! Order, please!

There is far too much disorder here. I cannot hear what the hon. member is saying. I would like to hear what the hon. member is saying, otherwise I cannot determine whether the hon. member is being relevant or otherwise.

The hon. the Member for Humber East.

Ms Verge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My objection to this Bill, quite simply put, is that it gives far too much power to the Cabinet and the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs at the expense of municipalities and at the expense of individual citizens. Mr. Speaker, this proposed legislation seems to be part of a pattern of the real change Wells' Administration. The pattern involves dictatorial decision-making, the pattern involves decree decision-making, the pattern involves imposing change without warning to the people affected.

Mr. Speaker, currently in The Municipalities Act, Part 3, there is legal authorization for the creation of regional government, but in Part 3 of The Municipalities Act there is a requirement that a feasibility study be conducted so that municipalities and citizens affected by a proposal for the creation of regional government have an opportunity to present their views and contribute their ideas to the process. This Bill eliminates the requirement for any kind of consultation with municipalities or with the

public. This Bill allows the Cabinet unilaterally to decree the establishment of a regional service district, then to appoint a board drawn on nominations of municipalites, to hand-pick a chairperson for the board, to assign to the board whatever powers and functions the Cabinet wants, and the range of powers and duties cover everything a municipality does now or could conceivably want to do. The list of powers even includes policing, which all along in this Province has been a provincial function.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what is the hidden agenda here? I attended a meeting of the Humber Joint Council, which comprises about twenty-five municipalities in the Bay of Islands - Humber Valley - White Bay area, at the end of September. The Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs was the guest speaker at that meeting and he gave an explanation of this proposed legislation to the gathering. I listened attentively. His speech was quite good. The only problem is that what he said and what is contained in this Bill are totally different. His speech did not reflect the content of this Regional Service Board Bill. Now, perhaps the Minister was not familiar with the bill, or perhaps the Minister is trying to fool municipal leaders and the public. Those municipal leaders, those members of the Humber joint council were not fooled, though, Mr. Speaker, because each one of them had in his or her possession a copy of the Bill. The Leader of the Opposition had sent every mayor and council in the Province a copy of this proposed legislation last Spring. So each one of the mayors and councillors listening to the Minister's talk

knew the difference between what he was saying and what the Government is actually proposing in the way of new legislation. So, people were left wondering: what is the Government's secret agenda?

Now, I talked about a pattern of dictatorial, arbitrary and surprise decision making on the part of the real change Government. Maybe that is the change they had in mind. It is not the change that they mentioned when they were campaigning for election, but it is, indeed, a real change.

Other examples of that kind of decision making includes the discovery by Memorial University students last week that the Minister of Education has changed the student aid policy. The Minister of Education has not admitted that yet. He has gone as far as to say that the change is authorized in fine print. Perhaps he allowed the Government to magnify the print in the future. But obviously there has been a change of practice and many students at Memorial University were caught off guard when they received their student aid grant cheques at the end of last week. A change in practice - no warning.

Another example, Mr. Speaker, is the notorious October 1st social assistance change. No warning. It hurt people in the pocketbooks, among the poorest in the Province. And last Thursday we found out that the Government did not even amend the regulations to give the necessary legal authorization. The Minister of Justice, and today the Premier, are talking about fixing that.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

On a point of order, the hon. the Member for Mount Scio - Bell Island.

Mr. Walsh: Mr. Speaker, we are not hearing very much, but we certainly would like to hear some relevance to the bill at hand. This is not a money bill.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, I think Beauchesne defines relevancy as an area that is very difficult to define, but in most cases the Chair will give the hon. Member the leeway to proceed. The hon. Member is merely trying to point out examples of Government's dictatorial approach as also pointed out and found out in this particular Bill. That is quite relevant. It has been used on hundreds of occasions.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

To that point of order, the Chair advises all hon. Members that when we are speaking to a bill we should try and keep our remarks to the bill. But as the hon. Opposition House Leader points out, sometimes it is difficult, and the Chair has to follow the points being made by the person speaking. I would advise the hon. Member to remember the words of the Chair.

The hon. the Member for Humber East.

Ms. Verge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I explained earlier, I am making the point that this Regional Service Boards Bill gives the Government, the Cabinet in particular, the power to make

decisions unilaterally, in a dictatorial fashion, without involving or consulting municipalities and citizens affected, and without even giving people affected advance warning.

I said that seems to be consistent with a whole trend established by the Wells' real change Administration in their year and a half in office, and I was giving three illustrations. I had mentioned the Student Assistants change that upset students at Memorial University last week and is still causing them problems, I cited as a second example the social assistance cut, and that is the one that evidently makes the Member for Mount Scio - Bell Island very uncomfortable, and I am glad to see that he seems to have a conscience. He should be bothered by that one, and the third example, I say to the former NTA president, who now represents Exploits District, is the September cutback retroactively in pay for substitute teachers, a cause that he espoused to those many months ago, when he was representing the teachers of the Province.

In September the administration he now supports and upholds instituted a cutback in funding for substitute teachers. That change was retroactive to the start of the fiscal year April 1 and is causing serious problems for school boards. The rules were changed in midstream. The Government did not give fair or advance warning of the change to school administrators and teachers.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!
Order, please!

I remind hon. Members that the level of noise is not conducive to the debate and is doing nothing for the debate whatsoever. I remind the hon. Member, as well, that the hon. Member is permitted to make points when she is making the analogy, but not to get into great debate on the point which she is using.

The hon. the Member for Humber East.

Ms. Verge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really was not bothered by the noise, I was actually enjoying seeing how the truth about what this real change Government is doing to teachers, the former colleagues of the Member for Exploits. It seems to bother him greatly. I guess he is having trouble living with himself, too, realizing how he has changed his principles in just a very short time.

Mr. Speaker, it being close to five o'clock, I adjourn the debate.

An Hon. Member: Hear hear!

Mr. Simms: Good speech! Excellent speech!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Development.

Mr. Furey: Mr. Speaker, I want to, first of all, congratulate the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl. He has been angry and bitter and full of bluster for the last two weeks, but it is good to see him calmed down and back to his old self today.

I move that the House at its rising do adjourn until 2:00 p.m. tomorrow and that the House do now adjourn.

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, would the Minister be prepared to advise the House and the press and the public what item of Government business we will be dealing with on Thursday?

Some Hon. Members: Tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Furey: Mr. Speaker, I think that we will continue with Order 22, Bill 38, on Thursday.

Mr. Simms: Mr. Speaker, we will probably need some clarification then in that case, because the Government House Leader indicated to me that he would probably be calling the Supplementary Supply Bill probably Thursday.

An Hon. Member: Why did he ask?

Some Hon. Members: Why did you ask?

Mr. Simms: I am wondering if there was any change. I want to know if there is any change, or is he aware of a change?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Development.

Mr. Furey: I am not aware of the change here, Your Honour.

Mr. Simms: How about the Minister of Finance? Is he aware?

Mr. Furey: I can assume that we are carrying on with Order 22.

Mr. Simms: Is the Minister of Finance aware?

Mr. Furey: Are you aware that we are going to switch to the Supplementary Supply Bill?

Mr. Matthews: He doesn't know
(inaudible).

Mr. Furey: As far as I know it is
Order 22, but we could very well
be switching to the Supplementary
Supply Bill.

On motion, the House at its rising
adjourned until tomorrow,
Wednesday, at 2:00 p.m.