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Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will have members' statements from the Member for the District of Placentia – St. Mary's; the Member for the District of Terra Nova; the Member for the District of Lake Melville; the Member for the District of Bonavista North; the Member for the District of Tornгат Mountains and the Member for the District of Kilbride.

The hon. the Member for the District of Placentia – St. Mary's.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. F. COLLINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I pleased today to rise in this hon. House to pay tribute to two special ladies in my district.

On November 10, Mrs. Annie English of Branch celebrated her one hundredth birthday. Practically the whole community of Branch gathered to celebrate the life of this woman and the tremendous contribution that she has made to her community.

With her now deceased husband, Tommy, they opened their doors and their hearts to several foster children over the years. The tributes from the family and friends were testimony to the great love and respect that they have for her.

Earlier, Mr. Speaker, in September, Mrs. Beatrice Murphy celebrated her one hundredth birthday at the Lions Manor in Placentia. A native of Argentia, she lived in Freshwater and after working in Argentia for twenty years owned and operated a grocery store in Freshwater with her husband, Pius.

After a lifetime of commitment to the community, they both reside today at the Lions

Manor in Placentia where they can be seen every day in the lobby greeting visitors.

Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to attend the birthday celebrations of both Mrs. English and Mrs. Murphy, and I ask all hon. members in this House to extend heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to them both.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. COLLINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize someone who has given the vast majority of his life to helping others, Mr. Gord Kelly, born on Burnt Island in 1941 and moved to Gambo at age eight.

Later in life, he would move to Churchill Falls for work. While in Labrador, Gord became involved with the Lions Club serving the community for twenty years, everything from organizing events to fundraising for the underprivileged.

He and his wife, Rosalind, returned to the Island and now reside in Glovertown. It did not take him long to become an active volunteer in the area. He is a regular at practically every fundraiser in Glovertown and surrounding areas. He regularly visits the local 50 Plus Clubs and the local seniors' homes to perform, along with his band mates Cal Sweetapple and Percy Collins.

For those with mobility issues, Mr. Speaker, he does do regular house visits. He is also an active member of the Catholic Church in Culls Harbour, as well as a member of the United Church Men's Fellowship in Glovertown. He is not restricted by denomination, Mr. Speaker; his only concern is in helping others.

I ask all members to join me in thanking my friend, Gord Kelly, for his outstanding community service.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Lake Melville.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today, Mr. Speaker, to recognize the life of the late Barney Powers. Born in British Columbia, Barney moved to Labrador to help build the Upper Churchill Project with McNamara, and just never left.

For almost fifty years he took part in almost every major project that has helped shape Labrador. From 5 Wing Goose Bay, to the Voisey's Bay mine, to the Trans-Labrador Highway, and even in his last days he was advising people working on the Muskrat Falls Project.

He adopted Newfoundland and Labrador as his new home, and like anyone who takes pride in where they live he did his best to build it and to make it better, Mr. Speaker. He helped build much of the development in Labrador while at the same time giving back to all of the communities that he worked in.

With the loss of Barney Powers, you could quickly tell that the Big Land felt a little bit smaller if just for a moment. He is survived by his wife Debbie, his children Tim and Jane, and his two grandchildren Sam and Sarah.

I ask all hon. members of this House to join me in celebrating the life of Barney Powers, a great resident of Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Nearly a year ago, it was the last school day before Christmas. Lori Mercer returned home at lunchtime and discovered that her thirty-three-year-old husband, who had worked the previous night shift, had passed quietly away in his sleep. The Town of New-Wes-Valley was suddenly and completely in shock.

Bradley Mercer, the eldest son of Roland and Bonnie Mercer, graduated from Memorial University's nursing program. He could have chosen to travel anywhere, but he returned to his hometown to nurse at Brookfield-Bonnews Health Centre. His devotion to his profession endeared him to all. He was truly in his element, patient care was paramount, and many days he ignored the clock as it told everyone their shift was over.

Bradley also loved outdoor recreation and he had a quirky sense of humour. I remember a photo at his wake that showed him sawing bread at his cabin with his new handsaw because he left the bread knife home. Bradley was blessed with a wide circle of friends. His closest comrades, the entire group, all called each other 'brudder'.

A wise author once wrote, "Someone will walk into your life and leave a footprint in your heart." Bradley Mercer, 'brudder', was such a person.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the founders of the Combined Councils of Labrador. The first Labrador Combined Councils Conference took place in Hopedale from April 13-15, 1972. The main purpose of the conference was to bring the community councils of Northern Labrador together to discuss their problems and collectively seek solutions. Four community councils were represented at that

conference, Mr. Speaker, Hopedale, Makkovik, Davis Inlet, and Nain.

Representing Hopedale was Zach Karpik, David Mitsuk, Fred Vincent, Isaac Winters, and William Onalik. Representing Makkovik were Bill Anderson, Ted Anderson, Gary Mitchell, Rupert Evans, and Reg Anderson.

Nain was represented by John Lyall, Sam Anderson, Harry Dicker, Abraham Kojak, and William Kalleo. Father Peters represented the Innu community of Davis Inlet. Bill Shiwak from Rigolet showed up without invitation but was welcomed with open arms.

The first meeting was chaired by Ian Strachan, representative for the Extension Service of Memorial University. Several others, including my mom, Ruth Flowers, and Garfield Flowers, attended as observers.

Mr. Speaker, the Combined Councils of Labrador has been and continues to be an effective organization representing Labrador.

I ask all hon. members to join me in recognizing the elders of Northern Labrador who started the Combined Councils in 1972.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DINN: Mr. Speaker, I stand in this hon. House today to recognize and commend a constituent of Kilbride district, Maureen Hynes, a long-standing member of the Goulds Lions Club.

Maureen was a Lioness for five years, and a Lions Club member for the past eleven years. Along with having a very busy work schedule and home life, Maureen is very active with the club. She organizes the children's Christmas parties and makes sure each child in attendance

receives a gift from Santa. She has helped the Leo Club as a Leo advisor, as well as played a major role in the Goulds Lions Club Drive-In Bingo, which is their major fundraiser.

Maureen has had a very busy year as Secretary of Goulds Lions Club and she was recently chosen as Secretary of the Year for District N4, which covers Gander East.

The highest award by Lions International is the Melvin Jones Fellowship Award, which was awarded to Maureen in 2009. Goulds Lions Club has contributed thousands of dollars and many volunteer hours in our community, and Maureen is one of the major players in this club.

I ask all hon. members to join me in commending this dedicated individual.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House of Assembly today to honour the memory of fourteen young women who were killed during what we now refer to as the Montreal Massacre.

It will be twenty-four years ago tomorrow, December 6, that the lives of these women were taken at Montreal's École Polytechnique, simply because they were women.

More than two decades later, this horrific event is a chilling reminder of the devastating effects of violence against women.

In 1991, in memory of these women, the federal government designated December 6 as a National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women. Tomorrow, flags at

Confederation Building will be at half-mast from sunrise to sunset to mark this day.

Mr. Speaker, far too many women in our Province live with violence every day. In 2012, 54 per cent of the 5,847 violent crimes committed in this Province were against women. During the past seven years, the two police forces in our Province reported more than 20,000 incidents of violent crimes against women.

These facts represent a huge societal issue that we all have a responsibility to address. Through the Violence Prevention Initiative, our government is proactively working with community partners and stakeholders to identify long-term solutions to preventing violence against women.

The purple ribbon lapel pin that has been placed on your desk today symbolizes the memories of women we have lost to violence.

Mr. Speaker, let this ribbon also symbolize the hope that comes from our collective efforts to end inequality and violence against women. I encourage everyone to learn more about how they can bring an end to violence against women.

As a reminder to us all of the events of December 6, 1989, I will read the names of those fourteen women who died that day into the record of this House of Assembly: Geneviève Bergeron, H  l  ne Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz, Maryse Lagani  re, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Mich  le Richard, Annie St. Arneault, and Annie Turcotte.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to ask that we all take a moment of silence to remember these women and all the women whose lives have been impacted by violence.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The House will honour the moment of silence.

[A moment of silence is observed.]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. Twenty-four years later the Montreal Massacre still haunts our Nation. Fourteen bright and promising engineering students were murdered that day, Mr. Speaker, just because they were women. After ordering all the male students out of the classroom, the gunman shouted, I hate feminists, before opening fire.

It was feminists, Mr. Speaker, who got women to vote. It was feminists who fought to have rape in marriage considered a crime in Canada. That only changed thirty years ago. It was feminists who opened the first transition house, many out of their own money, to provide a safe place for women and children to flee from violence. Just last week, I took part in a Take Back the Night event in my own district and the turnout was exceptional.

Only thirty years ago in the House of Commons the issue of domestic violence was met with laughter by MPs. Indeed, we have come a long way in our Nation to end the violence against women, but there is still much more work that needs to be done.

The elimination of the Family Violence Intervention Court was a step backwards for this government in protecting women and children from violence. The RNC chief was in the news only last month expressing his concern over the homicide rates in the Province, many of which are domestic homicides. Most recently, of course, we mourn the loss of Juliane Hibbs.

In Canada, December 6 is now recognized as a Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women. I say, indeed, every day needs to be.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Twenty-four years ago I was a filmmaker living in Montreal near the Polytechnique. I remember the evening so well. Aside from the shock, the chaos, and the tragedy, what I remember is how many women really understood what had happened. A year later, I made the film *After the Montreal Massacre* for the first anniversary. The film looked at what had happened at Polytechnique, but also linked it to the whole issue of violence against women.

We have come far in our understanding of the complexities of this issue. Many women have worked hard, have gained expertise, have lobbied for change, and have developed and provided effective services.

On this day of remembrance and action, I implore the Minister of Justice once again to reconsider the closure of the Family Violence Intervention Court. It was a program that was so effective in dealing with violence against women. I implore the minister to meet with and listen to the voices of those who know.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Member for St. John's North have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

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

MR. KIRBY: Thanks to the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

In the summer of 2000, I met April Arnott. April was an excellent student who loved nature and was interested in environmental issues. In November of that year, April Arnott was

murdered by her boyfriend. She was only nineteen.

Too many of us have known women who have died at the hands of their intimate partners. We must all bring our collective resources to bear in order to prevent such tragedies in the future. A single one of them is one far too many.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in the hon. House today to discuss the recent World Trade Organization ruling on Canada and Norway's action against the European Union seal ban.

The provincial government was disappointed when the World Trade Organization, or WTO, decided to uphold this ban using public moral concerns as the justification. We believe this was an unfair ruling, as the Canadian seal harvest is one of the best managed harvests of animals anywhere in the world. Our provincial seal industry has increased the level of training sealers receive to ensure a humane harvest, and many internationally respected veterinarians have reviewed the Canadian harvest and confirm indeed it is humane.

Despite the wrongful ban, the provincial sealing industry continues to grow thanks to the dedication of the industry players, and the ongoing support of the provincial government. More than 90,000 seals were harvested during the 2013 season, which represents an increase of approximately 30 per cent over the 69,000 seals that were harvested in 2012.

The provincial government has fostered this success by providing a \$3.6 million inventory financing loan to Carino Processing in 2012, and again in 2013. The industry fully repaid the

2012 loan, with interest, and is on its way to fully repaying this year's loan. This government has also provided almost \$40,000 recently to support an international branding and marketing strategy for seal products produced by Carino Processing. Tomorrow, I will join the hon. Gail Shea, federal Fisheries Minister, to make another announcement in support of the industry.

Mr. Speaker, the production value of the sealing industry has been as high as \$55 million annually, which shows the economic benefits this industry can create in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. This government deeply values the positive impact the sealing industry has on our vibrant and growing economy. We also appreciate its significance to our culture and history. In light of this, I call on all hon. members to support the federal government's appeal of the WTO's unjust decision to uphold this ban – a ban that the WTO admits violates international trade agreements.

Working together with the industry and our federal counterparts, we will continue to foster the success of an industry that has been a proud part of our past, and will continue to be a source of valuable income for rural families and communities in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, our sealing industry is not only important to us as a Province, but to each fisherman who take a significant income from this harvest each year. The decision by the World Trade Organization to uphold the 2010 seal ban was indeed disappointing.

Mr. Speaker, what was more disturbing was when our own government failed to pressure the federal government to place this critical issue on the table when the CETA trade deal was being worked on with the European Union. The fact that it was not raised during the trade talks shows that the Province did not consider the issue important enough.

Many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, including the Canadian Sealers Association, have expressed their concern that the Province did not use it as a bargaining chip at the CETA table as it would have certainly given us a better chance to have this issue successfully resolved. It shows the lack of government will to truly tackle issues that are important to our history, our culture, and our economy. Now we are left with no other choice but to again fight this seal ban through an appeal which could take many years.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest that to truly save our industry we must also fight the public relations board to correct the EU public misconception of our sealing industry, and that will require a significant investment.

Mr. Speaker, I was once a commercial sealer, I am still a subsistent seal hunter, and I do plan to go seal hunting this weekend.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement.

I fully support the sealing industry and I am optimistic about its future potential. The sealing industry is still an important aspect of rural Newfoundland and Labrador. It has played a critical role in the evolution of many of the coastal regions here in the Province. It is

intricately linked to our culture and to our economy, especially for many of the communities along the East and Northeast Coast of the Island, and as a traditionally way of life along the Coast of Labrador.

I fully support the federal government's appeal of the World Trade Organization's decision based on moral grounds. I think this decision is problematic because it has implications for the trading of all animal meat and products.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Member for The Straits – White Bay North have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

My family and my heritage have been linked to sealing for centuries. I am very disappointed by the WTO decision, and I am encouraged by any investment and any action that the provincial or the federal ministers will take on this initiative. Sealing is environmentally friendly, it is sustainable, and it is humane. We have so much potential to grow at the local level and in the Asian markets as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to announce the annual launch of our Snow Means Slow winter road safety awareness campaign.

The vision of the Department of Transportation and Works is of a safe, reliable and sustainable transportation and public works infrastructure that supports the social and economic needs of the Province. This campaign supports that vision by bringing safety to the forefront.

Mr. Speaker, with the increasingly volatile weather that we experience, it is more important than ever to make safe driving practices a priority. The Snow Means Slow campaign is designed to remind drivers to do their part by adjusting their speed to suit road and weather conditions.

The Department of Transportation and Works takes pride in providing a reliable road clearing service for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Our winter maintenance program represents an annual investment of \$65 million, providing for the operation of 557 pieces of equipment including plow trucks, graders, loaders, snow blowers, brine tankers, and backhoes.

Mr. Speaker, we began our winter maintenance service on December 1 and our crews will remain dedicated to provincial snow clearing and ice control on more than 9,800 kilometres of primary and secondary highways and community access roads. Our staff is committed to working around the clock, often in treacherous and dangerous conditions, to help keep the travelling public safe.

The Snow Means Slow message is a very serious and important one. Our advertising campaign is now running on television, radio, and newspapers Province-wide to encourage all motorists to plan ahead, check forecasts and adjust their speed according to the current road conditions.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all hon. members to keep safety a priority at all times and remember, Snow Means Slow.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. My colleague, the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, has been advocating for twenty-four seven snow clearing on expanded areas of the Trans-Canada Highway. If government are prepared to advocate for safer driving conditions and practices, they have to be prepared to provide the resources to make that happen.

Coincidentally, Mr. Speaker, just today I spoke with a transport truck driver who last Sunday got stuck on Holyrood Hill – it is about half an hour from St. John's – at 10:00 p.m. He called the RCMP to ask for assistance; they referred him on to Highways. Highways told him they could not clear the road until 6:00 a.m. the next morning. He called the RCMP again, afraid that somebody was going to go into the back of the truck, and another truck got stuck there. They had to call a wrecker, Mr. Speaker, to haul them up Holyrood Hill because it was impassable.

Twenty-four seven snow clearing is an important issue, Mr. Speaker. When it can happen only thirty miles from St. John's, it can happen on the Burgeo – La Poile highway, it can happen in other areas of the Province. To have that type of dangerous situation, Mr. Speaker, not only for the drivers of that vehicle to be stuck on the highway for eight hours, but for another driver who could possibly pile into the back of one of those trucks, it is a very serious issue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement here today.

I would also like to thank the workers who are out there on the highways doing the hard work of keeping these roads and everything clear. I know sometimes the department has been left – according to the Budget consultations last year they have been left shorthanded in some cases

when it comes to staffing some of the equipment that is out there. The reason why, of course, has to do with the retention of workers because they have to compete with other factors out there, such as the Labrador market.

I would like to remind government, too, that while it is very important to have these roads and everything clear, we also have to remember the other things that are happening out there as regards to highway enforcement that we have been talking about in the last little while. Enforcement, as well, is a very important component. We just cannot ask people to slow down, because sometimes they do not. We have to have the resources to ensure enforcement.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Since the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services was created back in 2009, we have had three different ministers, three different deputy ministers, and we have had four investigative reports from the Child and Youth Advocate.

I ask the Premier: How can you address the long-standing systemic problems within CYFS when the department is in such turmoil and in constant turnover?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Department of Child, Youth and Family Services and the provision of services to children and youth in the Province has a long history in this Province. Back in the 1990s it

came from a mainline department in government; it was moved to health authorities throughout the Province.

We, as a government, realized that is not the most effective way to provide services for children and youth. We undertook a study, a clinical review in 2008 to 2009. We looked at the results of that review very carefully, and in 2009 we announced that we would form a new Department of Child, Youth and Family Services.

It has been a big piece of work for this government, Mr. Speaker. It is a serious piece of work. Our goal is to continue to provide the best services possible for children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, my question was about the turnover, and there is no question, if you want to have consistency in any department, in anything we do, you would not be just moving people around on a regular basis.

Mr. Speaker, in response to my question yesterday, the minister said that events and recommendations leading up to the report were events prior to the fall of 2011. However, the Child and Youth Advocate says the issues still exist today.

I ask the minister: How can you say that these issues have been addressed?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The department was developed in 2009. We announced the development of a new

department. That department was wrapped around the recommendations from the clinical recommendations of the study that was carried out by Susan Abell in 2008, and there were several recommendations in that report.

One of the comments made by the author of that comprehensive report is that it is going to take many years of focused and concerted effort by government to bring services to a much better level than what they were being provided prior to that. We are committed to that. We are committed to that documentation. We are committed to the recommendations contained in it, and we are going to continue our efforts, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question again was about the comments that were made by the minister yesterday where he said the events and recommendations leading up to this report are events prior to the fall of 2011.

I ask the minister today: Do you stand by your comments that you made yesterday?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, this report was about events leading up to an event in the fall of 2011, a tragic day by many respects. In many ways it was a tragedy. Mr. Speaker, that resulted in the Child and Youth Advocate carrying out an investigation into the events leading up to that event and the events of the fall of 2011. She just recently released her report which contains a number of recommendations that are applicable to various departments within government.

We are looking at all of those recommendations. What is important to recognize here is that there

are – and we noticed this right away – common factors in the recommendations. There are common aspects of the recommendations the Child and Youth Advocate has mentioned. We compared to our goal in the first place in 2008 when we began the process of developing the department, and that included a number of factors, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are a lot of things in common. The recommendations, of course, coming out of the Turner investigation are very similar to the recommendations that we are seeing released this week.

The advocate has said that many deficiencies identified as a result of the investigation process are included in the report with applicable recommendation. The advocate also confirms that there are still issues outstanding today, and if they were not she would have acknowledged them in this report as she did in some previous reports.

I ask the minister: Do you agree with the advocate or not?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, the provision of services to children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador is a very important matter, so much so that we developed this independent department to deal with children and youth.

The advocate has made recommendations, several recommendations, and when you read through the recommendations some of those recommendations say develop and ensure; as an example, an auditing process. As a result of the

earlier recommendation done, that auditing process now exists in the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services.

That is what I am trying to explain to the member opposite. There are a number of recommendations and pieces in the recommendations from the Child and Youth Advocate which we have already implemented, are working towards, and making our best efforts in regard to those recommendations. We need to meet with her to make sure we are on the same page.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the advocate released three investigative reports this spring called Turning a Blind Eye, “Joey’s” Story, and Out of Focus. In those investigations, when policy changes were made in the interim, she acknowledged that in her report. It is clear from the advocate that this has not happened in this latest report and she is very clear about that.

I ask the minister: Why are you still insisting that these recommendations are only related to circumstances prior to 2011?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, that is not what I am trying to explain to the member opposite. What I am trying to explain to the member opposite is that when we undertook the enormous task of developing a new department and when we undertook the enormous task of developing new legislation and new policies to guide us in the provision of services for children and youth, we carried out a large piece of work. It was a transformation of how the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services provided those

services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

They came from recommendations in 2008. There are similarities in the recommendations she has provided. We agree. We are continuing to work towards the best services we can. Some of those recommendations that have common features in them, it is important we understand the vision of the Child and Youth Advocate and the vision we have, and have a good discussion about.

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

MR. BALL: I ask the minister: Would you confirm and agree that many of the outstanding issues based on the recommendations are still not addressed by your department?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, when one looks at the recommendations by the Child and Youth Advocate, a piece of work that took two years to complete by the advocate and resulted in a comprehensive report and several recommendations that she has laid out in the provision of child and youth services for the Province, it is very important that we have a clear understanding of what her intention and what her vision is when she lays out those recommendations. We are doing our work. We have been doing our work internally to look at those recommendations to grasp a full understanding of them.

Our intention is, and we have already reached out, to arrange to have a meeting, an opportunity to sit at the table to discuss her recommendations so that we have a full and clear understanding of what those recommendations are. Once we do that, we will be in a much better position to answer the hon. member –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have spoken with the advocate and she clearly identifies and states, as she did in her media release, that they have not been acted upon and she still sees some major issues. Yesterday we learned that there are almost 100 youth sixteen years and older who have signed youth services agreements and are living on their own. I asked yesterday how many of these children could be taken back into care.

I ask the minister: What action has been taken, working with those youth, and giving them the option of returning into protective care?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For many years in Newfoundland and Labrador, as has been outlined by members opposite in their comments in the last few days, when a young person reached the age of sixteen they come out of care. They come out of the care and custody of the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services.

We have provisions in place now that provide enormous supports for persons aged sixteen and beyond, for sixteen year olds, seventeen year olds, and eighteen year olds. We provide them with the option to continue to stay in a supportive living environment. Some of them, many of them, most of them opt out to go into an alternative arrangement. They live more independently than the ones who live in a supportive living arrangement.

We continue to provide supports to them, we continue to reach out to them, and we continue to encourage them, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: I take from the comment from the minister that the department – and I would like for you to confirm this, that you have actually reviewed those files and have progressively went through the files and given those children who have signed those youth services agreements the option to come back into protective care.

Can the minister confirm that?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to think that the social workers, social work supervisors, the professionals who work in the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services are very well qualified and work very hard in the provision of services to children and youth in the Province. We rely on them and we hold them at a very high standard, Mr. Speaker, and so we should. We expect good performance from those employees. They are very well qualified. I met some of them, I know some of them myself, they work very hard and they are very dedicated.

They provide choices to youth. When youth reach the age of sixteen, they provide choices to those youth. I can tell you that when a person reaches sixteen years of age, a child who is in care and reaches their sixteenth birthday, they have the option to remain in that supportive living environment that they lived in when they were fifteen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We kind of went through this a bit yesterday – and I agree with the minister. We have a lot of great staff working in the Department of CYFS. What I am looking for here is: Have you have actually progressively gone out and sought the number of youth that we have, who have signed youth services agreements, and giving them the option of coming back into protective care. Have you done that?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, protective care is designed for children up to their sixteenth birthday. So, protective care is designed for children up to their sixteenth birthday. When they reach their sixteenth birthday, we provide them with the opportunity to remain in the supportive living environment that they were living in prior to their sixteenth birthday.

That was not always done in this Province, Mr. Speaker, but it is done by us and it is done by us as a government. We provide supports and services to them. We provide supports and services then throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. It becomes the choice of the young person, when they reach the age of sixteen, if they want to stay in those circumstances; 40 per cent of them have chosen to stay in those circumstances and 60 per cent have chosen otherwise.

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, there are almost 100 people living on their own. The minister has been talking about a transition pilot project that allows for youth who are sixteen to nineteen, as you said, to voluntarily stay in protective care.

I ask the minister: How many youth do you have currently taking part in the pilot project?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, again, I have to tell the hon. member opposite, when you reach your sixteenth birthday you are no longer in protective care. Protective care is for children up to their sixteenth birthday. When they reach sixteen, we offer them the opportunity to stay in the supportive living environment that they were living in prior to their sixteenth birthday.

If children or youth, when they reach their sixteenth birthday – they are now referred to as youth and when youth do that, we build supports around them. We build supports around them to assist them in their everyday living. In a pilot project that we started just this year, in providing life skills coaches to youths throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, we provide skills and we provide coaching to them on how to function and operate in every day-to-day life.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the minister acknowledged yesterday that he received the draft report at least a week ago before it was released publicly.

I ask the minister: Will you table a copy of that draft report?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, until the report is made public by the Advocate for Children and Youth, the Advocate for Children and Youth has all rights to make amendments or changes to that report, as the person sees fit. Therefore, until the report is made public and it is publicly tabled and publicly presented by the Advocate for

Children and Youth, it does not become a public, finalized document.

The document that was made public and made available this week by the Child and Youth Advocate is, to the best of my knowledge, the same document, without alterations, that was provided to us the week before.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the minister has confirmed that he received the draft report approximately a week ago, but the advocate has confirmed that CYFS, Justice, and Health were all provided with the factual findings of this investigation on July 9, 2013, about five months ago.

I ask the minister: Can you confirm that is correct?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, a summary or a set of facts, as referred to by the member opposite, a draft, a set of facts, were shared with the department some time ago, and I believe it was shared with other departments as well.

Mr. Speaker, what is important here is that the advocate has full responsibility and full right to develop and complete a final report. That is what we have to guide ourselves by, is the final report that was released by the advocate this week. That finalized document to my mind, Mr. Speaker, is the only one that really counts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, we have the final report which was Tuesday, the draft report

that the minister states he received about a week ago, and the factual findings which the advocate says that these departments received on July 9.

I am asking the minister: Will you table what the advocate provided to you on July 9?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, we have a relationship with the Child and Youth Advocate as the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services. Now, as I mentioned in this House this week, when I first came into the department in October, I reached out to the Child and Youth Advocate to engage in a discussion, an opportunity to meet the advocate.

My understanding is that there has been a relationship similar to that with the advocate for some time, where the advocate will sometimes reach out and ask of information, provide information, there are responses that go back and forth. That is just the course sometimes of doing business with the advocate.

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that I want to – I am not in a position here to give the member opposite any assurances of any documentation or discussions we have had.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the minister is the head of that department so certainly he can take the responsibility of providing the documentation if he feels so. We understand that CYFS responded to the factual findings that the advocate sent to the department.

I ask the minister: Will you confirm that your department responded, and will you table your response to the advocate?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe, and with all due respect to the member opposite, what he is asking for now are documents that were compiled as part of the advocate's investigation. With all due respect to the member opposite, I would strongly suggest that what he should probably do is ask the advocate for those documents. It was her investigation, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I actually have to correct the minister because what I am asking for, your response was not part of the investigation. The factual findings that were sent to you were a result of the investigation.

The second thing is that I asked the minister: Will he table his response to the advocate? I am asking if he will table and provide to the public what his department said to the advocate.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our response to the advocate in relation to the information referred to by the member opposite was in response to her investigation. It was an investigation that was being carried out by the Child and Youth Advocate.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I have respect for the Child and Youth Advocate. I respect her office, her ability, her right to carry out investigations, and I am not going to interfere with that process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I accept the fact that the minister wants to keep the documents that his department provided secret. I am not asking for the advocate, I am asking for the minister to take responsibility but if he does not want to.

I ask the Minister of Justice: Can you confirm that your department responded, and are you prepared to table a copy of your department's response?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have the highest respect – and I know I speak for members on this side of the House and for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador when I state here in the House of Assembly that we have the highest respect for the rights, ability, for the Child and Youth Advocate to carry out investigations pertaining to children and youth in the Province. I am not going to interfere with that investigation. If he wants to obtain records or documents that pertain to her investigation, I encourage him to contact the Child and Youth Advocate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the Department of CYFS is refusing to provide their response to the investigation. The Department of Justice is refusing to answer whether they will provide.

I ask the Minister of Health: Can you confirm that your department responded, and are you prepared to table a copy to the public of your response?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, it is the same answer, as I have told you. The Child and Youth Advocate has the right and responsibility to carry out investigations that she deems necessary and appropriate in the capacity of her office. I am not going to interfere with her right to do that. If she has documentation involving her investigation that the hon. member opposite is interested in obtaining, I suggest he go through the process of contacting her office.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier this sitting I asked the Minister of Environment and Conservation about government's lack of action on protecting our coastal communities, as 250 of those communities are at high risk to coastal erosion.

There has been a second landslide in Daniel's Harbour in just one month, and storm surges last night in Placentia Bay created public safety concerns. Government is spending a considerable amount of money in Daniel's Harbour now to move infrastructure. We need to take these events into consideration, Mr. Speaker, as we allow future developments.

I ask the minister: When will you take action and update the provincial regulations for new coastal developments?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To build on the further questions and answers that we had in this House, there was a report done on coastal erosion. It is available online. It was done by Dr. Catto at the university, as the hon. member knows. Based on that report, Mr.

Speaker, which did not contain recommendations, there has been information put together to provide a toolkit for communities, for municipalities, to be able to do a vulnerability assessment of their community.

Also, Mr. Speaker, there is work being done to digitize the information contained in that report. That report is available. It is available to municipalities. We will work with municipalities and through our Department of Municipal Affairs as well to ensure that communities understand this issue and that they are prepared to make necessary changes if they wish to do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, it is deplorable that the minister would put this responsibility back on communities.

I have asked the minister: Is she prepared to change regulations regarding future development too near the coastline?

Dr. Catto has recommended publicly – I read it in the newspaper, so I am sure the minister did as well – that developments too close to coastlines are going to be very costly in the future.

Will you change the regulations, Minister, to take into account coastal erosion in these communities at high risk to prevent coastal development too close to the coastline?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, what I am not prepared to do is unilaterally impose on communities and municipalities what the hon. member is suggesting. This government is open to consultation and is open to working with our municipalities to help them assess the

vulnerability of their communities and work together. Any work in this regard will be done in collaboration with our communities and municipalities, and not to them.

Thank you.

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

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

Manitoba Hydro's Wuskwatim hydroelectric dam bills are in and the people of Manitoba learned it has cost twice what they were told it would cost. Manitoba Hydro officials blamed unprecedented increases in input costs on everything from cement, to fuel, to labour.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: What makes her and Nalcor think they will be able to control the costs of their Muskrat Falls Project, also approved by Manitoba Hydro?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, what we see time and time again in this House, and what the member opposite fails to recognize, is that we believe in our own experts and we believe in the work of Nalcor, first and foremost.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: This has been a long, comprehensive process. There has been a tremendous amount of work and expertise applied to the Muskrat Falls Project, Mr. Speaker, in every area that has been validated. It supports the work of Nalcor. It shows that we are on the right track to providing and meeting the power needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians at the least-cost option.

It is also built into this project an opportunity for a renewable resource that we can sell for revenue for the Province as long as the river flows. We are certainly going to continue to support the work of our own experts right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I point out that Nalcor and the government believed in Manitoba Hydro also. The people of Manitoba, however, face a 2.5 per cent rate increase because of the huge cost overruns on the Wuskwatim project. Some experts say Manitobans can expect double digit rate hikes over the next decade.

I ask the Premier: How can she be sure, as she keeps insisting, that people in this Province will not face the same fate from government's Muskrat Falls Project?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, with this project and with any other project we take on in this Province, it is important never to look at it through a single lens. That is what the members opposite have done, particularly the Third Party. The lens that they peer through all the time, and every piece of information is measured through, is that we are against Muskrat Falls.

Mr. Speaker, we have more than MHI – and MHI were not our experts. You tout the PUB, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Third Party touts the PUB in this House on a regular basis. Manitoba Hydro was the PUB's choice – the PUB's choice, Mr. Speaker - not the government's.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

In this year's Budget government pegged over \$531 million for Nalcor to draw down on, if needed. That is money government chose not to spend on infrastructure and services.

I ask the Premier: Does the Department of Finance have complete oversight on how this money is spent by Nalcor?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that is certainly an original way of describing government spending. Every dollar we spend on roads is a dollar we do not spend in health care. Every dollar we spend helping municipalities is not a dollar we spend in education, according to the rationale just put forward by the Leader of the Third Party.

Investment in Nalcor, Mr. Speaker, investment in our renewable energy, investment in the natural resources of this Province, ensure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are the primary beneficiaries of these resources and will allow us to do all of those other things.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ontario announced in June that it would ban outright the collection of so-called environment fees on consumer products, including those fees on the electronics and tires. They said that recycling should be a regular cost of doing

business. Tagging consumers for these fees should not be a business opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: Is she prepared to take another look at recycling in this Province and how much consumers are getting dinged as a result of it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, I think there is a commitment from this government, and probably from any government in this Province in the future, that recycling is important and waste disposal is also important.

There are fees on different materials that we dispose, whether it is paint, tires or electronic equipment. Mr. Speaker, the agency that we deal with for the e-waste, which is the electronic waste, is a non-profit agency. So, for the member's information, it is not a business that we are conducting this work with; it is a non-profit agency.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The problem here is that the EPRA, the group that she is talking about, has \$36 million in the bank and none of it has gone back to the consumer.

Will government reassess the program, recycling here, and stop charging the collection of recycling fees plus HST, the government take, for electronic recycling until it has time to look at the overall recycling program in this Province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have an agreement to have the e-waste collected at this time and there is a fee attached to that, but like any program, Mr. Speaker, we will make sure that it meets the needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It is not a lifetime contract that we are in to. We will review as we move forward to make sure that the waste disposal is happening in an appropriate manner and that the cost is appropriate to the consumers of Newfoundland and Labrador.

What we are also committed to, Mr. Speaker, is that we want to deal with waste management in Newfoundland and Labrador; again, whether it is the paint or the tires, or the e-waste or new waste management disposal sites that we have. Mr. Speaker, we are committed to a waste management strategy and we will see that through.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I am very happy to table the promised documents on our CETA negotiations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Pursuant to Section 8 and Section 10 of the Public Tender Act, I hereby table reports of the Public Tender Act exceptions for the period of April to October, 2013, as presented by the Chief Operating Officer of the Government Purchasing Agency.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. KING: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice under Standing Order 11, I shall move that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, December 9, 2013.

Further, I give notice under Standing Order 11, I shall move that this House not adjourn at 10:00 p.m. on Monday, December 9, 2013.

MR. SPEAKER: Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: No, a petition.

MR. SPEAKER: You are standing under...?

AN HON. MEMBER: Notices.

MR. SPEAKER: We are into answers to questions for which notice has been given.

Does the member have leave to go back to notices of motion?

AN HON. MEMBER: No leave.

MR. SPEAKER: Leave has been denied.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS early childhood educators are trained professionals essential to the operation of child care centres and indispensable to many parents and children across Newfoundland and Labrador; and

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: WHEREAS on the occasion of Early Childhood Educators Week in May 2012, government conveyed its support and recognition for the role of early childhood educators and expressed its appreciation for its value; and

WHEREAS early childhood educators working in child care centres receive salaries that are the lowest in Canada amongst ECEs; and

WHEREAS government's 2012 increase in subsidies paid to ECEs applies only to Level I ECEs working in child care homerooms and Level II Early Childhood Educators who operate child care centres; and

WHEREAS all early childhood educators are highly educated, skilled and deserving of a fair and equitable wage and subsidy; and

WHEREAS government is discriminating against some of the most skilled ECEs in Newfoundland and Labrador;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to revise

the enhancement to the Early Learning and Child Care Supplement to include all early childhood educators working in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I would first like to clarify. This petition has been in circulation for some time now, since about May of 2012. The hon. Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services tells me that there have been changes in terms of the salaries paid to ECEs in Newfoundland and Labrador relative to their counterparts across the Canadian provinces.

I do not know if that data is from Statistics Canada, but if he could table that information here in the House of Assembly and we could have a look at it to see if this is in fact out of date information. The fact remains, back in May of 2012, government did make a change to the Early Learning and Child Care Supplement that is paid to ECEs in the Province. While some received that, many did not.

I think one of our goals with the child care strategy in the Province is to encourage ECEs to attain higher levels of education and training. Going ahead with this would achieve that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS Route 430, The Viking Trail, is the primary highway on the Great Northern Peninsula used at all times during any given day to conduct business, commute for work or

education, and to obtain emergency medical assistance; and

WHEREAS at times the road lacks adequate snow clearing during late night and early morning hours; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has a twenty-four hour snow clearing program;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to allocate funds to implement twenty-four hour snow clearing on Route 430.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, it is quite evident when you have twenty-four hour snow clearing it does improve the safety outcomes. In my particular district, a key employer is the hospital in St. Anthony. There are a number of people who conduct shift work, who work late nights at gas stations. They are commuters, and after 9:30 p.m. road conditions can be quite devastating where people are not able to get home, they are not able to travel, or they are taking that risk.

That is something we should be looking at in areas where there are commuters. Given that Route 430 – the Deer Lake airport is a last in, first out type airport. A number of people on the Great Northern Peninsula commute late hours into the evening, or they are driving to or from the airport. This is something that can greatly assist and it is something that is driving the economy.

The Deer Lake Regional Airport is breaking records all the time. It is positive that it is doing that, but we have to look at the impacts, and the economic impacts, as to what it means for the commuters and the economy and making sure we are providing adequate services to keep families, keep people who are travelling on our highways as safe as they can be.

This is something that maybe on a pilot basis we could look at exploring, sections of Route 430; it

could be an opportunity to look at, for the Minister of Transportation and Works. It is something that constituents of mine are asking for, and I certainly look forward to having further discussion on that. Twenty-four-hour snow clearing is something we should strive to do, given that in the response to the Ministerial Statement today it was that snow means slow – and we certainly need to slow down; but if the road is not clear, people cannot get safely to where they need to go.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS Cartwright is an existing port of call for the *MV Northern Ranger*; and

WHEREAS Cartwright is connected to the Trans-Labrador Highway, providing access to truck freight destined for the North Coast of Labrador; and

WHEREAS Cartwright would eliminate unnecessary travel and cost for freight destined for Northern Labrador now being trucked to Happy Valley-Goose Bay; and

WHEREAS there has always been, and continues to be, commercial trade between the South and North Coast of Labrador;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to designate Cartwright as a shipping port for freight destined to the North Coast of Labrador, beginning with the 2014 shipping season.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a huge deal of frustration, especially for businesses and local contractors in my district this past season. Just to paint a picture of that, we have businesses in the Labrador Straits that have to drive past Cartwright, an extra 600 or 700 kilometres return on a gravel road to Goose Bay, and the people who are paying for this, ultimately, are the people on the North Coast of Labrador. They are paying an extra \$600 or \$700 on a snow machine. What we are asking for, Mr. Speaker, do not cost the government extra money.

If I go to Cartwright today and I am going to Black Tickle with my four wheeler, I can take it and go; but if I am going to Makkovik, I cannot take my four wheeler. Mr. Speaker, while the pavement is coming, the road is not finished. We are asking government to reconsider this for the new shipping season. It does not cost any extra money. There is just a blatant lack of will to provide this service to the people of Labrador once again, and we see it here in this situation.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Conservation, that we now move to Orders of the Day.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that we now move to Orders of the Day.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Order 2 on the Order Paper, third reading of a bill, I move, seconded by the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services, that An Act Respecting Adoptions, Bill 27, be now read the third time.

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

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion that Bill 27 be now read a third time?

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

MS ROGERS: I just have a question for the minister, and I am very interested in how this act is going to roll out. Although the new legislation will be rolled out, which would probably be passed very soon, in the interest of openness and transparency, I ask the minister if he will table all written submissions and the minutes or notes of all consultations that informed the amendments to the bill.

I am especially interested in the submission by the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate and any records of consultations with Aboriginal groups.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting Adoptions. (Bill 27)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting Adoptions", read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 27)

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to call from the Order Paper, Order 6, second reading of a bill, An Act To Amend The Schools Act, 1997, Bill 28.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries, that Bill 28 be read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 28, An Act To Amend The Schools Act, 1997, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Schools Act, 1997". (Bill 28)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

MR. JACKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in ten years as a member of this government and a minister of this government, I have been fortunate to be involved in many announcements which have brought benefits to Newfoundland and Labrador. I am standing today and I have to say this is amongst one of my proudest moments. On Monday, we went out to St. Teresa's and we made a launch of our Safe and Caring Schools Policy.

There has been much talk about bullying, anti-bullying, and whatnot. The launch of our Safe and Caring Schools, as I will get into a little bit further, while that is a large part of it, what we are looking at is making our schools safe for all students and we will be looking at different types of activities and whatnot that go on there, and see how we can indeed work with the larger school community to make things as best as we possibly can for our children.

Mr. Speaker, the message around this is certainly getting out there. I will tell you that

since our launch of the revised policy on Monday, we have gotten e-mails; we have gotten commentary. I was on the elevator when somebody stopped and commented on the work that we are doing in this regard, and the latest one caught me a little bit by surprise last night. I was aboard a cab and I am sitting right across from the cab driver in the front seat; he looks across at me and he says: Do you think it is going to work? I said: What do you think is going to work? He said: That thing you are doing on bullying.

A message for me in that, Mr. Speaker, a strong message, is that people are hearing about it; they are talking about it. His commentary to me, which I fully agree with, is schools can do their part and we have to do our part as the Department of Education and school boards, and he commented on the role of parents. I thanked him for his insight and his interest. It did leave an impression with me, Mr. Speaker.

Two year ago, a little over two years ago, I came in as Minister of Education. Within my first week, there were three things that I had identified that I wanted to work on during my time as Minister of Education. This issue of countering bullying was one of them. As we got further into doing this revised policy, certainly the whole aspect of having safe schools for our students expanded into other types of behaviours that we want to ensure are appropriate behaviours within the schools.

I want to tackle this whole issue of bullying among young people from different perspectives. Certainly, the physical violence – there is no doubt about that. There is harassment, intimidation, cyberbullying and sexting which probably about three years ago, none of us would have known about, exclusion, and just plain disrespect. Bullying can take many forms, and as such, we as a larger school community need to address it.

At St. Teresa's the other morning, the head table guests were there, but I have to say, the person on my immediate right and my immediate left were the ones I felt most connected to at the table because they are students. They are young

people who are in our schools day in and day out. In the gymnasium, the auditorium where we were, we had students there from other schools. These are the young people who go to these buildings day in and day out. They are the ones who are front and center and deal with this issue, and to see how the scope of things has changed.

When we spoke about bullying a few years back, as recent as ten years ago, we would have thought it would have been somebody who would have been physically aggressive towards someone else. Well, at a recent student leadership conference in Gander, there were some 400 students there, they did a poll on them. An instant return, as this is your vote. They asked those students where do they think the majority of bullying takes place. I was actually surprised. I knew it had been an issue for some time – 75 per cent of that 400 said they felt it takes place on the Internet; a whole new phenomenon.

For some of us my age, I was born into a time when there was no Internet. To the generation we have in school right now, they have not known life without the Internet. Therefore, they recognize it as a factor in their lives.

There were at the table with us on Monday, besides the two students, we had school board and school district personnel. We had the President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, the Federation of School Councils, we had law enforcement agencies, and we had a representative from EGALE – that is the Equality for Gays And Lesbians Everywhere. The Human Rights Commission was in attendance, the Red Cross, Roots of Empathy, and there were more.

Just to speak to the larger context of what it is we are talking about. The Ministerial Statement today and why we are wearing this purple pin, all of the things we are talking about here are all factors that impact on violence within society. Where better can we start to try to diminish and eradicate that than with our youngest people, with our students in our classrooms? This is what this revised policy is all about, getting

more and more into how we deal with this particular issue.

The fact that we have these people there, the fact that someone meets me in the elevator and mentions it to me, the fact that a taxi driver mentions it to me, the fact that I get e-mails on it and phone calls tells me that people on the ground get it. Now it is a matter that we take the next step as to how it is we can intervene more, how we can be proactive, how we can make it more effective and more efficient. That is what this piece of legislation is about.

I am very proud to stand in the House today to introduce amendments to the Schools Act, 1997, amendments which will strengthen and support school communities in their efforts to implement our new Safe and Caring Schools Policy. As I have already noted, it is about more than just bullying. We know there are issues around drug use. We know there are issues around violence. It is about these issues as well, alcohol use, the inappropriate use of the Internet. So it is more than bullying.

What it is about, too, is giving students the emotional tools, the social skills, and the life skills to keep themselves safe and grow into caring, compassionate, confident individuals. When it comes to implementing that policy, I think we all recognize that we cannot legislate basic human decency or empathy. I have said it on several occasions, Mr. Speaker, there is one thing we cannot legislate and that is respect.

Respect is a learned behaviour. It is a learned behaviour as to how we co-operate with fellow students within the classroom. It is about how a family unit operates, so that dad shows respect for mom, vice versa, and respect for the family. It is respect for all things around us, Mr. Speaker.

There are things we can do in the legislation in an effort to prevent bullying and other aggressive behaviours. There are things we can do to record and address these incidents in a consistent manner. These amendments make every member of a school community responsible for promoting a safe and caring

school so that in this legislation and this revised document students, teachers, principals, school councils, school boards, and directors all have a responsibility. We place it in legislation so it becomes a legislated responsibility.

It requires every school to have a code of conduct. Right now, if we walk into schools, we know there are schools that as soon as you walk in they have their codes on the walls. This is what you as a student should do to respect others, respect your teachers, your building, and the whole gamut. This now requires every school to do it. It also allows the minister to issue policy directives related to Safe and Caring Schools. I will take you through that section momentarily.

There are also smaller amendments related to the duties and staffing of school boards made necessary when we restructured our school board this past year. These amendments simply recognize the new position of associate director in all sections with reference to the school district executive. We will speak to that as well shortly.

Mr. Speaker, if I get a little into the amendments – as I have said, there are sections of the act that we will be bringing revised legislation from two perspectives; one, around the Safe and Caring Schools Policy, revised policy of 2013; and then around how the associate director and the role of the associate director becomes a part of this revised legislation.

Mr. Speaker, amendments to the Schools Act, one of the things we certainly will do, it will line up the Schools Act, 1997. It will line it up and be revised in conjunction with the Safe and Caring Schools Policy. It will strengthen and support the policy to place emphasis on ensuring that schools have codes of conduct. It allows the minister to issue directives related to bullying, protocols, and data collection.

Why do we need the legislation? We want strong enforcement of the policies. Right now schools do, many of them, have codes of conduct, but what we want to do is we want to

strengthen it so that all schools will have codes of conduct.

The reporting and recording mechanisms will provide them with a document in which they can, through this document, which is on the Web site – and if you go on there, if you go into this document, look at the table of contents online, and type in code of conduct, click, it is right there for you. You can see how this is a very, very functional document, very easily used, and I would contend it is going to make things efficient for schools.

We know teachers are out there now recording and reporting, but this will provide consistency and be effective and efficient. This is one of the other things that certainly shows our commitment as a government to providing safe and caring learning environments. Also, it gives very clear directions to stakeholders and the roles they have.

Mr. Speaker, there will be additions as it pertains to the people who are in the system. Now we will be seeing that “every student shall (a) promote a safe and caring learning environment”. That is under section 11. Section 24 around principals, a principal of a school shall, subject to the direction of the board, “promote a safe and caring learning environment”.

It goes on down through to schools councils, which are to promote safe and caring learning environments. The teachers’ responsibility shall include promoting safe and caring learning environments. It goes on down through the board and to the directors. What it in effect does is incorporate everyone’s responsibility as it references to this new Safe and Caring Schools Policy.

The code of conduct: Every school will be required to establish a code of conduct, a template of which will be provided to all schools. The code of conduct will identify standards of appropriate and inappropriate behaviours including, again, as I said, not limited to bullying. It will also provide proactive school and classroom strategies to

teach and reinforce appropriate behaviours, focusing on the positives, on the appropriateness, and outline also the possible consequences for failing to comply with the code of conduct.

The school code of conduct, as well, in addition to students promoting safe and learning environments in amendments to the act, it notes that students are to comply. Students are to comply with the school code of conduct.

Then, Mr. Speaker, in addition to the code of conduct, we have outlined the amendments will allow the minister to issue policy directives related to safe and caring learning environments, and these will include what I have said, the guidelines and template for a school code of conduct.

There is much around the definition of bullying, and I remember the Member for St. John’s North speaking several times on this particular issue, especially around the definition of bullying. Mr. Speaker, we have done extensive consultations with our education and our community partners including students, parents, teachers, administrators, school board and district personnel, the NLTA, the Federation of School Councils, law enforcement agencies, many community-based organizations involved in the well-being of children, and youth and district personnel.

I would like, Mr. Speaker, to read out the definition that we are bringing forward around bullying. The definition reads, “Bullying is typically repeated behaviour that is intended to cause harm to another person(s). A person participates in bullying if he or she directly carries out, assists or encourages the behaviour in any way. Those that engage in bullying behaviour are perceived to be in a position of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal, social and/or electronic. In some circumstances bullying is an illegal activity.”

Now, I will tell you that in our consultations in the first round we went out, we consulted, and then we went back and spoke to some of these groups to say: Okay, here is the basis of our

document; are there things here that you think need to be adjusted in any way? The law enforcement agencies came back and said: Yes, we would like to see in there that, in some circumstances, it can be an illegal activity.

Mr. Speaker, there is also the piece around the Bullying Intervention Protocol. Every school will be required to implement a process of responding to incidents of bullying behaviour, including physical, verbal, social, and electronic bullying. The protocol outlines both prevention and intervention strategies and appropriate responses to the behaviour. Incidents of bullying must also be documented, reported to the parents or guardians, and there must be some form of action or consequence.

Again, when I flick into the Web site and I look up Bullying Intervention Protocol, it is very much step by step as to how that protocol is laid out. This is the documentation and your interventions and your reporting to parents and such.

Finally, there is a requirement for the collection of data related to inappropriate behaviours. Incidents of bullying or other inappropriate behaviours will be documented Province-wide, data will be collected and analyzed for the purpose of improving student behaviour and the safety of the school environment.

Mr. Speaker, this will be an electronic piece so that in part one, I will say, for example, you can go in and just, click, here is the type of behaviour. You can just follow that process down through so that we now have documentation.

Teachers and schools are documenting now. They may be documenting in different ways, so what we are looking at is a standardized, more efficient process across the Province. Certainly, that information will be useful. I may be able to take a look at school A, go in and see the incidents that occur here this year. After two years of schools doing different activities across the school, let's go and see if those numbers have reduced, and maybe look at a particular

school where there are very few incidents and what are they doing there.

This information is going to be a valuable piece, not only for the tracking and monitoring and trying to do away with these inappropriate activities but it can also be a tool that we can further use, to analyze, to report, record and then do more intervention type of work with the hopes of improving the entire school system.

The second part of this, Mr. Speaker, is around changes to the school board structure. Everyone will know that we have gone from having five boards in the Province to two. We have an English school board right now, and we have the Francophone school board.

The Newfoundland and Labrador English school board – I have this minute to say publicly, to say over the airwaves and to say to those people who are watching, the work that has gone into this with the officials in my department and those who are leading the charge at the board office level and the satellite office level, I have to commend them.

I think most people who are in the field in terms of parents and students would notice that this school year started out very much like it would have started out any other year. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that behind the scenes there are people who are working at that board office level who have worked conscientiously, who have put in hours upon hours upon hours to ensure that the transition happen and it ran smoothly.

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line of why they do it, it is their job, yes. They do it because they want the students of this Province to have the best school system they can. They have done a tremendous job with that, Mr. Speaker.

What we have in this piece of legislation, we now need to incorporate the position of associate director. There was not an associate director before. Mr. Speaker, this is one of the positions that I wanted in there and I wanted in there for a particular reason. I wanted while we have a director at the helm, Mr. Darrin Pike, we have

Mr. Jeff Thompson as the associate director. Mr. Thompson's role is that role of dealing specifically with people in the field as it relates to programming.

Mr. Speaker, in the act now it says under section 79, I believe it is, what it talks about is the number of directors and staff at the office. What we have done is we have gone from four directors in the previous boards to one director now. We have implemented the associate director, that being a new position. The assistant directors previous were – I believe it was thirteen, now we have gone down to seven. That adjustment is made within that. We have the directors, assistant directors of finances, operations, HR, and we have four regional directors, Mr. Speaker.

As well, there is some – I do not think these are huge amendments, these are consequential amendments – adding the definition of associate director, and amending the definition of teacher, as it applies to section 2, as required for other executive level positions, such as director and assistant director; and applies to section 75, duties of boards; 79, directors; 92, around salaries and compensation; and 93, adjustments in salaries.

We also will have to make amendments to the Teacher Training Act, and the Teachers' Pensions Act. I want to be clear here, this is not about opening up the Teacher Training Act or the Teachers' Pensions Act. What it means is simply that we are incorporating the title of associate director in the revised legislation.

Of course, director duties; amendments are necessary, as schools now have one director who is responsible for the schools. The current legislation notes that a director shall, under the direction of the board, visit each school as frequently as feasible, at least once in the school year. Well, we are going to make an amendment to that. We are saying now that a director may designate a person to visit a school on his or her behalf.

I know Mr. Pike will make every effort to get to as many schools as director. He will make every

effort to get to as many schools as he possibly can, but in the event he does not get to certain schools, he can certainly designate a person to visit the school on his behalf, or if the director changes in the years and we get a female there, on her behalf. This applies to subsection 80(1.1). Mr. Speaker, one final point on this is that this does not apply to the Francophone school system.

I have to say, I know I have an hour, but I am not going to take my full hour on it. Mr. Speaker, I started out by saying that I think the message of what we are attempting to address here is getting out there. When you get a cab driver who mentions it to you, it is indeed a pleasure to know that he has become very much aware of this issue.

If I were to speak to my colleagues here on our side and the members opposite, I imagine most of them would be very much aware of it because we have spoken about this in the House on several occasions and we have had questions during Question Period on it, but when someone, such as a cab driver on the street mentions it to you, it means that those of us who have been involved in trying to get that message out there, have been doing a good job at it.

We know we have made major gains in the schools. All you have to do is, during pink day in February, go and visit one of these schools and see how much these young students, as young as kindergarten and Grade 1, are becoming very much aware.

As much as we focus on the anti-bullying message, we are starting to hear people talk about, let's not just focus on that. Let's focus on respect so that I, as a Grade 1 student, learn what it means to respect all of those in my class and in my school. It is about positive reinforcement. It is about engaging and involving the students in the rules that happen within a particular school. Now what this document will do is standardize the type of process that we are entering here.

When I leave government, one of the things I will be proud to say is that I had a part in bringing in a Safe and Caring Schools Policy,

revised edition, 2013. We have had in place, I think for the last six years, a Safe and Caring Schools Policy. What we did when we brought it in is we committed that after five years we would review it, and that is in fact what we did.

I can tell you that the people in my department who were involved in doing this, I said to them this morning, take pride in what you have developed here because these people come at this with a passion. They take their role in this very, very seriously. They want to get the message out there. This document, I will be proud to tell anyone out there that I had a small part in bringing this forward. Certainly, as I said, when I came into the department, it is one of the things that I wanted to address. I am very pleased to say that we have this document. It is a wonderful document.

I would encourage all members to take a look through it. I would also encourage them to go and take a look at the Web site to see what a document we have here for our schools.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I will take my seat. I look forward to the debate on this. I am expecting that there will be some questions when we move into Committee, but I thank all the folks for their time and attention. I particularly want to thank the staff that worked to bring this together; and, finally, those who are most important on the ground in making this happen, that being teachers, students, school councils – when I say school councils I speak about the role of the parent, the role of the parent in this, which is of critical, critical importance.

The school board office and we, as the Department of Education, will work with all of those stakeholders to ensure that as we bring this policy forward, it becomes an effective tool that schools can use in seeing that our schools operate with appropriate behaviours, and that we do add to the gains that we have made encountering bullying.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for an overview on that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: I am happy today to be able to speak to Bill 28, An Act to Amend the Schools Act, 1997. Mr. Speaker, I have no problem supporting the amendments in this act today. There are some areas of concern that I will outline as I go.

I come from a background where I have spent fifteen years with the school council in Charlottetown, heavily involved in education and concern about the aspects of bullying and things like that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: Right up front, I want to mention that the critic today, Jim Bennett, the Member for St. Barbe, will not be able to speak because he had a death in the family and he is out. I just want to be on record saying that is why there will be no response today from the critic.

Mr. Speaker, we had a principal at WGA, sadly for a short time and he moved on. When he walked into any school council meeting, no matter what we were dealing with he would say: Folks, it is all about the children; and if we forget the children, folks, what are we doing here anyway?

Really, that is what it is all about. I can speak as a parent of a sixteen-year-old. I said here that we have talked a lot this week in the House about children with adoption acts, with acts relating to crime and things like that, lots of focus around children.

When I was the lead in our community when we desperately needed a new school for the children, I met with the minister for Burin. On April 26 in 2012, what I said to him that day was: You have the most important job in this Province right now. He kind of smiled, because he knew I was looking for something.

I said: You absolutely do, because where would we be in this Province, in this country, in society, without educated people? Where would we be in oil and gas? Where would we be in health? Therefore, it is important that our children learn in an environment that is safe and that is free of mould infestations. An environment that is conducive to learning. It is very, very important. We say it all the time, but there is a lot of truth in it. They are our most valuable resource.

One of the things that I was a little bit concerned in, as I have been following this and reading the press releases and listening to the media. I did not see any time frames around the implementation, and I was closely noticing the no extra resources. I am concerned about on the ground. A lot of times we bring in amendments to acts and in order for this to happen, on the ground, boots on the ground, in the schools – I know in our small rural communities our staff, our administrators, are really, really taxed.

We have lots of schools where we have multi-grading in classrooms, small schools like Normans Bay who might have one teacher who is preparing courses for several grades; and then when we want them to help do their part to implement something like this, a lot of times, for it to have a successful outcome, it is imperative that we put the extra resources in place.

I noticed that this act allows some provision for extra directors and people to be hired at the top. I have always been a person who has been more concerned about having the support right into the schools.

This act also proposes that each school have their own individual policy. I feel, Mr. Speaker, that it is important that right now we have just moved under one English school board, it is too

soon for us to really criticize I believe. I did not have good support with the school board that we had, so I was not going to cry over the fact that we are now moved to one. For us, it was a bit of a barrier there in moving to what we really needed, a school in my town that we had been fighting for, for fifteen years, the fifteen years I was on school council and perhaps longer before I came.

Right now, we have one board that is bringing down lots of policies that will be consistent for everybody. I do not understand, and I have concerns about that, why there is some leniency here for each school to have their own individual policy. I believe it is very, very important with something as serious as bullying and something as serious as Safe and Caring Schools that we have consistency.

Also, there is concern, and I have had a number of e-mails, about the implementation and the funding piece, as I mentioned earlier around that. We all know about the administrators and the teachers who are overworked. They are very stressed. If we want to see successful outcomes from this we have to make sure the supports are in place for the people to be able to carry this out. I think everybody here in the House will agree that we all want the same thing here, and that is what is best for the children.

The NLTA, parents, and councils have some concern about the resources and the funding not being announced, we do not seem to know a price, and about the resources that will be there for this. The Goss Gilroy report said that the former Safe and Caring Schools Policy was okay, but that it was not implemented as it was not individually funded and there was no one specifically responsible. Mr. Speaker, they also said that some of the small amount of schools' money that was already there was directed to other programs. We really want to ensure that does not happen in this case.

In that report, it also said that each school district should have a safe and caring champion, and there is a lot of merit in that. I would love to see that followed up, Mr. Speaker. We can put out all these things, these rules, and these

wonderful things to follow, but you have to have a champion. You have to lead.

In my own background and my own experience, I led a number of files that we were successful on. Not that I was brighter and not that I was smarter, there is a lot of expertise on the ground, but not everybody is comfortable picking up a file and leading. Everybody needs a go-to person, someone who has to be responsible for that.

In this case we would be looking at four English and one French. I believe I would ask the minister to go back and take another look at that. This new Safe and Caring Schools Policy, I felt, was a little bit short on detail. We will see how it rolls out as it goes.

Mr. Speaker, because the Safe and Caring Schools Policy came about primarily because of bullying and how bullying has escalated in recent years, I think it is important that I take a few minutes to talk about – for those who are viewing, the listening audience – bullying and exactly what it is.

There was a time when we thought bullying was when there was a physical fist fight on a playground or something like that. We now know that bullying entails much more than that. I am just going to run (inaudible) stats and some things that I have been aware of and some things that I have researched myself.

Research shows that half of all children are bullied at some time during their school year – half, Mr. Speaker. It is very important, it is very necessary that we amend and update the Schools Act, 1997 and to get serious about implementing a Safe and Caring Schools Policy. Of the half who is bullied at some point in their life, we know that 10 per cent are bullied on a regular basis. I am sure that many parents who are watching today have their own stories, very sad stories. We know for some parents the outcomes have been fatal; they have been permanent. They would certainly support us promoting awareness.

It is hard to fathom, Mr. Speaker, that some parents – I doubt it has happened in this Province – have actually allowed their children to undergo plastic surgery to combat the bullying. It is hard to fathom.

Over 30 per cent of children who suffer a food allergy report having been bullied at school. Anybody who has lived with children, it is scary carrying the EpiPens and things like that. That is stressful enough, but just to know that you have these limitations –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: – in your life already through no fault of your own, you were diagnosed with allergies. Because of that, 30 per cent of children who suffer from a food allergy will be bullied.

Bullying is an international problem, Mr. Speaker. We hear about it often in the news. Sadly, a lot of times we hear about it in the news when there has been a tragic ending.

One of the things that we are all aware of as well, Mr. Speaker, is that bullying victims are students who can be both a bully and a victim. They often have been victimized and then they begin inflicting the same behaviour on others. That is why, Mr. Speaker, this education piece and this awareness piece is so, so important that we can stop the generational negative behaviour.

It is very sad that children who have a learning disability, or attention deficit, or a hyperactivity disorder are more likely to be bullied than other children, and they are also slightly more likely than others to bully. So, people who are already at a disadvantage in society are victims of bullying, and then because a lot of times maybe they do not know who to go to talk to, they do not know how to respond, they will turn around and bully others in return.

Researchers note, Mr. Speaker, that if a victim fights a bully and the bully wins, this loss will only make matters worse for the victim.

Consequentially, researchers argue that fighting back should not be encouraged; instead, the child should be encouraged to walk away. Now again, I go back to my own childhood and growing up we were taught to fight back, you pick up for yourself, and sometimes that is what we want to do now for our own children. I believe if we look at this research, this is why it is important to have the resources in schools so that if our children are bullied, they are able to go to the administrator, they do know that there is someone there for them to talk to, because we know that bully victims can suffer lasting psychological harm.

Those who felt bullied in sixth grade were more likely to report feelings of loneliness six years later, and those who bullied in sixth grade felt more overtly aggressive in the twelfth grade. Mr. Speaker, children with medical conditions that affect their appearance, such as spina bifida and cerebral palsy are also more likely to be bullied.

I share this information to make people aware that we are just not talking about a physical altercation at the playground any more, bullying is a real problem, and that is why we need to get serious about the Safe and Caring Schools Policy. Everyone has a role to play in this, Mr. Speaker, if we are to improve and minimize and counteract the negative behaviour that is happening.

Children who are obese are more likely to be bullied. Diabetic children who are dependent on insulin are more prone to peer bullying, and over 83 per cent of adults who stuttered as children said they had been teased or bullied. This is a very wide problem, Mr. Speaker, as it branches out into a number of other problems that cost our society, because bullies are more likely to engage in vandalism, shoplifting, and we know that there is a direct correlation between substance abuse and gun violence and bullying behaviour.

So that is why it is important that supports be put in place, not just in a Safe and Caring Schools environment but in other areas as well. Again, I go back to the story that we have been

talking about all week here in the House – the story of boys like John, who ended up in a home with adults with complex needs and addictions, and John needed supports in place himself.

Mr. Speaker, it is very, very important that we talk about those things. There is a connection between bullying and being exposed to violence. We live in a society now, we are talking about the technological age and the media and we all rely on these handheld devices and things ourselves; but, unfortunately, one of the negative sides of that, with the games that have been introduced, by the time the average child enters kindergarten he or she will have witnessed 8,000 murders on television, Mr. Speaker.

This is just a changing society that we are living in. Some cyberbullies think they can use a fake name. Mr. Speaker, the minister alluded to it when he was speaking, but one of the rising forms of bullying in society is through the social media. People think they will not be caught; but it is important for us to get the message out that even if you do use a fake name, there are many ways to track cyberbullying. We need to be serious about ensuring that they pay the price.

Only one in ten victims of cyberbullying will tell their parent and fewer than one in five cyberbullying incidents are reported to the police. So, far more of it is happening than we are even really aware of.

I will just mention the three types of bullying for the benefit of people watching. Sometimes parents might think they do not see physical signs, but it is much deeper than that. Social bullying, excluding victims from activities, rumouring about the victim; verbal, includes threatening, taunting, teasing, hate speech; and then physical, which we are probably most familiar with, the kicking, hitting, punching, and choking.

Mr. Speaker, the Columbine massacre, it is important to mention that today. I have read a number of books on that. The two students that were involved in the 1999 Columbine massacre, they were described as gifted students and they had been bullied for years. During that school

shooting, the boys killed thirteen people, injured twenty-four, and then we know they took their own lives.

Academically gifted students, especially those with high verbal aptitude, they are often targeted, maybe through jealousy and other things. They are often bullied and are more likely than less gifted students to suffer emotionally.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that students skip school every other day because of this problem of bullying and not knowing where to turn. We know that it is very important for people to understand that it is a myth that bullying will most likely go away when it is ignored. Ignoring bullies reinforces to them that they can bully without consequences.

It is very, very important as we go forward with the amendments of this act, Mr. Speaker, that the administrators in the schools are very educated, that they know the signals, that they know what to watch for so there are not things happening in the schools that they are not aware of, so we do not have some of these negative actions continue. We know an estimated 40 per cent to 75 per cent of bullying in schools take place during breaks such as during recess, at lunchtime, in the hallways, or in the restrooms. It is very, very important.

A lot of times, as I mentioned earlier, in rural schools especially, because you have a small number of teachers and administrators who are responsible for a lot of things, they cannot be everywhere at once. Yet, it is important they understand the places where bullying is most likely to happen so they are able to be there and move around at times like recess and lunchtime in the hallways and in the restrooms.

Mr. Speaker, just in clueing up, I want to say I am happy to see the amendments. We do have some concerns about the no extra resources on the already stressed and overworked administrators who are there. I am not sure about the time frame on when this is going to be implemented, but it is very important it be done in as timely a manner as possible. We even see

the NLTA often quoting, "...safe and caring schools are a responsibility of all partners involved in education." As I said earlier, we all have a role to play.

My fifteen years that I served on the school council, for fifteen years I was elected and re-elected as the community representative on our school council. I was there for a number of years before my daughter even actually entered school. I was there because it was important, very important to me to play an active partnership role with the community. It was always important to me that our school and our community was not a separate entity in the town.

In any way we could build partners that would help the children, whether that was providing means for them to travel out to sports, to bring people in to speak about different programs, and to give them whatever opportunities we could in small communities where a lot of times we do not have the extracurricular opportunities, the resources, and the recreational facilities that larger towns would have. To be able to support the students in any way we could because it is all about the holistic part of the student. It is not just about having the supports in place for them to do well academically, but for them to have other opportunities as well, like school sports, music, drama, and things like that.

I believe our school council that I can speak directly to, played an important role at William Gillett in the school development process. We recognize that it takes both education and community partners to nurture positive behaviours and reduce the likelihood of bullying and other inappropriate behaviours.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing what other members in this hon. House have to say today about the Schools Act.

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As Minister of Health and Community Services I am really happy to stand here and speak to this piece of legislation today. Mr. Speaker, more so than as Minister of Health and Community Services, I am happy to stand here as a mother of three children, as somebody who taught for thirty years in this Province through a number of means actually.

I taught in a regular classroom setting for a long time. Then I had the ultimate privilege in the latter years of my career of teaching through an organization called CDLI, the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation. Through that particular modern of teaching, I taught online into many, many communities throughout this Province.

It was a really interesting vehicle from which to teach as well. When we are teaching online, first of all it was a unique way to get to know students in this Province. I remember at the outset, I had some of my own reservations about whether or not this would work when I was introduced to the whole notion of teaching online. I had conversations with others who had actually done some work in this area. They affirmed for me that in actual fact you could have a very good working relationship with students. Mr. Speaker, that certainly was my experience in dealing with students online.

The interesting part of dealing with the students online were the number of various applications they had available to them. The numbers and kinds of different modes of communicating they had available to them, not just in the platform in which we operated our classrooms virtually, but also from the texting they were doing at the time, as a result of the e-mailing that was happening at the time and so on.

It was a really interesting introduction for me to a world in which students were at the outset much more comfortable. Maybe even at the end of that seven years I was there, much more comfortable than was I because it was something new for me in a way of learning. It was a mode for them to communicate and they did that so

very, very well; however, within that we all know there are traps as well. It was not very long before I began to see some of those, particularly in some of the ways in which students could message back and forth, inside of a classroom situation virtually, and outside of that situation too.

It was exceptionally interesting to see some of the innuendo that would float back and forth, some of the various kinds of things that we now know and call cyberbullying, Mr. Speaker. It was not as prevalent, I do not think then, as what I am hearing now in terms of statistics. It was so easy to do, and something that I think a lot of our children had slipped into at that particular point in time without realizing exactly what was happening.

In some senses you do not have to put a face or your name to what it is you are doing when you are into that kind of bullying and we know that it goes on. That is one of the most important things about bullying I think, Mr. Speaker, is that we have to acknowledge it. We cannot ignore this. We cannot say this does not happen in our society.

This is not a problem that is owned just by the young people of our society. This happens right throughout society, Mr. Speaker, but the place to arrest it is certainly with our young people. To teach about this, to understand about it, to learn why it is that we ought not do it, to talk about the ultimate problems that are created as a result of what happens here. That was my first introduction in some senses to cyberbullying, but as a teacher for thirty years and certainly as the mother of three children, I think I was afforded some very unique opportunities to see in other venues, in other ways, how bullying happens and the effects of bullying.

Even as a Brownie leader at one point in time, I recall a couple of stories, and I do not need to share the stories I do not think because I do not think there is anyone who doubts about bullying happening. I was able to see at some very early ages some of what I have now come to understand were probably learned behaviours. They were behaviours they had seen other

people fall into and use. Therefore it had, in some senses, become acceptable means of treating another person in their lives, most often somebody who were important to them in many of the respects of how they bullied.

It was a little disconcerting to watch and to figure out, how do I intervene, not just from the perspective of looking after the person who was being bullied, but how do I intervene and also help the person who is the bully here, because the bully also needs some help. That is something that we need to recognize and we need to respond to as well.

As I said, through my thirty years in a classroom, through many volunteer organizations, from my time on school councils as well, from my time with CDLI, and certainly as a mother and hearing children come home and relate the little stories of things that would have bothered them during the day, that sometimes did not seem like very much but over a period of time, story after story after story would mount and you would soon start to see there are causes here and there are effects, and we need to identify both. We need to respond to both and we certainly need to acknowledge that this is happening.

That is one of the things about this bill that I see as being so important. Bill 28 requires, I believe, a fair bit of ownership about this issue because it requires schools to first of all put into place a school code of conduct, some conduct that says we do not tolerate this here. This is not how we want to treat each other. This is not how we want to be treated, therefore there are consequences. There are ways we are going to show you that we are not going to accept that. That is a very important part of what this bill is going to do.

It requires teachers, principals, school councils, school boards, and directors to promote that safe and caring environment where students can feel safe, Mr. Speaker. That is so important, because if a student does not feel safe within the environment of education then we can rest assured that everything else that a school ought to be about is not happening.

If a student goes to school and does not feel it is a welcoming environment, that there are people there who care for them, that they will be safe while they are there, then you can be guaranteed without looking any further that they are not going to succeed in any way in that environment, because we all need that, wherever it is that we are. It is not just children. We all need to know that we are safe. Once we are safe, then we know the ability to move forward certainly lives with us.

That part of this bill in terms of what the Schools Act amendments would look like, for me is exceptionally important. Increasing the number of people we are going to have available in our schools to help and so on is another aspect of it. Certainly, allowing the minister to issue those policy directives related to safe and caring learning environments, all I think are amendments that will help to make those differences in creating the environment we want to have.

Mr. Speaker, when I had the opportunity to speak to this I was very happy to do it from the perspective of Health and Community Services as well. Our government is always interested in providing safe environments for our people but we also want to ensure that the people of this Province are as healthy as they can be in every respect, and our mental health is as important as any aspect of our overall health and well-being. We all need that sense of feeling secure and non-threatened, free from harm and so on. Policies and legislation that will help us to ensure that, to strive for that ultimate protection for each other, they are so very important.

Mr. Speaker, we know there are some repercussions of bullying that happen inside of a classroom in the sense of people become fearful of going to school. They do not want to go. They skip school quite often, learning does not take place. Families are affected as a result of all of this.

In the extreme incidents we know that depression sets in, that anxiety happens with people who are constantly bullied. Then the ultimate extreme, we know of many cases

unfortunately where people have taken their lives. Young people have taken their lives as a result of the aggressive behaviour that happened, the bullying that happened.

When I speak with some of my former colleagues who are guidance counsellors in the school and still working in the schools now, they talk to me about how at one time a large portion of their job as a guidance counsellor had to do with guidance in the areas of career development, for example. That does not happen very much any more for these guidance counsellors because their days are really taken up with problems that are much more serious and they have to devote the time to students who need help with regard to the bullying that takes place in their lives.

We have, within the Province, Mr. Speaker, a number of issues around the stigma related to some of what happens. People get labelled. The bullies will often assign labels to these people, and those stigmas are oftentimes things that follow them for long periods of time in their lives. We have stigmas as well that are attached to mental health and addictions issues. We know too that bullying can lead, not only to anxiety and depression in a person's life, but can certainly lead to some addictions issues. Sometimes people who are bullied will look to a way to escape that harm, will look to a way to find an in with the crowd even, or whatever the issue might be.

Mental health and addictions issues very quickly become part of the end result of somebody being bullied. That is an area that is of particular importance to me in my department, and to the people who work in my department, because those are areas where – we are always trying to protect our children. Those are areas where we do not want our children to slip and fall and ultimately be mired down; yet, some of what happens in a school system, when we think we do not have to worry about it, some of what happens there actually leads them directly to those places. Ensuring that safe and caring environment where they can be free of all harm is so, so important, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, within the Department of Health and Community Services, though, we are seeing increasingly areas where young people are looking for help in terms of their own mental health and certainly in terms of addictions within the Province. We have dedicated a goodly portion of time and many resources to trying to deal with those particular issues, which I believe, in many cases when we source them out, are exactly the outcome of bullying and aggressive behaviour by other people.

I want to talk about one of the things we are attempting to do and will do over the next bit of time in the department, and that has to do with a new media campaign, Mr. Speaker. Through an investment of about \$1 million, we recently contracted a local firm – the firm is m5 Marketing Communications – to develop for us a three-year anti-stigma social marketing campaign to address that very issue of being stigmatized because of depression, because of anxiety, because of any mental health issue, in fact.

The main objective of that campaign is to challenge and ultimately to change the way people think and act towards individuals who are experiencing any sort of mental health and addictions issue, whether that be brought on by bullying or just a challenge that they are facing in their regular days.

Mr. Speaker, we need to change how people think and how they view any person who is suffering anxieties or who is suffering depression. We need to change the behaviour. We need to change the name calling that happens as a result of that. We need to change the marginalizing that happens because someone might have a mental health or an addition problem. We need to change the belittling and the mocking that happens as a result of some of the issues people are facing in their everyday lives. Those are issues that create even bigger challenges for the person who is experiencing any sort of bullying or aggression.

The intent of our particular marketing campaign will be, in actual fact, to change how we deal with a person. It will change attitudes, we hope,

and more importantly it will change behaviours of those individuals who exhibit signs of being stigmatized or discriminated against because of any mental health or addictions issues they are facing.

We want to access effective and evidence-based services for people so they will in fact feel more comfortable, they will in fact feel more confident, and they will in fact be accepted into whatever environment and certainly, Mr. Speaker, within our school environments. That is an area where we have to pay attention. We will launch that in the spring of this year, that particular campaign that I am talking about – hopefully in the spring of this year. It will target the general public, but it will also in particular target youth, their families, employers, and employees as well.

It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the focus groups that will be part of the research we are doing around this particular campaign will start today. They actually start this evening here in St. John's. Then early next week we will move out to Deer Lake, and then on to Labrador as part of a consultation here and as a way of gathering the research to show us what is happening out there.

Participants of the focus groups will include individuals who have lived experiences of mental health and/or addictions issues. We anticipate through that we are going to learn as much about the bullying and aggressive behaviour that has happened to contribute to particularly some of the anxiety issues people face every day, as well as some of the other issues that are contributing here.

In addition, of course, anybody who is interested in participating and supplying us with any of their thoughts and their opinions in addition to the focus groups and the forums we will conduct over the next little bit of time, there will also be a written, online form that will take place all of this month to provide an opportunity for input from interested individuals and organizations from any of the regions of the Province. It will be set up as a survey. We will do it as an online survey with a series of open-ended questions to

allow individuals and organizations to provide their thoughts on key issues relating to measuring stigma, measuring discrimination, and so on, so in fact we can deal with it.

Also in the next couple of weeks, Mr. Speaker, there will be a telephone survey that will be completed. That will just help us to get some of the baseline data we need to assess some of the current attitudes that exist out there. Oh, I left out the section around television ads. We will do some of that as well.

The bottom line, the overall objective of all of this, is to bring attention to issues that our young people are facing or, in the case of this campaign, everybody but particularly our young, often as a result of bullying, often as a result of being discriminated against for whatever reason in this Province. We have to tackle that issue.

As I said at the outset of this, this is not an issue that rests in the Department of Education; this is not an issue that rests within the schools and with the teachers of this Province. This is an issue that all of society needs to own, needs to take responsibility for, and needs to work collaboratively, one with the other, to find out how we can in a positive sense move forward in identifying what the causes are, naming what the results of those particular activities are doing, and then finding solutions to see that we stop this horrible problem that exists in our society. Mr. Speaker, to say that one's health and well-being are not affected by bullying would be to have closed our eyes entirely.

I remark with my own children now who are grown, and they say to me, actually, on a regular basis, I cannot imagine what it would be like to be in a school setting now as opposed to what it was when they went to school, which is not very long ago. They talk about at the time they had cellphones, and the cellphones were the old fashioned cellphones and they really could not do very much there, but occasionally they would get on a computer and they would check out messaging or whatever.

Now, particularly with this cyberbullying, it is instantaneous, it is minute after minute, and it is

venue after venue, whether it is Twitter, Facebook, messaging, e-mailing, or whatever it is, Mr. Speaker. There are so many different ways children are experiencing this unsafe environment in which they are being brought up. So this is an issue we all have to take responsibility for.

I see my time is up. I cannot believe I spoke for twenty minutes and did not say one quarter of what it is I wanted to say. This is a serious issue, Mr. Speaker. We all have a role to play, we all need to identify what our role is, and we all need to make a serious attempt at ensuring our children have safe, caring, supportive, and comfortable environments in which to grow and mature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I would like to thank the minister for bringing this bill forward because it is something that needs to be dealt with. I will speak to the bill. I think there are parts of the bill that could be strengthened or could be improved. I will make some comments, but overall I will be supporting this bill because it is an important issue. It is an important issue for the children and for the school principals, administration, staff and so on, to be dealing with.

Mr. Speaker, the definition of bully: The amendment does not enshrine the definition of bullying into the revised act, but it allows the minister to set it in policy. Some consider this to be the best route as it allows flexibility and the ease of change if the definition needs to be revamped. Ontario, however, provides a definition of bullying in its Education Act. That is one point that I wanted to bring forward.

On the issue of consequences for actions, there is no definition of this term or any indication there will be one standard of consequences

across all boards, or if each school can set its own consequences. That raises some concern, Mr. Speaker, because if each different school sets its own consequences you have different consequences in different schools and different regions of the Province. Maybe we should set out as part of the legislation or part of the act a definition of consequences.

Zero tolerance: While this phrase was not used, it implies that each student and school now has a strict code of conduct that must be adhered to. There is research to show that extreme consequences of certain behaviours can affect students' willingness to report bullying incidences, as the punishment is sometimes too harsh or there is fear of retaliation and it fosters an adversarial school climate. Perhaps the restorative justice approach would work better.

I am wondering with this legislation if the minister is going to look at support for bullies. I know that sounds strange because we are trying to discourage bullying and we are trying to bring in policies that prevent bullying, but we cannot overlook the fact that maybe the individual who is doing the bullying needs attention as well. With some attention, maybe that is way of preventing bullying. The Newfoundland Federation of School Councils says that government missed the critical component here and would have liked to have seen something in the act to provide support to the bully rather than being kicked out of school.

Mr. Speaker, while we look at consequences, and there should be consequences for bullying, we also need to look at the root of the problem and why an individual would bully another. Maybe that individual needs help as well.

The code of conduct: There is no code of conduct that all schools abide by, so there is no consistency across the Province. I would ask the minister, when he responds to debate, whether or not he is looking at a code of conduct, how that code of conduct will be brought in, or whether or not there will be a code of conduct that will be uniform across all the schools.

The addition of directors: Regular visits will still take place for programming and for other reasons, but these visits will be at the behest of the director or the CEO who cannot meet his requirement that he visit every school, because there are 259 of them, once a year. It will be interesting to see, Mr. Speaker, how many new positions, or if there will be new positions, created at the administrative level over the next few months, especially given the reason for the school board amalgamation was to cut administrative costs.

School councils: The Newfoundland Federation of School Councils would like to see school councils evaluate the performance of a director, associate director, or assistant director after the five-year term is up rather than simply leaving it in the hands of the board. I wonder if the minister would respond to that or make some comment on that as well.

School buses: Since the words school buses do not arise in the amended bill, the amendments are not clear as to whether or not a code of conduct would apply to school buses. I do not know if that has been overlooked or if a code of conduct will include school buses, but we all know bullying not only occurs on school grounds but also on school buses. I wonder, when the minister speaks and responds, if he would provide some clarification as to whether or not this policy will also apply to school buses.

When we talk about resources, there was no announcement of funding allocations or a proper budget to implement the measures outlined in the policy, including how administrators are defined additional time to carry out extra duties or responsibilities. It would be interesting to know if the department itself hired or will hire additional people to ensure that it lives up to the responsibilities outlined in the revised safe and caring policy, while at the same time expecting schools to take on the extra work without additional resources. Will there be additional resources for schools to help carry out the safe and caring policies outlined in this legislation, Mr. Speaker?

There is broader application as well. I am wondering if the authority of the school principals to deal with bullying, whether it occurs at school property or off of school property – because we know that there is cyberbullying as well. What powers or what authority does the school principal have? Is a school principal able to deal with cyberbullying? Is a school principal able to deal with bullying on a school bus as it relates to bullying of other school children?

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia hired an anti-bullying co-ordinator back in October of 2012 to lead efforts to help keep people safe in schools, communities, and cyberspace. Our government should consider such a position as well, consider looking at what Nova Scotia put in place and whether or not the position that Nova Scotia put in place is working, whether or not that should be adopted here in Newfoundland and Labrador as well.

I am wondering about professional development as well, Mr. Speaker. Will teachers receive professional development and training related to this new initiative, whether or not teachers are going to have some training on what their responsibilities are as well – because the responsibility not only rests with the principal but also with teachers as a result of this legislation.

Speaking of teachers, there is bullying of teachers as well. The act perhaps should have gone a little bit further to protect the teachers who are increasingly a target of online bullying, not only by students but by parents. We know that it happens. There are sites called rate your teacher, for example, and some of the comments on these sites amount to slander of the teachers.

When the minister responds I wonder if he would provide some clarification as to whether or not there will be protection as a part of this, for teachers, in addition to students, when we talk about reducing or eliminating bullying at school.

I am wondering about mental health support and whether or not mental health supports were

considered as part of this legislation. There is very little support for mental health issues in our schools and even though there are guidance counsellors, oftentimes they are maxed out when dealing with career counselling and assessments and assessments for learning disabilities and so on.

I am wondering if there should be a co-ordinated approach from Education, Health, and Justice to find support for mental health within schools as well when we are talking about bullying and the root of bullying, the root of that problem, and whether or not we have gone far enough and even though there will be additional resources required. In order to help or prevent bullying oftentimes you need to get to the root of the problem, and oftentimes the person who is carrying out the act of bullying requires assistance, and requires help. Sometimes that is dealing with mental health issues.

One more comment on this and that is to talk about the Roots of Empathy. That is an evidence-based, internationally recognized classroom program that has shown significant effect in reducing levels of aggression amongst school children while raising social and emotional competence and increasing empathy.

Mr. Speaker, the program currently operates in seventy-six schools in fifty-six communities throughout the Province. It is a good program. It is proven to work. I am wondering whether or not we should be looking at adopting that program in other schools, expanding that program to other schools throughout the Province. As part of the Safe and Caring Schools Policy, I am wondering if government will commit to looking at bringing that program to other schools.

Those are my comments, Mr. Speaker. I commend the minister for bringing the legislation forward. It is important legislation. It is timely legislation. I am wondering if it goes far enough. I am wondering whether or not there are resources there for the schools. Those are the comments that I have made. I hope that the minister will respond to some of those comments when he does stand to respond to the

comments that all members in the House have made.

Having said that while I am not sure the legislation goes far enough, I am supportive of the legislation. I would like to have seen it go a little bit further.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to make some comments on Bill 28. It is An Act to Amend the Schools Act, 1997. There are important amendments, Mr. Speaker. There is some housekeeping with regard to the school boards, but the main gist of the amendments would be with regard to the Safe and Caring Schools initiative that was amalgamated I think in 2006 and now is under revision.

Mr. Speaker, it gets back to a situation that we find not only in our schools, by the way, but I would suggest in any aspect of our society in the larger community we do have people who go out of their way to bully or harass other individuals. You will find it in schools, you will find it in workplaces, and you will find it most anywhere, Mr. Speaker. It is important – I see it as very, very important – that we be aware as a society and do everything we can to eliminate this scourge from our society in general.

Today the main focus is on our schools. Mr. Speaker, as a former educator and student in the school system here in Newfoundland and Labrador, I spent eleven years as a student and I spent twenty-two as a teacher-principal.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, from my own personal experiences I went through as a student, that feeling of fear you get in the pit of your stomach when you are faced with a situation where someone is looking to control some aspect of your behaviour. Taking your

lunch money, making disparaging remarks, and putting fear in you; there is nothing worse than somebody in a place where they should be safe and comfortable to have to day after day, perhaps, go through situations where they are fearful, fearful for their well-being and in some cases fearful for their life.

Mr. Speaker, as a student, I was bullied myself. In those days, you almost had to fend for yourself. You often had to fend for yourself by combating that violence with violence. Sticking up for yourself, as it was looked it, and so on and so forth, but people realize that is no solution. Oftentimes it worsened the situation rather than make it better.

As a teacher, I must say I went through many frustrating incidents of trying to protect the students who were in my care. Oftentimes it was just protection while they were in my presence. Certainly, you could not extend that protection, Mr. Speaker, to the playground, to off school grounds, and to some extent to the transportation, with regard to the buses. It was only when you were in the presence of your students that you could in fact protect them from bullying.

Mr. Speaker, again, the methods we used were more punishment of those who were bullying and punishing them in a way we hoped would instill in them a fear that if they continued to bully, they would suffer dire consequences as a result of that and change their behaviour.

Fast forward to where we are today, Mr. Speaker, and once again we have to come to grips with dealing with this challenge of trying to keep our schools safe and secure for the students who are in there. As a government, we are committed to prevent bullying harassment in our schools. In 2006, this government put forth the Safe and Caring Schools initiative, and we have experienced a great deal of success in making sure that we are addressing this particular problem.

I will just go down through a couple of things, Mr. Speaker, just as an example of things that we have accomplished since 2006: Province-

wide professional development and special training to school district leaders, principals, teachers, other school personnel; suicide intervention trainers with the education system; non-violent crisis intervention trainers; non-violent crisis intervention teams; online resources for students, parents, and teachers to help in their efforts to address violence in the schools; expansion of the Violence Awareness Week activities; implementation of Safe and Caring Schools; special project awards; introduction of annual safe and caring awards; awareness training for all administrators and guidance counsellors on awareness; and, of course, this year's introduction of My Gay-Straight Alliance resource to all schools in the Province offering Grades 7-12.

Meanwhile, every school in the Province has its own school development plan, which speaks to how they can make safe and caring issues a part of their school culture.

The Roots of Empathy, as the member just referenced, the provincial government will increase support to the Roots of Empathy this year to \$75,000 in an effort to allow that organization's programming into more schools throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. As was referenced, it is an internationally recognized program that focuses on building empathy by engaging children in positive social behaviours, sharing, taking turns, respecting others. The beauty about this program – guess what? It was developed by a person who was born and raised in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a good basis, but the time has come for us, as a government, to go back and look at where we are and to make the necessary revisions. In that space, from 2006 to 2013, seven years, things have changed dramatically and we need to be more flexible; henceforth, the amendments that are going to be put forth for this body to look at and hopefully approve. I gather from the speakers today that we are on our way to moving forward.

This was not done haphazardly, by the way; and the first thing that you always look for is, this

revision of our Safe and Caring Schools, how did it come about? Of course, first of all, you need independence. A consultant was hired and basically conducted widespread consultation. Just to go down through it: the stakeholders; students; teachers; principals; school councils; law enforcement; school boards; any organization that is in any way educational related; fifty face-to-face focus group sessions throughout the Province; plus, of course, access through the Web page for anyone who wanted to put input.

It is from this comprehensive consultation that this government then was able to come forward with recommendations of how we can better serve the students of this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The hope is that these amendments will bring us up to another level of engagement and intervention that is so crucial for us as a government, for we as a people to protect our children, but also to put in them an awareness and understanding and developing an attitude where violence, bullying, harassment is simply not acceptable.

The amendments will deal with a school code of conduct. This is important because you do have to lay out what the parameters are. A code of conduct is very specific in making sure that the students and not only the students, teachers and anyone in the school community, understand basically what is the most appropriate behaviour in whatever circumstances comes up regarding bullying or harassment.

There is flexibility. So, the guidelines – and the minister will issue these policy directives. It is important because, and I already heard it in the speakers who went before me, there has to be consistency.

It is no good if we have inconsistent policies in different schools throughout the Province. We have to get it right first. We have to make sure that whatever is put in place in a school code of conduct is what is most appropriate. Therefore, the minister has the flexibility to put in place the guidelines and more importantly, the templates that are necessary.

We have to make sure the intervention protocol also addresses what needs to be done when intervention is required as it applies to violence, for example, bullying or harassment. The other aspect of it is the data collection. We have to have running records of what is going on so that the interventions and what is happening can be tracked. We can use that data then to build upon our understanding of what is happening, and audit to make sure that what we want to happen is going to happen.

Of course, this is about all members of the school community as well. This is not only about students. It is about teachers, councils, and boards, and the directive is that we are all in this together. This is not about one. This is not going to be on the shoulders of the teacher. It is not going to be on the shoulders of the parents. This is going to be shouldered by the entire school community, and to some degree the larger community.

With regard to full implementation, naturally when you put amendments in and you are revising it, it is not going to be an overnight thing. I say, Mr. Speaker, the target I understand, is that full implementation will take place as of September, 2014. That is about a year as we make sure that policies are implemented consistently across the Province and that we do find ways in which we can be consistent. I am confident in seeing what these amendments are, that indeed there will be consistency.

The aspect of the legislation, Mr. Speaker – and I think all of us realize in this House that there is no way you can use legislation to be prescriptive when it deals with bullying, when it deals with harassment, violence. We want to be sure that this legislation will allow the flexibility for the government, whichever government is making these policy directions, either today or in future administrations, that there is flexibility because of the changes.

I think I already alluded to the fact that the bullying I experienced as a student, that I seen as an educator, was more in that 25 per cent where it was face to face. I realize now that is not the

only bullying we are dealing with. It is the 75 per cent we find on the Internet, and that is an area we really – so we need to be adjusting as we go along.

Safe and Caring Schools has to be, literally, a work in progress. You have to be adaptable. You have to have the flexibility to deal with it. If we think we can put something prescriptive on paper right now that is going to stand the test of time over the next year even, or years to come, we are living in a fool's paradise. We need to be on the ground – and I say we, the people, the students, the parents, the teachers, they have to be fully informed. They have to be fully engaged because this is not something we are going to do, it is going to be cured and we can move on to something else.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that violence, unfortunately, is going to be with us as we go forward for years and years to come, if not forever. We cannot let the opportunity slip by if we do not continue to be flexible enough to deal with any changing circumstances.

Again, I like the flexibility of allowing the minister, for example, the department, the school board, and the parents, to be always looking for better ways to make sure there is improvement. This goes back to what I said before, Mr. Speaker. This cannot be willy-nilly in a sense of just putting a code of conduct in, and this, that, and the other thing. It has to be a living, working document that we put together, or documents. We are building on a program that we already have in the school, so it is resourced. I would hope that as necessary, resourced to make sure and ensure it is a success as we go forward in future years.

Mr. Speaker, it is very, very important that we be successful. I like the consistency this is going to put in place. I like the fact it is spread out, that everyone can have and play their part, and shoulder the responsibility to make sure this works. There are always ways we can improve going on, but this is an improvement over the Safe and Caring Schools that was released in 2006. Now we have an opportunity to reflect

back over from whence we have come in that seven years, build upon that, and move forward.

Mr. Speaker, it is very, very important because it is necessary for us to make sure that whatever we do, we do it right and we do it in the best interests of the children or the students, whatever you want to refer to them as. We have so much to gain by making sure we find ourselves in a position, and these amendments will put us in a good place, to build upon what has already been successful.

Just think about how the students have influenced where we are today. The pink days; where did that originate from? That originated from a student or students who want to make sure their world is safe. They want to make sure it is secure, and they want to make sure everything has been done to allow them to be the best they possibly can.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at Bill 28, I am fully supportive of it. I hope we can move that forward and get on to the business of making sure that we make our schools safe and secure. As for the other amendments, as was pointed out, these are more housekeeping; because with the reduction in school boards to two, it is absolutely necessary that we make some necessary changes again to make sure the educational services in this Province are delivered in the most effective way and once again getting to the front line into the schools, as these amendments and the Safe and Caring Schools are putting us right into the classroom and right into the schools. It is giving us the protocols we need in intervention. It is giving the code of conduct that is clear to those who are part of that community.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I leave it at that. I encourage anyone who wants to get up and say their piece in making sure we get this right and that we do have the amendments that are going to do the job, which is to keep our schools safe and secure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I am glad as well to stand today and to speak to Bill 28, which is a bill that includes amendments to the Schools Act. I think it is important to point out, and I think the previous speakers did it towards the end but I want to say a bit more about it, that there are a number of amendments that are unrelated.

There are a number of clauses, 1, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, and 15, which relate to something that is totally unrelated to the Safe and Caring Schools. They are, in a sense, housekeeping necessitated by changes as was indicated previously caused by our having only one English-speaking school board now in this whole Province.

I would like to point out an anomaly between the two sections of the bill that I think is an important thing to point out. The other part of the bill is the clauses that deal with Safe and Caring Schools, and most of the conversation this afternoon is about the Safe and Caring Schools, as it should be. That is extremely important and I am going to speak to that.

Before speaking to it, I want to mention the fact that when it comes to the Safe and Caring Schools part of the bill, in the briefings that were held, and I do thank the minister for the briefings that were provided, we were told when it came to the Safe and Caring Schools section of this bill the officials did fifty consultations with about twenty-five people each time. I think that is extremely important. It is wonderful. I am delighted to know such consultation took place. We are talking about over 1,000 people and I have to assume they were in different parts of the Province. I would like to think that. I am really glad to see that consultation.

When it comes to the section of the bill dealing with Safe and Caring Schools, it looks like there was in-depth consultation. However, when we

look at the clauses that have to do with the changes to the act because of our now having one English-speaking school board in the whole Province, we had no consultation when it came to this government making a decision to go from the school boards we had down to one English-speaking school board in the whole Province. There was no consultation. It was part of a budget and nobody knew where it came from.

I find it very interesting that these two sets of amendments are in the one bill. One has to wonder why. It seems to me the clauses that are dealing with the associate director who is going to be added to school board and all of the changes that have to be made to the act because of just that one thing, the change of the fact there is going to be an associate director to whom the assistant directors will be accountable, is creating quite a bit of change to the act.

It is also happening because we now have only one English-speaking school board. We had no discussion about it and here in the House today it is not really getting discussed either because we are concerned about the other piece of the bill, which is the Safe and Caring Schools. It is extremely important that we deal with the part of the bill that has to do with Safe and Caring Schools; I just question the government sliding in, in the same bill, the amendments that have to do with something entirely different.

There are many times we deal with bills in this House relating to the same act, but when the bills deal with a totally different topic we have different bills, amendments to the same act but under different bills. I do need to point out I think government has really pulled something here by putting the amendments that relate to our now having one English-speaking school board into the same bill that includes the most important thing around the Safe and Caring Schools. People are going to have to make choices about what it is they are speaking to.

I am going to speak to the Safe and Caring Schools. I have points I need to make. I have questions I want to put out. I could not stand here without pointing out what we have in the other clauses in this bill and that this

government, I think, has really done something to the people of this Province that is unconscionable. They made a major change to our structure without consultation with the people. I think they have to look at how they behave themselves as a government.

They choose when they consult, apparently. They consulted when it came to the Safe and Caring Schools, but there was absolutely zero consultation in this Province with regard to the major change that happened to our educational system. Here they are slipping them in through the same bill, and no discussion in this House taking place with regard to what happened to our system.

We had no chance to talk about it in the House. It was not part of a bill. It was something they did. They put it into their Budget and then now they are slipping these changes in. I stand on record as questioning what this government is about, Mr. Speaker.

Now I will turn to the Safe and Caring Schools section of the bill, not because the other is not important but because we really do have to deal also with the importance of bullying in our schools. I am not going to go on for a long time about the incidence of bullying. I know many of those who have stood before me have and those who will come after probably will as well.

We all know the different forms. We all know that bullying is a reality. We all know that we seem almost helpless when it comes to dealing with it. Anything we can do to bring it to the forefront and to make our schools safe and caring is essential.

What is important, I think, and it has been pointed out by some, is that we have the piece of legislation. We have legislation that is broad stroked and it has to be. Then it refers to, for example, a code of conduct. The legislation refers to having a policy and et cetera. Some of the meat of what we are concerned about with regard to bullying therefore will not be found so much in the legislation as it will be found both in the policy, which one can find on the Department of Education Web site, and I would

assume in the code of conduct. I am really not sure if the code of conduct has been finalized yet. I know that the policy has been.

When we look at the bill, we are not going to find the definition of bullying in the bill. We are going to find the definition of bullying in the policy. I think it is really important to note that some jurisdictions have done what is being done here and others have put the definition in legislation itself. I would not want anybody to think that if the definition of bullying is not in the legislation it is not as important as what is in the legislation. That is one concern that I have.

I understand the rationale. The rationale was explained in the briefing. You want to have flexibility, those who work in the Department of Education who worked on the legislation and on the policy want to have flexibility, things can change, and they want to have the flexibility with regard to change. For that reason, the definition of bullying is not in the legislation.

I would like to point out, being in the Legislature, everything in legislation is a growing thing. Everything in legislation is something that is evolving. Our society evolves. All parts of our society evolve. The government structure evolves. One of the reasons for being in the House is to be changing legislation as it reflects our growing society. For that reason, I am not sure the explanation for not putting the definition in the legislation holds water.

We have so much experience now of all the aspects of bullying. When I read the definition that is in the policy I say, well, it seems pretty comprehensive. If it has gone through all of the consultations that we have been told – we were not told the mix of people in the consultations. I would hope it was pretty comprehensive, inclusive kind of consultations and that they did include all different experiences in the community. When I read the definition, if we are secure enough to have this definition in policy, I am inclined to think we should be secure enough to put it in legislation.

If something in the next few years becomes a whole new form of bullying, surely it does not

take that much to make a change. It really does not. It means drafting a bill and bringing it to the House for discussion. My fear is without the definition of bullying in the legislation, you can have people not seeing the definition as important as other things in the legislation. I really do have to question the legal power actually of something that is just in a policy and something that is in legislation.

I am going to read the definition that is in the policy. “Bullying is typically repeated behaviour that is intended to cause harm to another person(s). A person participates in bullying if he or she directly carries out, assists or encourages the behaviour in any way. Those that engage in bullying behaviour are perceived to be in a position of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal, social and/or electronic. In some circumstances bullying is an illegal activity.”

If it is the thinking of experts that that definition stands in today’s experience, then I think it should be in the legislation, not just in the policy. I think explaining a Bullying Intervention Protocol, which is part of policy, is of a different level than the actual definition of bullying itself, particularly since the whole issue of the safe and caring legislation is to get at bullying.

It would seem to me that it would need to be in the heart of the legislation. The code of conduct, not necessary; the Bullying Intervention Protocol, not necessary; the details around data collection, not necessary. They are all ways in which the policy is going to be put in place and the legislation is going to be carried out; but, the definition, I really do have to question, and I will be looking forward to a response from the minister on that and will probably have more questions to raise about it when we come to the Committee stage. Right now, I am going to bring out the concerns that I have and speak to some of the content.

Another concern that I have has to do with clause 2. Clause 2, of course, is the beginning in the bill of the Safe and Caring Schools section of the bill. Clause 2 talks about students – section

11 of the Schools Act, which right now has only sort of one sentence to it, is being broadened. Section 11 of the Schools Act now will say, “Every student shall (a) promote a safe and caring learning environment; (b) comply with the school code of conduct, school discipline and the rules of the school; and (c) carry out the learning activities within the prescribed curriculum.”

The thing that I am concerned about is the phrase “promote a safe and caring learning environment”. For a student, what does that mean? Here we have a piece of legislation that has jurisdiction over students and it is talking about students promoting a safe and caring learning environment. What does promote mean? What does it mean in terms of the student?

I can understand when we get into the section on teachers and administrators, I can see the promotion by them and how it fits; but when it comes to students, what is it that that is obligating the student to do? There are no details. In the policy itself, when I look at the policy – and I only have the short form of it here; I have gone online and read the longer form – it still does not include how you determine how a student is promoting.

That is something I would like the minister to speak to. I have actually asked our researchers today to go back and to ask the legal people who gave the briefing with regard to the bill, to get some direction from them. Actually, the legal person they spoke with acknowledged that the phrase “promote a safe and caring learning environment” is vague and is something that would be very difficult to determine.

So I question a phrase like that in a piece of legislation. Promote a safe and caring learning environment, by doing what? It just seems vague the way that it is written. I put that out there for the minister to speak to. As I said, that is something else I may want to come back to when we are talking in Committee.

There are issues I want to bring out. First of all, the whole thing of putting the policy in place – I

note, as has been noted ahead of me, that the goal for that is September 2014 the policy will be implemented. The legislation and the policy have an awful lot of detail to them that is going to be putting an extra demand on the school system, an extra demand on administrators, and an extra demand on teachers, on those two groups in particular. The fact is they now have to come up with guidelines for a school code of conduct. All schools are going to have to have the guidelines. They are going to have to put in place protocols to make sure the policy directives are complied with and they are going to have to come up with the details that are not in the legislation.

Some schools already have policies and some already have documentation systems, but a lot of them, the majority, are still dealing completely with paper. This new system is supposed to be an electronic database system, so the question becomes: What is the extra stress on the staff in schools for the inputting of data when certain cases of bullying have to be documented, learning how to use the system?

We are talking about this, Mr. Speaker, at a time when there have been cutbacks at the administrative level in many schools. Coming down to one school board has also meant cutbacks in the number of personnel on a school board level. We had 161 teaching positions cut in our school systems with the budget for this year. Teachers are telling us how overworked they are already because of the number of students in the regular classrooms who have special needs that are not being met. Teachers need to deal with so many issues now as it is.

I want this put in place. I want to put in place everything that is being talked about in the legislation and in the policy, but what resources is the government going to put in place to make this work without the extra stress on the teachers and the administrators? Are they going to tell us here today there is going to be a budget line for the Budget of 2014 so when the policy comes in place in September of 2014 there will be more human resources to deal with putting the legislation and the policy in place?

I do not have any more time right now, Mr. Speaker, but I will be coming back to these issues in Committee.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to have a few words this afternoon to speak about this particular bill. It is certainly a very current topic, well, the changes to the Schools Act, but part of it is the issue of bullying and our Safe and Caring Schools Policy that was released earlier this week. It fits well with the theme of what we have been doing as a government this week in the House of Assembly. In particular, we looked at adoptions, the best interests of the children when we talk about adoptions, and now the Schools Act which focuses on children as well.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to address some of the issues just then put forward by the Leader of the Third Party. One was complaining that she did not have an opportunity to speak about the changes to the school system. That is exactly what this debate is about. It is the debate of changing the legislation of the Schools Act.

If she has any comments she would like to make, she has the opportunity. She just used her time. There will be a Committee as well; she has time to do that. She can ask whatever questions she wants. She has opportunity in Question Period every day and she also has opportunity throughout this debate, Mr. Speaker. To hear that you are up talking about it and complaining at the same time you do not have an opportunity to talk about it quite frankly does not make a lot of sense.

Mr. Speaker, government is committed to preventing all types of bullying. At one time teachers would have thought it was their God-given right to strap students and they did it. We do not tolerate that today, but teachers actually did that at one time. We have come a long way but we need to go further as well.

Everyone knows as well, Mr. Speaker, that bullying is not a government responsibility. Government has a role to play here but government does not have a magic answer when it comes to bullying. If we did we would be able to make it stop right away. We all know it is extremely important that we work together as we work on this particular issue.

One of the amendments this Schools Act is bringing in says that the minister, which would be the Minister of Education, has the authority to issue policy directives relating to safe and caring learning environments, which would include “(A) guidelines and a template for a school code of conduct, (B) a definition of bullying, (C) a bullying intervention protocol, and (D) a requirement for the collection of data related to inappropriate behaviour”.

Mr. Speaker, this means that the definition of bullying is not being placed in legislation. That is certainly something that has been debated in other provinces as well, as some provinces have included the definition of bullying. At this point we have decided not to include the definition of bullying.

Why I think it is important we do not include the definition of bullying at this time, but ensure that the minister has the authority to issue a policy directive to deal with that issue, is rooted in the fact that behaviour and how people are bullied is changing so rapidly. The definition of bullying we would have dealt with ten years ago or five years ago is significantly different from how we would look at it today.

In saying that and in this argument I can also say there are valid points for putting it into definition in legislation as well. It is one of these issues where the opinions are both valid.

You look at the pros and cons of each and you decide on which way you are going.

The reason I feel it is more appropriate at this time not to put it in legislation is because of the particular changes we can see in bullying. One, Mr. Speaker, is that we all talk about the use of social media and how people can bully each other through the Internet. The use of bullying or targeting people through social media is a difficult issue sometimes to address because many times people will become anonymous within the social media.

They do not have to identify themselves. They set up a false Facebook account or they go under a name under Twitter or under social media and they do not identify themselves. At that point, they take free reign to make comments about people, make degrading comments, personal, about their colleagues or about their co-workers, and they put it out there in the general public.

A lot of times that is directed at adults. It is certainly directed at politicians a lot. It is constant, Mr. Speaker. It can be nasty, inappropriate, degrading, and it brings in your personal life, but as adults we are expected to deal with it. When it comes to students, they are more vulnerable. They are still in stages of development. They are not yet matured. That is why we need legislation and policies to help us deal with these issues.

I do not know if anybody had the opportunity to see *The Fifth Estate*, it was either Friday night past or the Friday night before, when they featured the Amanda Todd story. I think most people in Canada are aware of Amanda Todd and the fact that she committed suicide just before her sixteenth birthday. She was a victim of cyberbullying. What stood out for me in that particular documentary was I had no idea the extent of how you could be cyberbullied, what access people have, how they understand the computer systems, understand the social media, how it can pop up, how they can steal your identity under Facebook, get to all your friends, and put pictures out there.

Amanda Todd, unfortunately, was a young girl who made an error in judgment, which was to take a picture of herself to flash at a Web cam. She flashed, Mr. Speaker, her upper body. That was something she regretted and maybe lots of young people regret, but it was how people took it and turned it on her. That was all about luring someone, harassing someone, and blackmailing someone. Mr. Speaker, she had to go to school and face her classmates, and everyone would know about it. She was being blackmailed. She tried to deal with it, it would pop up again. She changed schools. It did not matter, they could find her. It came to a point where she felt she could not cope.

What went viral on YouTube was how she explained what was going on. She had a series of index cards and she held them up and told her story. When you saw that documentary it was very compelling, but what hit me from that documentary, and what we are debating here today, is the fact of how difficult it is to wrap a definition around bullying, because as much as we know about social media and access to it, there are still matters that happen.

The way people could use that, it would have been beyond what I would have perceived in a definition of where people could go. I think by having our definition more fluid, that we can change it, that the minister has the authority to do it, will allow us to be able to respond appropriately, or as advancements or different technologies develop so we can deal with that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, anybody who has raised a child knows that peer acceptance is so important, particularly when they are in junior high. At that point in time, being part of the group and being part of the class is extremely important. It is a time when they are even finding it difficult to choose who they want to be their peer group. They want to be in with everyone because that is some important, peer acceptance. It is a natural progression and part of their development where they kind of want to move away from the nuclear family and be more accepted by their peers.

Mr. Speaker, the damage that can be done to a young person at that particular time in their life, because instead of getting the acceptance they so need at that stage, they are faced with rejection. They are also faced with harassment, extortion, blackmail at times as well, being laughed at and feeling they do not fit in with any particular group. That has lasting effects on young people, Mr. Speaker. This is all about trying to address some of these issues, trying to see what we can do to help young people.

The important part – and it was highlighted in the policy released by the minister a few days ago. It is something we need to keep in mind as well, and I said it earlier, that bullying is not part of government's full responsibility. We need to take some leadership around the issue. We need to work with our partners, but to truly address this issue and prevent it and prevent further harm to young people is to make sure that the whole community responds.

There are two ways that we are hoping we will be able to accomplish this, Mr. Speaker. One, certainly, is through the Safe and Caring Schools Policy, and the definition of bullying and what our expectations are from the school community, which is outlined in the legislation. Again, we just cannot legislate behaviour. We have to make sure there are cultural changes, there are attitudinal changes, and that there is acceptance.

In order to truly accomplish that at the school level, Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure that as we teach this message to students we also need to model that behaviour. Inappropriate behaviour cannot be displayed whether it is from the administration of the school, the principal, the teachers, the parents, the school council or any activities, or any school bodies that come together within that school. It is incumbent upon everyone to understand these issues, to work on these issues, and to be a role model for students. It is also just as important, that when this behaviour is apparent, somebody needs to label it and needs to acknowledge the inappropriateness of it so that people learn from that experience as well.

What we are actually trying to accomplish in the school system, Mr. Speaker, is very similar to the model that we have in our Violence Prevention Initiative. Under our Violence Prevention Initiative we have, I think it is ten regional co-ordinating committees in Newfoundland and Labrador. Each of these regional co-ordinating committees are made up of individuals, from either government departments or agencies, who have a vested interest in trying to prevent violence in Newfoundland and Labrador.

These regional co-ordinating committees represent their communities; therefore, they are able to do local activities and initiatives that are geared towards that particular community. Many times, and we see this throughout the year, the activities of the regional co-ordinating committees of our Violence Prevention Initiative deal with the school; deal with the school, the students in the school and activities, whether it is the pink shirts or other activities, where we see this usually there are events that go on.

Not only are we trying to get this in the school community between the administrators, the teachers, the school council, and the parents and the students, we are also trying on that second level, which is that community level through our Violence Prevention Initiative, because if we truly do not change the culture and how we think about this, we will not see the progress that we absolutely need in this area, Mr. Speaker.

The amendments to the Schools Act will be a step in the right direction. It acknowledges and lays out our expectations. It is also fluid enough that we can bring about changes as we need. As we need changes and as the minister sees these changes, policy directives can be initiated. We all know that can happen a lot quicker sometimes than doing legislative changes. It also means that if there is a particular issue we had not been able to foresee, we would be able to deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, that draws me back to another example of sometimes how important it is that we are fluid in our definitions so we can respond to situations that we were not able to foresee. In

my former life, I did addictions counselling with the Correctional Service of Canada. I remember just before I left to run in the 2003 election I interviewed an inmate and he told me he was addicted to OxyContin. I had never heard tell of that.

I said: You are addicted to what? He said what it was, and I had not heard of it. So I looked it up and it was a drug similar to the opiate-based drugs. You work with it and you think, my gosh, this must be an anomaly within the system.

Well, everyone today, everyone in this House of Assembly, and everyone in the media knows what OxyContin is. We have heard it over and over. Ten years ago or fifteen years ago if we had to do up a definition of what drugs we would treat in an addictions treatment, that drug would probably never have been named because we could not foresee that it was going to be there.

When we talk about bullying, it is a similar example. How we would build a definition today and where it could go, it is very important that we are all-encompassing and we are able to make the necessary changes to deal with issues as they arise.

The other thing I want to comment on, because we are discussing the Schools Act and what it means for the Safe and Caring Schools related to the policy. The other issue I think we cannot lose sight of as we debate this legislation is that bullying is not restricted to schools. There are many educators here in this House of Assembly and they realize that a lot of it happens on the school grounds. A lot of it happens during class, recess time, lunchtime, and a lot of it is happening electronically.

A lot of times a teacher cannot see what is happening, because it is happening behind the scenes. It is coming up on someone's handheld device and the teacher has no idea what is being said. Twenty years ago, if somebody did not say it out loud, it probably was not being said. Today, you can say it electronically.

The point we need to understand here as well, as we try to address bullying we cannot expect that teachers and schools alone can address this issue. Bullying is not only going to happen on the school grounds or during school time. What happens is a lot of this happens after hours, it happens at home, it happens through the Internet. It is not just an issue for the schools. The schools have it. They have to deal with it day in, day out.

If we think we can only push this responsibility onto the schools and deal with it in no other form, we will never make the inroads that are necessary to be made with regard to bullying; therefore, and as I had said, it is important that what we do in schools links very comfortably with what we are doing through the Violence Prevention Initiative, because that takes it that step further into the communities to help us work with other groups of people. If we do not work in concert with each other, we are not going to be able to make any inroads in violence prevention in this Province, Mr. Speaker.

It is important that the Schools Act, our Safe and Caring Schools Policy, and our Violence Prevention Initiative all work together. We need to hold our schools accountable for their code of conduct, how everyone in that school community behaves, and how they address inappropriate behaviour of the students. We must realize this experience must go beyond the school grounds. It must be something we see within our communities as well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of initiatives since 2006 through our Safe and Caring Schools that I just want to mention. I think it builds today what we are doing. It builds on what we have been doing, what we think is working, and what is important in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, some of the initiatives that have been taken place since 2006 in our Safe and Caring Schools Policy, which was released at Stephenville Elementary back in 2006 – and I was the Minister of Education at the time. I was accompanied by the NLTA President Kevin Foley at the time. It was something we

embraced then. It is something we should always embrace and we should always ensure it comes forward for further development, evaluation, and improvement. Just because something is the best it can be today does not mean it is going to be the best it can be in five years time.

Some of the initiatives were: Province-wide professional development and special training to school district leaders, principals, teachers, and other school personnel; there has been suicide intervention trainers within the educational system across the Province; non-violent crisis intervention trainers within education; non-violent crisis intervention teams within schools; online resources for students, parents, and teachers to help in their efforts to address violence in schools; the expansion of the Violence Awareness Week activities, including the provincial promotion of Pink T-shirt Day to encourage students to take a leadership role in anti-bullying activities at their schools; the implementation of the Safe and Caring Schools Special Projects Awards, which provide \$500 to forty schools each year in recognition of school-based initiatives to combat bullying; the introduction of the annual Safe and Caring Schools Awards, which provide fifteen graduating students with a \$500 post-secondary tuition voucher in recognition of their individual efforts to address violence and harassment in schools; awareness training for all administrators and guidance counsellors on awareness of LGBT issues; and this year the introduction of My Gay-Straight Alliance resource in all schools in the Province offering Grades 7 to 12.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of work done that outlines some of the initiatives this government is committed to. I think the amendments we are talking about in the Schools Act, along with the policy of the Safe and Caring Schools, will further build on what is important to this government. Having an environment where people can go to school, they can thrive in those schools, they feel safe, and it is a healthy environment for them is something we all want for the students of this Province.

I anticipate there will be further debate but, Mr. Speaker, I also think there will be wide support for the amendments that have been put forth by the Minister of Education.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I am very happy to stand and to speak to Bill 28, An Act to Amend the Schools Act. I will particularly focus on the Safe and Caring Schools aspect of this act.

We cannot talk about bullying without explicitly talking about gay, lesbian, and trans kids because we know it is primarily gay, lesbian, and transgendered kids who are the targets of bullying or often straight students who are accused of being gay, lesbian, or transgendered who are often the targets of bullying. It is whether you are or you are not, but it is whether you are or whether you are perceived as gay, lesbian, or transgendered.

I think we have all seen that in our society. For those hon. members in this House who have been teachers, they have seen that in their schools. It is a horrendous thing to see a child mocked, bullied, and tortured because of who they are or who other students or teachers perceive them to be.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely important we clearly and explicitly when talking about bullying also clearly and explicitly talk about our children who are gay, lesbian, or transgendered because they are the majority of the target and, again, children who are perceived to be such are the majority of the target of bullying. Of course, we know bullying comes in all forms.

We also know, because of studies that were done by EGALE Canada across the county, the majority of suicides among our children are by children who are gay, lesbian, or transgendered. We know also the majority of students who have contemplated suicide or contemplated self-harm are ones who are either gay, lesbian, or transgendered or who have been accused of that. We know how vicious, how detrimental, and how damaging this type of bullying is.

I do not how many times I have stood in this House, Mr. Speaker, and praised our Department of Education for the incredible work they have done in anti-homophobia education. They have been leaders in the country and possibly even leaders in the world in this area. As a citizen of Newfoundland and Labrador I am so proud of that. Not only am I proud of it –

MR. JACKMAN: Are you proud of the minister who brought it forward?

MS ROGERS: I am so proud of the minister who brought it in – I am so proud of the minister who brought it in.

MR. JACKMAN: Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS ROGERS: I am also so incredibly proud of the minister who will continue this work because we know the work is not finished. We know how important it is because it is about the lives of our children.

We know that oftentimes the majority of young people who drop out of school are kids who have been bullied. We have all heard the stories and we have also seen it happen. As students ourselves we have seen it happen.

We have seen the young guy who is called a fag, who is called a sissy, and who is called a fairy. Sometimes it is really overt, sometimes it is physical, and sometimes it is so subtle. It is so subtle that it can be just a young student walking down the hallway and someone whispering out: Fag, fag, queer, queer. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, having to go to school every day, five

days a week, and seven hours a day and be the target of that? We know how difficult that is for our students.

Again, I feel so hopeful because of the incredible work that has been done and ushered in by the Ministers of Education who have been involved in this and by the incredible bureaucrats in the Department of Education who have championed it, but who have championed it in such a comprehensive way; and then to do their partnerships with Egale Canada, who have become experts in this area and who also hold up Newfoundland and Labrador as an example of exemplary work and of progressive work, so to speak.

We know how important it is, but we also know how important it is to continue this work and to make sure the resources are there to continue it. I know one piece of the work started in our school system was that there was intensive professional training in the school districts with principals, with guidance counsellors, and with teachers. One part of that training as well was that there was going to be some audiovisual material and campaign, much like the campaign that the Minister of Health spoke about, the anti-stigma campaign.

I know that teachers and principals, administrators, and also parents were saying but we need a tool to help change attitudes. Mr. Speaker, we know that legislation does not change hearts. Legislation does not change hearts; however, legislation does protect the most vulnerable from the heartless. We know that, so we need that. We need this legislation. We absolutely need this legislation. We need this legislation to be strong.

We do need a definition in our legislation, to be clear about it, and our legislation then is not only to prevent what is happening but our legislation should also speak to what is omitted. Our legislation should be something that guides curriculum development. We need curriculum revision because, again, we know that gay, lesbian, and trans students are the greatest victim, the most targeted, in our whole population and are the ones who are oftentimes

the most unable to defend themselves and can often be quite vulnerable.

Our legislation has to guide us to action, not only to prevent something, not only to act with specific types of bullying, but also to be preventative in that. What does that mean? It means that our curriculum and all the resources that students have access to have to be positive, that gay, lesbian, and trans youth have to see themselves in their readers, in the literature that is chosen. They have to see that they are also valued and valid and are part, that our curriculums must be inclusive, and that is really important, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing is that I know there was discussion and there was going to be a budget to do a media campaign, much like some of the very effective anti-violence media campaigns that we have seen in the past few years. I guess similar to what the Minister of Health has stood up and talked about in terms of the campaign about stigma. Teachers have told the trainers that they need to see media in their communities that value gay, lesbian, and transgendered kids. They need to see media that will educate the parents and that will educate the community, again, so that this legislation can be effective.

I believe at some point that was agreed to, and I am not quite sure what happened to that. I think that is a part. Our students are not just in schools; they are in homes, and what happens in their homes is what is brought to the schools as well. If we feel our media campaigns to date have been very successful – for instance, the tourism media campaign has been very effective. The anti-violence, violence against women, and the Purple Ribbon Campaign have been very effective in terms of raising awareness, although we have to go beyond just raising awareness. We need effective programs. We need resources.

One of the things I wonder about this particular initiative is: What are the resources that will be committed to this, and I asked the minister that, in order to make this legislation effective? Again, legislation cannot change hearts, and that is what we are talking about. We are talking

about changing hearts and we are talking about changing minds.

I have had the absolute privilege and honour of going to a number of schools in the Province that have gay-straight alliances. I tell you it has been incredibly empowering for me as a lesbian to be able to go to schools and see young gay, lesbian, and transgendered children being validated in their own communities and their own schools. It has absolutely been incredible. I never, ever dreamt that I would see that in my lifetime.

To see these children validated by their teachers and validated by their co-students is absolutely revolutionary. To see kids who had to hide, who have cowered, who have been afraid at lunch going in the lunchroom and afraid of going into the gym, to see that they are validated and have a role in their school is so incredible. I would like to praise the schools, the teachers, and the students who have been daring enough to start these gay-straight alliances.

Not only are there queer kids who are involved in the gay-straight alliances, but it is also straight kids who do not want bullying in their schools because they know the bullying in the schools really affect the whole atmosphere in the school. They are happy to have this as well.

Who would have thought, in this day and age, that we would actually see that happen? Students organizing in junior highs and in senior highs, educating one another, speaking to one another, looking at how they can change the atmosphere in their own schools, looking at how they can change the atmosphere and the attitudes among their peers. For those of you who are educators, you know how scary that can be for students, to attempt to try to change the attitude among their peers.

So, I would be very, very interested in seeing again the resources that will be made available, because just to make the legislation is not enough. It is not enough. We have to have the resources so that teachers can do work, so that there are media campaigns – because that was an integral part of training, the very effective

training that has happened in the schools. We also know that training a group of people really helps, but then those people change, and people come and go, and so there needs to be ongoing training. Again, the training that has been done has been so excellent; the feedback about it has been great.

Again, working against discrimination and working against bullying is not just about looking at dealing with violations that exist, but it is also about dealing with what is omitted and what does not exist. We have to make sure that the lives of gay, lesbian and transgendered people are not invisible in our curriculum. That is really, really important.

There was a time when women were not visible in curriculum. There was a time when women were not included in history books. I would say most of us who went to school, when we went to school there was very little talk about what women did in history, and that is changing – and it just did not happen; our awareness just did not happen. It happened because of changes in our Human Rights Act. It happened because of changes in our Charter of Rights. It happened because women pushed and pushed and pushed.

I think that, again, this legislation will point to a moral obligation on behalf of the Department of Education to ensure that the lives of those who we are talking about protecting – because again, we cannot talk about bullying without explicitly talking about gay, lesbian, and trans students, and teachers. Because we know about gay, lesbian, and transgendered teachers who have been absolutely bullied and vilified, who at times have had to leave their place of work because they were so bullied, and not supported by their administration.

We know that we cannot just act against behaviour but that we have to be proactive in that, as the Department of Education has started and has done a marvellous job, but it must continue. There must be resources for professional development in education. There has to be resources for a media campaign that will take this. The other thing is we have to know that the safe and caring school act and the

issue of bullying must extend beyond the actual school, and beyond the classroom.

What about extracurricular activities? What about sports activities? What about the school bus? What about the school bus stop? Is all that included in this particular legislation? If schools are taking trips not even to another school, I would assume then that all activities related to the school would be covered under this legislation, and that anybody who works within the school purview would also be covered by this.

We know that in a democratic modern society bullying is indefensible. It is absolutely indefensible. I am pleased that we are looking at a code of conduct that will extend to all activities and all people associated with the schools.

I would like to think that the definition of bullying would be in the legislation. I am not quite sure why it would not be. As my colleague for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi had stated, our legislation is a living, breathing tool that changes and is modified as we change, as we learn, and as our society changes and evolves.

To not put the definition of bullying in the legislation itself is unfortunate. I am not quite sure; I have not yet heard a reason for not doing so that would render the act any less strong than it would be if it was in there.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I am happy to support this bill. I think particularly on behalf of gay and lesbian or transgendered students this is a good thing because they are the majority of students who are bullied within our schools, as are the teachers. I will be happy to stand and to vote for this.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed, at this hour on a Thursday afternoon, a great opportunity to stand and speak to Bill 28, An Act to Amend the Schools Act, 1997.

The whole intent for this bill is four or five notes that we would think, that we are entering into this debate here today, and the amendments would require that every school would have a school code of conduct. It also requires teachers, principals, students, school councils, school boards, and directors to promote safe and caring learning environments in their schools.

If I could speak to these two issues for a few moments this afternoon, my former life was an educator. I spent thirty-one years in school in the classroom and in my last eight or nine years, I was principal of a K-6 school. I can remember that we sat on many meetings together as principals of schools in the same school district and Safe and Caring Schools was a very, very big topic at that time.

Bullying was always an issue discussed at the administrative levels, as well as the school council levels, as well as in the staff rooms, and it has forever been around us.

We can think back to when we were students ourselves and going to school. If we think that there was no bullying in those institutions, then we obviously would be mistaken. I can remember back as far, I guess, in the life that we were living, it was like if you had something different about you, if you were a little obese, or you were a little slow, or you were not the fittest and the fleetest of the crew, whether it be on the hockey team or in the classroom or at sports days. I can remember being bullied, Mr. Speaker, because I could not sing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

AN HON. MEMBER: Do you want to try now?

MR. CROSS: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to give in to the bullying around me this afternoon

either. Definitely, my singing would be much like bullying. I would be torturing you. It would be a very unwelcomed activity to your ears, so I would leave you and forgive you that this afternoon.

Just in thinking about bullying, the definitions we think about, and having a succinct definition of bullying, it is almost impossible as such to come up with one that would cover all of the different aspects and that would cover all of the different little points about it we could put our hands to such that we could think we do have the perfect definition. We do know what bullying basically is. We know it is repeated. We know it is unwelcome. We know it is how the bully gets their jollies. We know there must be some feeling of something that motivates someone to carry out that behaviour.

We also, as many speakers have said, know bullying is probably something that lasts for a fleeting two, three, five, six, eight, or ten seconds. It can happen very silently. It can happen without a witness. It is only the word of the bully or the bullied that is important. In lots of cases the bullied person feels so small, even though they might be the biggest person in the building physically, they feel so small inside that they do not know what to do and what action to take.

It is about time, Mr. Speaker, we look at this. This act brings this to the forefront to the point we talk about bullying as it is one of the most important aspects of education. If we are going to educate our children to make the future a much better place, then we have to teach them how to behave and how to respect each other.

For part of my former life, Mr. Speaker, I was a trainer for Safe and Caring Schools. In carrying out those duties we would carry out workshops at schools and as a principal I also did take our school, the school I was the leader of, and accept whatever was stated. When we evaluated the school to think about our Safe and Caring School attitude and policy, a big part of it is about attitude. If we think about that, Mr. Speaker, then we have to realize we have to

mould that attitude. We have to mould at that young age so it is acceptable.

Much of what we see on TV, in the movies or, just think about when we were kids growing up and a lot of the skits that we would portray in our Christmas concerts and things in school, if we had a little classroom scene, what were we putting on the stage? We were showing how the kids were getting away with misbehaviour and the teacher could not find it out. We were promoting the misbehaviour, not realizing what we were doing, just for humour and just for a laugh. The whole aspect of bullying may be the bully thinks it is just for a laugh. That is sad, Mr. Speaker.

I wish I could get into a lot more of the whole aspect of how you take a school, mould it, and transform it. I would like to share a couple of things with you in a moment or two before I finish today. At Memorial Academy, and that building no longer exists because it is merged into Pearson Academy in New-Wes-Valley, so the last placement I was as the principal, we attempted to mould the student behaviour.

We used our students, they were only up to Grade 6, but we used them in a committee, especially the Grade 5s and Grade 6s, to help us look at the school and reflect on some of the rules. We used them to act out some of the misbehaviours. We taught behaviour to the younger students. We taught them the right behaviour. We showed them what the wrong behaviour was. They could analyze and they could choose for themselves.

That is a part of what we have to do and embed in this legislation in what we are looking at here as part of the new education system we want for our child. What we have is not good enough. If we always have what we always had, then we will always have that and we will never improve it. We have to be bold enough to look further ahead and we have to be bold enough to take this a step further and say: Look, it is starting here and we are moving on.

Just as the motto of Memorial Academy was, when we finished and we used positive

behaviour, we thought before we acted. That is what we have to do here, Mr. Speaker: make our legislation think before we act and put it in right.

I see the time, Mr. Speaker, so I will clue up for today.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

MS SHEA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, that the House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

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