



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLVIII

SECOND SESSION

Number 25

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA

Monday

October 16, 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we start the formal procedures of the day, I did want to address and bring attention to everyone in this House, and our strangers, that we've gone through a little bit of a transition these last two months. I'd like to thank both staff and all the hon. Members for their support.

I also wanted to point out that we have some new faces, and maybe some others that are familiar faces but they're in new roles. I'd also like to, first of all, identify our presiding Officers: the Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees is the MHA for Baie Verte – Green Bay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Deputy Chair of Committees is the MHA for St. George's – Humber.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: While they don't like me to do it, I do like to acknowledge the great staff that exist in this House of Assembly: Sandra Barnes, who's the Clerk; Elizabeth Murphy, who's the Clerk Assistant; and I'd like to introduce, for many of you, Ms. Kim Hawley George. She has been appointed in an acting position as the Law Clerk, consistent with the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*.

Ms. Hawley George was previously Chief Legislative Counsel and assistant deputy minister in the Department of Justice and Public Safety. Prior to being appointed Chief Legislative Counsel in 2010, Kim was a legislative drafter with the Office of the Legislative Counsel for more than 15 years.

Previous to that, she held a position as solicitor in the Civil Law Division, Department of Justice. Kim is not new to this Table and this House. She has sat there in that chair prior to 2007 when, as several Members will recall – not myself, but perhaps others – the Parliamentary

Counsel to the House was provided by the Office of Legislative Counsel.

With that, I'd like to welcome Ms. Hawley George.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I also wanted to identify our Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Wayne Harnum, in the back. We have a new and a former Page joining us today: Mohammad Ali Bakhshi who is returning with us as a Page, and a very new Page in Jeremy Cook.

Welcome to both of them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I'd also like to, of course, acknowledge all the other staff involved in information and financial management with the House of Assembly service.

In the Speaker's gallery today I'd like to welcome Superintendent Owen Brophy, who will be the subject of a Ministerial Statement today remarking on his 35 years of services to corrections and the justice system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I'd also like to welcome to the public gallery, Ms. Bernice Morrissey, who will be the subject of a statement by the Member for Windsor Lake, along with members of her family who are also here with her today.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today we have Members for the Districts of Conception Bay South, St. George's – Humber, St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, Baie Verte – Green Bay, Windsor Lake, and Lewisporte – Twillingate.

The hon. the Member for the District of Conception Bay South.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Town of Conception Bay South for hosting the 2017 regional Scott FireFit Championships held from August 5-6, 2017, at the Robert French Memorial Stadium.

Often described as the toughest two minutes in sport, the Scott FireFit Championship is a competition based on firefighting tasks commonly performed in emergency situations. There are many different levels of competitors, from the seasoned 10-year veteran to first-time rookie.

Congratulations to the Conception Bay South Fire Department for their strong finish at this competition. I would also like to commend all other fire departments abroad and at home who competed in this great competition.

Mr. Speaker, not all these individuals are career firefighters. We have a large number of volunteers in our province who unselfishly protect us every day.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating them for their performance and thanking them for their continued dedication in making our communities a safe place to live.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. REID: Mr. Speaker, we in the House of Assembly have all met people who are the lifeblood of their communities where they live. People, who do volunteer work, serve on town councils or in their professional lives have a tremendous impact on the communities where they live and the individuals that they come in contact with.

Recently, I had an opportunity to join the friends and family of one such person in Pasadena as he celebrated his 90th birthday.

Mr. Nelsen Bennett was the first elected Mayor of the Town of Pasadena. He was there as the communities of South Brook, Pasadena and Midland joined together to form the magnificent town we have today.

As well as being the first elected Mayor of Pasadena, Mr. Bennett was actively involved in regional economic development, and as a teacher he has had a lasting impact on many of his students. Mr. Bennett is still active in the community and continues to contribute to the town he was so influential in creating.

I ask all Members to join with me in extending best wishes to Mr. Bennett on his 90th birthday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise today to recognize Sister Corona Wyse, a constituent who turned 100 years old on July 15, 2017.

Sister Corona was born in 1917 in Placentia and was a teacher from 1936 to 1960. She taught in Grand Falls – Windsor and Corner Brook, and served as director of religious education with the St. John's and Stephenville Roman Catholic School Boards.

Sister Corona has earned several degrees including a bachelor's degree, two master's degrees, and a PhD in Education.

She is also a published author. She wrote a book called *Not Words, But Deeds* on the life of Nano Nagle, Foundress of the Presentation Sisters in Ireland. The book is a history of the Presentation Sisters before and after their arrival in Newfoundland 1833.

Sister Corona now lives at the Presentation Convent Motherhouse in St. John's.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Sister Wyse on her many achievements on the occasion of her 100th birthday.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte – Green Bay.

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to storyteller, advocate and legend, Mr. Ed Smith, who passed away on September 8 at the age of 76.

An award-winning author, most of us will remember Ed for his extremely witting *The View From Here* columns that appeared in many of the province's newspapers. Reading the *Telegram* on Saturday mornings with a cup of coffee will not be the same now that Ed has passed away.

Ed taught in schools all over Newfoundland before finally settling in Springdale. He had been a high school principal and administrator for many years. In fact, Ed was my high school principal and a great friend. After he retired, he was left paralyzed from the shoulders down from a car accident. He became an advocate, often writing about life with quadriplegia and in 2001, Ed won the Gabriel Award for writing that uplifts and inspires the human spirit.

Known for his wicked sense of humour, Ed often wrote about his family, including his wife of 54 years, Marian, his son Rob, daughters Michelle, Kathy and Jennifer, and their families.

On behalf of all Members of this hon. House, I offer heartfelt condolences to the Smith family.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in this hon. House to recognize Mrs. Bernice Morrissey of Airport Heights on 50 years of dedicated service as a health care professional.

Having completed a business program at Holy Heart of Mary in 1967, Mrs. Morrissey attended

a job interview for a temporary typing position at St. Clare's. After the interview, the head sister approached her and asked if she would like to train for electrocardiograph technician. Mrs. Morrissey accepted and completed her distance learning course in 1970 when she became a registered technologist.

During her 50 years at St. Clare's Mercy Hospital, Bernice gained a reputation for compassion, care and empathy, always putting her patients first. Her work provided her with the patient contact she loved, as well as the opportunity to follow up with her patients.

Recently retired, she already misses her patients, co-workers and her public service. Days are now filled with family and friends and she is enjoying spending time with her three-year-old grandson.

On behalf of all those she served, I would like to thank Mrs. Morrissey for her five decades of exceptional health care service and wish her a well-deserved and equally rewarding retirement.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise in this hon. House to offer a message of congratulations to all those elected in the recent municipal elections and to say thank you to all candidates who had put themselves forward to serve their communities as a member of council. You're all to be commended. I hope you find the wisdom and the courage to do what is best for the residents you now serve, and feel assured that I will be available to help you achieve your goals.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge this province has Canada's longest serving mayor, Mr. John Hamlyn, of Crow Head. Mr. Hamlyn was first elected to Crow Head town council in 1962. The following year, he accepted the role of mayor and has been serving the residents of Crow Head ever since.

During his long history, he has been instrumental in advancing the community.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Mayor John Hamlyn as he begins his 55th year in municipal governance and, indeed, all municipal councils across this great province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Before we continue, I did want to also recognize in the gallery, Mr. Jim Bennett, the former Member of the House of Assembly.

Welcome, Sir.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad not to take that portfolio.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the significant achievement in the way our government upgrades road infrastructure in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: Last month, our government began an innovative project that looked at ways that we could reduce slowdowns at high traffic periods of the day on our highways during the construction season.

As part of our nighttime road construction pilot project, seven sections of the Trans-Canada Highway from Kenmount Road to Salmonier Line were paved at night.

Work began at 7 after the evening rush hour, and ended each morning by 6. Detours were in place overnight to ensure the safety of the travelling

public and the men and women working on our roads.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say this is the first time in our province's long history that a provincial government has undertaken road construction at night.

Now that this work has been completed, we will review the project in the weeks ahead and look at things such as safety, productivity, costs and impacts on motorists to determine if we will consider more nighttime paving in the future.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to finding new ways to upgrade road infrastructure that lessens impacts on residents and tourists alike. We look forward to sharing the report on this project very early in the new year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I appreciate the minister finally providing the people an update on this matter, considering the project started far later than what government had promised. It got to the point where people were actually wondering if it was going to happen at all. Many are now wondering the same with other roads in this province that the government has promised to pave.

It's interesting that the minister should mention tourists because much of the roadwork was promised for this year actually began after the tourist season, with many annual visitors stating the road conditions this year were worse than they'd ever seen.

I am pleased to see the project completed, however, but I'm sure the same can't be said for much of the other projects that will be carried over into next year.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the Minister for the advance copy of his statement, and I thank the Minister for an update on the pilot project. I'm sure drivers are going to appreciate not having so many slowdowns on the highways during the day and better roads.

I'm glad our province has finally recognized and begun to implement a practice that has been in effect for many years in other parts of the country. I'll be surprised if we find it doesn't work. I'm looking forward to the review, especially as it pertains to road safety.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the career and contributions of retiring Superintendent of Prisons, Mr. Owen Brophy. With more than 35 years of experience working in corrections in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Brophy has had a tremendous impact on the justice system in this province.

Mr. Brophy began his career in adult corrections in 1981 and since then he has worked in a number of capacities. In 2014, he was appointed as Superintendent of Prisons for Newfoundland and Labrador, which made him responsible for all adult custody facilities in the province. Mr. Brophy contributed expertise in the areas of offender risk management, conflict resolution, and the provision and delivery of varied programs and initiatives including employment equity.

Mr. Brophy has shown extraordinary leadership in his role as Superintendent of Prisons and has

worked hard to maintain the safety and well-being of inmates and staff within adult corrections in this province.

Mr. Speaker, recently we announced a new policy on disciplinary segregation. This would not have been possible without Mr. Brophy's dedicated work and his commitment to collaboration with community partners. Under his leadership, this province has been able to change the way that it deals with adult corrections and to focus more on rehabilitation. He has created a framework for us to continue to work with and I cannot thank him enough for his incredible contributions to the justice system here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking Superintendent Brophy for his many years of service. While we are sad to see him go, we wish him all the best for a long, happy and healthy retirement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement today. We join with government and Members of the House of Assembly in congratulating Superintendent Brophy on a successful career and the contribution that he'd made to the province's correctional system.

Mr. Speaker, Superintendent Brophy's career of 35-plus years is noteworthy in itself, but considering the difficult challenges that are often faced in corrections in our province, decades spent in those challenging, demanding and sometimes dangerous environments is to be commended for Superintendent Brophy. While we wish him all the best, we know that the corrections system in our province will miss his experience and his expertise.

We see Superintendent Brophy here today surrounded by some very important people to him. To Superintendent Brophy, I personally extend my congratulations to him on behalf of

our caucus and the people that we represent and wish him all the best in the next chapter of his life. We can see already his focus has turned to the importance of family. We wish him all the best in his next chapter of his life together with his family.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I'm delighted to congratulate Mr. Brophy on his retirement after 33 years of service in the corrections system, a difficult profession for sure.

Mr. Brophy served many important managerial roles over his career, but we are particularly grateful for his work on a more rehabilitative approach in our corrections facility. So I'm pleased to join with my fellow Members in wishing Mr. Brophy a very happy retirement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased today to rise to recognize the 25th anniversary of MusicNL. What started as a group of musicians recognizing a need for a formal structure has evolved into an organization that continues to promote, develop and advocate for the music industry in our province.

Mr. Speaker, last night at the annual awards show was capped off by an exciting week of performances, showcases and training opportunities. I also had the pleasure of presenting the Lifetime Achievement Award to

Glen Tilley. The Kubasonics, Steve Maloney and our very own Janet Cull – whose roots are in my district on the Great Northern Peninsula – each won three awards. It speaks to the diversity and the talent we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

This year's MusicNL Week focused on export development, assisting our musicians and performers with export opportunities including buyer education and business development training. Our musicians had a chance to perform for buyers from North America and Europe, helping them to gain exposure, learn about the industry and grow an audience base.

Mr. Speaker, the musical talent that exists in Newfoundland and Labrador is second to none, and artists from this province deserve opportunities to reach as broad an audience as possible.

That is why the provincial government proudly invests \$350,000 annually in MusicNL, and proudly contributed \$34,000 to help MusicNL expand on its robust export development program this year.

By helping local musicians foster their talent and business skills, our government continues to cultivate a culture and style that is all our own, while contributing to the growth of the music sector.

I invite all hon. Members to join me in congratulating MusicNL and all the award recipients on a successful 25th anniversary.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I, along with my colleagues, join with government in congratulating MusicNL on their 25th anniversary. In addition, we would like to thank all those who played a role in its success, both past and present.

Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador is blessed with overwhelming talent and musical ability. MusicNL helps support local musicians, allowing them to promote and develop their craft and to reach audiences around the world.

We are pleased to see the current government continue to support this organization as past administrations have done, and we look forward to further future successes.

Again, congratulations on 25 years of growth and success. To MusicNL, keep up the great work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I was pleased to attend the awards last night and I congratulate MusicNL on an impressive, top-notch award show and on 25 years of extraordinary professionalism in advancing the music industry in this province.

It is right that government continue to invest in this industry, not just because the artists should be supported, but also because this industry's contribution to the economy in this province is enormous.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

There are many important issues on the minds of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians today, and in the coming days as we sit here in the House we'll raise many very important issues.

We're here today to debate special ballots. As the House convenes here today, the Chief Electoral Officer is in Supreme Court appealing a recent ruling by Supreme Court Justice Butler.

I ask the Premier: What are the implications of the Chief Electoral Officer appealing the court ruling on special ballots? What are the implications to the legislation before the House?

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

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

Yes, we are certainly here today, I guess somewhat unexpectedly, to debate amendments to the *Elections Act* which have been brought on by the legislation from 2007 and the subsequent court case that was just decided on September 6, which in all actuality basically negated the special ballots provision, section 86 of our *Elections Act*.

The fact is that the CEO of Elections NL has commenced an appeal. He did so on Friday, as is their right. The province is listed as an intervener as per the previous case; however, there may certainly be implications, but the fact remains that this House needs to debate the *Elections Act* amendments to the special ballots provision specifically in order for us to comply with the other parts of the *Elections Act* which dictate that we must have a by-election within 60 days of the resignation of a Member.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, I'll ask the Premier in this way. Is it possible that changes being proposed in the bill

being brought to this House by the government here today, is it possible that those changes could be deemed unconstitutional also by way of an appeal launched by the province's Chief Electoral Office? By that very appeal that the Chief Electoral Office is in the court on today, is it possible that his application is and the decision of the courts could impact and deem this very piece of legislation to be unconstitutional?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Certainly, I guess whenever you draft any piece of legislation to bring into this House you face the possibility, and one of the concerns you must always remember is, does it pass constitutional muster? Does it offend any of our charter rights that we have been granted?

In doing so, we rely on constitutional experts, solicitors, experts in the field to ensure that we do not cross that. In this case, the amendments that were made in 2007, pursuant to a 2011 case that was decided on September 6, found that section 86 specifically the special ballots provisions of our *Elections Act* were unconstitutional and of no use. We have no choice but to move forward.

I am very confident and certain that the provisions, the changes we're bringing forward here today will pass constitutional muster and will survive any challenge.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, I'd like to ask the Attorney General if he will be applying for intervenor status as part of this appeal process; and, if so, what's the purpose of and intent of intervenor status?

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

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

The original piece of, I guess, litigation that was commenced by an interested party back in 2011 listed the Attorney General of Newfoundland and Labrador, at that time, as an intervenor, as a party to that application and to that case. The same thing is going on here.

So yes, this province, the Attorney General and my office has been attached to this. We are listed as intervenors. We have seen the notice of appeal that has been filed by the Elections NL CEO. The Department of Justice will now do its analysis to see what our stance is as we move forward.

What I can guarantee you is that we are here right now to debate Elections Act amendments to ensure that we can have a constitutionally valid by-election, as dictated by the Elections NL legislation.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Speaker, in recent months, there has been numerous tragedies on the highways of Newfoundland and Labrador, loss of life, impacting families throughout our province, and has been devastating to many communities and individuals.

I ask the Premier: What are you and your government doing to address highway safety?

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

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

I stand here to answer this question, but the reality is that there are a number of Members on this side that could stand up and answer this

question, whether it be the Minister of Service NL who just recently brought in changes to drunk driving legislation to make our roads safer than what they are, and certainly safer than they are in other jurisdictions. It's a significant piece of legislation. What I can say is when we come back here in the future we have more legislation that she will be bringing forward to ensure that we have safer roads.

I could speak for the Minister of Transportation and Works who has been doing a significant job ensuring that we have safe roads to go on. The fact is we have a number of roads in disrepair across this province. It's one of the issues that we've been left to deal with. Again, it happens on a daily basis. We know the challenges that go there.

Certainly, what I can say I'm doing as the Minister of Justice is working with our RNC and our RCMP to make sure we do everything within our power to make these roads safer for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Justice to advise this House how many additional police officers were deployed to Labrador this past summer, and how many of those actually came from Traffic Services here on the Island.

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

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

As the Member opposite would know, operational decisions of the police, whether it be the RNC or the RCMP, are not the mandate of the Minister of Justice. I do not dictate police operations and which officers serve in which role. What I can say is I have been assured that nobody from Traffic Services – there was no disservice to Traffic Services anywhere in this

province in order to fulfill the mandate of the operation that was done in Labrador.

In fact, we know that the RCMP reached out to police forces all across the country to ensure that we had the necessary people on the ground in Labrador to ensure the safety and well-being of all people in Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I ask the minister just to clarify his statement because it sounded like he began to say nobody from Traffic Services, but then he changed his answer a little bit. But just to clarify – and I understand that it's not your decision to deploy resources; my question is about the impact on resources in our province while hundreds of police officers were deployed to Labrador during the summer.

My question is: Were officers from Traffic Services on the Island portion of the province deployed in Labrador this summer?

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

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

Certainly, there was a significant operation in Labrador this summer that was done and, basically, as a part of a review done by the RCMP. This is their job. Any police force's job is to measure any kind of scenario to ensure that we weigh all the risks and make sure that we take all necessary steps to protect the lives and safety of all people in that particular scenario.

In this case, there were extra officers that were required in Labrador, which the RCMP gathered through their own resources here and across the country. They even reached out to the RNC, I believe. I know, again, they did reach out to other provinces.

What I can say is that there was absolutely no disservice to Traffic Services anywhere in this province during that time. I've been assured that by the head of the RCMP in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Just a couple of quick points on this matter.

First of all, I'd like to ask the minister: What was the total cost of this, what you referred to as a significant operation?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I don't have an updated cost here. What I can assure the Member opposite is that there was a significant cost that was necessary here due to the expertise of the RCMP. They said that this was a significant situation and would require extra resources. I would estimate the cost actually will be in the millions.

Obviously, there was a significant expense. The positive side is that there were absolutely no injuries reported and everybody was safe thanks to the hard work of the men and women that did this job.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Back to the line of questioning which was specific to road safety, highway safety and the safety of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, especially considering what was experienced in our province in the last few months.

I ask the Premier if he will commit to immediately call a round table of key stakeholders to help identify a plan to address highway safety and the safety of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

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

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

What I can say is that everybody on this side of the House certainly takes road safety and traffic safety very seriously. I can say that I meet on a very regular basis with members of law enforcement, of both forces, to talk about this issue; in fact, I've talked about this issue in the recent past.

I know that other Members of this Cabinet and this caucus have done the same thing. I know the Premier has done significant work reaching out and speaking to people on this issue. This is what we do on a day-to-day basis, whether it's policy change, legislative change, what do we need to do.

What I can say is that there are a number of initiatives that are being undertaken, being looked at right now. I cannot reveal them in the House right yet but, hopefully, it's going to lead to an increase in safety amongst our roads. Again, it's not coming down to an extra expenditure of funds; it comes down to just doing things differently.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals boast about their summer road maintenance program, yet in many areas across the province potholes, bridge and shoulder erosion, as well as severe rutting, have been ignored. Can the minister tell us why the summer maintenance has occurred so late this year or not at all in some areas of the province?

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

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

I thank the hon. Member for the question. Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the hon. Member is this construction season in this province we have paved 588 lane kilometres of pavement in our province; 300 culvert replacements; over 90 kilometres on the TLH. They are just some of the things we've done with construction. Mr. Speaker, potholes didn't happen overnight and we're fixing them as fast as we can.

Mr. Speaker, they ask questions about summer maintenance; let me remind them that it was their government that closed 13 depots in this province and laid off 100 people.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to remind the minister that I asked about summer maintenance, not a roads program. Their roads program, there are roads being paved, but I have one question for the House: How do you pave more roads with less money? How do you get more paved with less money? Everyone wants to know the answer to that question, but maybe you'll throw that in after this next one.

We are being told that depot staff feel as though they are being denied proper resources to carry out required road maintenance. The travelling public are frustrated with unsafe road conditions.

Minister, what are you doing to address this resource issue?

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

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

Again, I thank the hon. Member for the question. Mr. Speaker, what they have to realize is that we're doing earlier tendering, better tendering. Our five-year roads plan – if any person in this province wants to go today they can see 75 per cent of the work that we're going to do next year. This allows contractors to better plan. So that's why we're paving more roads with less money. It's because they didn't plan, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: They did not plan.

He talks about workers in depots, but let me remind him again, as in my previous answer, it was their administration in 2005 that closed 13 depots and laid off 100 people throughout this province. And I heard, Mr. Speaker, that was done on the back of a napkin.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I remind the minister we've been asking for the last year for 100 per cent of the roads, not 75 per cent, 100 per cent of the roadwork planned.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: So I ask the minister to come clear on that one too.

Actually, unlike the minister, I talk to the people in the depots. I'm speaking for them because their voice is not being heard. They're being heard by me. So I'm going to be the critic and I'm going to bring it up here in the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: Maybe the minister should go back and talk to some of his own staff people and come back and give me better answers.

There have been an alarming number of accidents on our province's highways this summer, many resulting in fatalities. Has any analysis been done by your department in an attempt to identify the cause? Many are pointing to reduced highway enforcement and lack of maintenance.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, there are many factors in the accidents we've seen on our highways this summer. Mr. Speaker, I extend condolences to all the families that were affected by this. Our department is working with groups.

If you look at the Veterans, Mr. Speaker, a highway that's 20 years old, back in the spring the previous minister reached out and met with the Conception Bay North Joint Mayors Association to talk about some solutions there. In this spring we did a traffic study. We found some numbers, and looking forward to going back in the very near future and speaking again with the Conception Bay North Joint Councils on some of the things we can do to help highways, such as the Veterans.

Mr. Speaker, another one of our problem roads has been the area between Whitbourne and Clarendville. This year, Mr. Speaker, we resurfaced 115 kilometres between Whitbourne and Goobies.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, we're addressing this. Again, there are many issues –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In light of these tragedies, what immediate measures are you taking to improve road safety for the travelling public?

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

MR. CROCKER: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, this past season we paved 588 lane kilometres in this province. I know the Minister of Justice has had conversations with the law, with the authorities. My own department met with the RCMP this past Friday to see if there were any suggestions they could bring to us.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's an important time. We recognize this week is National Teen Driver Week. Safe driving around our province is an issue for all of us. We all travel the roads. We all have family members on the roads. One of the things I would encourage all of our drivers to do in this province is remember safety. Keep safety foremost, and drive to the best of your ability. We will continue to upgrade the roads in this province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has announced an inquiry into Muskrat Falls.

I ask the Premier: When do you expect to release the terms of the inquiry, and when is the anticipated start date?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I have been saying now for a few weeks, we will look forward to and will start the inquiry this fall. It is something that is long overdue. I think the people of this province have a right to know how we got in the situation that we're into with the Muskrat Falls Project. It means

doubling of electricity rates. It means, Mr. Speaker, extreme costs. I refer to it often as the Tory tax on electricity. It's something that people realize today, that this will have a profound impact on many generations in our province.

The inquiry will be starting this fall. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador have a right to know how we got into this situation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm certainly glad to hear the Premier is getting ready to call the inquiry finally, but I do note to him that since March of 2016 there's been an additional \$1.5 billion accrued under his watch, I say to the Premier. So we're looking forward to it.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier commit to ensuring that the terms of reference is drafted by an individual or group that is independent of government?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think if you look at the schedule – I just want to address the preamble. If you look at the significant progress that's been made since we've made some changes on the Muskrat Falls Project with the new CEO and new board, new Oversight Committee that includes independent people, Mr. Speaker, you will see in the last year there's been more work done than you've seen in any of the previous years before. Some 48 per cent in the first three years, now it's up to over 80 per cent. So there's been significant progress that's been made under the guidance and the leadership of this administration.

I will say this, when it comes to drafting the terms of reference, who will not be drafting the terms of reference and that is the group they called upon regularly, and that's Nalcor. Nalcor will not be involved in the drafting of the terms of reference.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: And, yes, we will get this out there independently. People that were part of the decision-making process will not be included in drafting of the terms of reference.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to hear the Premier say that, but I point out to him that the current CEO kept all the team in place at Nalcor. He said he had confidence in their management skills and overseeing the project. So I'm glad to see that it will come out of Nalcor and there will be a terms of reference set up, no problem with that.

I also ask the Premier: At any time will the terms of reference or discussion come back here to the House of Assembly?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, there's one thing for sure that we know right now. The Members in the Opposition Party, clearly in the last few days, have articulated that they still support the project. They support a project that means more than doubling of electricity rates in our province. It's the single, biggest tax measure ever to be inflicted on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I will guarantee you this, Mr. Speaker. We will not be putting the fox back in the hen yard with those terms of reference. We will not allow that to happen. We will put in a terms of reference that is all encompassing. We will get to the details of what got us into this position. It will not be determined by the Opposition, who actually got us in this position in the first place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I should highlight for the hon. Premier, that there's a \$1.6 billion increase since they've taken power in regard to the project. So we're happy to see insight, a review of the project and what actually has transpired and taken place.

I'll ask the Premier: Will you commit to ensuring that before a full-blown inquiry is done that a forensic audit of the project is completed, possibly by the Auditor General's office that will look at the decision making that was done, procurement of contracts and all of those things that could feed into an inquiry?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, we look forward to having a very intense, detailed, deep dive into how we got into this situation. That will include everything from a forensic audit. The commissioner and those people, they will have a broad width and they will use whatever resources they need to get the real answers that were hidden from the people of this province.

The Member opposite just spoke of over a billion dollar increase, Mr. Speaker. These are numbers that were hidden from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. They would not disclose them prior to 2015 because they were ashamed of it. They knew in June of 2015, the former premier knew this and hid it from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, our intention is to expose all of that and let the inquiry do the work. Whatever measures they need, they will have the resources to do it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The numbers weren't hidden. The current CEO announced them several times in the past number of months. So they weren't hidden. Their own CEO announced the number.

I ask the Premier, the timeline for looking at this project, we know it will go back to – I think it has been referenced, a time when the decision

was made to sanction it even before that. As well, will the review take right up to date, in terms of what decisions have been made to this date?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, if there's anything I look forward to is getting in front of that inquiry and laying out the things that we have had to clean up based on the work of the prior administration.

Mr. Speaker, what I would like to know, they had the ultimate opportunity to do their own inquiry. It was called sanctioning, and they refused to do it. They kicked the PUB out. They rejected the joint review panel, Mr. Speaker. They had the opportunity to ask questions in the beginning and refused to do it, Mr. Speaker.

We are going to get the answers that are required. What I would like to know, knowing what we know now, do Members of the Opposition still support the Muskrat Falls Project? Stand up and let the people know: Do you still support the project?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For years, the Member opposite sat in Opposition and pledged and promised to change the 1.6 kilometre busing route. Last week, the minister attempted to blame the school board saying that the rule was a school board policy, but documentation by the minister's own department clearly states that the rule is the policy of the department.

I ask the minister: Why haven't you made changes to the 1.6 kilometre busing rule?

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour for me to be able to respond. The Member opposite is entitled to his own fantasies,

but he's not entitled to his own facts. The fact of the matter is we do have problems at the beginning of the year with school busing. I never, at any point, tried to say that the 1.6 kilometre rule was a rule of the school district. That is a policy of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Most of the school busing problems are resolved with the courtesy seating policy at the beginning of the school year. Sometimes parents decline courtesy seating. That happened in one well-publicized instance.

That happens and that's the choice of parents. They can take courtesy seating. If that doesn't work for them, they're welcome to decline it as well.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Why are you playing politics with children's education? Last year, the minister said government had no place getting involved with the school trustees, but all it took was a trustee to criticize the Liberal government and the minister fired off a letter telling them to keep quiet.

Why has the minister flip-flopped on his policy?

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said before, the Member is entitled to his own fantasies, but he's not entitled to his own facts. The fact is we have an excellent working relationship with the school districts.

We are in the second year of a wildly successful full-day kindergarten program that the PC Party voted against. We are rolling out significant new professional development initiatives with the school districts that the PC Party neglected in government. We have opened, I believe it will

be now, eight new schools since we took office here, Mr. Speaker, to address overcrowding issues in schools that the PC Party ignored in government.

So far from what the Member is alleging, we have an excellent relationship with the school districts and we are doing good work together.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island for a quick question, no preamble.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will there be a delay in the construction of the Mobile school extension?

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

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

I thank the hon. Member for the question. The answer is no, there will be no delay. The first tender was called and awarded a few weeks ago. That tender is due to be completed on November 30.

Just this past Friday, we called tender number two, which is the construction tender, and the new section of the school will be occupied by the fall of 2018.

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.

The success of the long-overdue judicial inquiry into the disastrous Muskrat Falls Project will depend on the terms of reference given to that inquiry.

I ask the Premier: Will he ensure that a forensic audit precedes or is a part of the inquiry?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said in the previous answer, we will use whatever efforts we have, whatever tools we have available to us, for the commissioners and those who will be doing the inquiry, use whatever they need to get the answers that's required, things like a forensic audit, a detailed investigation into sanctioning decisions that were made.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, they have a right to know what got us in this situation – a situation that will lead to more than doubling of electricity rates in our province, inflicting financial hardship on seniors, on young families in our province, impacting businesses. So we will use whatever mechanisms, things like a forensic audit, that are required to get the right answers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I point out to the Premier that legislation gives him the responsibility for putting the terms of reference together. If a forensic audit is going to get to the bottom of things, he should see that as something that's important.

I go on, Mr. Speaker. I ask the Premier: Will he consult with experts and concerned members of the public before drafting the terms of reference for the inquiry?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When you develop the terms of reference of an inquiry so important as this Muskrat Falls inquiry, it's important that you make them as broad as you can so that people can be engaged and people will be put in place.

Mr. Speaker, right now we have many departments that are looking at this, from Justice and Natural Resources and so on. We are excluding people that would have been part of the decision-making process going back to the sanctioning time. Nalcor is not involved in the terms of reference. We are going to have those terms of reference; they'll be ready soon and this inquiry will get started this fall.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I didn't hear from the Premier talking about experts and concerned members of the public outside of government departments, and that's where we should be going.

Mr. Speaker, the public recently learned that Nalcor has nearly 500 embedded contractors working on the disastrous Muskrat Falls Project. While in some cases this is normal industry practise, this issue has raised serious concerns about government's competence in the oversight of this project.

I ask the Premier: Why was there no public mention of these 500 contractors until almost two years after his government took power?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What we expect from any agency, board and commission – if you remember, the legislation now that has been discussed in the last few days around the embedded contractors was legislation that was put in place by the prior administration. We will take whatever measures that are required to get the information so that Nalcor is as open and transparent as any other department within government. That's where we want to be.

Right now, we have the OIPC, the Privacy Commissioner, looking at this; they're doing a review of where this is right now, Mr. Speaker. We want to get this information out there. The

people in our province, they have a right to know.

As the Member opposite clearly said, in some cases, this occurs. I believe, when I look at this, there's a disproportionate number, but we will get to the bottom of this. Mr. Speaker, the CEO himself, Stan Marshall, wants to get this information out there, too; let's not forget that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: I ask the Premier: When did he learn of these 500 embedded contractors and the number that was out of whack?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, a lot of this information came out through the work that's been done in the media, Mr. Speaker. It's been ongoing. We want to get the information out, how much has been paid to embedded contractors. We will continue to ask questions on where the commercial sensitivity is with all of this.

We're working with the new board that we've put in place, Mr. Speaker. We're working with the current CEO who has said that he wants to get this information out there. Maybe legislation prohibits this. If it means that we've got to make some changes so the information is available publicly, that is what we want to do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party for a brief question, no preamble, please.

MS. MICHAEL: Very quick, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Why is it only now that he's dealing with this issue? He says that he's known for a while.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: I think, Mr. Speaker, it's a bit disingenuous when the Member opposite – I

had already mentioned there is a review that's currently undergoing right now. There has been correspondence back to the board of directors.

Mr. Speaker, this could require some legislative changes, but the premise and the basis of all of this is to get Nalcor to a position where it is as transparent and accountable as any department within government. That is where we need to get.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Securities Act, Bill 15.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Prepaid Funeral Services Act, Bill 18.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Labour Relations Act, Bill 16.

I further give notice, Mr. Speaker, that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Labour Relations Act No. 2, Bill 17.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Elections Act, 1991, Bill 14.

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

Be it resolved by the House of Assembly as follows:

WHEREAS section 4 of the *Seniors' Advocate Act* provides that on resolution of the House of Assembly the Lieutenant Governor in Council shall appoint a Seniors' Advocate;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Dr. Suzanne Brake be appointed as the Seniors' Advocate.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 11, I give notice that this House will not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 17.

Further, pursuant to Standing Order 11, I give notice that this House do not adjourn at 10 p.m. on Tuesday, October 17.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville.

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

I move the following private Member's motion, seconded by the Member for Mount Scio:

WHEREAS increasing immigration is key to prosperity of Newfoundland and Labrador; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador is facing significant demographic challenges that has Canada's most rapidly aging population and lowest birth rate, and it is projected that by 2025 the province will experience a 10 per cent decline in its working population, resulting in 35,000 fewer people in the province's labour market;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador in its goal to increase immigration so that Newfoundland and Labrador will welcome approximately 1,700 immigrants annually by 2022.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Pursuant to Standing Order 63(3), the private Member's resolution just entered by the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville shall be the motion to be debated this week.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

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

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

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

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

with a teacher qualified to instruct deaf and hard-of-hearing children;

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I know this petition has been generated by parents who are quite concerned about the lack of resources their children are receiving in the school system right now. It is their concerted effort and their commitment to their children that has created this petition and which many people around this Island are signing, I understand. Today, I have the early stages of that petition.

When the School for the Deaf was closed in 2010, the government of the day promised that children would continue to receive the same services they received in that school. What we're learning is children are going into school on the first day of school, which was what happened this September, and services aren't in place for them. Everybody thinks it is okay that a child should go into a classroom for a whole week and have nobody there with him or her to help them take part in school. To not be able to communicate, to not be able to be with their classmates, to not understand what's going on because of lack of services.

We have a terrible situation, Mr. Speaker, going on. We had a task force on education that supposedly had representations from people throughout the province, and I know they had representation with regard to the issues around

deaf and hard-of-hearing children, yet we have one sentence in their report dealing with what these children are going through.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

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

WHEREAS school-aged children are walking to school in areas where there are no sidewalks, no traffic lights and there are areas without crosswalks; and

WHEREAS this puts the safety of children at risk;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to ensure safety of all children, removing the 1.6 kilometre busing policy for the safety of ongoing children.

As in duty bound, your petitioners forever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I know today there were questions in Question Period concerning the 1.6 policy. I understand how the 1.6 policy came in years ago, and the reason for it was safety. I walked to school every day and probably lived within a mile of the school and other people got picked up by bus.

In areas that I'm talking about, like on Torbay Road right now, we just opened a brand new school on Torbay Road. The first couple of mornings I went up and helped with the crosswalks and stuff like that, children coming to school. It's an area where there are approximately 15,000 to 17,000 cars a day travelling on that road. There are no sidewalks. Areas of the road, it's probably about 18 to 24 inches of area where they have to walk. I know

there's a policy in place but policies are made to be changed. I believe changing these policies will only help in the safety of our children. It's going to be too late when something happens.

I applaud the Department of Transportation and Works. They went down and put some signage up there, and I applaud the residents that volunteer every morning at the crosswalks. Also the Town of Torbay, in this particular area, have a commissioner that goes over there. He does three or four schools. He's there also.

The policy of children having to walk at this time of year is bad, but once the snow gets on the ground it's even going to be worse. In those areas where, like I said, 18 to 24 inches of the width of a sidewalk – which is no sidewalk, it's just a gravel road. Once the snow comes this is going to be treacherous for those children to walk along. We're talking children from, in this particular school it's 4, 5 and 6. They're pretty quick and they can move out. In the other schools in my area where there's a huge concern, we're talking little children in kindergarten to grade four.

I believe this policy should be changed and that government should really have a look at this policy because it's all about the safety of the children.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREAS those same individuals can now no longer access dentures;

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I find it very unfortunate that we have to rise in this hon. House to present this petition, especially given when the former administration was in place and introduced the Adult Dental Program with one set of dentures, the Members opposite, who today form government, screamed and yelled for two sets of dentures.

What did they do when they took power? They eliminated the set that people were already availing of. So now they have nothing. While in Opposition, they said we feel people deserve better and then once they took office, we're not giving you any teeth at all. It's terrible, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of primary health care, that is something that the current government is really promoting. My understanding based on some preliminary consultations that have started on this is that it's all about encouraging preventative health care and raising money on health care down the road because we're going to make people healthier today.

Every person involved in the medical field knows that having healthy teeth means healthy hearts and healthy gums. It really would have a big impact, I would put forth, on lowering the cost of health care down the road by eliminating potential serious problems with respect to other diseases that people will develop as a result of poor oral health.

Again, I implore this government to rethink their decisions, to go back to their thoughts that they

used to express in Opposition and give the people of this province the dignity they deserve and restore dentures for people who need them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: 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 an extension was approved to the Robert E. Howlett highway on March 25, 2014; and

WHEREAS the environmental assessment, design and engineering of this project is completed; and

WHEREAS continued residential and commercial growth has increased traffic flows on the Southern Avalon;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reinstate the approved extension of the Robert E. Howlett highway to improve and ensure the safety of the travelling public to the Southern Shore and, totally, to the Southern Avalon.

Mr. Speaker, this is a piece of significant infrastructure to meet the growing residential, commercial and industrial needs of the whole Southern Avalon. It's about a 9.6-kilometre extension that would revert away from one of the largest water supplies serving the City of St. John's: Bay Bulls Big Pond. It would alleviate environmental concerns in that regard; take it away from that body. That's always been a concern.

It would bring it, like I said, about 9.6 kilometres, almost 10 kilometres, down close to the intersection of the Town of Bay Bulls with

the City of St. John's boundary, relieving some of the traffic going through Middle Pond and that area.

As I said, what we've seen in the region is tremendous growth. Statistics Canada just recently some time ago recognized regions of Witless Bay as one of the fastest growing communities. So we've continued to build infrastructure over the past decade. Unfortunately, this is the second piece of infrastructure that was cancelled by this current administration. The other being the middle school for Mobile Central High, but all of this basically shows the growth and the requirement for the free flow of traffic for commercial reasons, certainly residential reasons and it's a significant piece of infrastructure that's needed now.

We hear on the other side the talk of all the infrastructure money that's available from the federal government. I'd certainly like to see our two MPs who serve that region step up and play a role, as well as this government, to get this much needed piece of infrastructure built and built very quickly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS infertility is not an inconvenience; it is a disease of the reproductive system that impairs the body's ability to perform the basic function of reproduction; and

WHEREAS infertility affects men and women equally; and

WHEREAS treating infertility is excessively expensive and cost prohibitive; and

WHEREAS infertility impairs the ability of individuals and couples to conceive children and begin to build a family;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to implement the program that assists individuals and couples allowing them to access affordable in vitro fertilization services.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is extremely appropriate now for a number of reasons. As just noted by my hon. colleague across, the private Member's bill coming this Wednesday is about growing our population here and the need for growing our population. It emphasizes more about immigration, but it's connected to the fact that we have a real need here in Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure that we have a next generation and a following generation to provide services here, to drive the economy and to, no doubt, care for an aging population.

We have a multitude of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, couples themselves, who would like to have a child but unfortunately, due to a medical condition, are unable to be able to go through the normal process and have a child, and needs some other medical interventions. The unfortunate thing here is the cost related to that.

We spend in excess of \$3 billion in our health care system to provide services to people. This is another health service. It's very important. It may not hit every citizen, but it has a very important component to those families who want to in a loving, caring environment, bring a child into this world, have them contribute to our economy and to our society, be leaders in our environment and, no doubt, take a leadership role.

Mr. Speaker, we think this is an added program through our health initiatives and our

investments that would provide a service, not only from a health point of view, but also provide a service in ensuring that our population grows in the near future and gives every citizen here an opportunity to be parents in a loving and caring manner.

Mr. Speaker, I'll get to talk to this as the House sits over the next number of months.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Orders of the Day.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

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

As everybody knows, we are here today in the House by virtue of having to be here to debate amendments to the *Elections Act*. That's something that was communicated last week.

As anybody that follows parliamentary procedure would know, the standard procedure is that you do various motions of a bill on different days: notice, first reading, second reading, Committee. However, our Standing Orders allow, with leave of the House, for a bill to skip stages in that.

In this case, given that we've already given notice to that, I'm asking leave of the House to do first reading of Bill 14, the *Elections Act* amendments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Government House Leader have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

MR. SPEAKER: Leave has not been granted.

The Government House Leader.

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

Given that the Opposition is not here to do work today, I would move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House do now adjourn until tomorrow.

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

All those in favour, signify 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

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