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(Hansard)

Speaker: Honourable P.J. McNicholas

Thursday

26 May 1988

The House met at 3:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (McNicholas):
Order, please!

Statements by Ministers

PREMIER PECKFORD:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:
I want to report to the House, or I can do it under Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given, kind of thing, from yesterday as it relates to the alleged problems with the awarding of space and so on as it relates to the Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal. I can either do it now or do it later, so I am at the mercy of the House.

MR. TULK:
Do you have a statement?

PREMIER PECKFORD:
Yes. It is just verbal right now but, I will provide some information later. I just want to do it as quickly as I can, because I was in meetings on it through lunchtime, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Blanchard) and myself.

I met at lunchtime, Mr. Speaker, with Mr. David Buffet. There are two things here which were of some concern yesterday. One was the possibility of Conflict of Interest as it related to Mr. Buffet in his role as Chairman of the Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal, and the awarding of space to a company. The two issues are, one, whether there was any conflict of interest in Mr. Buffet's case, and two, was the

awarding of the contract appropriate. They are linked in somewhat because of the ownership of the company.

What I did this morning, because I wanted to clear up the question of conflict of interest, the only way to do that, I thought, was to meet with Mr. Buffet myself. The Conflict of Interest Guidelines and legislation now in place apply to public servants, to members of the House and to ministers. There are no Conflict of Interest Guidelines which apply to this particular circumstance. In other words, I could not refer it to the tribunal I set up to get a reading on it. We have been, for about a month now, reviewing, as was said in the Throne Speech, the whole conflict of interest legislation as it relates to members of the House, Cabinet ministers and public servants, and, quite likely, we will be bringing in some new legislation on that before this session is finished. At the same time, we were looking at, because we are looking at other jurisdictions, trying to cover off agencies, boards and so on that are linked to the government. So, it is quite likely we will deal with what now this issues brings up as a problem with conflict of interest, which does not only apply to agencies and boards like the Workers' Compensation Tribunal.

Now, the issue on Conflict of Interest, given that there are no guidelines, is that you have to look at it then as if guidelines did apply and they do not. Mr. Buffet's law partner in the law firm is a shareholder of the company that was awarded the space so, therefore, perception is that Mr. Buffet could have tried to use his position as the Chairman of

the Workers' Compensation Tribunal to get this company's space to be the company's space for the Tribunal. So what I did was ask Mr. Buffet to come see me, which he did. I asked him straight out, 'Were you aware of the private - not of the law firm - interests of one of your law partners specifically as it relates to one of your law partner's interests in Terra Nova Enterprises Ltd?' I questioned him on that and he said no, he was not aware and is not aware of the private interests.

I do not think you should laugh at this. This is pretty serious stuff. Because, on the one hand, I want to ensure that there is no conflict of interest, but, on the other hand, I do not want to destroy the credibility of an individual in this Province. I could easily come into the House this afternoon and say I consulted with Cabinet and Cabinet had issued an Order-in-Council to fire Mr. Buffet because of the perceived conflict of interest. I thought I should give him an opportunity to sit down with me and let me ask him the question. I can only believe what Mr. Buffet tells me, and he told me no, he is not aware of the private affairs of Mr. Mercer, he was not aware of it at the time.

He went on to indicate that he wrote a letter to the Deputy Minister of Labour after a public works official had assessed all the properties, and it was on the basis of that assessment that Mr. Buffet, as Chairman of the Appeal Tribunal, wrote the Deputy Minister of Labour pointing out the three companies that seemed to have the best face, and giving the pros and cons. He did not come out in his letter and say 'I recommend Terra Nova Enterprises

Ltd.' As a matter of fact, it would be more convenient for Mr. Buffet to have it in one of the downtown premises, because it would have been closer for him as opposed to where it was awarded.

The Deputy Minister of Labour then wrote Treasury Board asking for permission to award the tender to the fifth one. The first two or three did not qualify under the tender documents, in any case, because the tender documents indicate handicapped accessibility, parking space and so on.

So I can only report to the House now that I am satisfied - I assume a person's innocence unless it can be proven otherwise - Mr. Buffet is telling me the truth, that he did not know of any of the private interests of one of his partner's - it was not the firm of which he is a part, it was the private interests of an individual in the firm that he did not know about - and that he accompanied an official from the Department of Public Works when they surveyed the building, and he did not make a specific recommendation for that company.

As far as the awarding of the contract goes, from what I know and the documents I went through this morning and through lunchtime, is that this seems to be the most appropriate space as it relates to parking and handicapped accessibility. I was not aware until lunchtime - I was not aware this morning - it said adequate parking space in the booklet that goes out with all the tender documents. But it also goes on to talk about accessibility from the handicapped point of view, and the contractors all had this and had to bid on it

from that point of view.

So in looking at the whole complete situation, first of all I have to accept, unless proven otherwise, that Mr. Buffet is telling me the truth and, therefore, there was no conflict of interest. Secondly, from the documentation I have seen it seems, given the tender documents of handicapped accessibility, parking and so on, that the appropriate space was awarded to this company to whom it was awarded. Unless I find out something different, that is the position I take at this point in time.

I do realize that obviously there is a need, which we recognized three or four months ago, and that is why we are doing a new Conflict of Interest Legislation Act to perhaps cover off in the future in legislation, or regulation, or whatever, the whole question of other boards and agencies, which are really quasi government agencies and some guidelines governing the membership on those boards and agencies, so that this kind of thing cannot be perceived to be a problem in the future. I guess that is where it all lies as truthfully and as honestly as I can give it at this point in time.

MR. WELLS:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. WELLS:
Mr. Speaker, so that I do not forget it before I sit down, I assume that at a later date the hon. the Premier is going to deal with the question of the problems with prosecuting appeals, and Mr.

Buffet's position because of his prior involvement.

PREMIER PECKFORD:
Yes, I will have that the next day or so.

MR. WELLS:
I will wait for his response on that. I just wanted to check on it.

Mr. Speaker, a number of questions still remain with respect to this matter. The letter Mr. Buffet wrote, the Premier says it was following a personal inspection of the premises. I do not know whether or not Mr. Buffet knew his law partner, Mr. Mercer, owned a 25 per cent interest in the building or not. He says he did not. Well, I cannot say he did. I find it unusual that he did not, but I can only accept his statement. I have no basis for challenging his statement.

But, Mr. Speaker, with respect, Mr. Buffet's letter relating to the matter indicated that any one of the three would be acceptable, any one of the three, including the one at \$11, and the Premier affirms that. He did say perhaps the most desirable would be the fifth highest one, and he then went on to say, 'This building is entirely accessible to handicapped people.' If that were a justification for it, there would be no problem. The indications that the official Opposition received was that that building is less acceptable to the handicapped than the Water Street building, which was \$11 square foot property.

PREMIER PECKFORD:
But they also had a \$50 a month charge on parking or something, that \$11 figure. There were other costs, Mr. Speaker.

MR. WELLS:

I would have to explore that. We asked somebody familiar with the handicapped, a handicapped person, to assess both buildings. He did that assessment, and the assessment was tabled in the House yesterday. That assessment - and I assume the man is competent to do it. He has done that kind of assessment before, I believe, perhaps for the Province, on some occasions - clearly indicates that the Water Street property is more accessible, although not totally accessible to the handicapped, but is less impaired from a handicapped point of view than the Eastern Canada Building. So it is more desirable from a point of view of access by the handicapped than the building that was rented.

Now, the other thing that flows out of this is that the letter that was written by Mr. Buffet was written apparently on behalf of the law firm Mercer, Spracklin and Hayward, because that is the firm in which the letter is. That may have been inadvertence, I do not know, but, in fact, it was a letter from the law firm recommending that a building in which the senior partner in the firm had a 25 per cent interest would be rented. That clearly, by any standard of judgment, would be improper and Mr. Buffet ought to be asked to explain that as well.

With respect to the \$50 a month parking, that still would not make up, even if it were so, for an additional \$3.85 a square foot price. Mr. Speaker, everything that we have seen so far indicates clearly that the most desirable property from the point of view of access to the handicapped and general suitability for this purpose was the Water Street property. So I still do not see

that the issue has been properly explained, and I refer also -

AN HON. MEMBER:

Who owned the Water Street property?

MR. WELLS:

A company called Atlantic -

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Atlantic - that was the lowest bid.

MR. WELLS:

Atlantic Opportunities -

AN HON. MEMBER:

ACOA.

MR. WELLS:

Atlantic Office Space, or something. Yes, ACOA. I can produce the name. It was Atlantic Office Properties.

AN HON. MEMBER:

Who owns that?

MR. WELLS:

I do not know who owns it. Atlantic Office Properties, I believe, is owned by Mr. Duffet; he has an interest in it. I do not know.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

It is not Buffett, it is Duffet.

MR. WELLS:

- but I will find out.

Mr. Speaker, clearly the issue has not been resolved. While I am it, Mr. Speaker, I should tell the House and the hon. the Premier that the information the hon. the Premier gave the House yesterday does not appear from the records to be accurate. The records of the company filed in the registry indicates that the Deputy Premier was a director of that company for the years 1982, 1983 and 1984. It

does, indeed, indicate that the shares were transferred to Mr. Mercer in trust in 1979. So the title was transferred to Donald A. Mercer in trust in 1979, as the Premier indicated.

I should also point out that 1985 indicates the hon. member was a shareholder. I believe that to be inadvertence, because it does not indicate there was a transfer out. So, I think that is just a typographical error, and I make no issue of it except I point it out. But the share lists do indicate that the Deputy Premier was a director of that company for three straight years, 1982, 1983 and 1984, and if that is in fact so, Mr. Speaker, then that is an involvement -

AN HON. MEMBER:
This is wrong.

MR. WELLS:
- in the management of the company and the statement by the hon. the Premier yesterday that he played no role in the management of the company would not appear to be correct if those records are correct, and we have no reason to believe they are not.

The whole matter has not been resolved, and I ask the Premier to examine the matter further and report further to the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

DR. COLLINS:
A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
A point of order, the hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. the Premier indicated yesterday that I

had given him some information about my relationship with this whole matter, and he reported that to the House. Now, the hon. the Leader of the Opposition has just indicated, or suggested, or implied that that information is incorrect and, therefore, he is saying that I gave incorrect information to the hon. the Premier which was related to this House.

MR. WELLS:
No, no!

AN HON. MEMBER:
Yes.

DR. COLLINS:
I do not care whether it is what the hon. the Leader of the Opposition said, that is going to be the understanding. I want to make it quite clear I do not have any insight into how the Leader of the Opposition interprets an involvement by a director. Whether I am a director of the company is immaterial. I said I have no involvement - I told the Premier this. I wrote to him on this with the business decisions, commercial activities, or whatever, of the company, nor have I since 1979. Whether my name is still listed as a director of the company is totally immaterial to that statement. The statement says I have had no involvement with the business affairs of that company.

If the hon. Leader of the Opposition, because in some records down in the Registry, or whatever it is, my name is entered as a director, is therefore indicating or suggesting or implying that I did have an involvement with the company of the nature I just mentioned, I say straight out that is incorrect and

I would expect him, as an hon. gentleman, to make sure that that is the understanding he has given the House.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. WELLS:

Mr. Speaker, I will make clear the understanding I have given the House. What I said to the House is that the records of the company, which the company has to file every year - it is called a share list - indicates who the shareholders are and who the directors are. As the hon. the Premier said, the hon. member's shares were transferred in trust in 1979; the title was transferred to Donald A. Mercer in trust.

There appears to be a difference in 1985, when the hon. member is shown to be a shareholder, but my guess is that is just a typographical error, an innocent mistake that has happened frequently in the filing of the share lists and, as I said, I suggest nothing wrong.

But I did point out that for the three years, 1982, 1983 and 1984, the hon. minister, whom the share list showed had ceased to be a director in 1979, was not a director in 1980, was not a director in 1981, became a director in 1982, remained a director in 1983, remained a director in 1984, and ceased to be a director in 1985 and was not in 1986. That is what the share lists indicate in the registry.

DR. COLLINS:

Are you saying I had an involvement with the company in 1982, 1983 and 1984?

MR. WELLS:

No. No.

DR. COLLINS:

Clarify that.

MR. WELLS:

Here is what I am saying.

DR. COLLINS:

I want you to clarify it!

MR. WELLS:

Sure, but in my terms, not the hon. members. I will clarify it in my terms.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. WELLS:

The people who have responsibility for the management of all corporations - they have it, they have responsibility for the management of all corporations - are the directors. If the minister did not participate as a director, I do not know that. I am saying that -

DR. COLLINS:

I said I gave the hon. the Premier the information. Are you doubting the hon. the Premier?

MR. WELLS:

All I am saying is that I have advised the hon. the Premier that the records of the company filed in the registry indicate that the hon. minister was a director in each of those three years, and perhaps the hon. the Premier would clear that. Now, that was the full statement I made and nothing any more than that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries.

MR. RIDEOUT:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce today that the Fisheries Loan Board is now in the process of mailing out applications for debt restructuring to all direct loan and bank loan guarantee clients of the Board who have loan balances as of March 31, 1988. These applications should be received by those clients by late next week. Applications for debt restructuring have also been mailed to our regional offices and staff of the Fisheries Loan Board and field representatives will be available to assist fishermen in the completion of these applications.

A brochure will be mailed out with these applications which will provide information on who qualifies for assistance, what kind of assistance is available, the limitations to the programme and some general information on filling out the applications.

Fishermen upon receiving the application should complete and return them to the Fisheries Loan Board without delay so their applications can be processed as expeditiously as possible. When the Board assesses a fisherman's application and determines the amount of assistance available, the applicant will be advised of the new status of his or her account. Additional staff have been hired by the Board to assist in the implementation of this debt restructuring programme.

Mr. Speaker, as I announced on April 6, 1988 when I released the details of the debt restructuring programme the thousands of

individual loans and circumstances which surround each make this debt restructuring programme extremely complex. This type of programme is basically a new experience and it is, therefore, very difficult to put a time frame on exactly how long it might take to implement the entire programme. However, my staff will attempt the process all applications as quickly as possible.

I look forward to the implementation of this debt restructuring programme and to the many worthwhile benefits it will bring to the fishing industry of this Province for many years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I might add in closing that during consideration of the department's estimates in Committee, and I believe a day or two ago in the House, when an amendment to The Fisheries Loan Board was being debated, the implications for fishermen in terms of Revenue Canada was raised. I indicated to the Committee back a few weeks ago that we would attempt to investigate that matter. We have done that now, Mr. Speaker, and we have had our tax expert, our tax consultant hold a number of meetings and a number of discussions with Revenue Canada and the advice is that there has been no change in the advice given us several months ago, when we sought advice from our tax expert on this matter. In other words, the process we have chosen to use will have minimal, if any, effect on the tax burden of fishermen.

However, at the time we announced the programme, we asked fishermen to make sure they consult with their own auditors before they decide whether or not they want to

participate in this programme. But we have consulted with Revenue Canada and the advice is no, there will be no problem with the programme.

MR. W. CARTER:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for Twillingate.

MR. W. CARTER:
Mr. Speaker, I welcome that latest piece of news from the minister, because it was a source of great concern to members on this side of the House and, I am sure, to fishermen, as well. But I am rather surprised, Mr. Speaker, that the minister frequently rises in his place and makes Ministerial Statements, some of which are very, very worthwhile and some which are very minor. I am rather surprised, Mr. Speaker, that -

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. W. CARTER:
When you have something to say, Mr. Speaker, maybe it is worth saying it.

Mr. Speaker, as the hon. the Premier will know, I am sure, being a Cabinet colleague of mine, most of the statements I made he approved of and he encouraged me to make them.

Mr. Speaker, it is rather strange that the minister would rise in this place today and make a great deal of fuss over the fact that we are going to be mailing out a little brochure to fishermen and an application, when last week we

saw a situation where a fish plant on the South Coast collapsed financially, causing probably 500 people to

AN HON. MEMBER:
That is not true.

MR. W. CARTER:
Well, we saw the fish plant close, or fail to reopen, for want of financial assistance which is going to see probably 500 people thrown out of work and leave a number of fishermen holding the bag for \$90,000 in back wages, yet the minister did not see fit to rise in his place to acquaint the House with that problem.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

The hon. member's time has elapsed.

MR. W. CARTER:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker, other than a few small details we have already mentioned to the minister, we are completely in support of the objective of trying to remove some of the debt from the shoulders of our inshore fishermen who, of course, have gone through the same kind of difficult time the other part of the industry did, and have also been rescued.

Mr. Speaker, we have only one real question on this. As I look at this, you are talking about using tens of thousands of dollars, in some instances, to relieve individual fishermen of some of their debts. I cannot see how that can be interpreted as anything other than a subsidy for

our fishing industry. When I do that, I begin to wonder what would happen if this were done, say, a year or two years from now, when we enter into this trade deal with the United States, in which we have a five or six year period of time to define exactly what subsidies are.

It seems to me that this is one of the things that will be defined as a subsidy and that legislatures like this, years from now, will not have the option to be able to rescue their fishermen when they get into trouble like this. That, Mr. Speaker, is one of the costs, which our Premier and our Minister of Fisheries refuses to acknowledge, of entering into what is going to be a disastrous trade deal for all of Canada, including our fishermen.

MR. SPEAKER:
Any further statements by ministers?

MR. WOODFORD:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORGAN:
New minister. New minister.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for Humber Valley.

MR. WOODFORD:
Mr. Speaker, I am pleased, on behalf of the minister responsible for Hydro, to advise hon. members that the community of Grand Bruit on the Southwest coast of Newfoundland will receive electricity from the hydro grid for the first time tomorrow.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. WOODFORD:
This will mean a reduction in electricity rates for the forty-five customers of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro residing in the community of Grand Bruit. Until today, the people of Grand Bruit received their electricity requirements from diesel generation, which for more than 600 kilowatt hours of consumption monthly is more expensive than electricity received from the hydro grid.

The cost of connecting the community of Grand Bruit by Newfoundland and Hydro is \$660,000 and involved the construction of a single phase 7.2 kilovolt line for a distance of 13.7 kilometres from the Hope Brook Gold Mine.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for Gander.

MR. BAKER:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am very pleased to respond to the new minister, glad to see him on his feet making a statement. I am very happy for the people of Grand Bruit, that they are now going to be charged less for their electricity and, hopefully, have a consistent supply of electricity.

PREMIER PECKFORD:
Grand Bruit.

MR. BAKER:
Yes, I know the Premier is very knowledgeable in French; he points out the French pronunciation.

MR. BAKER:
However, I would like to make just

one comment about this. There are many, many communities all over Newfoundland, the South Coast of Newfoundland, the Coast of Labrador, and so on, which are not connected to the grid. Many have to suffer the high cost of diesel generation and I would like to say to the acting minister and to the Premier of the Province, that now might be the time when we can get away from penalizing these people because of their geography and, as a Province, provide electricity at a consistent cost all throughout the Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Menihok.

MR. FENWICK:

Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I did not realize that he had already sat down.

Having a look at the statement, Mr. Speaker, we are talking about \$660,000 involved in constructing the line for forty-five families, which works out to about \$14,000 per family, which is expensive but reasonable, since, obviously, the diesel generating system was probably more expensive on a long-term basis.

The only thing I would like to contrast is with the announcement made by the same minister a while ago about the Roddickton operation. In Roddickton we had two choices, we could have attached them to the major connect, by running a line up the Northern Peninsula, or we would have put a wood chip burning system in. We made the decision to put the wood chip one in, which was also a saving and which provided jobs, but, Mr. Speaker, in that case the electricity rates

were not reduced to the interconnect rates and that is unfair. The people of Roddickton should receive the same rates as the people of Grand Bruit. It should be equal treatment in both cases, and that is the only complaint I have about the policies pursued by this government.

Oral Questions

MR. KELLAND:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Naskaupi.

MR. KELLAND:

Mr. Speaker, a VOCM news report indicated that a certain quantity of produce from the Sprung greenhouse has been dumped in Robin Hood Bay. My initial reaction to that would be that this was substandard culls or something that was not normally marketable. I ask would the Premier give confirmation that that is the case, and perhaps make a comment on the quantity we are talking about?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

I do not know if the company has issued a statement on it or not, Mr. Speaker. All I know is, starting from the first day of production, the company has been culling their produce and, obviously through inspections by Agriculture Canada and so on, putting on the market their best produce based on size, based upon quality and so on.

Right from the first day there has

been some produce that they would not put on the market, which was still good produce but was not the right size or whatever, they have been providing that culled produce to a food bank here in St. John's when they could. In other cases they have been selling some of the organic material, like the vines when they reach their maximum length, to farmers and other people. Other produce, which they do not sell or provide to a food bank, they discard in the same way as any manufacturing operation would discard certain culls that they have. So that is what is happening. They are doing three things: They are providing some to the food bank; they are providing some for sale to farmers, and not only the cucumbers themselves but the vines and the organic materials; and other produce, that are not acceptable in their view to either, they are discarding. That is, as I understand it from day one.

MR. KELLAND:

A quick supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the member for Naskaupi.

MR. KELLAND:

I wonder would the Premier undertake to get the information - I guess he would not readily have it at hand - and find out the kind of quantities we are talking about in that regard so that we can get some appreciation, I suppose, of the level of efficiency of what is being produced, or what is marketable and what is not marketable for various reasons?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I am sure the company will indicate just exactly what the status of that situation is.

MR. GILBERT:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Burgeo - Bay d'Espoir.

MR. GILBERT:

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Doyle). I wonder is the Minister aware that the federal government and Terra Nova Transport have made a decision to put on hold all construction work on the Newfoundland Railway for this Summer? What input has his government had in making this decision?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

MR. DOYLE:

Mr. Speaker, I am certainly not aware of that and we would not have any input into it. I would suggest that if the hon. member requires additional information he give Terra Transport a call.

MR. GILBERT:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the member for Burgeo - Bay d'Espoir.

MR. GILBERT:

Mr. Speaker, possibly this is a bit more serious than the minister would want to admit, because I am sure the minister should be aware there are 200 Newfoundlanders -

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

Would the hon. member please ask his question?

MR. GILBERT:

There are 200 Newfoundlanders going to be denied part-time jobs for the Summer, so would the minister now make representation to the CN or Terra Nova Transport to see if this is the case? Will those people be rehired?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

MR. DOYLE:

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the member this is a federal responsibility. The provincial government has no input as to what time Terra Transport rehires its Summer maintenance crews. I will check into it for the hon. member and find out what the reasoning is for that and report later on.

MR. GILBERT:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A final supplementary.

MR. GILBERT:

Will the minister now confirm that the agreement to shut down the Newfoundland Railway has been made and the government is only deciding on the right political moment to inform the people of Newfoundland and Labrador of this decision?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

MR. DOYLE:

Mr. Speaker, no such decision has been made.

MR. FUREY:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for St. Barbe.

MR. FUREY:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier has he issued a letter to the Deputy Premier approving his company's involvement in leasing office space to the Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal? Specifically, did he issue a letter approving that? If he did, would he table it in the House?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Did I issue a letter approving office space being leased? No. If I understand what the hon. member is saying, - back in 1979, when the minister wrote and informed me of his involvement, I wrote him back under the regulations, and that is where it is.

MR. FUREY:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary.

MR. FUREY:

Mr. Speaker, the Premier will know that under the regulations that he wrote, guideline 3 says that while holding office a minister -

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. FUREY:

Is he aware, Mr. Speaker, that that guideline says that a minister holding office, 'or a body or organization in which he ... has a financial interest, shall not, without first obtaining approval' directly from the Premier 'be eligible to receive

benefits from the Province? As such, I ask the Premier again, did he specifically approve of the Deputy Premier's involvement in a company from which he received benefits from the Province? Did he approve it in writing for both the workers.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. FUREY:
Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

PREMIER PECKFORD:
I went back and —

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

PREMIER PECKFORD:
I am sorry, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. member has asked three questions, so I presume the Premier is answering the first.

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:
Mr. Speaker, I performed my role under the Conflict of Interest legislation back in 1979, where the Deputy Premier informed me under the regulations that he had this interest, and that it was put in trust. Then I responded saying, thank you very much and I see no problem here, or whatever the wording was. I do not remember what the exact wording was. And that is the last I heard of it until it was raised in the House in the last few days. So that is where it is from my point of view, simply that. And I accept what the hon. minister told me at the time, that he had put it in trust and obviously would have no involvement with the company. And that is what has happened.

MR. FUREY:
A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
A final supplementary.

MR. FUREY:
Guideline 3 is very clear, Mr. Speaker. It says that anybody —

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. FUREY:
Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier are the guidelines just a farce? Has he issued approval to all ministers? Has he given a blanket letter to all ministers, that at any time there are questionable practices they are automatically exempt? Is that what he is saying?

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

The hon. member in his final supplementary made a speech rather than asking a question.

I am going to recognize the hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:
My question, Mr. Speaker, is for the Minister of

PREMIER PECKFORD:
Mr. Speaker, I feel obligated that I have to respond to that allegation that was made.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Oh, oh!

MR. SIMMS:
Yes, and he asked a question.

That was a point of order by the Premier.

MR. SPEAKER:

I recognized the hon. the member for Menihek, but if he will give way I would call on the hon. the Premier to answer that first question that was posed by the hon. member.

MR. FENWICK:
I yield, Mr. Speaker.

PREMIER PECKFORD:
All I want to say is I just do not like this innuendo and so on. 'Is this a sort of farce?' Is it a farce that the Leader of the Opposition does not tell us about his \$50,000? Is it a farce that the Leader of the Opposition does not report everything in his Conflict of Interest statement?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

PREMIER PECKFORD:
I am not saying it is a farce and I do not want the allegation thrown at me. What was done in the case of the Deputy Premier was he followed and I followed the guidelines of the Conflict of Interest legislation that this administration was responsible for bringing in. But I can tell you one thing, we are going to be bringing in more Conflict of Interest legislation to make sure that we know everything that the Leader of the Opposition got when he reports. We all thought we had to report everything and could not decide what we can keep hidden. We will all have to disclose everything we got.

MR. MORGAN:
Not keep some hidden and disclose some.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Menihek.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. FENWICK:
Come on, guys! Take it easy, will you?

My question, Mr. Speaker, is for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Windsor), who, I believe, is in the House or in the precincts. If the Minister of Finance is not here, then the Premier may be able to answer it.

The question has to do with Easteel Industries. It is our understanding, from information that we received today from the receiver, that there have been no responses to the request for someone else to take over the operation, and, in fact, now they have given up on that and they are about to put the physical assets - the steel, the building, land, and so on - up for tender to the highest bidder, and to dismantle the operation as a going concern.

Could the Premier or the Minister of Finance confirm that or not?

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:
I would have to wait to get the latest information on it. I heard some information yesterday on it, that the tenders were in and, as I remember, there were no tenders for the rehabilitation and reopening of the facility. I will have to get more information as to where it goes from there for the hon. member. So I will get that information for the hon. member.

MR. FENWICK:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:

Since the former employees have indicated that they wish to make an attempt to operate the Easteel Industries as a going concern, will the Premier and his government consider a request from the organized workers, who have worked there for decades, to make an attempt to take over the assets of the operation itself and try to get it operating again?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

If it is in the hands of the receiver, I guess whoever is interested in tendering on it would make their application or proposal to the receivers. I cannot understand how the receivers have not got any proposals for reactivation, and then the member gets up and says there is a proposal for reactivation.

MR. FENWICK:

There is no proposal. We are just asking if you are open to one.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Obviously they would make this proposal to the receiver. That seems to be the logical thing to do.

MR. FENWICK:

A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A final supplementary, the hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:

Mr. Speaker, since we have, I think, \$3.5 million to \$4 million committed to the operation, what I am asking the Premier to do is take a much more active role in the disposition of the assets. Since we are one of the major creditors, will the Premier commit himself to looking at the possibility of the workers themselves, especially those who are unionized workers and were there for a long period of time, putting together a proposal with the help of the government in order to get it operating as a going concern rather than have a bunch of scrap?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Mr. Speaker, there was an opportunity for whoever wanted to to make a proposal to the receiver for the reactivation of the facility. Therefore, that is the route that was available to the workers out there or to any other company that had any interest in it.

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Fogo.

MR. TULK:

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Premier and it relates to the Conflict of Interest Guidelines. Did I understand the Premier to say, in answer to the question from the member for St. Barbe, that once he has given his permission to do certain things to a company that falls under the Conflict of Interest Guidelines or a minister who falls under the conflict of interest guidelines,

that no matter what the dealings of that company are with the government afterwards that minister is free to do as he wishes?

MR. BAIRD:

Ask your Leader. He knows how to get around them.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

No, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TULK:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the member for Fogo.

MR. TULK:

Then, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier will he table the letter in which he gave the Deputy Premier of this Province specific approval to have his company go ahead with the leasing of this building to the Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Mr. Speaker, that is foolish, silly.

MR. WELLS:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. WELLS:

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs (Mr. Brett).

There is a problem in this

Province that affects my district and a number of other districts, and it is the government policy to require sewerage treatment plants in about a dozen or so small communities. Millertown, being one of them, Badger another, Glenwood another, Benton another.

Mr. Speaker, would the minister indicate to the House what the government is going to do to prevent those communities from being bankrupted by the costs of operating those sewerage treatment facilities when, in fact, other larger communities are pouring raw sewage into the same river system?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BRETT:

I thank the hon. member for that question. He is right, it is a very serious problem. I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition is referring to Millertown in his district. I met with that town council several months ago, and the hon. Leader of the Opposition, whose district includes the town, was at the meeting. The town is having very serious financial difficulty as a result of having to cover the cost of sewerage treatment.

In most cases, these treatment plants are required where sewerage is being dumped into our rivers and not into the ocean, but the problem is not unique in that one town alone, it is in several. I suggest to the House that almost every single community that has one of these sewerage treatment plants is in serious trouble.

Only yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I met with a council in Central Newfoundland whose total budget is

just in excess of \$300,000, and it is costing between \$60,000 and \$100,000 a year to maintain the sewerage treatment plant. So it is a very serious problem. I do not pretend to have any immediate solution to it, but what we have been trying to do is to help these communities on an individual basis, as the need arises, and perhaps somewhere down the road we will have to come up with some kind of a programme.

But I would suggest that that it is going to be difficult to get rid of the sewerage treatment plants for obvious reasons. They are required by the Department of the Environment and I guess we will have to continue to install them as they are needed but it is a problem I do not have any immediate answer to, Mr. Speaker.

MR. WELLS:

Mr. Speaker, a supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. WELLS:

Specifically with respect to the community of Millertown and the dire problem it is in at the moment where it has had to terminate the employment of the one person who can operate that facility, and there is now a danger of the facility backing up and running out in the town, what does the minister intend specifically to do for the community of Millertown in that regard?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BRETT:

Mr. Speaker, I will have to deal

with the town council of Millertown as I do with other councils when they get into trouble. We will have to look at it on an individual basis. If there is, in fact, a request in from the council, then it will be dealt with, and I suppose if it means dollars rather than having the council go bankrupt, then we will just have to find the dollars.

MR. DECKER:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for the Strait of Belle Isle.

MR. DECKER:

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the hon. the Minister of Culture, Recreation and Youth (Mr. Butt).

The minister will know that his solution to the rabies problem in the Roddickton area was to cordon off an area and try to destroy every wild animal inside a certain area.

I ask the minister: Will the minister follow the same procedure used in the Roddickton area and kill off the animals in the Green Bay area, now that there seems to be a rabid animal found in the Green Bay area?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Culture, Recreation and Youth.

MR. BUTT:

Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member that wherever there is a possibility of eradicating this rabid fox problem that we have it will be done under the careful supervision of highly technical and skilled people in the Department of Culture, Recreation and Youth, Wildlife Division,

assisted by a world renowned specialist, Dr. Johnston, who just went back to Ontario to take a break. What treatment is adequate in Roddickton, the Triton area will get the same kind of treatment. If it requires something different to be done, I am sure it will be done. I have confidence that those people will do likewise.

MR. DECKER:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for the Strait of Belle Isle.

MR. DECKER:
The hon. minister has the layman's respect for the expert. Does the minister now realize that the approach which he has taken in Roddickton could lead to the eventual destruction of the total animal population in this Province? He can eradicate rabies because he will eradicate all of the animals.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Minister of Culture, Recreation and Youth.

MR. BUTT:
Mr. Speaker, we have implemented a programme in Roddickton that was clearly thought out by a highly professional group of people. We have hired the best people we know of in the world who can help us in eradicating this very serious problem.

To date it looks like what they have accomplished has gone extremely well. It was never our intention to wipe out all wildlife in a particular area, but only to eradicate the rabid fox problem.

MR. DECKER:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for the Strait of Belle Isle.

MR. DECKER:
Your experts picked up three rabid foxes. Mr. Speaker, that is the result of the experts. Will the minister now give orders to his department to stop this needless slaughter in Roddickton and find a less wasteful way to control rabies? It is a total wasteful slaughter of animals, Mr. Speaker, and it should be stopped.

MR. BUTT:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Minister of Culture, Recreation and Youth.

MR. BUTT:
Well, Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely amazed that I am getting this line of questioning from the hon. member. We arranged to have him come over to the Wildlife Division in the department so he could be fully briefed, a two hour briefing session, I think. We obviously wasted a lot of time and energy of some really good people who set aside a couple of hours to bring the hon. member up to speed. If he has all of a sudden become an expert because of the advice he has gotten over there, and he has come up with something new, I suggest he do the responsible thing and call up one of the supervisory people on that team and say, 'Look, what you people are doing and what Dr. Johnston is instructing you to do is all wrong. Because, I, Chris Decker, have the solution to this and here is my plan.' They will bring it back to me and I will notify the hon. member what I will do with

it, obviously.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. LONG:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for St. John's East.

MR. LONG:

Mr. Speaker, I have a question today for the Premier in the absence of the Minister of Social Services (Mr. Tobin), who I understand is attending an important conference in Gander. With reference to the Conference in Gander which is being attended by social workers and their supervisors and financial officers from across the Province, I would like to ask the Premier could he advise hon. members what back-up systems the Department of Social Services would have in place to deal with social assistant recipients who are in need of assistance when their Social Workers are in Gander?

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I would be very pleased to answer that question for the hon. member. First of all, let me say to the hon. member in reference to Gander, I was there last night and spoke to 700 Social Workers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SIMMS:

A great reaction.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

I got a wonderful reaction.

Mr. Speaker, out of fifty-two offices in the Province, regional, suboffices and so on, forty-six are still manned by people who work for the Department of Social Services to take care of the problems of people whilst some of the other Social Workers are in Gander, and the other six are being looked after by Public Health Nurses and the like so that we can ensure that while the people were in their seminars and their training programmes yesterday and today in Gander the people of the Province are still not being neglected during that two day period.

MR. LONG:

A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A supplementary, the hon. the member for St. John's East.

MR. LONG:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask could the Premier give us further information. I appreciate the information he has offered - and whether he would indicate that the staffing in these offices is being done by students on a temporary basis and secretaries, and that there are many offices in the Province that do not have professional people to offer assistance to people who are in need of help?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, I did not have time this morning to check this. I was up about six and I have been in meetings ever since then, which is what I do most

days, and then I came to the House. But I try to keep up with the debate on most things that go on, and from the information that I have at the present moment, forty-six out of fifty-two of the offices have people there to deal with the problems that individual recipients or others might have in coming to the offices, and the other six are being covered by Public Health Nurses and the like.

I will have to get that additional information for the hon. member because I did not have time this morning to tour all fifty-two.

MR. LONG:

A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A final supplementary, the hon. the member for St. John's East.

MR. LONG:

I do appreciate the frankness of the Premier's response, but I ask would the Premier would check with the Minister of Social Services to determine whether the practice of the department, with such events as the conference in Gander with 700 professionals, is that staff, on such occasions, are advised to tell people to go to their churches for assistance if they are in need?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER PECKFORD:

Mr. Speaker, I do not know if that is true or not. I cannot believe that that is true. If somebody said that they did not have the authority of the government to say it or the department, I am sure, either the Deputy Minister, the Assistant Deputy Minister, or the Minister. I just cannot put much credence into that kind of advice

being given.

There is a major conference on dealing with the social programmes of the Province, dealing with youth corrections, dealing with day care, dealing with the handicapped, mentally or physically, dealing with all the range of programmes that are now being offered by the Department of Social Services. There are seminars and training programmes on for the people in the various divisions of the department. It is a major undertaking by the minister and his department to try to respond to the changes that are taking place in various parts of the Province. As I understand it from the minister, the offices have been covered and there are forty-six that are being manned by people and six others that are being looked after by Public Health Nurses and the like in the various communities. I think this afternoon most of the Social Workers will be back to their home communities.

Whether somebody said, 'You cannot get anything at the Department of Social Services office today, you better go to your church,' or something like that, if some flippant remark was made by somebody like that, they never had the authority of this government nor would they get it if they sought it.

MR. GULLAGE:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Waterford - Kenmount.

MR. GULLAGE:

Mr. Speaker, a question for the Minister of Housing (Mr. Peach). Would the minister explain why

rent in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units have in fact increased over the last five years by an average of almost 10 per cent, when these same units have been bringing savings of \$537 a year to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, as a result of decreased appraisals with the switch from rental value taxation to capital value over the same period?

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Minister of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

MR. PEACH:
Mr. Speaker, I indicated to the hon. member, I think last week to a similar question, that Newfoundland and Labrador Housing did have some rent increases over the past couple of years, and in 1988-89 we indicated some further increases for our market rental units so we would be in line with the private sector people in the Province and would not be in direct competition with them. In all cases, Mr. Speaker, we have an ongoing maintenance programme, a refurbishing programme with our housing units throughout the Province, where we spend several hundred thousand dollars per year doing up our units in Stephenville, Labrador and St. John's. Our rental increases, Mr. Speaker, are in line with what the market demands.

MR. GULLAGE:
A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
A supplementary.

MR. GULLAGE:
Would the minister explain why it appears that Newfoundland and Labrador Housing does not in fact lag behind the market but in fact sets the market price, due to

excessive current and capital costs compared to the private sector, and that these costs are in fact setting the market price rather than lagging behind it, as the minister has explained?

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Minister of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

MR. PEACH:
I think, Mr. Speaker, it is good that Newfoundland and Labrador Housing are in the market rental units as well, because if we do set the market rates, Mr. Speaker, we also are helping and assisting in controlling the market rates. If we were not there to provide housing units to some 6000 or 7000 tenants across the Province, I wonder what some of the rentals might be, particularly in the city.

MR. GULLAGE:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
A final supplementary.

MR. GULLAGE:
Would the minister agree to investigate the current and capital costs apportioned to each unit and, if in fact they are out of line and adding to the cost per unit comparable to the private sector, would he recommend that these units be returned to the private sector so that the market price would be set properly?

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the Minister of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

MR. PEACH:
Mr. Speaker, I did indicate a week or so ago that our market rental units would be increased by some 5 to 10 per cent across the Province. We are doing that in

line with what the private sector are charging. I think I indicated as well that if we are not on an even keel with the rest of the Province, we are probably 1 or 2 per cent below the rest that are out there. As well, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to ensure that our units are refurbished and are kept up to standard. That is what we have intended and will continue to do, Mr. Speaker, so that our units are in a salable position. We did dispose of quite a number of units last year, particularly in the Stephenville area, and any units that we have throughout the Province are in a salable position at any time.

MR. W. CARTER:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for Twillingate.

MR. W. CARTER:
Mr. Speaker, my question goes to the Minister of Fisheries, and it concerns a statement made recently by Mr. Bruce Chapman, head of the Fisheries Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, who said that in addition to the Rose Ting plant closure, there are a number of other plants in the Province having similar financial problems. Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister: Is he aware of any other plants in the Province where there might be impending closures because of financial problems? If so, what steps does he intend to take to look after that problem if, in fact, one does exist?

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

MR. RIDEOUT:
The answer is no, Mr. Speaker.

MR. W. CARTER:
A supplementary.

MR. SPEAKER:
A supplementary, the hon. the member for Twillingate.

MR. W. CARTER:
Mr. Speaker, we have seen what has happened in the St. Lawrence situation where a large number of people have been thrown out of work because of a plant failure. Now, my question again to the minister, Mr. Speaker, is since this gentleman is a reputable member of the fish trades—

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. W. CARTER:
Yes, Mr. Speaker. — will he not then make some inquiries and find out if in fact some of our plants are in serious trouble? I ask the question in order that maybe we can head off another plant closure similar to what happened in St. Lawrence.

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

MR. RIDEOUT:
Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries is talking to the people involved in the fishing industry every day of the week — the Fishing Industry Advisory Board, the Department of Fisheries, we are talking to FANL, we are talking to the independents, we are talking to the Caplin Producers Association, we are talking to the union, we are talking to everybody, Mr. Speaker.

And I am not quarrelling with Mr. Chapman's observations of the market situation at the moment, but I answered the hon. gentleman's question truthfully,

and truthfully, at the moment, the answer to his question is no.

MR. SPEAKER:

The time for Oral Questions has elapsed.

Answers to Questions
for which Notice has been Given

MR. RIDEOUT:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries.

MR. RIDEOUT:

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in Question Period, the hon. the gentleman for Twillingate (Mr. W. Carter) asked me if I was aware of the fact that fishermen in the Red Harbour area were owed \$90,000. I believe that was the figure he quoted by St. Lawrence Processors Ltd. I undertook with him that I would check it out and inform the House. The hon. gentleman, of course, made reference to the same statement again today in the House.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the hon. gentleman and the House that we have checked into this matter. It is my understanding that on Friday past, May 20, the fishermen received their cheques from the company, as was the arrangement. They and the plant workers were to be paid every Friday. The bank at St. Lawrence refused to honour the cheques because the cheques were drawn on a bank account in St. John's. The matter was resolved on the same day when the owner of the company, Mrs. Ting, arranged to have the appropriate funds transferred from St. John's to the local bank in St. Lawrence. It is

our information that the situation appears to be normal. All fishermen and all plant workers have been paid up to date, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

Any further answers to questions?

MR. PEACH:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Housing.

MR. PEACH:

Mr. Speaker, I have the answers to question 152 on the Order Paper which was asked by the hon. member for Menihek (Mr. Fenwick) concerning Newfoundland and Labrador Housing with regard to what plans the Housing Corporation has to hire handicapped people in the corporation; what funds have been allocated for handicapped programmes; what funds have been allocated to make the corporation itself more accessible to the handicapped; and are there any other programmes that the corporation may have to help the handicapped?

In short, Mr. Speaker, the corporation does have active representation on the provincial government's Employment Equity Council. We fully endorse equal opportunity for all people.

The corporation has a number of people on staff who have various degrees of handicaps. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the corporation does have a handicapped person on its Board of Directors who, I am sure, in the meetings that I have had with the Board of Directors, expresses well

his concerns and the needs of the handicapped.

I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, in the answer, that the corporation's new headquarters on Canada Drive is accessible to the disabled. Most of the housing units we have built over the last year or so, and, as a matter of fact, four or five units I have had the pleasure of opening over the last couple of months, some here in the City, out of four four-unit buildings, we have had one and two of those which are completely adapted and made available to the handicapped.

As well, Mr. Speaker, the corporation, through other programmes, through its RAPP programmes and other housing programmes, do address the needs of the handicapped, and, as we do have representation made to us for various community groups around the Province with regard to housing needs, we are ever mindful of the needs of the handicapped, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SIMMS:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the President of the Council.

MR. SIMMS:
Mr. Speaker, with deep regret and apologies, I failed to pick up Your Honour's words when he said, "Notices of Motion". Could we slip back to Notices of Motions, I beg of you. I have a very important notice to give.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER:
Agreed.

Notices of Motion

MR. SIMMS:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the President of the Council.

MR. SIMMS:
Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, "An Act Respecting The Reorganization Of Certain Government Departments And Matters Related Or Incidental Thereto". (Bill No. 42)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank hon. members for their patience and co-operation.

Petitions

MR. LONG:
Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. LONG:
Mr. Speaker, I have a petition today that I would like to present to the House.

MR. FENWICK:
It has 1,000 names.

MR. LONG:
My current total is 826 names as of this point. There were some that were going to be brought to my office this morning, but did not quite make it, so I think there are more still out there.

The prayer of the petition is quite in order, and I will read the prayer so that all hon.

members will see what the petition is about.

MR. MORGAN:
Is it original?

MR. LONG:
Over 800 names, all original signatures, properly in order and the prayer of the petition reads:

"To the House of Assembly:

"We, the undersigned, call upon our Provincial government to reject any plans to have nuclear-powered submarines stationed in Newfoundland and Labrador for the following reasons;"

AN HON. MEMBER:
What? What?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Oh, oh!

MR. MORGAN:
You are all out of your minds.

MR. LONG:
If you do not want to support the petition, then you can get up and say so. But for now I would like to finish reading the prayer of the petition so that it is on the record and all members can understand what the 800 signatories to this are saying.

MR. MORGAN:
Are you also against (inaudible) this time or what?

MR. LONG:
For the following reasons:

"We believe the cost of the submarine program represents a gross misuse of Canadian taxpayer's monies, and that far more jobs would be created if those dollars were invested into

other needed areas;

"We believe, and experience has shown, that naval nuclear reactor vessels pose serious environmental hazards, and that St. John's and other harbours in the Province are not now, nor will they be, able to deal with a reactor accident;

We believe that nuclear-powered submarines are not needed to assert our arctic sovereignty and that these waters could be more effectively and more cheaply monitored using underwater sonar devices, surface vessels, together with plane and satellite surveillance;" and finally because,

"We believe that the acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines would involve Canada in the U.S. Navy's controversial Maritime Strategy that, by threatening Soviet deterrent sub forces, would undermine Canadian, as well as global, security."

So, Mr. Speaker, I will present the petition to the page to be presented to Your Honour, and would say that the prayer of the petition is outlined in a quite comprehensive way. There are many reasons why growing numbers of Canadians across the country, North and South, are voicing not only their concern about this proposal by the federal Tory government but, indeed, their active and their increasingly loud opposition to the intention by the government to spend anywhere between \$8 billion and \$16 billion, to \$20 billion of Canadian taxpayers money over the next five or ten years to purchase a fleet of ten nuclear-powered submarines.

Mr. Speaker, I would say the hon.

House Leader perhaps may be the person who might respond on behalf of the government. The Premier is not in his seat, but the Premier in the past has been the person for the government who lead the charge on this issue and, in quite deliberate fashion, denouncing the hon. Mayor of the City of St. John's in this House, virtually calling the mayor of the City names and the councillors as well for taking what he said was an irresponsible position.

But I would say to the hon. House Leader, and also to the Premier, you should check today's **Globe and Mail** on page 3, I believe it is, in which we have a headline that literally jumps off the center of the page. It says: "59 Percent Oppose Purchase of Sub Fleet, Poll Says."

Now let me just quote from this, I was going to say Enviroponics, Environics Pole that was just published yesterday in which there is a quote from the people who sponsored the Poll that says:

"Playing a tough, macho kind of role in the Arctic, going head to head with the Soviets, manfully keeping the Americans out, all this kind of stuff is not going down well with the Canadians."

"The poll found 59 per cent of respondents disapproved or strongly disapproved of the federal government's plan to buy a fleet of ten or twelve nuclear-powered submarines at a total cost of at least \$8 billion," and probably a lot more.

So what I would say to the House Leader (Mr. Simms) and the Premier is this government had better be careful about the manner in which it speaks to this issue,

particularly in the City of St. John's.

I can testify that almost 900 signatories to this petition represent only the proverbial tip of the iceberg. There is a popular ground swell of support for the courageous and common sense position that the Mayor of this City has taken. This support for the Mayor is going to translate into indeed a movement of public opinion across the Province.

This government and this Premier has enough problems on its hands without leading the people of this Province into the front lines of what is becoming increasingly an obvious crazy scheme by the federal Tories to waste taxpayers money on some kind of phoney defence policy which is based on a red scare, which makes absolutely no sense in defence in security terms, let alone economic terms.

The promise of economic development through military spending is something that the people in this Province are increasingly, with a louder and louder voice, going to come to this government and say, 'We reject unequivocally the promise of jobs to be drawn into the nuclear arms race.'

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER:
Hear, hear!

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker, similar to another

petition we presented before, if there are any other members on the government side or in the official Opposition who wish to speak in support of the petition, I will be glad to sit down and give them my place. I did not see anybody rise, so then I will assume it means they are all opposed to it.

MR. LONG:
The Premier opposed the petition. The Liberals are opposed also.

MR. FENWICK:
Is there anyone? No?

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Oh, oh!

MR. LONG:
The Liberals are also opposed.

MR. FENWICK:
Okay.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important to realize this is a petition signed by in excess of 800 individuals. It is also a part of a movement towards looking much more critically at what we are willing to accept in terms --

MR. MORGAN:
Are they Newfoundlanders?

MR. FENWICK:
-- of military development.

MR. MORGAN:
Are they Newfoundlanders or some (inaudible)?

MR. FENWICK:
The question, Mr. Speaker, --

MR. LONG:
They are in my district, all over the City of St. John's, in the last two weeks.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SIMMS:
You do not represent the whole City of St. John's.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Oh, oh!

MR. LONG:
Be clear on it.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. LONG:
Restaurants downtown had a petition.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

MR. MORGAN:
Born on the mainland!

MR. LONG:
Go jump in the lake!

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker --

MR. MORGAN:
(Inaudible) the petition.

MR. LONG:
Have a look at the petition.

MR. FENWICK:
Mr. Speaker, maybe the individuals can continue on the debate at some other time and during some other occasion in this House, I hope.

What I would like to do is make some very important points with respect to it. There has been a bit of confusion coming out of the position from City Hall about whether or not the City's position is that this is a nuclear free zone in terms of weapons or in terms of power plants. I think it is important to realize that it

may be - I think the member for Waterford - Kenmount (Mr. Gullage) may confirm that his belief is that it is nuclear weapons free zone. But, Mr. Speaker, what I think it is important to realize is the distinction between nuclear power plants and nuclear weapons is a spurious separation.

In fact, in the case of war, in the case of a submarine being burned or being destroyed, the effect of a nuclear-powered submarine blowing up is the same in terms of the number of people it kills and the effect it has on a city like St. John's as if a nuclear weapon were actually used in the city. I think it is rather difficult for people to separate the fact that either is a very clear threat to a city like St. John's.

One of the things that we should also realize is these nuclear submarines that the Premier so eagerly wants in the City of St. John's, wants in our harbours are ones which are not permitted in New York City, are not permitted in San Francisco harbour, and are not permitted in major harbours in the United States because the people who make them and man them and who supervise them, the American government, realize that it is folly to put nuclear reactors like that close to major population centres.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about it, apart from the incredible waste of taking \$10 to \$20 billion worth of money to put into this particular military expenditure, there is a very clear threat to the people of St. John's or any harbour in this Province, if we were to station nuclear submarines.

In saying this, by the way, I

should mention to you that neither the federal party, myself, nor my colleague here, are particularly opposed to conventionally powered submarines in an appropriate role, defined for Canada, in which we have an appropriate defence policy that makes some rational sense.

Quite frankly, the only defence policy I have seen make sense is the one adopted by the federal New Democratic Party in its recent White Paper, all of which are available to hon. members here so they may actually learn a bit about international strategy and a defence policy appropriate to our times. With that, Mr. Speaker, I sit down saying I entirely support the petition that has been presented.

I believe in the future we will have a more enlightened electorate. It is obvious in this House, there are fifty people here, that not only do not know what they are talking about in terms of nuclear defence, but even worse, are not even open to listening to the arguments and looking at the perils that are there. That is too bad. We are willing to do it. We think it is our responsibility.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. DAWE:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. DAWE:

Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of members on this side of the House

to support, certainly, the right for people to have varying opinions as to how Canada should be defended and the type of strategy which Canada has to put forward to make sure its sovereignty and its territories are protected and the people of Canada are protected.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, if hon. members to my far left were as excited and as committed to defending and maintaining Canada's sovereignty as they are on this particular issue, then perhaps we would have nothing to fear from anybody because it was a very emotional outburst that the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. Long) displayed.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has announced this on previous occasions. We certainly are going to do everything we can in this Province to make sure that there is a more equitable distribution of DND spending in Canada. We are by far the lowest per capita receiver of DND spending in the context of this Province as for expenditures from National Defence and we want to make sure, and we will make sure, and we are doing everything we can through conversations with the Minister of National Defence, our friend, the Minister of International Trade, Mr. Crosbie, and the Prime Minister through the Premier's office, to make sure that that discrepancy and that disparity in the expenditure from the federal government, particularly in the area of National Defence, is more equitably spent and a larger portion is spent in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. DAWE:

This particular programme and the expenditure of this amount of money, the many billions of dollars, provides a unique opportunity we have never had before to access a significant amount of new expenditures.

The National Defence Department and the federal government have maintained they are not willing to take existing programmes and existing infrastructure from one part of Canada and move it to another part, but this represents, as a result of a White Paper put out by the federal government, new expenditures of new dollars in the area of National Defence and it provides a unique opportunity for this Province to try and access some of those dollars. We will be very aggressive in making sure this Province and the people of Newfoundland benefit from this kind of economic benefit.

Again, Mr. Speaker, before I sit down, I wish to acknowledge the right of people who sign petitions to make representation to their Legislature with varying opinions and certainly those opinions, as well as people who have opinions in a completely opposite direction and who fully support this kind of initiative on behalf of this national government and consider it to be long overdue, I certainly support the people who have that view as well. Mr. Speaker, with that

MR. SIMMS:

Before you sit down, with respect to the Mayor, we have lots of dealings with the Mayor, very, very good dealings on many occasions. This is only one matter.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. SIMMS:

Does he not still have time left?
He was not finished.

MR. DAWE:

Mr. Speaker, as it relates specifically to the City of St. John's and to the Mayor of this City, as my colleague, the President of the Council, the President of Treasury Board, the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, House Leader, my colleague to my very near left, has pointed out, we have a lot of ongoing and excellent relationships with the City of St. John's and are very supportive and work co-operatively together to make sure that this City, as an integral part of this Province, continues to prosper and take advantage of many opportunities from the federal government and from the provincial government.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I conclude.

MR. DOYLE:

And they were very wise words, I must say.

MR. LONG:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

We are on petitions now. Is the hon. member rising to present another petition?

MR. LONG:

No, I am on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A point of order, the hon. the member for St. John's East.

MR. LONG:

My point of order is with reference to the comments made by the member for Bonavista South (Mr. Morgan) concerning the names on the petition. I would like to draw to the attention of the House the names on the petition -

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

That is not a point of order the hon. member is rising on. He has presented a petition with a certain number of names on it, and these names have been accepted.

There is no point of order.

MR. LONG:

I rise on a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A point of privilege, the hon. the member for St. John's East.

MR. LONG:

My point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, is that I believe that the member for Bonavista South has questioned the validity of the signatures on the petition which I presented with several hundreds names on it. In particular, I would like to say that there is a person in the gallery -

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please!

MR. LONG:

- today, who is a Grade IX student, who gathered 200 names in her school.

MR. SPEAKER:

Order, please! Order, please!

The hon. member knows when the Speaker rises he should sit down. He is here in the House long

enough to realize that.

MR. LONG:

I am sorry, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member is, to my mind, abusing the privileges of the House by rising on a point of privilege. There is no privilege whatever at the present time, no prima facie case.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Name him! Name him!

Orders of the Day

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, carrying on with legislation, we are dealing at the present time with Order 9, Bill No. 14, which was adjourned last day by the member for Stephenville.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Stephenville adjourned the debate. He has his full time.

The hon. the member for Stephenville.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure to speak to the bill being brought in by the hon. minister. I have just a couple of concerns that I would like to express on behalf of some constituents of mine, and also concerns with the general part of the bill.

There are two points I would like to make. One point, with reference in the bill, is to signage on the highways put up by the Department of Transportation. The Chamber of Commerce in my area

has been very interested in it, and I think in other areas of the Province where places are off the beaten path of the Trans Canada Highway. They have been attempting to put up signage to promote the areas in which they live, and that has been a problem in trying to get nice signs up to promote, for example, the Bay St. George, Port au Port area.

There was some concern, I believe, within the Department of Transportation, as to the type of signage, and so on. I am hoping to see, I see some things in here related to signage put up by the Province, but I would like to see if the minister could address that matter when he rises, with respect to organizations, or communities that are trying to promote themselves. I think it is very important for communities off the path of the Trans Canada, especially when it comes to tourism, to get the proper promotional effort put out on the highway so they can draw the tourism dollar into these areas. It is very important for the economies of these areas of the Province. It has been a problem.

As a matter of fact, I believe the response from the Department of Transportation a number of months ago was that they were working on a bill, and they were looking at legislation. I would assume that that is going to be addressed.

MR. DOYLE:

I support what you are saying.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

Alright, as you are probably aware, it is happening in other parts of the Province.

So we would like to see something. I think a good

compromise can be worked out on that matter which will allow these communities which are not in under the direct TCH to be able to benefit and, as I say, to avail of that opportunity to draw tourists into their areas. If the minister could address that, I would appreciate it.

On a second matter, I had a letter from a constituent a while back. In the bill itself, it talks about accidents, the reporting of motor vehicle accidents, and so on. A constituent in my area had an accident and had hit a guard rail, and went through the guard rail. The accident was reported; there was a report done. But he received a bill from the Department of Transportation for the replacement of the guard rail. I would bring that question to the minister, as to whether or not that is government policy to send the replacement cost of the protection you pay for to a person who has an accident.

To me, it is not exactly a fair policy. I would hope the hon. minister, and I have sent him a letter on this and have addressed it to his department, I would hope that matter can be addressed because it is a genuine concern to myself and to many people out there that the guard rails or guide rails that are put up around the Province are there to protect the people who drive. No doubt, some people maybe are careless, and so on.

I would hope government will realize that when you get a driver's licence, you pay fees and you are paying insurance, and so on. I hope the government can be a little bit more fair, I think, in trying to collect this type of payment from somebody who has an

accident. The general taxpayer, I think normally, will pay the whole thing.

When you pay your fees for drivers licenses, you pay your fees for a variety of other things.

MR. FUREY:

You have to nail (inaudible).

MR. K. AYLWARD:

Well, that is fine when you damage property, but a guard rail is there to protect you.

AN HON. MEMBER:

(Inaudible).

MR. K. AYLWARD:

Well, it is property, but it is also a guard rail that you pay for with your drivers license fee.

MR. DECKER:

It is a guide rail.

MR. K. AYLWARD:

It is a guide rail, or whatever you want to call it, but it is there to protect you. Sometimes the road is not in very good shape and you hit the guard rail and you go through it. I think it is a matter we should look at as part of the policy of government.

I would hope that the minister, being a new minister in the department, will review that just to see if something can be done about that matter.

Those are the two major concerns I have, specific ones, mind you, but ones that relate to the bill and if the minister can address those in the near future, I would greatly appreciate it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your patience and your time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. BAKER:

Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Gander.

MR. BAKER:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I see the hon. minister was on his feet and I am sorry to interrupt him but I have just a few comments about the bill. My mike is not turned on, that is why you cannot hear. Just some comments about this particular bill. First of all, the obvious comment made many times by members on this side is the fact that one would have to point out the flip-flop with regard to the point system that the minister is so famous for in this Province right now, so very famous for.

He came into a department that had a well-established and well-announced policy of a point system that was supported and recommended and so on by all of the safety groups in this Province, the Newfoundland Safety Council, the Newfoundland Motorcycle Federation, and every other group in the Province concerned with safety and with people driving on the highway that really, at some point, should be weeded out. The point system was welcomed as a marvellous device to make the roads of this Province safer.

This was all done by the previous Minister of Transportation, who is a gentleman who is concerned about safety and regulations in this Province.

The present minister, of course,

comes in and immediately decided -

AN HON. MEMBER:

(Inaudible).

MR. BAKER:

Oh, I understand. The minister is listening. I know he is hiding away behind the President of the Council, but I understand he is listening. I know that.

MR. TULK:

He is getting his instructions.

MR. BAKER:

He is getting his instructions from him. That is probably more like it. The member from Fogo says he is getting his instructions from him.

This minister comes along and, being a new broom and sweeping clean, he decides, for some reason, that the point system has to go, that this Province should not be subjected to this point system, and, for no reason at all, seemingly, the minister cancels the whole programme.

We wonder what the real reasons were. I do not know if the minister is getting any political feedback. I do know the minister has disappointed a lot of people and a lot of people are dismayed by this flip-flop. They do not know why the minister cancelled the point system, a point system that was, as the member for Burgeo - Bay d'Espoir (Mr. Gilbert) said, welcomed by all parties in the House, by all sides of the House. So we are anxious to hear some proper explanation from the minister as to why this particular programme was cancelled.

I would like to point out to the minister that there are many things that make the highways of

this Province dangerous, many things, I suppose, that The Highway Traffic Act cannot deal with and An Act Relating To The Use And Operation Of Vehicles.

One of the major problems, I would point out to the minister, and I am sure he understands this, is the rutting of highways across the Province, areas of the Trans-Canada Highway that when there is any rain at all become nightmares to drive on, rivers running down the middle of the roads. So this kind of a safety hazard, this kind of a hazard to driving, I would suggest to the minister, should be eradicated as quickly as possible, this particular hazard.

I know that there is some construction underway now in an area of the Province where this problem is severe. But I would like to point out to the minister that all over the Province we have this same problem.

The minister in answering questions about highway construction would say that we only have so much money and we can only do so much. Well, I would say to the minister that our highway system now in this Province is inadequate. We do not have enough paved roads and we cannot support and we cannot properly maintain and keep the roads we now have.

In this regard again, Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, I would like to say the proposal that would see a twinning of a lot of the Trans-Canada Highway across this Province, a proposal that would see a trade off in terms of a lot of money for the railway, has to be done with care because the Minister of Transportation

(Mr. Doyle) many times has referred to the problem of the upkeep of the roads we now have. If the minister does not guarantee that if such a deal is struck at sometime in the near future, if such a deal is struck at any time, that we be guaranteed proper maintenance money because it is one thing to have double the highways in this Province, but it is another thing to have double the highways in dangerous condition in this Province and that is what we do not want to see. I realize that does not relate directly to this bill, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you for bearing with me while I got that little point off my chest.

There is a specific point in here having to do with seat belts systems. The idea of seat belts is generally accepted as being a good practice. It has been proven it results in lower medical costs in the Province and so on. But I would ask the minister when he is summing up and making his closing speech, if he would deal with the fact that in this particular piece of legislation seat belts are required, and the incidents and the details of how they have to be used are spelled out, but there are a number of exceptions. One of them is that when you are driving a vehicle in reverse, you do not have to have a seat belt on.

A superficial analysis might indicate that is because when you are driving in reverse and if you happen to bump into something or something bumps into you, you are being pushed back into the seat and, therefore, you do not need the seat belt restraint to prevent you from bouncing around inside the car. So perhaps that is the reason why, when you are driving a

vehicle in reverse, you are not required to wear a seat belt.

However, I would like to point out to the minister through you, Mr. Speaker, that many accidents occur when people back out onto roads and get hit side on. They do not hit something backing into it, they get hit side on. And I would suggest that perhaps it would be better in that instance if the seat belt were still on to prevent the bouncing around that might occur inside the car.

A major point that has been brought up here, and I would like to support it, has to do with school buses. The point has been made about seat belt use in school buses, and I shudder when I see school buses going by, full of school children, and there are no restraints. Not only that but, the padding and so on in those buses is rather minimal.

That is bad enough, but what compounds the problem with school buses is quite often you will see students standing. I believe there is an allowance made for 10 percent of the capacity of the bus to be people standing. I say to the minister this is a recipe for disaster. The minister might come back and say, 'We have had no disasters with the school buses. There are school buses throughout this Province for a number of years and we have had no major disasters. The member from Gander is being an alarmist.'

I would say to the minister, those school buses are not safely constructed. They very easily crumble. They do not have adequate padding in the interior. The occupants are not wearing any restraint devices and maybe one of the reasons they are not wearing

any restraint devices is because there is nothing strong enough to attach them to. Not only that, there are students standing in the aisles while the buses are in motion.

I think this is an area where the minister cannot just sit back and wait for a disaster to happen before he then brings in regulations and pontificates on how quickly the government takes action in a situation like this. Now is the time for action with regards to school bus use in this Province.

I know there are a lot of extenuating circumstances with school buses because, if you require the restraint devices, then the cost of busing students becomes greater, and therefore the cost of education climbs.

I would also say to the minister, and I am sure the Minister of Education would bear me out, we are busing far too many students in this Province anyway, and there are so many cases where we can stop the busing of students and thus decreasing this problem with the buses and the possibility of a potential disaster.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, these are the-

MR. TULK:

Cost is no excuse.

MR. BAKER:

Cost is no excuse, I understand that, but sometimes the Minister of Transportation uses these arguments to support the status quo and to excuse not making a change.

With those few comments, Mr. Speaker, I will wait until the committee stage to make any

further specific comments on the Bill.

MR. SPEAKER:

If the minister speaks now, he closes the debate.

The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

MR. DOYLE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all I want to thank members for some of the very good points they did bring forward. I have been taking notes on some of the items the hon. members have been expressing concern about. I will attempt to deal with most, if not all, of the comments put forward.

First of all, going down through the list here, I think the member for Burgeo - Bay d'Espoir (Mr. Gilbert) mentioned the time involved in bringing forward this legislation we have before us today. I would point out to him most of the Act, as I indicated in presenting the bill, is of a housekeeping nature, with a very important section set out for the National Safety Code. Of course, the National Safety Code, for the most part, has been a federal initiative and most provinces are responding now the way that we are responding by bringing in their own particular bill to give effect to the National Safety Code. Of course, not all provinces have done that yet and we are very much on time and we are quite timely, indeed, in bringing in the bill at this point.

The point system has been talked about by some members today and some members are concerned about it, and the fact that it has been placed on hold or cancelled, as

some members said. I have met with the Safety Council recently and I have talked about the point system at some length with them and gone over the pros and cons of it. The members of the Safety Council are concerned about safety on our highways and I would hope and trust all members are.

However, I do not believe, Mr. Speaker, there is anything to indicate the same goals cannot be achieved by pursuing other initiatives that the Department of Transportation fully intends to be involved in over the next number of weeks and months. The Registrar's Office, in consultation with other officials within the department, will now be formulating plans to develop an education and a counselling programme.

Drivers, as I have indicated in making the opening statement on the point system a number of days ago, are being monitored, have been monitored for a number of years by the Registrar's Office, and the chronic offenders are being identified and will be given the opportunity, hopefully, when we get this education and counselling programme put in place, to take advantage of that measure.

The programme is much more detailed than what I have indicated in those couple of brief words. However, the programme is to be worked out and I will be announcing to the House and to the Province what measures will be implemented to achieve our objectives in that regard. Hopefully, that will be done in the not too distant future, depending upon how quickly, of course, the Registrar's Office and the officials of my department can

put in place this programme.

When I initially announced the point system was to be placed on hold, I believe I used the phrase that it was probably a little bit too punitive and at that time some members took exception to that word and to that statement, they felt the phrase was a little bit too strong. However, Mr. Speaker, maybe it was not too strong at all. Maybe it was very accurate.

I say that because I believe that the point system, like every other system in the world, it is not free from fault, it is not perfect as some people might very well lead us to believe. There are problems with the system yet to be worked out. It is not fail safe. It is not foolproof.

A case in point as a ruling that was recently brought down in a court over in Nova Scotia. An individual had his licence taken away from him by the Registrar's Office. He had no knowledge of why his licence had been suspended. Upon investigating the matter, he found out that he had his licence suspended even though he had not been in possession of his own car, it had been given to a friend and somehow, it worked back through the system that he was to lose his licence because of it. He took it to court, and, of course, the court ruled that the Registrar did not have the authority to take away his licence in that particular regard.

These are measures or things that should be pointed out that make the system probably a little bit too punitive if it is not properly addressed. These are things which have to be addressed and have to be dealt with when bringing in any type of a system of this nature.

I do not want, Mr. Speaker, to jump in too quickly on it. I want to examine the alternatives that are available to government. I want to move slowly on the issue so that every possible avenue of approach is exhausted to insure what is proposed is a fair and a just and a reasonable and a proper approach to this type of programme.

I sincerely and honestly believe some further research needs to be undertaken in that regard. I do not believe you should bring in any measure, simply because it seems to be working well somewhere else. If it is ever brought into Newfoundland, I would like to see it because it is good for the Province, and because it can work well here. In that regard, I believe that more research is needed, more time needs to be taken to examine the materials available to us, to examine it both from the view of the effectiveness of such a system, and also allowing for careful study of the mechanisms necessary to help drivers improve their driving habits.

Mr. Speaker, I want to address some of the points that were made by the member for Stephenville, (Mr. K. Aylward) which were very good points, as a matter of fact, that he made, one being our signage policy here in the Province, and that more signs should be allowed to promote certain areas and certain businesses, and I believe that is a very, very good point and I support completely what the member is saying. Over the last number of months, as a matter of fact, when I was Minister of Municipal Affairs and the former minister was Minister of Transportation, we put in place jointly a committee, consisting of people from

Transportation and Municipal Affairs, to look at the whole signage policy of the Province.

Coincidentally enough, I wrote a memo a couple of days ago indicating to staff that I wanted that committee to report and to give us some idea as to what the signage policy should be that we should adopt for the Province. I have had representations made to me by business people who need to have a greater promotion of their business, which happens to be off the beaten track, off the Trans-Canada Highway. I think I told that committee to report by June 10, and hopefully it will come up with recommendations to address that problem.

There is one other point I should address, which the member for Stephenville brought up as well, and that has to do with the policy we have in place, in the department, whereby we send bills from the department to various individuals who damage guardrails in the Province in accidents. That is a policy the department has had in place now for a number of years. I should point out, as well, that in about 90 per cent of the cases the Department of Transportation winds up paying the bill for these guardrails, simply because we can never really locate who has done the damage, other than in cases reported to the RCMP.

Mr. Speaker, with those few remarks, I move second reading of the bill. If there is any additional information hon. members would like to have, I will be only too happy to provide it to them when we get to Committee stage.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend And Consolidate The Law Relating To The Use And Operation Of Vehicles," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill No. 14)

MR. SIMMS:

Order 11. Bill No. 7. "An Act To Amend The Schools Act."

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Schools Act." (Bill No. 7).

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Education.

MR. HEARN:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bill No. 7, "An Act To Amend The Schools Act," deals with four amendments. Number one, which is sub-section (4) of Section 5 of the Schools Act, is an amendment that provides for the alteration or abolition of school district boundaries and the creation of new school districts. The old sub-section (4) of Section 5 provides for the alteration of district boundaries and the creation of districts, but it does not provide for the abolition of existing district boundaries. This was necessitated by the recent board studies commissioned by the Integrated Education Committee, and more recently by the Catholic Education Committee, and, for the benefit of hon. members, I have now been notified by the Pentecostal Education Committee that they are also going to be looking at their school board boundaries.

A number of recommendations will soon be forthcoming in relation to boundary changes, and consequently the legislation will have to be

changed in order to accommodate the requests by the various Education Committees.

The second amendment, sub-section (1) of Section 9, deals with current legislation, somewhat cumbersome in its provision, for the establishment of interim school boards where school districts are created. The amendment to subsection (1) of section 9 will simplify the process and provide for a smoother transition from an interim board to a permanent board. As the School Board elections are held every four years now, coinciding with municipal elections, a number of the changes that are forthcoming in the next short while and into the next few years, as the three Committees make suggestions and changes and phase them in, there will be a number of new boards, or interim boards, being set up and this just makes the mechanism a little more fluent, and the process can flow smoothly rather than in the cumbersome way it would at present.

The third one deals with capital funding, that is subsection (2) of section 86. The capital funding for school construction is apportioned to each Denominational Education Committee on a population basis. Subsection (2) of section 86 provides for an exemption for this apportionment formula where funds are jointly provided by the federal and provincial governments for the construction of schools in communities not designated native communities.

The amendment of subsection (2) of section 86 extends this exemption to the expenditure of capital funds under the federal/provincial official languages agreement in

education for the construction of francophone schools. The only exception to the way we apportioned out our funds dealt with the Native peoples agreement. We now have, also, under official languages, an education agreement whereby funds have been provided, in the case of Mainland, for a francophone school, and we could end up in the future with one or more schools in the Province.

If we had apportioned our funds out the way we are directed at present, if special funds are received for a school which comes under the Catholic Education Committee, then an even a larger proportion of funds would have to be given to the IEC and somewhat smaller to the Pentecostal Education Committee, even if they were not building schools. So these are exceptions whereby one committee or other would be building a special school under the Native peoples agreement where there is already an exemption. Now, under the official languages agreement, if one or other education committee will be building a francophone school shared by the federal and provincial funding arrangement, then it does not reflect the distribution of equal funds to all the others, and they have all agreed to this, of course.

Number four is the amendment to subsection (1) of section 87. This will permit the Denominational Education Committees to fund 100 per cent of approved school construction projects in capital grants voted by the Legislature. Current legislation prevents the Councils from funding more than 90 per cent of the capital cost. Usually boards have to borrow in order to

fully finance construction projects. You have heard me on a number of occasions, and a lot of other people when talking about the financial state of school boards, relate it almost directly to the 10 per cent they always had to borrow in order to fulfill their share of the construction commitment.

A couple of years ago it was agreed that when the projection we had given them ran out, which was this past year, the IEC, the CEC, the PEC, the Education Committees, could fund 100 per cent of the school construction and not 90 per cent. This would eliminate the requirement of any input by boards on capital construction, at least as far as legislation is concerned. And it would save boards a tremendous amount of money, because most of them which are in debt are in debt simply because of this borrowing in the past.

I think that covers the four amendments, Mr. Speaker, and I will be glad to elaborate more on them a little later.

MR. DECKER:
Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

Before recognizing the hon. the member for the Strait of Belle Isle I would like to read the three questions for the Late Show. The first one is from the hon. the member for Port de Grave. He is not satisfied with the answer given by the Minister of Culture, Recreation and Youth regarding accessibility for the handicapped in provincial parks. The second one is from the hon. the member for the Strait of Belle Isle who is not satisfied with the answer given to him by the Premier

concerning Sprung. And the third one is from the hon. the member for Waterford - Kemmount who is not satisfied with the answer given by the Minister of Finance concerning pensions for part-time employees.

The hon. the member for the Strait of Belle Isle.

MR. DECKER:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The first clause in this bill reflects the reality, of course, of our society today, that is making provisions for the new educational districts and what is going on. Members, and the Minister of Education, will realize that prior to 1969 practically every denomination in this Province had schools spread throughout the Province. I remember where I grew up, in a small town, we had the Salvation Army, the Anglican, and the United Church, I think it was, and before integration we ended up with a Pentecostal school as well. Of course, the reality was that the people saw the wisdom of coming together and by evolution they decided to take a major step in 1969 and they amalgamated their school boards. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that that good will still exists out there and as we are faced with declining enrolment and as we are faced with the extra costs of funding education, the DEC's are realizing that it makes an awful lot of sense for us to share services, for us to come together in joint school boards, and this is happening.

I was quite excited with the recent catholic study which suggested that there would be a lot more working together. The Integrated report came out

sometime prior to that, which pretty well had the same intention, as the minister knows. It is good that we make provision for when school boards within the catholic system, or school boards within the integrated system decide to come together and form one board, or three boards form one board, or whatever the case may be. This very thing is happening in the Strait of Belle Isle district today. As the minister knows, the school district of Vinland and the school district of Strait of Belle Isle are discussing coming together to form one school board

MR. FUREY:

There will be problems, too, I think.

MR. DECKER:

Problems? I do not foresee any problems. The only problem I foresee, Mr. Speaker, is where the headquarters of the new board is going to go. Apart from the actual working together, I do not see any great problems there.

I would like to see some encouragement, though, on the part of the minister for boards which amalgamate. Let me suggest some encouragement the minister might address when he gets up to close the debate. I will use the two boards I just spoke about as an example. The Vinland School Board and the Strait of Belle Isle School Board are discussing forming one board. Now, it is no secret that the Vinland Board has a substantial debt load which it will be bringing into the union. The Strait of Belle Isle Board is by no means a wealthy board either, but it does not have quite as high a debt, it is not quite as unmanageable as the Vinland debt.

What I would like the minister to address when he gets up to close the debate is the possibility of two school boards, like the Vinland and Strait of Belle Isle, coming together. I would like the minister to discuss the possibility of, if not eliminating their debt then equalizing their debt, so that one of the partners coming into this union will not be seen as bringing an unnecessary load into the union. This, Mr. Speaker, would be a clear incentive to encourage school boards to amalgamate. And once they amalgamate, of course, it is going to be a great savings to the IECs and, ultimately, to government itself.

Apart from that, I do not see any great problem with Clause number one. It is simply, as I have said before, reflecting the reality of what is happening in the Province. And I think it certainly would be good to commend the members of the DEC's who have this good will and who, I believe, are genuinely concerned with education in this Province. It is the wish of all of them, I believe, that every child throughout this land, no matter where he lives, will be exposed to the best possible education. I think it is good that they continue on with this.

Clause two, of course, is just the mechanism for taking the school boards through while they are waiting for the new board to have people elected to it.

With Clause three there is no great problem. What else can the minister do with federal money for the French programmes?

However, I have a few reservations about Clause four. I am hoping

the minister will address Clause four in a little more detail when he stands up to close the debate. Some weeks ago the minister made a lot of noise in the Province when he announced that the 10 per cent requirement was going to be removed from the construction of new schools. At first glance, it seemed that the minister was really being extremely free with government's money and was taking a lot of the load off the backs of the school boards. But, Mr. Speaker, if you look at this clause a little closer, you will see that it will result in less schools being built in Newfoundland than would have been built had the minister not taken out the 10 per cent requirement. Now, I will explain what I am saying.

The minister provides somewhere around \$20 million a year for school construction in this Province. Twenty million dollars million when the school boards were required to come up with 10 per cent, actually meant \$22 million dollars - \$20 million from the department plus \$2 million from the school board, for a total of \$22 million. Assuming that each school would cost \$1 million, you could end up with 22 schools. So \$22 million could have built 22 schools.

MR. DAWF:

Not likely! Not in this Province.

MR. DECKER:

No, I said assuming \$1 million. Assuming they cost \$11 million, we could build two. Assuming they cost \$22 million, you could build one under the old system. With the new system, there is no 10 per cent to be added on to the department's share, so the total cost now for school construction

is \$20 million per year, which converts into twenty \$1 million schools; two \$10 million schools; and, if I am going to follow the Minister of - what do they call him now that they have thrown him out of Transportation? - Intergovernmental Affairs, some insignificant little department.

Anyway, if the school was costing \$22 million, then the new system would not allow a school to be built in a single year. Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Education gets up to close the debate, I would like him to make the announcement today that his department is going to compensate for that \$2 million which is no longer available for school construction. So if he had intended to give \$20 million, he is going to have to give \$22 million; for every time he gives \$20 million he is going to have to give \$22 million, 10 per cent more, because, remember, this policy now removes the 10 per cent requirement. So I would like him to address that.

The 10 per cent, Mr. Speaker, is also not retroactive. The minister will know that a lot of the problems school boards have are in the past tense, it is debt they presently have and have had for years. It is not debt they are going to compile, that is a totally different story. They are not going to add any more debt, because this 10 per cent is going to take out school construction for them. But the school boards are already on the verge of bankruptcy, they already have this debt now, so if the minister is going to remove the 10 per cent, in order to solve the problem the school boards are having with their finances he is going to have to make it retroactive.

That way, if this is done, then the children will not have to go out and raise money for their school supplies, for chalk, some of the major capital costs connected with running schools, I understand - children have to go out and collect money for chalk in some of the districts throughout the land.

If the minister made the 10 per cent retroactive, this would eliminate that need. I would also like the minister to tell us what this 10 per cent was removed from, because it is not removed from all capital costs. With a brand new school being built, the board does not have to come up with 10 per cent. But the minister will know that one of the most common capital expenses school boards are faced with is repairing roofs; there are dozens of schools throughout this Province which need new roofs. All of these schools which have problems with their roofs were designed by some of the top architects.

MR. BAIRD:

Why do you not go up and jump off a high one?

MR. DECKER:

I would probably fly away anyway, so it would be a useless endeavour.

AN HON. MEMBER:

The hon. member is not now taking shots at the member for St. John's East when he is talking about roofs, is he?

MR. DECKER:

Mr. Speaker, I am going to have to ask for protection. I am being harassed, I am being insulted, I am being humiliated. This is getting to me. I am being interrupted, more importantly than any of it.

The hon. the Minister of Education will know that problems with roofs is one of the biggest problems school boards are having, and school boards have to raise money to repair those roofs, roofs that were designed by some of the best architects in this Province. The old schools, which were built by our grandfathers, which were not designed by architects, had no problem with the roofs, because they understood the local system and they built the roof which belonged to us and there was no problem with it. But a lot of those new schools, those expert-built schools, end up with rotting roofs in a matter of a few months after they are built and the school boards have to go out and raise money to replace that roof, which costs a considerable amount of money. What I would like the minister to do when he gets up to close the debate is say that the 30 per cent requirement - I am not sure if it is a 20 or 30 per cent requirement - not the 10 per cent, the 20 or 30 per cent requirement the school has to come up with will also be taken over by the minister and that he will not do what he did when he took out the 10 per cent, but he will compensate for it and he will put extra money into the system so that all the roofs that would normally be replaced will still be replaced.

The minister knows that portable classrooms do not quality. The minister knows that when you move portable classrooms from one location within a district to another, they do not qualify for the 10 per cent. Mr. Speaker, these are a few points I hope the minister will address when he gets up to close the debate, after all my colleagues have had a chance to spend fifteen or twenty minutes on

this particular bill. Apart from that, Mr. Speaker, we have no great difficulty with supporting the bill, because we do not think it is going to bring down Western civilization by doing so.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:

Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

Actually, I am quite pleased that this particular piece of legislation comes to the floor at this time, because it deals with school board boundaries and it also deals with the problem of funding of schools, in Clause 4, and generally deals with the denominational education system in something of a general way.

I have been looking for an opportunity in the last couple of weeks to actually put some comments on the record in the House here from my perspective of the problems we are having with the school system we have inherited from the last 150 years, and the directions I personally think we should follow; at least I, personally, think right now, although perhaps after the weekend we will actually have it as a formal position of the party I lead.

Mr. Speaker, one of the sections of this particular bill talks about the ability to merge school board boundaries so that they can be done in a more expeditious manner. I think, if anybody has read the report produced by the Catholic Education Committee, the one that talked about amalgamating school boundaries and setting up school districts, which, by the way, I think was a positive contribution to the whole question

about what shape our school system will have in the future, the report suggested that we should be establishing school districts and the school districts would be ones in which all denominations, at least the integrated and the catholic denominations, would agree to share resources in that particular area, although there would be a responsibility of each separate school board in order to provide for religious consultants and the supervision of religious education, and so on. But, although it is a breakthrough in terms of the thinking that is going on, Mr. Speaker, it does have a major liability which is pointed out in the report, in that if you eliminate the duplication of school boards, you really only attack a very tiny proportion of the problem that exists. School boards, quite frankly, are not the biggest educational expense. What I am talking about is the school board superintendent and the consultants who work at the school board level, the establishment of a board and the cost of operating that particular part of it. This is a very tiny portion of the educational expenditures in this Province.

For the most part, the expenses are in the schools themselves, the places where we have 8000 teachers working, and where we have 139,000 students as of September of last year. And if we are going to attack waste and duplication and if we are going to look at improving the school system, then the attention has to be focused on the school themselves, not just the school boards. Quite frankly, that is the area where this legislation is deficient; the minister has not exercised the leadership I would expect of a brave Minister of Education like

himself, and of a government that is breaking innovative new ground in areas like pay equity, pension plans for part-time workers and a number of other areas.

It seems to me, that one of the biggest areas of spending in this Province is still being left to a system that was designed, quite frankly, back in the 1830s or 1840s, and was designed at a time when the government, at that time, of the country of Newfoundland, or the colony of Newfoundland, had very few resources and had to lean heavily on the Roman Catholic church, the Church of England, the Methodists and other denominations which existed at the time in order to finance the educational system.

MR. SIMMS:

Is the hon. member going to speak for the whole thirty minutes?

MR. FENWICK:

Oh, yes. It is going to take awhile, yes.

Hon. members may be surprised to learn that when this House was first constituted, back in 1833, in the first vote we ever put through - by the way, that was when we were established and we sat in a tavern, in the first couple of years of the existence of this legislative chamber - we had a common school system. In some cases, I think we may still be there. What we had, Mr. Speaker, was a system whereby one educational vote came out of this House and that vote was used to set up whatever schools we could. Admittedly, it was a very modest amount, it paid a very small amount of the cost of educating people, and as a result, it was difficult to see any other way of doing it but to rely on the religious denominations which,

quite frankly, had better sources of revenue and were better organized than the government of the day.

Mr. Speaker, here now, about 150-odd years later, the roles have considerably reversed; we now have a situation where the vast majority of the funds going into our education system - the Minister of Education may be able to put a percentage on it, but I would suggest that if it is not at 98 or 99 per cent, it is very close to it - come from votes that are done in this particular Legislature, and the amounts that come from the particular denominations themselves are very small, especially with regard to the essentials put into the system. I am not saying they do not put additional funds into it, but essentially from that point of view.

Mr. Speaker, historically, the first thing this Legislature did was set up a common school system. It could not afford it, so it had to go with a different model and that is the model we have today. My argument to the other members of this House is that that model is no longer working, and that in the next decade at least, that model will collapse of its own weight unless we do some major modifications to it. Let me give you some numbers: In September of this year we had 139,000 students in our school system. The projection by the hon. minister's department is that over the next ten years we will lose approximately 40,000 students, so that in the academic year 1997-98, ten years from now, instead of there being 139,000 students, we will only have 99,000 students.

MR. J. CARTER:

A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the member for St. John's North.

MR. J. CARTER:

(Inaudible) book and in a great many articles. I think it is time the hon. gentleman was asked to come to the point. What is he trying to say?

MR. SPEAKER:

There is no point of order, just a difference of opinion.

The hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:

Mr. Speaker, what we see, to repeat the numbers so that the member for St. John's North can follow along, since these numbers may be difficult for him to comprehend, we have 139,000 students registered in this academic year, and ten years from now we will have 99,000. That is a loss of 30 per cent of the students who currently exist in our schools. Mr. Speaker, since that is reasonably evenly divided across the Province, that means that student enrolment in the town of Deer Lake, which currently has three high schools, one Pentecostal, one integrated and one Roman Catholic, will be at least 30 per cent lower in all three of those schools. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, considering the variations in it, it is more likely to be 40 or 45 per cent in a community like that.

My question to the members of this House is, how can we offer a decent quality of education to the people of Deer Lake if they are going to have 30 per cent less resources in each one of these

high schools ten years from now? How can we offer them a decent level of education when 30 per cent of their teachers are gone, as well as 30 per cent of the money available to buy books and to equip library spaces and to pay for the cost of operating laboratories? The answer, of course, is we will end up with an educational system inferior to the one we currently have. Because you cannot give any sensible argument to me to suggest that by reducing the number of teachers in a school that much we will end up with anything other than 30 per cent less quality in our education and, quite frankly, maybe an even considerably greater drop than that.

So, what do we do? What are the options? I suggest to you we have no other option but to plan ahead and decide to put one high school in a place like Deer Lake. Instead of having three separate buildings, have one building, and in that one building we would have 70 per cent of what we have in all three institutions; we would have enough, Mr. Speaker, to keep the good quality teachers we have there, to offer the options to these students that are necessary in order to give a good quality of education there.

In doing this, Mr. Speaker, I suggest to you that the denominational aspects of our education system can be maintained 100 per cent. What would happen is the religious education for the Pentecostals, for those of the Protestant religions and for those of the Roman Catholic faith can be accommodated by having instructors or teachers of those particular faiths teaching a curriculum that is approved by that particular denomination.

I do not see, Mr. Speaker, why there would be anything detrimental about a person of the Roman Catholic faith, for example, being taught Science or Mathematics or English by a person who is a Pentecostal or an Anglican or a United Church member, or whatever. It seems to me that no particular advantage is gained one way or the other by having that. Yet, since we will be able to offer more options, I would suggest that that is the direction in which we have to go.

Similarly, the same situation could be said for places like Port aux Basques, Stephenville, and Corner Brook. Corner Brook is a good example, because if one looks back over the last several months and realizes that there has been an absolute furor in Corner Brook over the proposed closing of two of their elementary schools, which was vigorously protested by the individuals concerned, and when the legitimate option of trying to co-ordinate facilities between at least two of the school boards in Corner Brook was proposed, it was met with not only indifference but positive hostility on the part of the individual school boards themselves, which brings me to one of the arguments that is often put forward by the Minister of Education and by other proponents of what we currently do, and that is, that using a system of inducements and exhortations by the minister, we may get the denominational systems to co-operate more fully in providing services on a common basis, as is I believe the case in Fogo right now. If I am not mistaken, the member for Fogo (Mr. Tulk) can correct me later on, in Fogo right now we do have the pooling of resources by two of the major denominations in which a common

facility is provided that is of a higher quality than that which we provided for both before.

So if we are talking about the denominational system this way, maybe what I am talking about is a Fogo model. I will be even willing to use that in future speeches. We are promoting the Fogo model, not as a thing you go to as a means of last resort because you are desperate about it, but quite frankly, because it is the model we should be following since it offers a better quality education to our children.

DR. COLLINS:

Would the hon. member permit a question?

MR. FENWICK:

Not right now, let me finish most of this stuff and you can come to it later.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to suggest, is the other apologists for what we are doing right now say, 'Well, a lot of the school boards are co-operating.'

MR. SIMMS:

That is so.

MR. FENWICK:

Yes, in Fogo that is true, to a degree.

But one of the schools that is often pointed to as a model of co-operation is J.R. Smallwood Collegiate in Wabush. Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you that when you talk to the people directly involved, they will tell you that the degree of co-operation of the J.R. Smallwood Collegiate is laughable.

It is true it is a common

building. It is true they have a common heating plan, and therefore a maintenance person who works in both sections, but we have a completely different administration for both sides of the particular school. Although we share the gymnasium and a few other facilities, quite frankly they still operate as though they were totally independent schools, much to the detriment, by the way, of the school children in the particular school itself.

To give you an example, we have a class of Grade VI students on one side of the school in which there are about eight or ten students. On the other side, just a corridor away, we have another class with about twelve or fourteen students also in that particular grade. We have yet to be able to find a way to get the school boards to work together to combine those two into one Grade VI class in which there is a reasonable number of students.

So when we go and talk about the degree of co-operation that currently exists, the fact of the matter is it does not exist. There is a tremendous entrenched bureaucracy in the school systems and the school boards that fight each other continuously and refuse to give up any of the small empires they have created over the period of time.

What I am saying to you, Mr. Speaker, if that is we are talking about eliminating the 10 per cent they have to put in in terms of building a school, if we are talking about integrating school boundaries, we are just nibbling away at the edges of the problem. The problem is much larger than that.

The problem exists in this 30 per

cent drop in enrollment that is projected for the next ten years that will create incredible agony in the school systems throughout the Province and must be faced honestly, and that really is the part that I am disappointed with because there is no honesty coming from that side of the House in terms of the educational debate. What we are getting is the minister coming up with what I would call bandages on a hemorrhage.

MR. J. CARTER:

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

A point of order, the hon. the member for St. John's North.

MR. J. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, I believe I heard the gentleman say that there was no honesty on this side of the House. That is a blanket statement and a blanket unparliamentary statement and I think he should be required to withdraw it. It is not parliamentary. It is not decent. It is insulting and it is inaccurate and I do not like it.

MR. FENWICK:

To the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

I did not get the comments of the hon. member.

MR. J. CARTER:

Mr. Speaker, he said that this side of the House did not show any honesty. Now that is a gross insult and I think he should be made to take it back.

MR. SIMMS:

He did not say that.

MR. J. CARTER:

He did so.

MR. FENWICK:

To that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER:

To that point of order, the hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:

I do not think it is a point of order, but quite frankly, I said there was no honesty with regard to the crisis in education on that part and I still maintain that that is an accurate statement. I do not believe it is unparliamentary, by the way.

MR. J. CARTER:

You cannot say indirectly what you cannot say directly. I think he should be made to take it back. That is insulting and gross.

MR. SPEAKER:

To that point of order.

I do not think there is a point of order. It is a rather vague statement and is acceptable.

The hon. the member for Menihek.

MR. FENWICK:

Mr. Speaker, the situation which we have is an educational system which has a massive loss in students that is projected over the next ten years, something that we have to plan for because if we do not plan for it, we will end up with a situation that nobody wants. Yet, we have no recognition by this government that the structure of our education system is inherently inefficient, it has a tremendous amount of duplication in it, and as a result it must attacked head on.

You just cannot ignore the situation, and pretend it will get

any better, because, Mr. Speaker, it will not. It will just be getting worse and worse and worse.

What it will mean is the educational standards for our children, or our children's children will be lower because this government has not recognized its duty to grapple with the situation head on. We cannot afford the duplication we have now.

What does it cost us now? We have two guesses that have been published. One is from the NTA which says 25 per cent of our educational dollar is wasted by duplication in this system. That may be a slightly exaggerated figure, but this year it will be \$90 billion more.

Mr. Speaker, \$90 million, as we know, is three times what we get out of the School Tax Authority. It is almost two and a half percentage points of our sales tax. Mr. Speaker, that \$90 million is more than all the corporation tax we raised last year.

So, when we get down to it, Mr. Speaker, the fact is if their number is right, then we are totally immoral in asking for the kind of sums that we do when that level of duplication exists. Mind you, Mr. Speaker, that is only one estimate.

If you use the government's own estimate, and I have talked to the Minister of Education about it, asking him which I figured was legitimate: What do you think of the numbers in terms of duplication? His guess is that the duplication is more in the range of about \$10 million. Now, if it is \$10 million, Mr. Speaker,

that is still a considerable amount. Think about it . \$10 million, that will build 50 per cent more schools this year than we have in the budget, normally speaking, for this year. \$10 million, as we have pointed out before, is one-third of what the School Tax Authority raises, \$10 million, my Lord, Mr. Speaker, \$10 million would almost get us another half of a Sprung greenhouse project, if we were so foolish as to ever go into anything like that again.

So \$10 million, by the minister's own admission, is much too much of a waste, even if that is closer than the \$90 million estimated by the NTA. Either way, it is unconscionable for any level of that duplication to continue to exist.

DR. COLLINS:

Why not have one great big school and all students could go to that big school and then you would have no duplication.

MR. FENWICK:

Mr. Speaker, the fact is we have to address it honestly.

MR. LONG:

Hear, hear!

MR. FENWICK:

The honest way to address it, if the problem exists, if we say we are taking away this 10 per cent on the capital requirements and what in future you will do is to build whatever schools you want, whatever duplicate schools you want, we are still not using the dollars of our educational budget as well as we should. What we are going to have to start saying to people is, 'If you are going to go and build a school in, for example, Gander, then you build a

school that will accommodate all the students of Gander, not just one particular denomination, because in the future we cannot afford that kind of duplication, not only because of the money, but even more importantly, because the level of education of our students will suffer when we cannot continue to offer them the options they need to be functioning members of tomorrow's society.'

Mr. Speaker, that is only part of the matter I would like to address on this particular bill here. Could the Speaker give some indication of how much time I have left?

MR. SPEAKER:

Two minutes.

MR. FENWICK:

It is two minutes until I will have to stop, but I believe I have thirty minutes. Is it all used?

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. member has ample time. I am not sure how long the hon. member has spoken. I have not been in the Chair all that length of time.

MR. FENWICK:

Mr. Speaker, I just want to wind up this particular part of debate on this bill by saying one thing: This weekend we have our convention in Corner Brook. At that time we will be putting the party a resolution that calls for the establishment, as a priority, of common schools in this Province consistent with the denominational education in which the denominations still would be able to teach the religious component to those particular schools themselves.

I believe it is long since past

time that this should be debated. We, as a party, will debate it, even if the other members of this House will not. We will go forward and we will campaign on it and we are convinced that the people of this Province are so far ahead of the members of this House on this issue it will be a major plus for us in any kind of election campaign we participate in.

Mr. Speaker, in order to go to the Late Show, I will adjourn the debate. I would like to take it up again when we next debate this Bill.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

Before calling the hon. member for Port de Grave, I would like to tell the hon. member for Menihek he has ten minutes left.

Debate on the Adjournment [Late Show]

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. the member for Port de Grave.

MR. EFFORD:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:
The hon. member is not satisfied with an answer he got from the hon. the Minister of Culture, Recreation and Youth about the accessibility of handicapped in provincial parks.

The hon. the member for Port de Grave.

MR. EFFORD:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have great reason not to be satisfied with the answer to the question, because when I asked the Minister of Culture, Recreation and Youth in Question Period about a study of his department that he himself had requested, he said very clearly, "Mr. Speaker, I will have to take that under advisement. I am not sure of that. If the hon. member had told me earlier, I would have certainly given the information."

It was back in February, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's department requested and said very clearly that 'presently park facilities are largely inaccessible to the disabled and those who suffer from other forms of impairment, temporary or permanent, according to John Butt, the hon. minister responsible.'

The parks are now open to all citizens of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly the handicapped people and the disabled people, who use those parks and use those facilities. That is particularly why I asked that question of the minister.

The other reason is the fact that now the private sector is going to be becoming involved in providing services to those parks, whether they be concession stands or whether they be games or whatever, they be boat rides or whatever, for that particular reason I saw the great need to ask a question of the minister. What steps have been taken? Has that report been seen by the Minister? Has he read the report and what steps have been taken to provide and assure the people of this Province parks

will become available and accessible?

We do not want the minister to stand in his place this afternoon and go on with some political form that is going to be forgotten about, because we all know how many studies have been requested by this government and how many studies are sitting on the shelves.

DR. COLLINS:

Why not toss in the odd innuendo?

MR. EFFORD:

That is the problem, Mr. Speaker. We need assurance. In fact, if I want to answer the Minister of Health, the innuendos I will toss will not be left in trust to somebody else, I will do them myself, no problem with that, Mr. Speaker.

DR. COLLINS:

You are missing the innuendo and being (inaudible).

MR. EFFORD:

Mr. Speaker, the matter is very simple. The handicapped and disabled people of this Province need assurance that this is going to be done in 1988 so the park facilities presently there and any new private sector initiatives that become involved, in any form, of building concession stands, or whatever it is going to involve, that the people will be assured that it will be done to their satisfaction.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the Minister of Culture, Recreation and Youth.

MR. BUTT:

I thank the hon. member for raising that very important question, Mr. Speaker, and I will deal with it very directly, giving all the answers to a few straightforward questions he raised.

You are quite right, the hon. minister put out a number of press releases. Memory fails sometimes, but, in fact, it was my predecessor who had engaged Richard Scypka and Associates to undertake this accessibility study for provincial parks. It was undertaken in February of this year. Richard Scypka and Associates were hired to undertake a provincial parks accessibility study which is now complete.

The goals were to improve accessibility for all provincial parks which had restrictions for those anyway impaired, physically impaired or people with impaired mobility or sensory impairments, that kind of thing. There are a couple of parks that have some provisions in them. J.T. Cheeseman and The Arches have made some inroads into this area. But there are a lot of parks obviously where there is a lot of work to be done which will require a fair amount of money. It has to be phased in and budgeted for in subsequent budgets.

We have also, I will tell the hon. member, had involved in this some people who are actively involved with handicapped people. We wanted handicapped people themselves to have some input into this, so the report is complete. It is presently being analyzed, finally, now after getting consultation from handicapped people. It is presently undergoing an in-house analysis by

people in the Parks Division and there will be something forthcoming in the next couple of weeks, about two weeks time. That is not a long time, by the way since this has been done. I guess as a result of that study, then we will have to budget next year and in subsequent years for putting in the proper infrastructure to accommodate the handicapped people.

I hope in doing that now I have addressed the major part of the hon. member's question and then there was the part as well about private sector involvement, the second part of this important question. I can tell the hon. member that preference will be given, because really it is a position of government anyway, but preference will be given, where accessibility is important to handicapped people, private sector people who come into provincial parks with proposals and where they have made an accommodation for handicapped people, that will obviously give them one step up over somebody else who has not made that provision. Of course, the Director of Parks, who is involved in the analysis of those private sector programmes and proposals that are coming in, that is uppermost in his mind. We will require, where necessary, access to those private sector initiatives by disabled people.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

I now call on the hon. the member for the Strait of Belle Isle who is not satisfied with the answer he got from the Premier concerning Sprung.

The hon. the member for the Strait of Belle Isle.

MR. DECKER:

Mr. Speaker, I understand the minister responsible for the status of women is going to reply to my question.

I wish the Premier was here because I honestly want to praise him up for apologizing for his minister. After all, it is a known fact that some of the statements made by the Minister of Rural, Agricultural and Northern Development (Mr. Power) were extremely irresponsible. The hon. the Premier had no choice but to stand up in this House and apologize on behalf of his minister, apologize to the farmers in the Maritimes and to apologize on behalf of every Newfoundland man, woman and child.

Having said that though, Mr. Speaker, I still pity the hon. the Minister for RAND because I honestly do not know how I would feel if my leader had to get up and apologize for something I said. I honestly do not believe, Mr. Speaker, I would be able to stay in the Cabinet if I had done that. I would certainly have to resign from the Cabinet if the Premier had to be standing up and apologizing. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, I would simply run off to Florida for a week. I do not know what I would do, but I would certainly be embarrassed. I would really be humiliated if the Premier had to do something like that on my behalf, but the Premier had no choice.

The Premier, when I asked him the question, and even though I am praising him up for the way that he apologized for the minister, the Premier still did not address the real issue which I was trying to get him to answer. I was trying to find out what instigated

the remarks the Minister of RAND came up with.

Where those irresponsible remarks actually contained in the real marketing plan for Sprung? Now, every since this scam was started, we have been trying to get the government to table in this House the actual marketing plan for the cucumbers. We have said all along, Mr. Speaker, that there is no way that these cucumbers can be marketed at a fair price.

We know you can give them away. We know that you can dump them into the Atlantic Provinces. We know you can dump them on the Grey Islands or you can dump them in Robin Hood Bay dump. We do not care where you dump them. We know you can dump cucumbers. What we have been asking for is the marketing plan. What we have been told is that there was a well thought out marketing plan.

When the Minister of RAND spoke, was he giving us a glimpse into this real, well thought out marketing plan? When the minister said that it was his intention to put every cucumber producer in the Atlantic Provinces out of business, then drive up the price of cucumbers, when the Minister of RAND went on with that foolishness, was he, indeed, quoting from the actual marketing plan of Sprung?

Now, that is what we are trying to find out. If so, it is a foolish plan, because if he were to destroy every cucumber farmer in the Atlantic region, what would happen is he would not destroy the big American producers. They would simply pull out of the market for a few weeks, or a few months until the price came back up, and then they would come back

in.

If this is the marketing plan the Premier talks about, the well thought out marketing plan, I think the people of this Province deserve to see the plan and pass judgment on it. What I want to ask the Premier, and in his absence, the minister responsible for the status of women, will he today table the real marketing plan so that I can know and the people of Newfoundland can know, and the people of the Atlantic region can know, whether or not the Minister of RAND actually made up those irresponsible statements or was he simply quoting from the plan.

Now, if there are other Machiavellian plans in this plan, and the minister responsible for the status of women does not want us to see what the other crazy schemes are, then when he answers me, let him assure me and this House that this irresponsible action the Minister of RAND was going around spouting off a few days ago before he went to Florida, is not a part of the marketing plan. Mr. Speaker, the main way to do this is table the plan so we can see for ourselves. If he is not prepared to table the plan, then let him remove all uncertainties, all doubts and tell us specifically that no, it was not a part of the marketing plan to destroy all the farmers in the Atlantic region.

As an afterthought, Mr. Speaker, I might say, I still do not believe that there was a plan in the first place. I think it was just hit-or-miss nonsense. They never thought about the marketing plan until they had put \$23 million of Newfoundlanders money into the silly project in the first place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the President of the Council.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. member for his question. I want to welcome the member for Bonavista North (Mr. Lush) back to the front benches. I would like to see him where he rightfully deserves to be sitting in my view.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SIMMS:

One of these days they are even going to let him ask another question, I bet, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to this particular topic, the hon. members opposite knows, members over here know, people in the gallery know - and it is nice to see the member for Fogo (Mr. Tulk) in the back seats where he belongs - everybody in the general public knows, everybody in the media knows, everybody in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island knows, and after the little thing that went on today with CBC Radio, I suppose everybody across Canada knows there is a plot underway in this Province to undermine the future of this particular project. Now, that has never been clear.

MR. WELLS:

It is sad.

MR. SIMMS:

Maybe it is sad. The hon. Leader of the Opposition says it is sad. The hon. Leader of the Opposition

is absolutely right. It is sad, and if the hon. member thinks I am suggesting he necessarily has something to do with it, obviously, he must be touching a cord or something.

I did not say where or who or anything else, but I did say there is a plot and that comes from talking to a lot of people around the Province, not just Liberals, but the general public. They say the same thing the polls say on this particular issue and topic, and that is, 'Give the project a chance to work.' That is becoming increasingly difficult as time goes on for the very obvious reasons.

It is not the pole the hon. member was climbing down on Fleming Street.

MR. LONG:

Do you think that is funny? (Inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Oh, oh!

MR. SIMMS:

Yes, really funny.

Mr. Speaker, everybody is aware that something is transpiring and that something is an effort to undermine that project. Every single day in the House you see it because if anybody can tell me when they look in the face of the Leader of the Opposition when he is on television talking about the Sprung Project they can see one line of sincerity in what he is saying - yes, everybody can? - we will see, Mr. Speaker, we will see.

Take away all of the rhetoric surrounding the hon. member's last five minutes in debate, take away all of that, take away the

rhetoric from the hon. member for Windsor - Buchans, who likes to use this all across the Province as a bit of platform, take it away and what do you have, Mr. Speaker, if you take all of that away, all of that rhetoric? You have nothing, Mr. Speaker, but pure, raw politics. That is what you have, pure, raw politics, and everybody sees it. People are seeing it more and more every day, even though the member for Windsor - Buchans does not think that that is possible.

I can tell the member for Windsor - Buchans if he went out to his own district in Windsor - Buchans, he would find the same kind of comments going around about the kind of approach the Liberals are taking on this particular issue.

Mr. Speaker, the member asks for the marketing plan. Why did he not, or why have they not, asked for the marketing plan for Hope Brook? Why have they not asked for the marketing plan for Baie Verte Mines? Why have they not asked for the marketing plans of FPI, or larger industries like that which have received considerable government and public funds? Many of them have. They all have, as a matter of fact.

The kinds of little 'behind the scenes' things - I will tell you one the other day that really, really shocked me. Listening to CBC Radio the other, who did I hear on mouthing little funnies about Sprung? None other than the former research officer in the Liberal Leader's office, the executive assistant.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:
Hear, hear!

AN HON. MEMBER:

The Liberal Leader's?

MR. SIMMS:
Yes.

The man who worked and supported the member for Mount Scio, whom all those members over there knived.

AN HON. MEMBER:
Yes!

MR. SIMMS:
Yes, knived.

He worked in the Liberal Leader's office, and here he is, with supposedly some credibility, talking about the Sprung issue. What he was doing was mouthing exactly what the Liberal Leader had said the day before in the House himself, absolutely the same, almost word for word.

Now, you tell me that we should not be paranoid about that kind of thing! You tell me there is no little plot going on! You tell me there is nothing behind the scenes trying to build up everything you can to undermine the project! You try to tell that to the people.

The member for Windsor - Buchans, who is using the same kind of platform as others before him have - it will come home to roost, I tell the member for Windsor - Buchans - he thinks he is well up there on a pedestal now, but he will soon find out, Mr. Speaker, that that is not the case. In his own mind he is a wonderful man, but not in the minds of the people of Newfoundland.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the question, as I said, take away the rhetoric and there is nothing there. I submit to the hon. members if they were to listen to

what the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are saying right now, today, they, like the people, would give this project a chance to work without trying to tear it down at every opportunity they get in the House every day.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER:

I now call on the hon. the member for Waterford - Kenmount, who is not satisfied with the answer he got from the Minister of Finance about pensions for part-time employees.

The hon. the member for Waterford - Kenmount.

MR. GULLAGE:

Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the minister, I would direct my question to the President of Treasury Board.

AN HON. MEMBER:

No! Not again!

MR. GULLAGE:

Again.

The minister's statement dealt with 5,000 part-time employees, the majority of whom are employed in the provincial health care system and the Province's school boards. My question was mainly concerned with how, in fact, we could set up a pension plan on a money purchase basis and have matching contributions from government and from the employees involved in a different type of plan than is presently being made available to the rest of the government employees.

My concern, Mr. Speaker, was that a money purchase type plan does not really allow a transfer of

credits over to the government funded plan or the consolidated fund, the pension fund that is now in place, a unit benefit type of plan, and give credit for other than the monies that have been accumulated. Because it is difficult to give credit for years of service unless you build that in as one of the conditions, and I see no reference to years of service in the minister's statement.

The unit benefit formula, which is presently under the main government plan, provides a degree of protection, in that the final years of earnings are used as a formula, along with the years of service, to determine the pension. So there is a degree of built in protection against inflation with that sort of plan.

My question, then, further is that if a person is in a money purchase type, as is being proposed with the part-time workers, and that individual subsequently transfers into full-time employment, all he takes into his full-time employment are his contributions to date and the matching contributions of government, but no reference at all, and I assume no credits at all, for the years he has had as a part-time worker. That does two things: it means that his years of service are not part of his formula when he ultimately retires, assuming he stays under full-time status, and, secondly, it gives no hedge whatsoever against inflation. Because possibly the accumulated dollars under the money purchase type, when he or she was part-time, could have been very early in their career. And even though the dollars would then accumulate in the general fund, if you like, or the main pension plan

of government, and future credits for years of service and future accumulations would receive full credit, years of service while in part-time employment are given no reference at all in the ministerial statement and would certainly impact dramatically on the final pension available to the full-time employee of government.

I think this is a serious flaw, Mr. Speaker, not addressed in the Ministerial Statement, and I would certainly like the minister to address it and explain why, when a unit benefit formula type of pension plan which is recognized, generally speaking, best for employees, particularly where inflation is looked after with a formula for the final five years of earnings, or the best five years, together with the years of service used as a general formula. It is literally the best way to fund a pension plan from an employee standpoint, because it does cover inflation in that you are providing the pension on the basis of final earnings.

I fail to see how the minister can state that part-time workers are adequately looked after and just as well served.

Even though the minister said an actuarial firm said this was the best type of plan, it may be that it is the best type of plan, but only from the government standpoint, only from a funding standpoint, because it cannot be considered best from the employee standpoint.

MR. SPEAKER:
Order, please!

The hon. the member's time has elapsed.

The hon. the Minister of Health.

DR. COLLINS:

Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Windsor), I will attempt to respond to the points brought up by the hon. member. It is a bit refreshing, actually, to have a serious question asked by the opposite side. I think the hon. member is off on the wrong track, and I hope to show that. Nevertheless, I think it is a serious question. He means well. He has a difficulty in his own mind, so he brings it out on the floor of this House, and, of course, that is what this House is for. And that is refreshing, because we see so much in this House coming from the other side, as the hon. the President of Treasury Board just mentioned, that is pure and completely unadulterated political fooh-fah; it is either that or it is full of innuendos and unsupported statements and snide suggestions. It is really refreshing to get an honest to goodness question, even though it is based on a wrong premise.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member sort of suggests that a money purchase plan by its very nature has to be a bad scheme. I do not think the hon. member himself really believes that, if he considers it. I mean, a money purchase plan is quite a legitimate way for people to have pension protection after their working years; it is used in many, many areas in the private sector. I believe it is used almost exclusively in the public sector in Manitoba. So it is not a strange beast to have a money purchase plan, it is a normal alternative, or option, as opposed to the defined benefits plan.

Insofar as transferring from one to the other goes, I suppose one could say well, if a part-time worker has a money purchase plan for a period of time and then becomes a full-time worker and our scheme for full-time workers is a defined benefits plan, he could leave his money purchase plan in and get an annuity later, and then just carry on with his defined benefits according to the number of years worked. That is an option.

What we would feel most workers will do, and they certainly will have this option available to them, is that the money that goes into the money purchase plan, that is the part-time employees' contribution plus the matching contribution from the employer plus the investment income from that fund that is assigned to the employee, he can use that amount of money to buy service in the defined pension plan.

I would remind hon. members that our pension plan allows members to buy either worked or unworked service, as long as the employee and the employer contributions are matched. Of course, there would be no difficulty in doing that here, because the money purchase plan will have in it both the part-time employees' contribution and the employer's contribution, that is government's contribution to his money purchase plan, during his part-time employment. So there will be no difficulty for him to match both sides of the service requirement.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is no difficulty in transferring. There certainly is that, and I would suggest that the hon. the Minister of Finance, when he comes in with the details, which he said he

would - I would remind hon. members that he said in his statement, 'After we have consulted with all the parties involved and finalized the administrative details' - will say, 'If a worker insists on keeping his money in the money purchase plan, he will be permitted to do that.' Although I think they will mainly find that it is to their long-term benefit to transfer over if they transfer into full-time employment.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think government can be criticized for this. I would remind hon. members that it was this government that brought in many improvements to the pension provisions for public employees; it brought in the beginning of a funding arrangement for our pension obligations, which was not there before in any respect at all. We have done actuarial studies now and are going to bring forward arrangements to improve the security of the plan, and hon. members will be informed of the details of that after they have been discussed with the workers involved.

This government has taken its responsibilities in regard to pensions very, very seriously. We know they are important to workers in the public sector, as they are to all workers. And to criticize this government for what it has done for part-time workers, breaking new ground - we are one of the few Provinces doing this. We are not the only Province, but we are one of the few Provinces to have taken this very important step to protect part-time workers. To criticize this government, with that sort of record behind it, I think is quite unwarranted.

MR. SPEAKER:

The hon. the President of the Council.

MR. SIMMS:

Mr. Speaker, just before you adjourn the House I want to advise members that we will not be sitting tomorrow, of course, as everybody knows, to allow the NDP to attend their tiny, little convention on the West Coast.

MR. LONG:

Fleming Street was larger.

SOME HON. MEMBERS:

Hear, hear!

MR. SIMMS:

Now, the hon. member did not have to bring that up again. Anyway, Monday and Tuesday of next week we will be chugging on through legislation on the Order Paper. After that we will see and we will let hon. members know.

AN HON. MEMBER:

What about Wednesday?

MR. SIMMS:

Unless members opposite want to confer to see if we want to give it up to do legislation. Whose motion is on?

AN HON. MEMBER:

Gene's.

MR. SIMMS:

Gene's, yes. No way! We will not give up Wednesday. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, thank you for your indulgence.

MR. SPEAKER:

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, May 30, at 2:00 p.m.

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Answers to Questions

tabled

May 26, 1988

Hansen

QUESTION: #152

Mr. Fenwick (Menihok) - to ask the Honourable the Minister of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation to lay upon the table of the House the following information:

- (a) What plans the department has to promote the hiring of handicapped people in their department over the next year?
- (b) What funds have been allocated to help in programs like this?
- (c) What funds have been allocated to make the department itself, and their programs, more accessible to the handicapped people?
- (d) Are there any other programs that the department itself might have to help the handicapped?

ANSWER:

While the Corporation does not have a hiring policy per se in the recruitment of handicapped people, it should be recognized that the Corporation has active representation on the Provincial Government's Employment Equity Council and fully endorses equal opportunity for all. Over the years, the Corporation has had people on staff with varying degrees of disabilities and has been very sensitive to their special needs.

The Corporation has had a person on the Board of Directors for some years to specifically represent the needs of the physically disabled and as well, a number of programs presently being administered are tailored to meet the needs of the handicapped i.e. under RRAP funds are available to owners of housing accommodation to improve the accessibility of rental and ownership units occupied or intended to be occupied by disabled persons. Not only is the Corporation's new headquarters on Canada Drive accessible to the disabled but also a number of social housing units already in place have been modified to suit special needs.

In present and future construction, the Corporation will be ever mindful of the needs of the handicapped through not only its Board representation but also through the various requests that come forward from the community at large for this special needs accommodation.

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