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Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we start regular proceedings today, I want to share with you a result of a review that I had completed, as a result of some issues that have arisen in the House in recent past. This is not long but a little bit lengthier than normal, so I would ask you to bear with me because it is providing some direction to the House.

I am rising today to speak on an issue of concern in this House with respect to the tabling of documents during debate and Question Period. The frequency with which such tabling has been requested has caused me to review the text and precedents on such tabling of documents and I wish to indicate the manner in which I intend to proceed in dealing with the issue.

First, there is no distinction made in the parliamentary precedents between a document referred to or quoted – the distinction between debate and Question Period, there is no distinction.

Also private members do not table documents from which they have read. O'Brien and Bosc, on page 434, states, "There has been a long-standing practice in the House that private Members may not table documents, official or otherwise."

O'Brien and Bosc states on page 609, "Any document quoted by a Minister in debate or in response to a question during Question Period must be tabled upon request...". That same paragraph, a little further on, goes on to say, "...a Minister is not at liberty to read or quote from a despatch (an official written message on government affairs) or other state papers without being prepared to table it if this can be done without prejudice to the public interest."

O'Brien and Bosc, on that same page, quotes a 1941 ruling of Speaker Glen which addresses the reasons for requiring tabling of documents read by ministers. "The principle upon which this is

based is that where information is given to the House, the House itself is entitled to the same information as the honourable member who may quote the document."

This explanation is similarly stated in Bourinot on page 347 of his volume on *Parliamentary Procedure and Practice in the Dominion of Canada*.

Sometimes a document is clearly an official report or stated government policy, and sometimes it is not. Documents issued by the government as a policy document fall within the category of a "state paper". They can, however, be excluded if it is found to be in the public interest to do so.

If a minister wishes to invoke this exception, he or she must stand in his place on a point of order and make the argument before the House.

Personal correspondence has also been quoted and in doing so, the minister makes that letter a document that must be tabled. O'Brien and Bosc states on page 610, "If a Minister quotes a private letter in debate, the letter becomes a public document and must be tabled upon request."

Briefing notes, however, being excluded from tabling where "referred to" – and this is an important distinction. O'Brien and Bosc on page 610 states, "A public document referred to but not quoted by a Minister need not be tabled." It continues in that same paragraph and goes on to say, "However, a minister is not obliged to table personal or briefing notes referred to during debate or Question Period."

Any confusion that has arisen with respect to these seemingly clear principles appears to be related to one's interpretation of the terms "quote", "cite", or "refer".

Ministers, as you all know, come prepared with their own department prepared notes, which allow them to give accurate responses to questions in Question Period and to clearly and accurately debate bills, resolutions, and other motions before this House.

Ministers frequently speak with papers in their hands and will glance down at those papers or their tablets or smart phones to ensure the accuracy of their statements and to refresh their minds as to the points they wish to make. It is not the nature of the document, nor referring to it that requires the tabling, it is the actual quoting from the text of the document that triggers the need for tabling.

Members must use their own words, as that is the purpose of debate. Documents used to drive home an argument or a point is the exception, hence the requirement to table such documents.

The third edition translation of Parliamentary Procedure in Quebec best states the quoting principle on Chapter 13, page 369, and it goes on to say, "Quoting from a document implies that the speaker has communicated an excerpt from it. Consequently, a minister is not required to table a document he or she referred to without quoting from it."

The Speaker of this House, on December 5, 1990, page 17 of Hansard, "A Minister who summarizes a correspondence, but does not actually quote from it, is not bound to lay it upon the Table."

An Acting Speaker of the House of Commons, Speaker McClelland, as written in the House of Commons debates, April 29, 1988, ruled, "The Minister is not required to table the document unless he has quoted directly from the document."

The House of Commons debated the terms "cite" and "quote" in 1988 and in a ruling on April 25, 1988, from selected decisions of Speaker Fraser, the Speaker determined that despite the member's arguments on the use of "cite" and "quote" by Erskine May, he goes on to say, "...For there to be an obligation on the Minister to table a document, it has to have been actually quoted from."

It appears from my review that the word "cite" is often used when in fact the appropriate word would be "quote". A minister may "cite" the source of material, the author, or even the page

of a document, but unless there is an actual "quote" of the text, the tabling requirement would not apply.

All ministers glance down at and refer to their briefing notes from time to time; however, the rule is when an actual quotation of words occurs, the document must be tabled upon demand.

Erskine May, twenty-fourth edition, page 446, states that the Speaker ruled "...that summarizing or confirming the accuracy of other summaries did not bring the rule into operation...".

Use of thoughts, data and information in a briefing note, interpreted into a minister's own words, does not make it a quote. A restatement of a cost, a percentage or other number, usually at the request of another member, does not make it a quotation either, unless it is in the context of a larger sentence or paragraph that is read aloud in the House. It would be very difficult for any member or the Speaker to absolutely infer that glancing at and using one's briefing or personal notes in this sense is the use of a quote to advance the debate.

If it is obvious to the Speaker that a minister is reading or quoting the text of material in his or her hand, the minister will be compelled to have it tabled.

In this regard I wish to add that Parliamentary Secretaries will be required to table a document that he or she has quoted from where the document relates to his or her assigned portfolio but otherwise will be treated as a private member.

Also, the Speaker is compelled, as in all cases, to accept the word of the minister as to the truth of his statement that a document has not been read from.

I would like to quote from Beauchesne's sixth edition at paragraph 494, which states, "It has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted...". It goes on to say, "On rare

occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident.”

As was ruled by Speaker Fraser in the House of Commons with respect to his previously mentioned ruling on April 25, 1988, “...As to whether the Minister actually quoted from a document, the minister’s statement on March 29 that he has no such study, that he did not quote from any such study and that he has nothing that he could table, stands on its own and, according to our tradition, the House must accept his word.”

We must take an hon. member at his or her word that a document has not been quoted or read from.

By extension of this, if the Speaker, however, directs a minister to table a document, unless the document can clearly be argued as exempt for the reasons of public good, the minister must table the document without delay. The entire document must be tabled and not just a severed page or pages.

As stated by Erskine May in the twenty-fourth edition on page 447, “...it is the responsibility of the Government and not of the chair to see that documents that may be relevant to debates are laid before the House...in a timely manner...”.

If the document is in an electronic format, a paper copy of the document quoted from must be obtained by the minister and laid upon the Table.

A document that a minister volunteers to table, which can be presented at the minister’s convenience, need not be tabled. In our own House on November 9, 1983 the Speaker had said the “...Minister might have indicated that he would table some information but it was not at the instruction of the Chair...and the chair would not enforce...”. On November 10, in our own Hansard, page 6287, “...if the Minister undertook to table a document, no time limit is set...”.

As we go forward, the manner in which this Speaker will deal with issues with respect to tabling of documents, what I have shared with you today is how it will be treated in this House on a go-forward basis.

Thank you for your attention.

Statements by Members.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have statements from the Member for the District of Bay of Islands; the Member for the District of St. John’s North; the Member for the District of Mount Pearl South; the Member for the District of Bonavista South; the Member for the District of Port de Grave; and the Member for the District of Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

The hon. the Member for the District of Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this House today to recognize and extend congratulations to a group of young athletes from Sacred Heart Elementary school in Curling.

On Saturday, this group of athletes won the 2014 West Coast Grade 6 Girls Basketball Championship. This is the third championship for the team, having already won the Tiny Titans and the RNC Grade 6 Tournaments. Hard work, dedication, and commitment to the team are the trademarks of these young players.

Mr. Speaker, members of the team include Laura Green, Kristen Buckle, Morgan Young, Madison Hackett, Emma Welshman, Jenna King, Taylor Butt, Abigail Power Petten, Olivia Porter, Maddy Mollon, Emily Butt, Adrianna Sheppard, Holly Mackey, Maggie Hunt, and Megan Allan.

I am very proud to have had the opportunity to work with this group of young athletes. Despite their coach and with the help of Lisa Young, April Butt, and Samantha Bennett, these players demonstrated what true sportsmanship and team spirit is all about. They are true representatives

of Sacred Heart school, and I am confident they will continue with their basketball careers.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join with me in congratulating the Sacred Heart Grade 6 Sabres, and yes ladies, I am impressed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, on February 22, fifty-nine students took part in the annual Spelling Bee sponsored by *The Telegram* newspaper.

Students from across Newfoundland and Labrador took part in the local spelling bees to qualify for the main event held at Holy Heart Theatre in St. John's. In addition to improving students' spelling skills and increasing their knowledge, the annual Spelling Bee provides valuable experience in developing students' self-confidence – a necessary skill for success in public speaking, athletics, the arts, and other areas.

The Telegram Spelling Bee provided two students who attend St. Andrew's Elementary School in St. John's North, Aaron Sarkar and Luesma Fully, with an opportunity to showcase their talents at the highest level.

Special thanks goes to English as a Second Language teacher Ms Tina Rowe for organizing this year's Spelling Bee at St. Andrew's. Special congratulations go to Emily Hynes of Holy Trinity Elementary in Torbay, champion of *The Telegram* Spelling Bee, who will represent Newfoundland and Labrador in the 2014 Scripps National Spelling Bee to be held in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all hon. members join me in congratulating all of the participants of the 2014 *Telegram* Spelling Bee.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to stand in this hon. House to offer congratulations to a group of individuals who have made a significant contribution to sport in my community.

The Mount Pearl Sports Hall of Fame was founded in 1995 by the Mount Pearl Sport Alliance and since that time has inducted seventy-one tremendous individuals. Today, I would like to acknowledge the achievements of five others.

Gerry O'Brien has been inducted in the athlete category for his tremendous accomplishments in the sport of soccer. Inducted into the builder category are: Mary Holloway for her contribution to Special Olympics, Dan Maher for his dedication and commitment to both soccer and Special Olympics, Michael Mooney for his significant impact on the soccer community, and Paul Boland for his tremendous contribution to youth bowling. These individuals are a credit to their respective sports and to their community.

I would ask all members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating these individuals on this significant accomplishment and wish them all the best in their future sporting endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Mr. Speaker, hon. colleagues, I rise in this House today to pay tribute to Clarence Coles of Elliston. Although he is no longer with us, Mr. Coles deserves to be recognized as a man who served this country with honour.

Clarence was born in Elliston, Newfoundland and Labrador in March 1930. He fished with his father at the age of eight and moved to Ontario to work in the 1940s.

Mr. Coles enlisted in the Navy in 1953 and went on to serve the *HMCS Magnificent*, *Athabasca*, *Bonaventure*, and the *Fraser* military ships. While on the *HMCS Magnificent*, Clarence took part in the Canadian Honour Guard in England for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. He received the Canadian Forces Declaration and received three Good Conduct badges in 1964, then was promoted to Corporal in 1965.

Clarence married in 1956 and fathered five children. He retired from the Canadian Navy in 1971 and returned back to Elliston in 1992. Mr. Coles received a Special Service Medal and NATO Bar in 2006.

Clarence was an avid hunter and sports fishermen. On January 6, 2014 Mr. Coles passed away.

Mr. Speaker, hon. colleagues, please join me in honouring Mr. Clarence Coles for his lifetime of dedication to this country, Canada.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today in this hon. House to remember and pay tribute to Mr. George Mercer of Coley's Point. Mr. Mercer passed away recently at the age of ninety-four, with his family by his side.

Mr. Mercer was a former World War II naval veteran who, like many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, joined the Royal Navy. He was honoured to serve his country and defend the many freedoms we have today. He was a proud member of the Royal Canadian Legion serving as District Governor and President of Branch 32, Bay Roberts throughout his years.

Mr. Mercer became Mayor of Bay Roberts in 1973 and served his community and served his community for eight years in that position. During his time as mayor, the town saw the paving of Coley's Point and the beginning of water and sewer infrastructure in the town. He was a successful businessman, running his own business for many years, with a reputation for quality service.

I ask all hon. members to join me today in paying tribute to Mr. Mercer, who unselfishly served his country and community, for which we all are thankful.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise in the House today to call attention to the fact that one of Canada's most Outstanding Principals works in my district at Holy Heart High School. Sheldon Barry, along with Roger Gillingham of Baccalieu Collegiate in Old Perlican, was presented with his award on February 25 by registered charity, The Learning Partnership.

If the feedback I get from students and families is anything to go by, Sheldon is more than deserving of this reward. He told *The Globe and Mail* one of his biggest challenges is helping his students understand why they should want to be in school at all, especially when they can see unfilled, well-paying jobs that may not always ask for post-secondary education.

He does it, though, in many ways, not least of which is his personal interaction with the students. Sheldon is in the corridors talking to them, leading a team that develops innovative programs to encourage staying in school, and generally being the inspiration every parent would like his or her kids to have.

I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating Sheldon Barry, one of Canada's Outstanding Principals for 2014.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this hon. House to acknowledge and congratulate Jason Watkins and Kevin Willmott of Labrador West, winners of the 2014 Cain's Quest Snowmobile Endurance Race. I also take this opportunity to recognize all those who participated in this year's competition.

Cain's Quest is touted as the world's longest and toughest snowmobile endurance race, and this year was the toughest yet for racers. Twenty-nine motivated teams started the race in Labrador West on March 1, and frigid temperatures and treacherous conditions tested them for most of the 3,600 kilometre route throughout Labrador. Eight teams of two crossed the finish line on Saturday, March 8, and it was my pleasure to celebrate with them and more than 1,100 participants, friends, and supporters at the closing ceremonies in Labrador City.

Mr. Speaker, this world-class event brings economic benefits to the entire region and provides an opportunity to showcase Labrador's rugged natural beauty to the world. The provincial government is proud to support this unique sporting challenge with an investment of \$95,000 this year.

Labradorians continue to embrace this race, bringing communities and cultures together in the spirit of achievement. Checkpoint communities were more engaged this year than ever before, bursting with excitement as teams came through. The excitement online also

reached record levels this year, with over 57,000 visitors from more than seventy countries around the world following online during race week.

Cain's Quest began in 2006, and this year marks the seventh race challenge. Participation has more than doubled over the years and we look forward to continued success. This one of a kind extreme event is planned and managed by a volunteer-run, non-profit organization. As Minister Responsible for Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and to thank all of the volunteers and sponsors of the biggest and best Cain's Quest to date.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in applauding and celebrating all of the racers who dared to take the challenge of Cain's Quest across the Big Land; and recognizing all of those volunteers, sponsors, and friends who helped support racers in their journey.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, we on this side as well would like to congratulate Jason Watkins and Kevin Willmott from Labrador West on winning Cain's Quest. We would also like to congratulate all the participants. There are no losers participating in such a grueling snowmobile race. I would like to especially congratulate the teams from Natuashish, Nain, and Makkovik. Mr. Speaker, we would also like to congratulate Todd Kent and all the volunteers throughout all of the communities in Labrador who made it all possible.

What is it like to participate in Cain's Quest? Imagine a situation where adrenaline replaces most of your body's requirements. Imagine frostbite creeping up on you without your

knowledge. Imagine travelling through unfamiliar terrain at night at high speed. Imagine trying to focus on a small screen that is continuously changing and blurry from vibration and impact.

Imagine your whole body screaming for sleep and entering short periods of total exhaustion to wide awake. Imagine your mind playing tricks on you and strange visions appearing before you then changing back to reality. Imagine all of your energy reserves used up from fighting cold, tension, fatigue, and body-jarring continuous impact. Imagine doing all of this while trying to control an 800 pound piece of machinery that is capable of reaching speeds of 200 kilometres an hour. Mr. Speaker, you are in Cain's Quest.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Cain's Quest is a shining example of what can be done when creative and imaginative people put their hearts and minds to a task.

This magnificent event has become world famous in less than a decade since it was created. People all over our Province can see from its success what imagination, dedication and good old hard work can accomplish. What a race!

Bravo to Jason Watkins and Kevin Willmott, this year's winners. Bravo to every team, and bravo to the people who organized the event. We look forward to next year's Cain's Quest.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to outline our government's work in facilitating robust oversight of the Muskrat Falls Project on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Many senior departmental officials throughout government have been involved in oversight from initial planning, to early engineering, to our agreements with Emera, and most importantly to sanction and financing.

Our government has also ensured that there has been more information made public about this project than any other project in the Province's history, providing the opportunity for review by the public, government, and independent experts including Manitoba Hydro International, Navigant Consulting, the Board of Commissioners of Public Utilities, Dr. Wade Locke, and Ziff Energy Group of Calgary.

In addition to our government's oversight, the level of external due diligence undertaken by the Government of Canada gave them the confidence and satisfaction in the Muskrat Falls Project prior to issuing a federal loan guarantee to back the \$5 billion financing for this development. This effort by Canada was supported by experienced external legal advisors, independent financial advisors, an independent engineer, and an independent insurance consultant, all engaged directly by the Government of Canada.

Furthermore, Nalcor's board of directors and internal audit department also provide oversight. The provincial government requires Nalcor to report regularly through annual transparency and accountability reports and Nalcor regularly prepares financial statements which are audited by the external independent auditor and integrated into Nalcor's annual business and financial annual reports. Nalcor holds public annual general meetings where the previous year's performance is discussed.

Prudent oversight of the Muskrat Falls Project is a priority for our government and it will

continue through the construction and operation stages of the project.

To strengthen and formalize the existing oversight for the construction phase of the Muskrat Falls Project, a departmental committee of Finance, Natural Resources, and Justice, chaired by the Clerk of the Executive Council, will focus on project costs, scheduling, and overall project performance.

The committee will review information provided by external auditors, the independent engineer, and Nalcor; provide updates and discuss issues with relevant departments; meet regularly with Nalcor officials; report to Cabinet, which will provide direction to appropriate ministers as required; and provide quarterly updates to the public starting in July on project costs, scheduling, and project performance.

Also to be initiated and made public by Nalcor this year will be a report specific to the Muskrat Falls Project prepared by Nalcor's external auditors as part of their annual audit. Nalcor will also issue quarterly consolidated financial statements starting later this year.

This complements Nalcor's monthly benefit reports currently released publicly which include details on employment, construction and procurement activities; construction costs; safety and environmental activities; stakeholder and community consultation; and engagement initiatives.

It is a priority for our government to ensure information on the Muskrat Falls Project will continue to be made available to the public, while still protecting the commercial interests of the project.

Mr. Speaker, strong oversight of the Muskrat Falls Project continues to be undertaken by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Government of Canada, Nalcor Energy, project lenders, and independent experts. This project will provide the least-cost source of electricity for the future and will benefit Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for generations to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker

I thank the minister for his brief notice today. It was actually just over five minutes before we received a copy of this statement, nevertheless providing the opportunity to review the project and providing this oversight.

The minister went on to mention the PUB. As we know, the PUB were never given the full opportunity and actually said there was not enough information then to make a conclusive decision on the project.

What was not mentioned, I thought, in this release today was about the Joint Review Panel. Of course, that panel said they could not really justify the project. That was not mentioned.

It goes on to say about sanctioning the project and about the oversight and the level of due diligence that has already been done on this project. We will say, then, as we have said many times as we have stood in this House, sanctioning the project without Emera on side, I believe, has disadvantaged the future of this project in giving Emera the first right of refusal.

The title of the statement says, "Provincial Government Facilitates Robust Oversight of the Muskrat Falls Project". I actually question the use of the word robust. A robust review would have started at the beginning, not when you are \$5 billion in commitments made on this project.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the announcement by the minister today about quarterly reports by Nalcor as part of the due diligence is something, as you know, I have mentioned in this House many times. That is part of the regular routine for many companies the size of Nalcor. We actually accept that. We actually believe that is a good initiative, and we look forward to those financial reports from Nalcor.

Mr. Speaker, I will conclude today. The oversight, in our opinion, is something that should have started earlier, \$5 billion into this project; nevertheless, the committee itself, a committee of bureaucrats should have been a little more independent in my mind.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I thank the minister for at least getting it just before going into the House, so we had some idea of what we were going to be facing.

The oversight being touted by the minister is still missing the truly independent oversight of an independent body, such as the Public Utilities Board. We have an internal committee, yes reporting to Cabinet, internal all the way through. The decision to release any information is still in the hands of Cabinet. They have yet to prove to us that they are going to be more than a secretive government because that is what we have had up to now. They have a lot to prove to us and to the people of this Province.

The PUB should have been the overseeing agency right from the very beginning. This government missed the opportunity to undo what a Liberal government did in 1999 when they removed the PUB from overseeing the Lower Churchill Project.

Mr. Speaker, this is the biggest investment in our history and we in this House are not going to get a truly independent oversight. I really regret to have to say this and I look forward to seeing what this government is going to do in being open in what they reveal. Even now we have to wait for July to get an update.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Time for Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With over \$5 billion already committed to the Muskrat Falls Project, government has finally announced an oversight committee. Proper management includes a provision of oversight from the beginning, from the start, even on small projects, let alone a multi-billion dollar initiative like Muskrat Falls.

I ask the Premier: With so much taxpayer money on the line, why did you wait until there was almost \$5 billion committed before you added this oversight that was announced today?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, of course, the premise to the question of the Leader of the Opposition is incorrect. Oversight started a long time ago. It started before sanction. We had people like Navigant, independent people, look at this: Navigant, MHI, did different reports in the DG2 numbers and the DG3 numbers. We also had Dr. Locke do a report; we had Ziff Energy do a report. We looked at the constitutional issues. We looked at the Upper Churchill.

There was lots of oversight before the sanction decision was made. Then, of course, we were looking at financing. With financing, the federal government were involved and their lenders were involved. Nalcor's lenders were involved; the banks were involved. They have hired an independent engineer to do oversight. They had their internal and external counsel. There was lots of oversight going on.

Now we are into a new phase. We are now into the construction phase and we feel it was necessary to enhance – because the people of Newfoundland are telling us they wanted to see enhanced oversight to this project, the minister has announced that today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: I thank the Premier for his answer, but the people of this Province also said that they wanted the PUB in there; they said that in many, many numbers. So a committee of bureaucrats reporting to Cabinet is merely just window dressing, Mr. Speaker. What is needed is accountability, and one option was calling in the Auditor General to review the operations of Nalcor.

Since you claim to be open, why didn't you ask the Auditor General to review a project spending section under section 16 of the AG's act?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, let me make this very clear to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Auditor General can go into Nalcor any time he or she wishes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, we brought the Auditor General into this House after he was kept out by the previous government. We invited the Auditor General into this House. The Auditor General can go into Nalcor any time he wishes. The independent engineer can go into Nalcor and look at what is going on any time they wish. Whenever it is appropriate that they want to do it, then please go ahead.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: We understand the AG can go in any time he wants, so the answer to that question right now is that this government, this Premier, is not interested in sending the AG in. Under section 16, the Premier can do that.

If the Premier is not prepared to ask the AG to review it, the other option would be, of course, to send the PUB in to provide oversight into what is happening. That is exactly what was done with their partners in Nova Scotia.

I ask the Premier: Why didn't you ask the PUB to provide this oversight?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, right now there is oversight going on with respect to the outages and we welcome that oversight by the PUB. Nalcor is co-operating. Hydro is co-operating. They are doing an independent review. They have had three independent people do reports. They filed that with the PUB. We welcome oversight by the PUB, Mr. Speaker.

In addition, let's look at other things that are going on, when you want to talk about the Auditor General. The Auditor General does not work for the government. The Auditor General is an independent Officer of this House of Assembly and has the full freedom to go and look at any part of the government's operation, any Crown corporation, and report back to the people of this House, and through the House, to the people of the Province. We welcome that, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier mentioned welcoming the PUB and the work that they are doing on the ongoing DarkNL and what happened in January. Well, they were not so welcome back in March, just two years now, when they actually said they would not be given the extension that they requested.

Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General released a good review of the Sherriff's Office earlier today; however, the government has had this report in its possession since December 2, 2013. If we remember the old Tory Blue Book commitment to release every report in thirty days, we are not sure if that is a platform or if that was indeed an actual commitment or promise.

I ask the Premier: Since you are now claiming to be open and you have the commitment in the Tory Blue Book, why did your government sit on a report for over three-and-a-half months without making it public?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, we had the pleasure to release two reports this morning that will make a significant difference to the justice system in Newfoundland and Labrador to the tune of \$3.5 million investment in this year's Budget. Twenty-nine recommendations were submitted, and government announced today that we are acknowledging, accepting, and implementing every single recommendation in that report.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Part and parcel of receiving those reports, Mr. Speaker, requires due diligence on behalf of government to understand what is in the report, to assess the budgetary implications. In one particular report, the Legal Aid report, there was not a direct spelling out of the number of positions and a dollar figure associated with

it. It takes time to do that and that is what took the time between the time we received the reports and today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last year the Minister of Justice made harmful cuts throughout the justice system saying that the cuts were made because of the Province's financial situation. This morning he accepted all twenty-nine recommendations of the two reviews, but when questioned on how government could afford the additional millions of dollars he said: This is a good question for the Minister of Finance.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Since the Budget projections from last year looked very similar to this year – as a matter of fact this year we are told you will be borrowing – do you accept these recommendations? If so, where will you find the dollars?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, there are times when the revenue comes in it is wonderful for government. Government can provide programs and services for the people of the Province. There are other times when the times are a lot tougher and you just cannot continue to do that and you have to come back.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to say that this government is now on track to be back to surplus next year and will stay in surplus the year after. We are in a position to do things to help distribute wealth and look to the people of Newfoundland (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That is not news today because you said you were going to be on track to be in surplus next year, last year, yet you still made the cuts. The Minister of Justice says that they are putting more funding into the Sheriff's Office and Legal Aid because they took the time to review those services after the initial cuts were made. It seems a bit strange, but that is what was said; however, similar reviews were not conducted on other services that were cut last year including the Family Violence Intervention Court, and the Employment Assistance Services offices.

I ask the Premier: Why have you allowed some cuts to stand without review? What are the criteria for using when you order a review?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, what we did today was follow through on a commitment. If you want to go back to the member's question, the origination of this challenge was last year's Budget. We announced a number of decisions at that point in time. We were in a particular position where I had to make decisions as Justice Minister.

We received feedback and we listened to what people had to say. As a result of that, we struck a committee. We listened to what the committee had to say and we changed some of the decisions. We struck two reviews because we were asked to do so.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite, we are listening to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and we are implementing the recommendations that have been brought forward for the Department of Justice.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, that really means you were not listening to them last year, from what I just heard.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a very difficult winter on everyone, to say the least, and thousands of fish harvesters are now facing a delayed spring fishery due to severe ice conditions, some people are saying the worst in twenty-five years.

I ask the minister: Has your government called upon Ottawa to ensure fish harvesters and plant workers have access to a timely, appropriate compensation program to address this looming critical situation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, where our ice conditions this year are a little bit heavier than they have been in the past, we have certainly been in touch with industry and from the federal government just recently. I was in Port de Grave on Saturday morning with my colleague and met with a number of fishers there. There were over 100 fishermen there and people involved with the industry at a breakfast. At that time, I also met with the harbour authority. They actually had some ice mapping and went through that.

While there is concern at this point in time, we are not sure where the industry is going to go in terms of starting. Let there be no doubt if there is something we have to do to facilitate or to help it along we will certainly do that, but we are hopeful the industry will start on time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind the minister that the special compensation provided by the federal government is nothing new. In previous years, as a matter of fact in 2007 and 2009, we were in a very similar situation.

In the meantime, employment insurance benefits will soon be running out. We all know that will leave families in a very critical situation.

I ask the minister: Why have you not started the discussions with the federal government? This is an urgent problem.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, this is a standard issue every year, in terms of ice conditions, the starting of the industry, the various species, setting prices, and so forth. The ice conditions, as I mentioned, are concerns in some parts of the Province. As we move forward in the days and weeks ahead, if there are initiatives we need to take with the federal government, us alone or with the federal government, we will take those initiatives, we will have those discussions, and we will move the industry along like we have always done.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, this government continues to assume there are no discrepancies in the justice system in Labrador, yet we have serious crimes like sexual and physical assault that have been on the docket for up to three years. Mr. Speaker, they are still on the docket.

I ask the Attorney General: You claim to be happy with the workload in Labrador, as you

stated in this House, why do we have such long delays in cases being heard?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Attorney General.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. F. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge there are challenges with delivery of services in Labrador, and in fact, in several places of the Province, not necessarily peculiar to Labrador. There are challenges involved in the delivery of services in Labrador, and this government is committed, Mr. Speaker, to reasonable access to justice for everybody. We have put a significant investment into Labrador to make sure that principle is met in Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, we are also prepared to sit down and work with the communities, with the different stakeholders in the justice system up there, always to try to improve the situation with regard to delivering services in Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General may be happy, but I can assure you that the victims impacted by serious crimes are not happy. In one upcoming court circuit the court will have to deal with ninety offences, forty of which are breaches of undertaking or failure to comply. Some of these initial charges include sixteen assault charges, three of which are sexual assault charges.

I ask the Attorney General: How can you be happy with the justice system in Labrador while the victims of serious crimes live in fear and stress?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Attorney General.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. F. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, I do not think anybody can be happy when the situations do not get resolved in time. I do not know where the hon. member is coming to when he makes that premise.

As I mentioned the other day in response to his question with regard to the backlog of cases in the Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Happy Valley system, we looked through the data and found that the cases are being – dispositions have been met in the Happy Valley-Goose Bay program, Mr. Speaker, on the same level in comparison with the rest of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, the key figures are cases that are initiated and cases that are completed. We find there are more cases completed than are initiated, and that is on a favourable comparison, Mr. Speaker, with the rest of the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, the Humber Valley land-use draft plan was in the hands of government for three years. Over \$650,000 was invested in the plan by municipalities in the region and the provincial government.

I ask the minister: After sending comments back to a defunct committee, a resigned chairperson, will the minister now admit that this department mishandled this file and wasted \$650,000 of taxpayers' money?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, as members of this House of Assembly, we all have an obligation to tell the truth. We all have an obligation to make statements that we know to be true. I know to be true, Mr. Speaker, that Dr. Downer has not resigned. I knew it to be true last week, and I know it to be true now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I read from *The Western Star*, "Since vacating the position, he has not had much involvement...".

Mr. Speaker, I say to the minister, do you want me to do your research? You should do the research where Dr. Downer admitted himself that he resigned.

Mr. Speaker, even your own appointed chair, Dr. Downer –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: – after his resignation from the committee expressed concern over the government's inaction on the draft plan. Then you appointed him as Chair of Western Region Waste Management Authority.

I ask the minister again today: How much did you pay Premier Marshall's co-campaign manager and defeated PC candidate as chair of the defunct land use committee, and how much is he being paid as Chair of the Western Region Waste Management Authority?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, as I said last week in this hon. House during Question Period, work is ongoing on the Humber Valley regional plan. A comprehensive response was sent from my department based on feedback compiled in consultation with various government departments just several weeks ago. It was sent to Dr. Downer as chair of that committee, and work continues, and we hope to bring that process to a conclusion as quickly as possible.

Considerable dollars have been invested in that work because it is important work. It is so unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite is out of touch with what is going on in his very own region of the Province. I have the detailed cost breakdown. I will be happy to provide it later today in this hon. House. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I will table all documents related to those costs in their entirety.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills announced department restructuring, stating that staff complement will not decrease. We know for a fact that the regional director position for Goose Bay has been cut and we know there are job losses in St. John's.

I ask the minister: Will he give the people a straight answer, how many jobs or job equivalents are being cut?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, as I said in this House last week and also said on the talk shows on Friday, there will be no layoffs in regard to the restructuring of Advanced Education and Skills. As a matter of fact, this will actually enable my staff to deliver the services within my department, which is so important to the people of the Province, more effectively.

There are no layoffs. As a matter of fact, NAPE has been involved in regard to this process right straight through. I thank NAPE for all their advice through the process. I look forward to delivering those services more effectively in the future, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: I guess you are not referring to all of the community third party groups being cut.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Advanced Education and Skills cut many Employment Assistance Service agencies last year, putting 226 employment counsellors out of work. We have just learned that women in successful employment are also closing their doors.

I ask the minister: Will EAS agencies serving women, as well as persons with disabilities, be cut?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, we will continue to provide those services through the great staff at Advanced Education and Skills. As a matter of fact, I think there were over 5,000 people serviced through that branch in regard to last year, in September, somewhere around that area. They will continue to move those programs forward. These programs actually will be delivered more effectively now on a go-forward basis once this restructure is complete.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on a question from last week about the Minister of Education's lack of clarity on school board savings.

I ask the minister: Now that your government has seen the openness and accountability light, can you finally enlighten us on how much money was saved by cutting three school boards last year?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, we are about the seventh month into the new board taking over, the new restructuring of these boards. As I have said from the beginning, I can tell the hon. member that there is \$5 million in savings by removing the upper echelon, if I could put it that way, of the school boards.

We are still working our way through that process, Mr. Speaker. I cannot give him an exact dollar but we are looking at probably in the tune of around \$12 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, while the minister still struggles to provide a sufficient level of detail on those purported school board savings, the 2013 education budget cuts are still impacting our schools. Last week, we heard that the Learning Through the Arts in Western Newfoundland program may be cancelled now due to 2013 Cultural Connections budget cuts.

I ask the minister: Will you reverse this decision, together with the other poorly thought-out cuts to classroom and student supports you made last year?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, the program that he is referring to was a federal program. When it was cut, we did pick it up for a bit. Mr. Speaker, we still have the School Touring Program that is on the go, the ArtsSmarts, and the Visiting Artist Program.

Mr. Speaker, I will have the hon. member know, and I am very proud to announce to the people

of the Province, that through this program, the Cultural Connections program, we have put in place \$17.4 million.

Go to any of the schools, take a look at the music rooms that are in the schools, take a look at the theatre arts rooms in the school, we have made a \$17.4 million investment towards those programs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Transportation has stated publicly that the cost to lease the *Norcon Galatea* is \$5,800 a month.

I ask the minister: Is this the total monthly cost or are there other costs associated with this lease? Will you table a breakdown of all associated costs for the lease of the *Norcon Galatea*?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when this government made the decision to lease the *Norcon Galatea* we did it under the advice that it was cheaper to lease than to purchase and run it on our own. We still stand by that decision, that it is cheaper to lease the ferry, because we did not need the ferry on an annual basis or an everyday basis.

When we went and purchased that lease, or entered into that lease with the Norcon group of companies, we did it on short-term basis because we are in the process, as I stated in this House on several occasions, of a marine vessel replacement strategy. As long as we are doing that, we may have to enter into leases.

I have no problem tabling all expenses with the lease of the *Norcon Galatea*.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the minister also stated that the *Norcon Galatea* lease expires on March 31, 2014.

I ask the minister: Will he confirm today that the lease for that vessel will be extended beyond March 31; and why did you lease the vessel as opposed to going to public tender, knowing that March 31 would not be long enough for the lease on that vessel?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when we entered into the short-term lease, as I said earlier, and it is a short-term lease that we entered into, we entered into the lease on the premise that we would need the lease to extend until March 31, 2014. On March 31, 2014 that lease will be up and we will not be extending the lease on the ship.

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

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

Regarding oversight of Muskrat Falls, I ask the Premier: Why will this government not allow independent oversight of the biggest investment this Province has ever made? What is he afraid of?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, there is a plethora of independent oversight over that project right now and there is even going to be more in the future. There is the report of an independent engineer. There could be the report of the Auditor General, should he choose to go in there. There will be the report of the independent financial auditor that is made available to the public.

The public have a meeting where they can go and question Nalcor and the executive. That is oversight as well, oversight directly by the public. Now, Nalcor are going to provide those reports on a quarterly basis and not just an annual basis.

There is going to be this internal oversight committee. They are going to do a public report.

Mr. Speaker, we come into this House when the House is in session and we are available to questions from the Opposition. That is probably the greatest independent oversight you can have.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Speaker, why won't this government reverse the 1999 legislation and allow the PUB to have oversight of the Lower Churchill, which it once had?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, as I said, there have been lots of independent oversight before sanction. There was independent oversight during the financing. We have now announced additional oversight that is going to take place within government.

Nalcor themselves are looking at their governance structure. The people who serve on the board and provide oversight of Nalcor are appointed by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador because, after all, Nalcor is owned by the people. It has been given instructions in the Energy Plan to carry out a plan in order to provide wealth and prosperity to the people of the Province. Mr. Speaker, I have every confidence they are going to do that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess the proof of the pudding is going to be in the eating, whenever that time comes.

Mr. Speaker, people applying to the Department of Advanced Education and Skills for Income Support are waiting for hours on the phone and weeks for applications to be processed. Now we hear of departmental changes that will lump all direct client services into one branch.

I ask the Premier: How will these changes improve this already badly functioning system?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, because it simply streamlines the services and that particular intake centre will be a centre of excellence. As well, she gives out some wrong information; 73 per cent of our clients who phone into Income Support for various reasons get answered by a real person. Yes, there is about 25 per cent who do not, but then there are also numerous repeat calls as well. We have had spikes with regard to the number of calls in certain months, and that is

expected in the system; but we do service our clients.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Sometimes people are on the phone for hours waiting for that live voice, Mr. Speaker.

I really ask the minister to tell us how these changes are designed to better serve people or are they just designed to serve the department's bottom line.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, I have been in this House since 2003 and it is clear to me that any kind of change to the Third Party is certainly reviewed as not being effective, any kind of change – the are against change is what I am trying to say, Mr. Speaker.

What we try to do are two things. Number one, provide the services that is within Advanced Education and Skills to the people of the Province who require that service, and also we have to enable my employees, the employees of Advanced Education and Skills, to deliver those services. That will be done through this reorganization. We have been great in regard to that in the past. Yes, we might have had spikes in regard to the number of calls and that happens from time to time, but we will continue to deliver that service, Mr. Speaker

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In his report lawyer John Roil wrote: There are concerns that due to the low eligibility threshold for qualifying for Legal Aid, many working people cannot afford access to justice.

I ask the minister: What will he do to fix these requirements to better reflect the economic reality that working people face today?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Attorney General.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

As I mentioned earlier, access to justice is one of the prime principles of any democratic society, and certainly one of the strong principles of the Department of Justice and this government.

We have, at the Legal Aid, a team of dedicated, strong professionals who are doing a great service for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to the vulnerable of those who cannot afford services.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize the threshold that the hon. member speaks about. There are recommendations in Mr. Roil's report that we have to consider and look at. We are only actioning a number of them today, there are others that have to be discussed with Legal Aid and with the Law Society, and we will be moving on these in the next few months.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, today at the minister's press conference, he said about the cuts he made last year: I was given a fiscal situation to deal with, and some decisions were made not in the best interest of the courts.

I ask the minister: Will he now correct all the mistakes he made last year and reinstate the Family Violence Intervention Court?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I did not say what the member opposite alleges I said, for the record. The comment I made this morning was that in the Budget last year I was given a fiscal situation where I had to make some tough decisions. I never once said anything along the lines that she repeated here today, that they are irresponsible or not in the best interest of the court. I said it was a snapshot in time.

Today, we are making decisions because we are in a different spot with the Budget. Last year, I had tough decisions to make and I made them and I stand by them. That is what we do. When you are in government you make tough decisions. Sometimes you have to change those decisions.

Sometimes you recognize there are positions you take and people want you to move away from them. You have to be big enough to admit that you need to do that. I did that with legal aid and with the Sheriff's Office. Today, we have produced two documents that are going to have tremendous benefits to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre has time for a quick question without preamble.

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister again: Will he listen then to the people of the Province and reinstate the Family Violence Intervention Court?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice for a quick response.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, we are always listening to the people of the Province. I always acknowledge that we cannot do everything. No matter how much you invest into programs and services in this Province, you can never do enough for some people. That is very unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, but we are sticking to the core services in Justice.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As alluded to in Question Period, there are a number of documents I would like to table today. I am very pleased with the movement on the Humber Valley regional plan that we have seen over the last number of months. Since November, when I took office, I have been working with Dr. Downer to advance this work, and, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the work being completed.

There are some vacancies on the Committee. That is –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Is the member going to table the report?

MR. KENT: Gladly, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Please.

MR. KENT: The first thing I would like to table is the terms of reference for the regional

planning authority because clearly, the member opposite fails to understand the process. The next thing I would like to table is the letter that the member referred to last week addressed to Dr. Downer correctly, despite the member's false statements in this House today and last week as well, Mr. Speaker. The third thing I would like to table is an e-mail from Dr. Downer himself.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the minister to table his reports.

MR. KENT: I am doing so, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Without commentary, please.

MR. KENT: Can I indicate what the documents are?

MR. SPEAKER: Just indicate what they are but let's not have a long speech.

MR. KENT: That was not my intention, Mr. Speaker.

An e-mail from Dr. Downer confirming his status and involvement in the process, and finally, a detailed breakdown of the costs, including consultant costs, remuneration of travel expenses for Dr. Downer, administrative costs and operational costs for the Humber Valley Regional Planning Advisory Authority in full detail, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I just heard the minister say that I made a –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Are you standing on a point of order?

MR. JOYCE: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Please indicate it.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I just heard the minister say that I made false statements in the House last week. I ask the minister to withdraw the remarks because at no time did I make any false statements in this House of Assembly. I ask the minister just to withdraw it.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs to the point of order?

MR. KENT: To the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I cannot withdraw the statement because it is absolutely true. The member made false statements today; he made false statements last week.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the minister suggesting that the hon. Member for Bay of Islands has made a false statement to the House?

MR. KENT: I withdraw the statement, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Humber West.

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce the following private member's motion:

WHEREAS senior officials of our government have been involved in oversight of the Muskrat Falls Project at every stage; and

WHEREAS our government has just announced further mechanisms to provide oversight of the Muskrat Falls Project; and

WHEREAS the Government of Canada provides oversight of the project through its role as guarantor of the \$5 billion in project financing; and

WHEREAS our government has subjected this project to a greater level of scrutiny than has been brought to bear on any other project in our history; and

WHEREAS the Board of Directors provides oversight of Nalcor, and Nalcor is also required to account, through its internal audit department, its regular reports to the government, its regular audited financial statements and its public annual general meetings, and

WHEREAS these oversight mechanisms reflect our government's commitment to ensure the public is provided with as much information on the Muskrat Falls Project as possible without jeopardizing commercial interest;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the government's actions to provide greater oversight of the Muskrat Falls Project.

That is seconded by the Member for Lake Melville, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader, notices of motion?

MR. KING: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that the motion just entered by the Member for Humber West will be the private member's motion that we intend to debate this coming Wednesday, Private Members' Day.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We, the citizens serviced by Curtis Hospital located in St. Anthony, Newfoundland and Labrador, petition the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and Labrador-Grenfell Health to retain the midwives at Curtis Hospital.

Our midwives offer services that cannot be duplicated and which cannot be replaced. The level of care they offer and the knowledge and training they have in the area of obstetrics is immense. It will be a great disservice to the people of this area if our midwives are no longer available to care for the people here.

We implore upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and Labrador-Grenfell Health to preserve our midwifery services at Curtis Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by over 600 individuals from the region, from my district, but also Southern Labrador. There are signatories from Quebec as well, who are not residents of Newfoundland and Labrador but they are served by the hospital. They really feel that government's movement on the issue of midwifery has been an utter failure, given that in 2010 the Health Professions Act was passed and it required regulations. There are three nurses who are employed at Curtis Memorial Hospital who had midwifery qualifications.

There are midwives who are practicing in the North, northern Territories, who are regulated. They would work in the system in Newfoundland and Labrador should regulations be in play.

Now, the minister has outlined that midwifery can happen in the private sector, likely within a year, but when it comes to publicly funded midwifery in Newfoundland and Labrador, we could be five to seven years out. This certainly does not send a very positive message to those who have utilized midwives. Maybe many in this room have been born by midwives.

On the Northern Peninsula, the majority of people have had prenatal, postnatal, and have even been delivered by midwives. They have done the majority of deliveries, especially for low risk. It is the safest and most cost-effective way when we are looking at utilizing professionals in a health care team.

Removing midwives from the delivery process will also create additional strain in obstetrics and put on call, in many cases, general practitioners and nurses who are not trained in that particular field right now who require that training, so that pregnant mothers to be make sure they are getting the services they deserve. Cutting out midwifery in a publicly funded setting is the wrong step, and it is that relationship that has been built up with these people from prenatal to delivery, to post-natal care. It has been in the Grenfell system for over ninety years, Mr. Speaker.

So I will put forward this petition, and I know I have others.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS in 2006, the provincial government created a commission to review the Individualized Student Support Plan/Pathways Model and make recommendations to improve

the delivery of special education programming in the K-12 education system; and

WHEREAS in 2007, the ISSP/Pathways Commission delivered a final report to government outlining seventy-five recommendations for creating a better system for the delivery of special education programming; and

WHEREAS to date, many important recommendations of the ISSP/Pathways Commission have not been acted upon, including those related to public disclosure of assessment and wait-list information; guidelines for comprehensive and ethical assessment practices; procedures to address the needs of all at-risk students; creating an effective appeals process for families; meeting the needs of exceptionally able or gifted learners; expanding the role of student assistants in the teacher assistant roles; introducing special education department heads in schools; and improving on special education teacher qualifications and certification;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to fully implement the recommendations of the ISSP/Pathways Commission in order to improve the delivery of special education programming for all students, parents, teachers, and schools.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, as the petition notes, a significant number of the recommendations of this report remain not acted upon, and it really is a part of a pattern of this government to commission reviews and not act on the recommendations, to allow those reports to accrue dust on a shelf somewhere.

I took the time to ask what it costs to carry out the ISSP/Pathways review, and it was a total of \$167,293, a significant amount of taxpayers' dollars used to carry out this review with a significant amount of recommendations, a number of the recommendations, not acted upon.

Now with the government's newfound openness to, well, openness and accountability, there are things in here like public disclosure of assessment and wait-list information that is fully in line now with this new purported, newfound attachment to openness, Mr. Speaker. I encourage the members to think about that because they may actually benefit from acting on their own review.

Thank you.

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

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

I rise today for a petition to the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS residents of the Southwest Coast must travel the TCH between Channel-Port aux Basques and Corner Brook for work, medical, educational, and social reasons; and

WHEREAS Marine Atlantic ferries dock at Channel-Port aux Basques at various hours on a daily basis resulting in extremely high volume of commercial and residential travellers using this section of the TCH; and

WHEREAS the world-renowned Wreckhouse area is situate along this section of the TCH; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador initiated a twenty-four hour snow clearing pilot project in 2008 that excluded the section of the TCH from Channel-Port aux Basques to Stephenville;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to include the section of the TCH from Channel-Port aux Basques to Stephenville in the twenty-four hour snow clearing project.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I know the members opposite do not want to hear this petition again because it is something that makes a lot of sense, but that is something that is contrary to what goes on in the other side in some cases.

What I want to concentrate on today is I have actually looked into the review of the twenty-four hour snow clearing pilot project. I have reviewed it; I have gone through it. I have come up with a number of questions and I put them to the Minister of Transportation and Works. The problem is, though, that contrary to the Open Government Initiative, I am not getting any answers back. Therein lies the problem again. It is a lot of hype, but not a lot of substance.

One of the things that I did ask about was we are the main entry for rubber tire traffic in this Province through Marine Atlantic. We have thousands upon thousands of vehicles coming in. What I asked for was: When did you do a study to see how many vehicles are coming in and comparing it to the other parts of the Province? I was expecting maybe over a month-long period or maybe during seven days. They took one day in the month of February and said this is recognition of the average. That in itself is absolutely ludicrous; that does not make any sense whatsoever.

I have gone back to them on that but lo and behold, surprise, they have not come back to me with anything on this again. That is just one thing. Their methodology to do this is flawed. I would think that one of the main reasons is because of politics. Maybe they do not want to do the right thing because of where this section of the roadway is. I am just putting that out there. I can only make assumptions.

That is the problem; we make assumptions based on the lack of information that is forthcoming, especially on something that is of a life-saving nature. Everybody knows that we need it. The operators that this government hires to pay to do this job say you should have it, yet they continue not to do it.

I am not going to stop; I will keep going. Like I said I have a suitcase full of these petitions not just from my district, but from the members opposite districts. I am going to keep putting them in until they come to their senses and make the decision before something tragic happens.

Thank you.

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

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

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

WHEREAS as a result of a recommendation in the Green report about wrongdoing in the House of Assembly, there is now legislation that protects anyone who speaks up with evidence of financial abuse or other impropriety in the Legislative Branch; and

WHEREAS it is unfair for one group of civil servants to be protected by whistle-blower legislation when another group is not; and

WHEREAS Justice Green stated that the financial wrongdoing in the House of Assembly might have been discovered sooner if whistle-blower legislation had been in place; and

WHEREAS the Cameron inquiry into ER-PR testing found that problems with tests would have come to light sooner, therefore lessening the impacts on patients, if whistle-blower legislation had been in place; and

WHEREAS the task force on adverse events recommended an amendment to the Regional Health Authorities Act to provide legal protection for employees reporting occurrences or adverse events; and

WHEREAS whistle-blower legislation is in place elsewhere in Canada and the provincial

government promised similar legislation in the 2007 election but has not kept that promise;

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge government to enact whistle-blower legislation to protect public sector employees in provincial departments and agencies, including public corporations, regional health authorities, and school boards.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to stand and speak to this petition. I know government has said and it was said for them by the Lieutenant-Governor in the Speech from the Throne that they are bringing in whistle-blower legislation. We already have experienced in this House that many times a first reading may happen and we wait for a piece of legislation and it does not occur.

I am bringing forward this petition, one, because it has been put in our hands and I am very happy to bring it forward; but to also impress upon the Premier and the government, since they say they listen to the people of the Province, that now that they have said they are going to do the whistle-blower legislation and the people of the Province are letting them know how much they want it, I really encourage this government to speed up the process of bringing that legislation in to this House.

As I told the then Premier in a leader's debate in 2007, I continue to have people calling anonymously, coming to my house when it is dark, and speaking to me and also to members of our caucus about concerns in the health care system, in the educational system, and in different arms of government because they are not free to speak out. They are not free to raise the concerns they have as public servants, so I really encourage the government to speed up the whistle-blower legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS there is a waste recovery facility being proposed by Eastern Waste Management in the Peak Pond-Reids Pond area; and

WHEREAS such a site will drastically impact the pond and general area in a negative way from an environmental perspective; and

WHEREAS there are many species of wildlife that will be negatively impacted by such a site, such as moose, rabbits, loons, ducks, Canada geese, et cetera; and

WHEREAS such a site will result in litter and strong odours in the general area; and

WHEREAS there are a significant number of cabins and permanent homes in the Peak Pond and Reids Pond area which will be negatively impacted by this site; and

WHEREAS Eastern Waste Management has many sites available to them for such a facility, including former dump sites in the area;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to intercede in the matter and advise Eastern Waste Management to withdraw this proposal and find a more suitable location for this waste recovery facility.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, as indicated here in this petition, Eastern Waste Management is proposing to place a waste transfer facility in the Peak Pond area. There are already eight other sites throughout the Province. This is the ninth and

final one, as I understand. I am also of the understanding that the other eight sites, or at least the majority of the other eight sites, have been set up in former landfill sites, which certainly makes a lot of sense.

Mr. Speaker, I have been up to that area and spoken to some of the permanent residents. I have also spoken to a number of people who have cabins in the area, people from the District of Mount Pearl South.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, it makes no sense to me whatsoever, when you view that site, why you would want to place it in that particular location, particularly given there are former landfill sites in that area. To destroy another piece of pristine wilderness, to place a waste transfer site and destroy that environment when there are already existing sites, makes no sense.

Certainly, the residents and the cabin owners are very upset by this. I understand there is an environmental assessment process going ahead, but from the perspective of those cabin owners and residents, they just want it stopped immediately. Therefore, I am bringing this to the House on their behalf and I will continue to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS Route 510 from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay is in deplorable condition and requires immediate upgrading; and

WHEREAS the condition of the highway is causing undue damage to vehicles using the highway and has now become a safety hazard for the travelling public; and

WHEREAS both residential and commercial traffic has increased dramatically with the opening of the Trans-Labrador Highway and increased development in Labrador; and

WHEREAS cold patching is no longer adequate as a means of repair;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately allocate resources to Route 510 from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay that allows for permanent resurfacing of the highway.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, they say a picture is worth a thousand words. Well, I can guarantee you when you are going to drive that road it is worth more than a thousand words, and I do it most weekends.

Many people have heard me complaining about the gravel roads in Southeast, but during the wintertime Mother Nature intervenes and that road – when we have an ice road it is good to travel on, but when you hit that pavement, and I drove it yesterday. I was driving along and bang, bang, bang; I thought the bottom was gone out of my vehicle. Every day I receive dozens of e-mails from people in that area saying it is only a miracle that someone has not been killed.

A few people here in the House last week had a chuckle, but it was not funny, when I referenced the highway as the Dalmatian highway because there are far more blocks of cold patch in it right now than there is actually pavement. It is thirty-five year old pavement. The time has come and gone for it to be resurfaced. It is a seventy-six kilometre stretch on Route 510.

I put a piece in *The Telegram* last week and I could not believe it when a spokesperson from Nalcor said, no, their equipment is not going over the road. It is going directly to the Muskrat Falls site via Goose Bay; yet, for months now every single time I am on the road there is a convoy of heavy equipment that is really pounding that road to death. So I am not sure where they are all going if they are not going to Muskrat Falls. That is certainly worsening what was already a very, very bad road.

I call upon the minister to have a serious look at that. We had four accidents last week. We have people losing tires and beating rims. It is a very, very serious issue and I will continue to raise it here in the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time, I move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to look at resolution and Bill 2, respecting the granting of Interim Supply to Her Majesty.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that this House do now resolve into Committee of the Whole to deal with Bill 2 respecting the granting of Interim Supply to Her Majesty, and that I do now leave the Chair.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Verge): Order, please!

The Committee will continue hearing debate on Interim Supply, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2015 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I am going to talk a little bit about ministers, and ministers going to very important functions on behalf of the people of this Province, and showing up at different events for the people of this Province and doing the business of the people of this Province. I think it is important. I think that work is important, Mr. Chair. I think it is important that the Province is represented. I think the voice of government being represented at these events is very important. I know, I served in Cabinet, Mr. Chair, and I can tell you it is important that the people have a representative at many of these events.

Mr. Chair, I am just going to point out some examples of the important work that is done by ministers when they go to these events. For example, March 14 of this year, Mr. Chair, the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills went to Ottawa. I commend the minister for doing that because I think it was important. I think it was important that the Province was represented there.

The news release said the hon. – and I will not say the name because I know we are not supposed to. The “Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, will join fellow Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers of Immigration at meetings March 18 at the John G. Diefenbaker Building on Sussex Drive in Ottawa.

“During these meetings, the Expression of Interest (EOI) model for economic immigration,

a design intended to be more responsive to labour market demand, will be among the items discussed. Ministers will also consider employer and provincial and territorial roles in the EOI, scheduled for launch in 2015.”

I commend the minister for going up there. I think that is important work, Mr. Chair. As I have said, I believe that it is important work that the Province is represented at these events.

I am going to give another example; May 13, 2013 the Premier attends an Offshore Technology Conference in Houston. I think that is important, and I think considering the Province’s role in the offshore industry it is important that the Premier attended that event.

Mr. Chair, it was a Ministerial Statement and it reads, “...I rise in this Honourable House today to highlight the tremendous work that took place at the Offshore Technology Conference, which I attended in Houston, Texas last week. This was a valuable opportunity...” – and I agree with that – for this Province “to not only discuss offshore technology with other leaders in the industry but also support our Newfoundland and Labrador delegation of 180 offshore service and supply sector companies who were there to market their products, skills and services.” I think that is important. Many people would argue that it is not, but I think it was money well spent. I think that we need to be at these events.

Mr. Chair, I am going to give a couple of more examples; April 16, 2013 the Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs attended a meeting in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The news release read, the hon. “Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs, will attend the annual meeting of the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group, April 16-17, at the Fort Garry Hotel in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Topics on this year’s agenda include Aboriginal education, Aboriginal economic development and violence against Aboriginal women and girls.” We know that that was very timely just recently. Again, I commend the hon. gentleman for attending those meetings on behalf of the people of this Province.

I am going to get to the point that I am making now in a couple of minutes, Mr. Chair. November 15 of 2013, the Minister Responsible for Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs again attended a meeting in Winnipeg, Manitoba. It was November 18 and 19 at the Delta Hotel in Winnipeg and the topics on the agenda were Aboriginal education, Aboriginal economic development, addressing violence against Aboriginal women and girls, national disaster mitigation strategy on reserve, and Aboriginal housing.

Mr. Chair, in April of 2012, the Premier attended a meeting in Houston at the Reliant Center and there were over 200 delegates there representing approximately seventy local companies and organizations. Again, I will say that it is important.

Mr. Chair, there were other meetings; I will not go through the entire list, but I will say meetings in Meech Lake, Quebec. It sounds like a nice place to be for a meeting. The Meech Lake one was by the Minister of Finance. There was a meeting in Boston by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture. That sounds like a nice place to visit.

Mr. Chair, in November of 2013 the Minister of Fisheries went to China on the government’s business. Again, I think it is important that we be represented at these events. The Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture attended a meeting in Brussels; another Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture attended a meeting in Boston.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Chair, I am not condemning any of them because I think they are all important meetings, and I think they are a valuable investment for the people of this Province to have this Province represented at meetings. I am not saying there is anything wrong with it, Mr. Chair.

The Minister of Justice attends a meeting in Ottawa; the Minister of Justice attends a meeting

in the Yukon; the Natural Resources Minister goes to Toronto; Tourism, meeting in Ottawa; the Minister of Environment, Cape Town, South Africa. Mr. Chair, Tourism, going to the Northwest Territories; the Minister of Education in Cape Town, South Africa.

Mr. Chair, the reason I am outlining these – and they all sound like very nice places to be – I am wondering: What is wrong with Gander? What is wrong with going to Gander? Is Gander not sexy enough, not exciting enough, not enough Air Mile points, Mr. Chair? It is a lot cheaper to go to Gander than it is to Cape Town, South Africa.

While I say that the meeting in Cape Town, South Africa, this Province was served well, it was a good meeting, and I think that it is important to be at these meetings; but I know that the issue being discussed in Gander regarding water in this Province – and I am going to say that of all of these meetings, because there are many, many, many more meetings that ministers go to, but all of those meetings that I pointed out, Mr. Chair, were while this House was in session, while this House was open and while we were sitting.

Mr. Chair, the Minister of Environment stood last week and said I cannot go to Gander for a meeting on water because the House is open. All of those meetings that I pointed out, Mr. Chair, were while the House was open.

I am not sure, Mr. Chair, if Gander is not far enough away, not exciting enough, or if the issue is not important enough. I am not sure if the meeting was not important enough, but all of these issues are important to the people of the Province and there are communities in this Province right now – I am getting e-mails on a regular basis from somebody complaining that they are dealing with frozen water. We hear from people who have water issues around the Province. We have concerns with water, water quality, chlorination issues, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. OSBORNE: We have issues with chlorination, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the member that his speaking time has expired.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks for the opportunity again to speak on Interim Supply, Bill 2. What we are talking about here, in case people do not know what it is, is the approval of money we need to continue on the good business and the good investments this government is doing and the investments we are making.

As a matter of fact, the member opposite just a little while ago mentioned about the Minister of AES going away on meetings. It is ironic, because it is just today, Mr. Chair, that I received an e-mail that a constituent in a municipality wanted me to share with the minister on the good work and the changes they made to the student employment applications this year. He wanted to applaud government for doing that and for making it more efficient.

That is what these meetings are all about. When our ministers travel to different places, they convene and they exchange ideas. Of course, it always makes it better for the people participating, I say, Mr. Chair.

Anyway, getting back to the Supply bill, right now we are looking at approving \$2,829,892,500, Mr. Chair. That includes money that is going out to Transportation and Works, Advanced Education and Skills, and Child, Youth and Family Services.

Just today, Mr. Chair, I had the privilege to join the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services on an investment for the Continuum of Care regarding the services of the adoptions and the level four they introduced today with regard to adoptions and the children who are having it very difficult in their areas. They need to be looked after by Child, Youth and Family Services and the proper people skill sets to be able to look after them in a residential setting. That in itself was quite an announcement this morning, and we need money to do that.

Health and Community Services and Justice; to go back to Health and Community Services, I know my colleague from Terra Nova was up talking on Health and Community Services last week, Mr. Chair, and he was talking about dialysis. Of course, dialysis is near and dear to me, and has been for some time. I probably talk about it too much at times, Mr. Chair. However, with the investments we have made in diagnostic equipment, especially dialysis, we have gone from seven sites up to fourteen.

With the opening of the one in Harbour Breton this year, I think it is in the fall, it will certainly relieve a lot of pressure on sites like Gander and Grand Falls-Windsor. This is significant because a lot of us can recall when we only had a couple of options; either go to Corner Brook or St. John's. So this money, when it is passed, will go out for services like that, I say, Mr. Chair.

Also, I wanted to get into Innovation, Business and Rural Development. There is money here for this as well. Mr. Chair, a big part of this government's focus is on economic responsibility. When we allocate business attraction funds or research and development grants, we subject applications to analysis to make sure the people's money is well invested. We have invested strategically, Mr. Chair, to help build vibrant and sustainable communities.

Creating opportunities for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to contribute their ideas, insights, and expertise in this process will be essential to the development of the Open Government

Initiative. A big part of this government's focus is on economic responsibility.

Mr. Chair, from April 1 – I just wanted to share a couple of stats. I always like to share some stats when I am up speaking.

MR. S. COLLINS: Stats are good.

MR. FORSEY: Stats are always good, I say to the Member for Terra Nova.

From April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2013, IBRD spent \$17.3 million on 276 projects through the Innovation Strategy program. Since 2011, over \$964,000 toward twenty-one projects through its technology program, and \$1.83 million for youth innovation, supporting 103 projects, Mr. Chair.

The Youth Innovation Program provides non-repayable contributions up to 80 per cent of eligible project costs to a maximum of \$20,000. Since 2009, the provincial government has invested close to \$1.8 million in eighty projects that support youth innovation.

In May of 2013, the provincial government announced \$422,000 in funding to twenty-four schools throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. That is the importance of this particular project and that is why we need to keep it going. It is good for the rural areas. It is good for youth. It is good for innovation, Mr. Chair.

Of course, the broadband initiative; I know it has been brought up here many times and I have always lobbied for my own district, as other members in this House have done. Mr. Chair, our government's investment of \$29.6 million has leveraged more than \$115 million from other sources to improve broadband access in Newfoundland and Labrador. This year we are on target to reach approximately 95 per cent coverage for the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FORSEY: Some notes I have written down, Mr. Chair. If the Member for The Straits – White Bay North wants that he can certainly

have it. It is not electronic. I think it is from BIC, but that is the BIC pen. I think that is where it came from.

Mr. Chair, talking about the broadband initiative; in 2007, an RFP was issued to bring broadband access to 200 communities. The RFP was precipitated by the provincial government's \$15 million investment in the Province's second trans-gulf fibre option connection to mainland, Canada.

In 2009, the provincial government announced the intention to connect more than 1,000 of its facilities, including health care institutions, libraries, schools and other offices in the communities throughout the Province. The network also sought to enhance the ability of communication companies to offer similar services to local residents and business customers, Mr. Chair.

The RBI was introduced. We had the RBI I, where there was a \$7 million investment; RBI II, a \$2 million investment. This past year, 2013-2014, RBI III; a further \$6.3 million was announced for the RBI III initiative, Mr. Chair.

In an effort to focus this funding towards remaining unserved and congested areas, an extensive mapping exercise was undertaken. The mapping exercise showed that approximately 95 per cent of the population has access to high-speed Internet. That is a major improvement since this program was brought in, I say, Mr. Chair. This is very important to the people of the Province, very important, especially to people in rural areas. When they need to operate their business from small rural areas, they can have contact with the rest of the Province or the rest of the world; therefore, it is very important.

That is why when we are talking about the Interim Supply bill and the money that we need, this is what we need it for: to continue the good work that this government is doing and to continue on with the initiatives that the people are looking for.

I am sure I have mentioned this before – but just in case because it is another figure, another stat – this year alone more than \$20 million has been approved under IBRD programs for regional and business initiatives. A lot of this is for rural areas, Mr. Chair. I am sure I will get the opportunity to discuss some of those areas and those investments later on.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to pick up on something that my colleague, the Member for St. John's South, had referenced in his comments about the statement that was made by the Minister of Environment and Conservation in the House of Assembly last week.

The Minister of Environment and Conservation pointed out that there is going to be a conference in Gander to look at the issue of water. It is the 2014 Clean and Safe Drinking Water Workshop. We just recognized World Water Day and the issue of safe drinking water is important all around the world, but especially here in our Province.

We know for a fact, Mr. Chair, at any given time there is something upwards of 150 boil water advisories in effect in this Province. We know oftentimes that – fortunately not that frequently, but we know there are instances where communities in the wintertime do not have an adequate supply of water. Oftentimes there are outbreaks of one thing or another where communities do not have water. There are communities that have boil water advisories in effect all the time.

We know communities such as Lawn, down in the Member for Grand Bank's district, where people have to go to a central point to collect water; often like you did back in the pod auger days, in order to get safe drinking water. So it is

a significant issue and a lot of those boil water advisories have been in place for about twenty-five years. I mean, it is a long period of time for communities in Newfoundland and Labrador, this day and age, twenty-five years with boil water advisories.

The Member for St. John's South pointed out that ministers do attend conferences while the House of Assembly is sitting. I know the Minister of Environment and Conservation said that she would not be able to attend because she will be here in the House of Assembly, but of course we know that the rules are structured very graciously so as to allow Ministers of the Crown to do the important work on behalf of the people of the Province to go out and attend those meetings.

Of course, politicians, we even have a would-be leader of the governing party, would-be leader of the PC Party down live-tweeting from Cuba wearing a fedora and smoking cigars and making commentary of all sorts, Mr. Chair, travelling around making comments about the direction of politics – not necessarily water; I did see some comment about a firing squad, but I will leave that to the members opposite to sort out.

Mr. Chair, I did go back through press releases. I know there was the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills recently attended the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers of Immigration meeting. We had the Premier who, while the House of Assembly was sitting, went and attended the Offshore Technology Conference in Houston. That was in May of last year. Of course, the weather in Houston is a bit different than the weather here in May. Then we had the hon. the Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs, while the House of Assembly was sitting, went to attend the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group meetings in Winnipeg; that was in April of last year.

We also had the Minister Responsible for Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs who, while the House of Assembly was sitting last fall, went to attend an Aboriginal Affairs Working Group meeting in Winnipeg, Mr. Chair. We also had

the Premier, while the House of Assembly was sitting, went down to attend the Offshore Technology Conference in Houston, Texas again. That was another trip to Houston, Mr. Chair, down to represent the Province down there. That was while the House of Assembly was sitting.

We also had the minister who is now the Minister of Finance, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, while the House of Assembly was sitting, attending an important federal-provincial-territorial meeting of Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Of course, that is a little bit further than Gander, because Gander is really not that far away. I know some members take air travel out that way, and certainly they are allowed to do that if that is their chosen mode of travel.

Also, this time of the year I know the weather is a bit touch and go. It could be a morning like this morning, but I suppose if you went in the evening in advance you could have no problem getting out to Gander.

In any case, as I said, it is really not unusual for ministers to vacate their seat in the House of Assembly for a day or two, or even three days. Sometimes they are gone for the whole week, Mr. Chair, to go to important meetings to do the important work of representing their departments and the Cabinet, the government caucus, of course, the provincial government, and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador's interests at a variety of different meetings.

Back in December 2012, when the House of Assembly was sitting, the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board he was at the time, the now Acting Premier, went to attend the federal-provincial-territorial Finance Ministers' meeting in Meech Lake, Quebec. Of course, Meech Lake is nice that time of the year.

We also had, in March, the minister attending – oh, this was this year. Yes, this was not very long ago the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture went down to Boston to attend the annual Seafood Expo. We also had the Minister

of Fisheries who travelled last year to China, all the way to China while the House of Assembly was sitting to attend China Fisheries & Seafood Expo, so that was a long way to go. I wanted to check and see what the distance was in comparison to Gander than to go to China to go to a meeting while the House of Assembly was sitting as well.

Then, we also had the former Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture who went to Brussels. It is a nice place; I have been to Brussels myself on my own private business, but a really, really nice city and a good distance away, a further distance than Gander I will say. It is a lot further to go Brussels, obviously, than it is to go out to Gander to represent the Cabinet, the government, and your particular portfolio to a European Seafood Exposition.

We also had the previous, now the Minister of Justice when he was Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture – and we have had an awful lot of Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture over the past number of years. It almost seems like we have a different one every six months or so.

That Minister of Fisheries, while the House of Assembly was sitting, also went down to the International Boston Seafood Show to represent the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the interests of the people of the Province at that meeting. Last year, the same minister – he was Minister of Justice though at the time – also went to Ottawa to attend the federal-provincial-territorial Ministers of Justice and public safety meeting.

The former Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace, he is no longer in the House of Assembly now, everybody will know he had a fairly notable dust up with the former Premier in China and subsequently vacated his post. He went to Toronto in March of 2012 to go to an international mineral convention and trade show to represent the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador in the interests of the people of the Province while the House of Assembly was sitting.

It is also interesting, Mr. Chair, to point out that the Minister of Environment and Conservation is unable to travel to Gander to go to the drinking water conference. Back in December, 2006, when she was Minister of Education she had no problem, while the House of Assembly was sitting, going down to Cape Town, South Africa to attend a meeting. Of course, it was an important meeting. She was leading a Canadian delegation of Ministers of Education at an international conference.

There is no reason for a minister to not attend a conference, whether it is Gander, or Brussels, or Halifax, or anywhere else, Mr. Chair, while the House of Assembly is sitting. We well know that we make allowances for ministers to travel while the House is sitting, and I encourage the minister to change her mind on this.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the member his time for speaking has expired.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to rise here and speak to Interim Supply. As many of us here on both sides of the House, even us in the backbench who have a fire and a passion for the people of our district and a passion for the people of the Province, we love to stand up and speak at every opportunity. I will get down to it right away.

I would like to commend the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs today on his minister's statement for Cain's Quest. I would also like to commend the member across the way for Torngat Mountains on his response to that Ministerial Statement which talked about the qualities of the people who had the guts, Mr. Chair, to engage in that race; twenty-nine teams getting into the action, only eight finishing.

I would just like to say we were positively glued to our computer monitors, following the race at every turn and checking out the local pictures. People were coming out in droves, Mr. Chair, to get out and see the racers at every opportunity at the rest stops.

The member across the way from Torngat Mountains talked about the fatigue. He talked about the long hours, the high speeds, the unbelievable conditions that these riders and these racers had to face, braving the elements, braving the trail, the natural terrain. It is just fantastic, Mr. Chair.

He made one comment that I would like to reiterate here. He said there were no losers, and I believe that absolutely to be the case. Anybody who had the will, the fortitude and the backing to get into this race certainly needs to be commended. Although only eight crossed the finish line, Mr. Chair, I would just like to say that anybody who was willing to brave not only the majesty but also the ruggedness, the terrain of Labrador, should be commended for that.

Some of the things we have missed in all of this that were not mentioned by either the minister or the member across the way were the support that these teams needed to get the job done. They had their own support teams that were there for the break-and-fix scenarios. They had sponsors that were there not only putting up just the machines in some cases but there to help them with the clothing, to make sure they had the gear necessary to give a good showing, if you would, Mr. Chair, but to also be safe out there as well.

I would like to commend Fire and Emergency Services, people who were on standby making sure that in the event people did have trouble and there were injuries, they were there and in some cases had to engage with the people and help out and make sure they were brought home safe and sound as well.

We have heard stories of the camaraderie that developed between teams. Although they were in competition, in the spirit of safety, in the spirit of seeing people make it home alive from the rugged wilderness of Labrador, Mr. Chair, we

have seen people come together. I guess at their own expense, the time they lost, they took it upon themselves to stick together, help each other and see each other through.

I would like to give special mention, Mr. Chair, to Team 5 from Goose Bay, George Rodgers and Mark Simms, and also Team 77, the Backcountry Ravens, Jason King and Ronald Barth, who had a great showing and placed second; friends of mine, Mr. Chair, local heroes, celebrities if you will, who did all they could to have a good showing. The community came out in droves just to get a glimpse of them along the trail. I would like to say thank you to each of those guys for their effort representing our communities and congratulations on a race well run.

Mr. Chair, next I would like to take a few moments and just talk about some of my activities in Labrador in the last little while. I am so pleased to hear people from across the way spend a lot of time today during Interim Supply talk about how our members and how our ministers are just everywhere around the Province. It is very true.

They are so busy in fact, Mr. Chair, that when the Minister of Municipal Affairs could not make it down to Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair for a special announcement, he asked a Labradorian to go down and represent him and this government, and I certainly was absolutely pleased to do so. I talk about my little trip to Cartwright. It was good to see the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair down there as well where we contributed around \$65,000 to the Cartwright outdoor rink project, a wonderful allocation of funds, I must say.

It all came about when the recreation committee from Cartwright got a response from the Royal Bank about a request for some funding. They then engaged us. With a combination of federal funds and our funds, Mr. Chair, we got to see an absolutely beautiful outdoor rink for the youth and for the athletes in Cartwright set up right alongside the 50 Plus Club, which was a wonderful initiative as well.

We got to see them setting up and putting the final touches on the rink. We got to see their ingenuity in their little homemade Zamboni, which was put together with a couple of slides, a tow-behind, a forty-five-gallon drum, if you will, to make sure the ice had a good surface.

We also got to see the community supports in place when the RCMP came out for their third donation to the community in terms of, I believe at that time, \$15,000 in hockey equipment, Mr. Chair. I would like to thank Constable Ed Power and the RCMP boys for coming out in full force, pardon the pun. They showed how the community comes together for things like this.

If you are over twenty years old and you are in Cartwright, you would know they had a rink in previous years. Now the little ones will be able to get out there and they will also be able to go over to the 50 Plus Club, Mr. Chair, and have a warm-up on those colder days as well. Not only do we see a community that steps up to the plate and goes for those recreation dollars, I think even though it is not a PC district, it shows the willingness of this government to put money where it is needed and to support those communities that are ready to step up to the plate and fight for what those communities want and those communities need.

I would like to thank the people of Cartwright, truly wonderful people, for taking care of us when we were in the district. A special thanks go out to Rich Lewis for taking care of logistics for myself and my CA Shannon Tobin. We had a wonderful time. My only regret of the whole trip was that as I was doing my little speech there in front of the 50 Plus Club, people were pointing to the plane that was coming to get us there. I did not get to have the fish and brewis from the 50 Plus Club, so that is my only regret leaving the community of Cartwright. I would like to thank them for their hospitality, wish them well, and congratulate them on their rink.

Next up, Mr. Chair, I would like to give mention to the community of Sheshatshiu. This past weekend they had the Penote Ben Michel Memorial Tournament. Although I was under

the weather and did not get to make it, with that note I will say I am sorry to my lovely wife and daughter who had to take care of me. I became ill with the flu and a giant baby emerged if you will. They had to take care of me. I missed the hockey tournament down there.

I would just like to say that what a tournament they put off. I was following online, getting the updates from my friends there. It was great to see all the leaders come out: Chief Penashue and Chief Andrew from Innu Nation. Local leaders like Peter Penashue get into it. We had teams from all over. We had a lot of input from Goose Bay.

I would like to say, Mr. Chair, nobody hosts a hockey tournament like the community of Sheshatshiu. This one may have been the most successful ever. I would like to say, though, on a more somber note also that at that time they dedicated the arena to the late Chief Joseph Riche, our friend Shushep, who is greatly missed. It was a tear-filled event. They played his song. When the curtain unveiled the name in the arena, the house was brought to tears and rightfully so. He is missed to this very day.

The community, I tell you, does one thing and one thing above all else: They remember those who have led the way, those who have shown the kids how to be Innu, how to be proud of their heritage, and proud of their culture. They certainly like to put that spirit, the spirit of their elders and their people into every event they host.

With that I would also like to give my heartfelt condolences to the communities of Natuashish and Sheshatshiu for the loss of Innu elder Dominic Pokue who was renowned for his storytelling, his way to make people visualize the past practices of the Innu people, and how to teach the young people to carry those practices forward into this new day for them.

Mr. Chair, I would like to say that Gervais Penashue must be commended for keeping the memorial tournament going year after year. He certainly does a wonderful job.

Since I am running out of time, I would also like to say that since we are talking about some of the great Innu people we have lost over the last while, I would also like to remind the people of Happy Valley-Goose Bay to come out Thursday evening at 8:00 at the E.J. Broomfield Memorial Arena for a vigil for the late Loretta Saunders, in remembrance of her, and in remembrance of all the murdered and missing Aboriginal women in our country, to give pressure to the Harper government to call an inquiry.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I rise again in my place to talk about Interim Supply. I have to note that yes, the memorial service is on the twenty-seventh and we will be there and we will keep the various families in mind.

Mr. Chair, I would like to have a few comments today about Interim Supply particularly when it comes around water issues, around issues that municipalities are facing, the challenges that they are facing as well, the challenges that have been faced in this country, and the lessons, of course, that have been presented over recent history that this Province should, hopefully, be learning by.

Of course, whenever you are talking about a lesson in the mishandling of water issues, one need only to look as far as Walkerton, Ontario to see what can happen when you do not have a proper municipal handling of water, let alone a proper government handling of water. I certainly hope that, with this Interim Supply bill, there is going to be a huge amount of funding here for municipalities that they can direct to their various water issues and the water challenges that they are facing.

Mr. Chair, the whole issue of water is not an easy one. Sometimes you will find that besides people who have an issue with a well that may be in their own yard, or they may be on a municipal water system, sometimes you need to be shown real leadership when it comes to water issues; you need to hear from the provincial government as well as the federal government on various issues when it comes to water.

We have had several governmental branches, if you will, that have taken up the charge on this. We have the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment who meet on a regular basis and discuss these issues. In 2004, they defined what I guess they would call a multi-barrier approach to water issues and they came up with three chief ingredients when it came to the governance of water. They say in their report that the goal of the MBA "in drinking water management is to reduce the risk of drinking water contamination through the presence of system redundancies, or barriers, built into the water system."

What do we mean by this? What they are talking about is the whole issue of the governance of water by the various branches of government connected with water. It does not only start in the home, but that person in the home needs the assurance that the provincial government or their municipal governments are going to be looking after their needs when it comes to water. They involved various stakeholders to develop short- and long-term plans to prevent, minimize, or control potential sources of pollution.

Mr. Chair, the other day when I asked questions in the House of the minister on this particular issue, because it happened to be World Water Day – it was on March 22 – I figured, well, it is time to get back to the water issues again now, start talking about these issues, and find out where government stands when it comes to water. It is not easy sometimes getting answers to that. It is not easy sometimes when you are sending out inquiries, for example, on water or you are asking questions on water to find out where government actually stands on an issue.

In other provinces we do know where they stand on particular issues, and one of those issues happens to be about source water protection. Source water protection issues are dealing with the protection of water that is outside your normal purview as a person, as a business, or as a municipality. It deals with the protection of water that would be outside of there, but it still has a direct influence on your water supply.

When I say source water protection, if I am talking about a project, for example, like fracking, fracking may not be happening in your own neighbourhood, it could be happening down the road, but the influence of that particular resource could have an effect on you eventually or because you are downstream. Of course, the reason I get up and talk about fracking is exactly that people are looking for protection of their rights, particularly when it comes to not only their immediately air environment but particularly when it comes to their water environment. Whatever happens upstream of you eventually hits you downstream. That is the reason why I get up and talk about fracking.

The second reason why we get up and talk about water all the time over here, as a party, is relatively simple. Because a lot of times we get up here, we stand up and talk about municipal funding issues when it comes to water here all the time. We talk about the funding arrangement that the Province does not have, as yet, with the various municipalities.

We know there is some hope eventually down the road that this issue is going to be rectified, but so far – and, Mr. Chair, let the record show – most of the presentations that I saw of either Municipalities NL or from my own research shows that this new funding arrangement has been fought for by municipalities as far back as the mid-1980s. This is an ongoing issue, and still does not have any redress on the part of municipalities. The provincial government here still ends up fighting with municipalities over that funding arrangement. We keep hearing arguments back and forth when it comes to water.

Let me tell you, the people of Walkerton, Ontario know water. In May of 2000, of course, we had several deaths due to, in some cases, the lack of training when it came to the regulatory changes at the provincial level. We also had deaths that were caused due to the lack of training on the part of water operators, people who were out there looking after chlorination systems and everything. That is how important water is. You cannot live without it. It is okay for an industry to move in and reap profit, but as one person told me already on this particular issue, you cannot drink money. You need water to live. So the focus should always be on water and people's rights around it.

Mr. Chair, in the Dennis O'Connor report of May, 2000 – the second part of the Walkerton inquiry report came out in 2002. In his report he stated among the ninety-three recommendations in the Walkerton report, Justice Dennis O'Connor recommended – well, actually, instead of recommending, of those ninety-three recommendations, thirteen of those actually dealt with source water protection. It talked about the problems upstream from where the individual had their water supply being drawn for. So, there is a vulnerability that we know about that is there.

We have the private landowner, in this particular case, had a well that ended up getting damaged by farm by-product, let's say, and then you had a municipal downfall as well as a provincial problem when it came to handling of water samples, that sort of thing. It is almost like while the barriers have been talked about by the Canadian Council of the Ministers of Environment, at the same time some of these barriers can end up themselves causing problems, and nobody wants to take responsibility. That is the feeling that I get from this.

Just to give everybody an example of what I am talking about; for example, the same day I was asking questions around water, I asked about the Big Triangle Pond project. One of the concerns here, of course, is while there is an environmental preview report being done and submitted to government, we keep asking for a

full environmental assessment to be done on this project. Again, I am going to come back to the source water issue here and I am going to connect it right up to a municipality.

The Town of Holyrood has its backup water supply as the North Arm River. The North Arm River runs right up through the countryside along the Salmonier Line, up to Little Triangle Pond that is right there on one side of the highway. That little pond gets its water from Big Triangle Pond.

Mr. Chair, when you are talking about the lack of source water protection here, we are talking about the construction of a road that is going to go in here and probably forever change the environment of that particular area. There is going to be the storage of chemicals in here too, not to mention fuel supplies for heavy equipment that is going to be running in there. That is what we are talking about when we are talking about the need, not only, number one, for an environmental assessment of this project, even though it is in the environmental preview report stage, but we are also talking about the need for this government to spend some wise money and invest it into source water protection so that we know we are going to have full control over our water and what happens to it.

I see that my time is up, Mr. Chair. I will relinquish the floor to somebody else and get up in a little while and talk about water again.

CHAIR: I recognize the hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor – Green Bay South.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUNTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, it gives me somewhat pleasure today to have a few words to say on Bill 2, An Act for Granting to Her Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2015 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service.

It is not a small amount of money, Mr. Chair. Money that we are voting on is over \$2 billion. Actually, it is \$2,829,892,500. It is a lot of money to spend in a short period of time.

In that, Mr. Chair, this Province is responsible for the well-being and the social programs for the people of our Province. This government is responsible for that. This government has put forward so many budgets now to take care of the interests of the people of the Province.

By having an Interim budget, it takes care of the interests until our Budget is passed. It might take a few months for us to get to the main Budget, but in the meantime the bills have to be paid. That gives us an opportunity, each member of this House, to get up and have a few words and speak about anything we want to talk about because it is a money bill. It is a time for us to get up and have a few words about, basically, anything.

We do recognize a lot of things in our own districts. It gives up an opportunity to praise up the things in our districts and praise up what government is doing in our districts. Of course, if we were in the Opposition, it gives us an opportunity to criticize the government for things they see that we are not doing in the districts.

From my period of time in this Legislature, over fifteen years now, and after being around for fifteen Budgets and fifteen Interim budgets, I can look around the Province and see that we are a lot better off since I have been here. Not because I am here but because –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUNTER: Even when I was in Opposition, and I give credit to the government of the day back then. Even though we criticized a lot, we still give credit for the good things that governments have always done and governments will always do, no matter what party is here, because that is our responsibility as a government, as a party, as an elected official in this Legislature. It is our responsibility to make sure that the people of our Province come first in

our budgets, in our delivering of services. We have to consider all of these things.

Before I go any further, Mr. Chair, I would like to welcome the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace. I did not have a chance to do that before. It is nice to have him, and I am sure it is a great experience for him to be here. After one or two terms he will probably wonder why he is here and wonder if he wants to come back here. There is something about it that always draws you back. After my seven times running and always wanting to be here, it is getting close to the time when I do not want to be here and need to move on. Hopefully, that will be within the short future.

Mr. Chair, you can look around and see what government is doing. You can look at every department. The Department of Health is a very, very big budget. I think there is over \$1 billion in the Interim budget just to keep us going for a couple of months, to deliver health care services; \$1,020,483,700 just to keep us over for a couple of months until we get into the main budget of probably another \$2 billion.

Because of the Province and the way it is spread out, health care is not an easy thing to deliver. People are all over the Province, we have health care facilities, and we have people wanting more. I am surprised it does not take up a bigger part of the Budget. We do have to deliver the best health care that we can for the money that we have allocated in our budgets for that.

In the last number of years I have been here, I have seen a big increase in the amount of money spent in health care. We are always going to have people complaining. Do we do the best for everybody? It is hard to do that. You do your best, you try to get the best health care that you can get, and of course we have to try to improve on it continuously.

You cannot just sit back and say here is what we did last year and the year before; this is what we are going to do this year. We have to try to get better and do more with the amount of money that we have. The financial pie that we have to work with is only so big. You can only cut that

pie so many ways to fit into our departments and our delivering of goods and services in the Province.

With our transportation needs – and nobody knows it better than me in transportation. I have a lot of roads in rural Newfoundland that I am responsible for. I have a ferry in my district. It just takes so much money to deliver a good road system and maintenance. The wintertime is a big challenge, especially with the ferry system, and with the rural roads that we have. It is a real big challenge, but we still have to budget X number of dollars to do this work now in the interim and then for the rest of the year with our main Budget.

The responsibility comes back to the ministers to make the decisions on what they are going to spend in the departments. Then, Cabinet, as a whole, has to decide at the end of the day when the Minister of Finance says here is the Budget that we have prepared and then everybody has to agree with it – even though some ministers are challenged because they have to go back over their figures time and time again to see where they can cut, make a few cuts here and there to try to get within a sustainable Budget, a Budget that is fair not only to the people but is fair in the delivery of services.

We have to make sure that everything is sustainable. We have to make sure we live within our means. Does that mean a deficit? Maybe, it might mean a deficit. Maybe it could be a short term, sometimes a long term, but we all have to do that in our daily lives. We all have to decide how much money we are going to spend on our groceries, when we are going to buy a new car if we buy a new car, and our cost of living.

We all know where that goes. The cost of living goes up for everybody. It goes up for government. When the price of fuel goes up and the price of service goes up and labour goes up, then the cost goes up for government. Government has to pass it on to the taxpayers of the Province. How do you do that? You do that in the form of a budget where we have to live by it.

When the interim Budget is finished and we go into our main Budget then we get a book called the Estimates. The Estimates book shows the Budget for the previous year, the amendments – the actual money that we spent – and then what we propose to spend in the coming year. Sometimes there is very little difference because there are things you have to do and you cannot cut. So Budgets some years are the same year after year after year, with modest increase. In some areas where government has to look to find savings, you can see a difference in, well, maybe they budgeted for \$20 million in last year's Budget, but they only spent \$10 million.

Now there is a reason for that. I mean, the Cabinet and the ministers have to go back sometimes and look at their budget and say: Well, we are not going to do this project this year or that project. Then, the Minister of Finance says to another department: We need to save \$20 million; we need to save \$5 million.

So, constantly they are going back and forth over the budgets and the Estimates for the coming year to see if we can deliver that service or see if we can save some money in not delivering that service. Unfortunately, for us, over here we are responsible for the chequebook; we are responsible to make sure that we live within our means.

When I was on that side, when I was in Opposition we did the same thing that the Opposition does today. It is the job they have to do; they have to keep our feet to the fire. They have to keep us accountable, and that is a hard job to do sometimes. I have sat on that side over there when we blasted the government day after day after day; but when the Liberal government was over here, at the end of the day we put thoughts in their mind where they did make changes, and it was for the betterment of the people of the Province. That is your job, and our job here is to do what we think we have to do with the taxpayers' money. It is not our money; it is the taxpayers' money.

MR. F. COLLINS: (Inaudible) eventually saw the light.

MR. HUNTER: The people of the Province eventually saw the light and elected us in 2003. It was no bed of roses when we changed from that side to this side, I tell you, in 2003. When the Premier of the day came to me and said we are cancelling the cancer clinic in Grand Falls-Windsor, of course, my blood pressure went up here, and I grew about six feet taller, I think, but it was not an easy thing to do. It was not an easy thing to go back into your district and tell them that you are cancelling a cancer clinic. We worked that out over a period of time, and it all had to do with how government decided they are going to spend the taxpayers' money – and it worked out. It worked out in our favour; we got our cancer clinic.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUNTER: There are lots of examples where I can look back over the last fifteen years and look at the negative side of things that we thought would happen but did not happen and something positive happened. We got a new ferry in Long Tickle and in Long Island – a brand new ferry. A couple of years ago the minister went out and we unveiled it, a service to the people. Are the people 100 per cent happy with the service? No, they are not, because you cannot do everything 100 per cent to the satisfaction of the people when you have a budget to go by and dollars to look at.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HUNTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I recognize the hon. the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is not often that I get to listen to the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor – Green Bay South, in listening to his remarks about budgeting and how important it is to budget and the whole

process of looking at making decisions when it comes to a budget. Well, we have seen this government here show very poor vision when it comes to a budget. One of the things you need to look at when you are budgeting and, as in your budgeting with life, you look at the long term, you look at taking a long-term approach, but government consistently budgets from year to year to year and then it comes up with shortfalls or there is a real push for a department to try to get money out the door at the very last minute, rather than looking at multi-year planning, multi-year budgeting. That is where you are going to get greater value when it comes to looking at utilizing the taxpayers' dollar.

Multi-year planning – Municipalities
Newfoundland and Labrador talks about how we should look at multi-year planning for capital projects because it provides a more consistent approach to how they can prepare. The same thing, in any of our households, we need to look at multi-year planning. If we look at trying to build the knowledge-based economy – and that is something that is very important in Newfoundland and Labrador. I heard the Parliamentary Secretary for Innovation, Business and Rural Development get up and read his notes and talk about utilizing old technology, the BIC pen and paper, but there is nothing wrong with that. It is really important to know where we are at, where is that roadmap in Newfoundland and Labrador when it comes to our knowledge-based economy.

I have been asking for the last two years for a list of government buildings that are served by high-speed Internet, high broadband, and those that are not. The Department of IBRD has said in this very House that they could provide it. They could provide two years ago. They still have not provided that documentation. I do not know what they have to hide there, Mr. Chair, when it comes to telling us that.

As well, I asked in this particular House for a list of communities that have high-speed Internet and those that do not. The department has confirmed that they have mapped the entire Province, yet claim that a list is commercially sensitive. I think if the Parliamentary Secretary

has that information, then he should make it available in this House so we can get better value. Under RBI I, RBI II, and RBI III, I guess, the businesses and the service providers that are out there can utilize our tax dollars and pair it with private-sector dollars so we can cover off as many households with this type of technology.

There are varying forms of technology. We could use fixed wire line. We could use wireless. We could also use satellite technologies. These are very important because a community, whether it is for education, whether it is for social activities, whether it is for business, whether it is for safety, we need to have high-speed Internet. We need to have wireless coverage in our communities.

We should be leaders, yet we are laggards. Marconi sent the first trans-Atlantic cable here in Newfoundland and Labrador on Signal Hill more than 111 years ago, yet we are behind many other provinces. We are behind in so many areas when it comes to the upload and download speeds and the fees that people pay.

There are people who are using satellite who have an upload speed – to try to get two megabytes per second, they have to pay \$175 plus tax a month; then there are caps and there are time delays. This is unacceptable when in jurisdictions in the United States you have the ability to get a similar service for \$30 to \$45 a month.

People who are using it in many rural communities, the minimum of 1.5 megabit uploads per second, if they are using major providers, they pay about that fee. They pay about \$40 to \$50 a month for high-speed Internet at their homes. Why are we being gouged as consumers, and those who do not have that option having to pay almost \$200 a month through satellite service? It is unacceptable.

We are not seeing that information being released by the Department of IBRD, but they should be sharing because an open government would be sharing that information. They say

they are going to be putting things about municipalities up there, so why are we not putting up the municipalities that have high-speed Internet and those that do not?

My district in particular has nine communities out of thirty-five that do not have access to high-speed Internet. Some of them are heavily underserved and some of them are capped. Some that do have the service basically are at capacity, and that is a real hindrance when we come to economic development and when we come to diversifying our economy.

I think there is a better way. There are certainly options. I would hope the Department of IBRD and the minister has the vision to make sure we are not at just 95 per cent, that we are much higher. If we look at where the CRTC says that 99 per cent of Canadian households are either covered by wireless or they have a home telephone line. If we are only at 95 per cent after this year's funding announcement – because last year's funding announcement for many high-speed Internet areas such as the Bird Cove area, Plum Point area, they are not fully covered right now and it is a year later. They have just a few days to meet their deadline. Will that provider come through?

It is one thing about saying you are going to do something, but having the capacity to do it is another thing. That is what we have seen in the transportation sector. The member opposite talked about transportation. It is okay to have a \$60 million road repair program, but if you are going to come out with your tenders really late and 20 per cent of the work never gets done, well that is a huge issue.

I certainly think that announcing tenders early and in a multi-year process is important because it allows for consistent planning. Businesses are forward looking, and that is where we need to be. We need to be looking at those types of things. It is not rocket science.

We will see the Budget come down on Thursday and it will be a one year Budget. It will not have that approach for multi-year budgeting. Looking at that there will be some projections for the

future, when we see where funds are committed for future years. Are they really committed when we are not in that multi-year budgeting approach? That is a concern for me.

One of the other things we see in many of our rural communities that is hindering our economic development are the transportation links that we have, whether they are ferry services, whether we are seeing increases to fees at Marine Atlantic. What is the provincial government doing to really bat that home to Ottawa that it is our provincial highway, that is where our goods and services are going right now?

Are we seeing the provincial government move forward from a pre-feasibility study on a fixed link to move forward to looking at a fixed link on the Northern Peninsula to Labrador through Quebec, through Route 138? As soon as we see Route 138 complete, transportation is going to flow north. I have said that in this House before. In my maiden speech I pointed that out, but we are not seeing it. We are not seeing the visionary approach from government.

When we have boil water advisories in the Province that are older and have been in existence longer than I have been here on this earth that is frustrating. I have municipalities in my district that have boil advisories that are over a decade long. There have been times when over 50 per cent of the public water supplies in my district are on boil advisory. That is a concern. We have to come up with a better, safe and clean drinking water strategy so that we can encourage people for the health outcomes of the Province.

We see health care costs are ballooning. Well, maybe we need to put more emphasis and investment on safe and clean drinking water. These portable water dispensing units are a good approach, but they are not the solution. There needs to be a much broader way to tackle this. Maybe we need to reach out to our universities and our colleges and our research and development corporation to look at finding those solutions.

We have a lot of talent in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have it right here. Sometimes we are not tapping in. We are not using that co-operative approach that we need to, to find a better result so we can allow our economy to grow, so we can ensure that our young people are staying.

We are just seeing the same old, same old from this government across the way. They are not using a visionary approach. They are certainly just backing up, backing up, backing up and that is not the way of dealing with the people of the Province. We need to have a progressive approach to dealing with people. We need to make sure we are listening, and this government certainly is not listening, unfortunately.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR (Littlejohn): The hon. the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is pleasure to stand in this hon. House today. First of all, I would like to thank the people of the District of Baie Verte – Springdale for their ongoing support. It is a privilege and an honour to represent them, not only in this hon. House but wherever I go.

Also, I would like to congratulate the Carbonear – Harbour Grace member for winning his seat in the by-election. I wish him well in his new duties. In addition, I would like to acknowledge and thank the former Premier for her hard work and dedication in serving the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I would like to wish her well in the next chapter in her life. Finally, I would like to applaud and thank the present Premier for assuming the role of interim Premier. He is doing an outstanding job. I thank him so much, Mr. Chair.

As other colleagues mentioned earlier, this is Interim Supply. So we have a lot of flexibility

in what we can talk about this afternoon. Mr. Chair, in my goings and comings throughout the district, I talked to a lot of people. One issue that keeps percolating to the top over and over again is roadwork. It is always a priority in my district, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, before I get into it, I just want to give you a brief description of my district. It is really divided into the Green Bay side, which is composed of fourteen communities, then we have a White Bay side, which we take care of about twenty-two communities, approximately, and a one-hour drive in between. As a district, we are geographically dispersed and, as you can understand, there are challenges posed by that geographical dispersion in meeting the needs of thirty-six communities.

Mr. Chair, I would like to give a recap of the roadwork that has been done in my district over the past five or six years or so. First of all, let us start with the Green Bay side. I have calculated that we have done approximately twenty-four kilometres on the Green Bay side. For example, we have done a significant amount of roadwork on Route 390; that is the route going into Springdale, which is the service centre for Green Bay.

We have done a lot of work on the Beachside, St. Patricks, Little Bay road, Route 392, and there will be some more going there as well later on down the road. On Route 391, we have done a significant amount of roadwork to the road leading to Harry's Harbour, Silverdale, Langdon's Cove, and Nicky's Nose Cove.

Furthermore, Mr. Chair, on Route 391, we have done a significant amount of work on King's Point road, an area known as Devil's Drop. We appreciate that as the people talked to the mayors, councillors and people in that region, they are certainly grateful of the roadwork done in that area.

On the White Bay side, Mr. Chair, we have a significant amount of roadwork with respect to towns such as Wild Cove, Westport, Brent's Cove, and Harbour Round; we have put \$1 million on Nippers Harbour road. That is still

gravel road, by the way, Mr. Chair. We have put a significant amount of investment on Route 414, the highway going into La Scie, and we have put a significant amount of investment in Route 410, which goes into Fleur de Lys, for a total of approximately twenty-six kilometres in the past five or six years.

Mr. Chair, as a people and as an MHA, I am certainly grateful and thankful for that investment, but as you know, the Baie Verte – Springdale district is stitched together with ribbons of shoulderless roads filled with potholes and exposed bedrock. Many residents throughout my district, through the social media, phone calls to my home and to my office have informed me, like they have done over the years, Mr. Chair, like other districts as well, that there is a bit of damage done to their vehicles, tie rod ends, front ends, lost tires; that is the nature of bad roads.

Mr. Chair, we have come a long way. There is still a lot of work to do, but I would like to acknowledge the fact that my district is a needy district when it comes to roadwork.

On the positive side, I was very, very delighted about three weeks ago – I think it was March 4 – to join the Premier in Fleur de Lys to announce a significant amount of roadwork in my district for this year and the year beyond. More specifically, Route 410, which goes into Fleur de Lys, we announced 11.75 kilometres; Route 414, which is the highway going into La Scie, about 9.8 kilometres; and Route 392 which leads into Beachside, Little Bay, St. Patricks, Shoal Arm, and Coffee Cove area.

Mr. Chair, on behalf of the people of my district, and as an MHA, I would like to thank the minister, the Premier and the Cabinet, all of the government officials for listening and acting upon such a needy district as mine. They have listened and I certainly appreciate that today.

Mr. Chair, I would like to zero in a couple more points – the people of the district brought up a couple points or suggestions to us as a government. Number one, they made a suggestion for us to increase the scope of work.

They suggested we should concentrate on trunk roads, and they suggested that we get the tenders out earlier. Mr. Chair, I am proud to say that on every suggestion, we delivered. We increased the scope of work, we concentrated on trunk roads, and we got the tenders out earlier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. POLLARD: As of April 1, Mr. Chair, these tenders will close. That is good news for the people of my district and the people are indeed pleased. I have talked to mayors, I have talked to councillors, I have talked to people around in the Green Bay side and the White Bay side in the Baie Verte area and the La Scie area and they are pleased that our government is making that commitment in the next year or two.

The early tenders will enable us as a government and as an industry, of course, to take advantage of the short construction season, which increases the chance of getting more work done and less carryover for the following year.

Now, Mr. Chair, why these routes, you might ask? Why Route 410? Why Route 414? Well, like the people suggested, why not do major work on trunk roads. Mr. Chair, these trunk roads are essential. Why? They are essential not only for safety reasons, they are essential not only for the enhancement of the travelling public, for the traveling experience, but also these trunk roads are essential to generate economic activity.

For those people who do not know, I would like to say, Mr. Chair, that Route 414, which leads into La Scie, there are two mines operating in that area, employing over 200 people. Also, there is a fish plant in Fleur de Lys, but unfortunately right now it needs to be reactivated. We are hoping that a miracle will happen and we will get somebody to come down there to invest in that fish plant and it will be reactivated, thus employing more people. We also have an offload facility in the La Scie area as well, of which a lot of product will come over that Route 414. That indeed is a trunk road. I

am grateful for the work we will be doing in the next year or two.

With respect to Route 410, Mr. Chair, which leads into Fleur de Lys, Fleur de Lys boasts a Dorset Soapstone Quarry, which is a tourist attraction centre there. Talking to the mayor and the town clerk there, over the past few years we have had a decrease in tourists because of the road conditions. I am happy to say and I am happy to report that these people are really happy. The mayor is really happy and the residents are really happy in Fleur de Lys because they know the roadwork will be forthcoming. They certainly appreciate the investment we will make as a government.

Furthermore, Fleur de Lys also has a fish plant/seal plant there that within the last little while, back on December 6, I believe, we announced over \$200,000 to go toward the Northeast Coast Sealer's Co-op there to do some work with new products when it comes to the sealing industry, which is very important to the people in that area and to the people of the region to provide supplemental income to these coastal communities, Mr. Chair.

I would like to commend the Premier and I would like to commend the Minister of Transportation. My district this year was first off the mark in getting early tenders out. That is what the people cried for. That is what the people in the Province want, to have early tenders so we can get a lot more work done in a short construction season.

I just want to again extoll the virtues of the minister and the Premier, and I thank you so much for listening.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am so happy to have this opportunity to stand and to speak again on this bill. I would like to

speaking about the Family Violence Intervention Court again because it is such an important issue, Mr. Chair, and one that somewhat baffles me. It baffles not only me, but I believe it baffles a lot of people in the Province because nobody can really quite understand why it was cancelled.

The Premier, since he was appointed Premier, has said time and time and time again that he is listening to the people of the Province. Today in a press conference the Minister of Justice said the same thing: he is listening to the people of the Province.

In his press conference today, what he did was he released the independent report done on legal aid and he released the independent report done on the Sheriff's Office. He explained that after the very rash, rash Budget cuts that were done last year, some of the decisions that were made had to be reversed almost immediately because they were decisions that were not well thought out. He said he was given a fiscal situation to deal with.

He said the reports that were tabled today had a number of recommendations and the government was going to – there were thirteen recommendations in the legal aid review and all thirteen recommendations were going to be fulfilled by this government. That is a good thing. We have an independent assessment and review directing the government how to best handle the shortfalls and the challenges that legal aid faces.

Mr. Chair, nobody has done an external review on the Family Violence Intervention Court. We do know there was an internal review done. The sources I have heard from have actually told me that the review was very positive. Since that review came out I have spoken to police officers, I have spoken to defence lawyers, I have spoken to prosecuting lawyers, I have spoken to women's groups, and I have spoken to the organization that provided the therapy for the men who freely entered into the Family Violence Intervention Court. I have spoken to groups who are providing the support and therapy for the women and children who are

victims of violence and all of them talked about how effective the court was.

As a matter of fact, the Justice Minister himself talked about how effective the court was. He said that the court was fulfilling its mandate. It was doing what it was supposed to do. However, he was stuck with a fiscal situation that he had to deal with. That is why the court was cut, he said. It was \$500,000, 0.2 per cent of the entire Budget.

I was speaking with women who are working in the area of violence against women in different parts of Labrador who said they in fact wanted to see the Family Violence Intervention Court expanded to Labrador to help keep the women and children of Labrador safer. Mr. Chair, there was nothing wrong with this court.

When the minister talked about the fact that he was concerned about the numbers of people going through the court, the numbers he had stated in his rationale for closing the court were actually – at the time when he looked, the number who had finished the court program, because the program goes over a period of about six months, was the number who had finished up to that point when he had made his decision. He did not take into account the fact that there were already, as well, numbers of families who were in the process of using the court and all of the services. They were in the process of treatment and they were in the process of support groups.

The numbers he gave were not an accurate reflection of how well the court was being used. As a matter of fact, it was the year when the court had the most uptake in the whole history of the court. It has been on the go for five years. It was a jewel in the crown of the justice system.

Our current Premier, who was Minister of Justice when this court was instituted, was so very proud of this court and looked forward to having it instituted, not simply as a pilot project, but as something that was a permanent program in the Department of Justice. The Department of Justice said they were looking forward to making it a permanent program. Women's

groups were saying that. The police were saying that.

The funny thing is even today the Minister of Justice talked about how they are looking at streamlining and efficiency within our justice department. This was a court whose whole mandate was about streamlining. It was about taking cases that could be handled in a very specific manner, in an efficient manner, and quickly. If a woman, for instance, contacts the police because of a violent incident, a domestic violence issue, by the time the case actually gets to court it is often a year down the road, whereas with the Family Violence Court it was within a few weeks and then it is dealt with immediately. In other situations it could be up to over a year before the case is actually handled and closed.

The other thing, in terms of looking at efficiencies and streamlining, the research that was done on the court shows in fact there was a much, much lower recidivism rate. What that means, Mr. Chair, is that fewer and fewer of the men were reoffending, that in fact the court was working. They were getting treatment.

We are not talking about life-threatening cases of violence; we are talking about violence where families, in some cases, want to stay together, often young families. There was a risk assessor who would meet with – again, I am using shorthand here and saying most of the offenders were men – the man and assess whether or not he was a candidate for therapy, where there was a possibility that he could change his ways. Again, what he had to do was take responsibility for what he did; he had to own up to it. Then, also, what happened is we know the women and children were safer because the court was so involved because the treatment program for men was very specific and the treatment program for women and children was very specific, and everybody knew what was going on.

So this was a fabulous, fabulous program. I do not know why we still have not heard a reasonable explanation, except for money; but if it is money, in fact, this court was saving money. It was saving money in the general court system. Also, it was only \$500,000. Now, we know, Mr.

Chair, there is over \$1 million dollars a day – over \$1 million dollars a day – spent on Muskrat Falls. This was \$500,000 for the whole year, and it was an effective program.

Now, Mr. Chair, I speak about it not looking for political points. I beg – I am begging the government – on behalf of the women and children in this Province. I am begging the Minister of Justice, if the Minister of Justice could only listen, I am begging him, I am imploring him, and I am pleading with him on behalf of women's groups who are working in this area, on behalf of families who have been affected by family violence. I am begging him to meet with these groups. These groups are writing him saying they want the court reinstated. I have hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of petitioners saying they want the court reinstated.

These are not people who do not know what they are talking about. These are people who have years and years of expertise in the area of family violence. I am imploring, if the Minister of Justice is truly, truly serious and honours his word that he is listening, he would meet with these people. I am begging him to do that. I am begging him to give them the chance to talk about why this court was so important and why this court must be reinstated.

To reinstate it is not a big deal. The court is there, the trained judge is there, the trained legal aid counsel is there, and the groups that gave the therapy and the support sessions, they are all there. It would just take a matter of the decision and \$500,000 a year, 0.2 per cent of the Justice budget – not 2 per cent, 0.2 per cent of the budget.

The Premier himself has so often said since he was appointed that he is listening to the people. This is the opportunity for them to truly stand by their word and to listen to the people. They do not have to listen to me, if they could listen to the people who are the experts in this area, because they are experts in this area. These are people who have been working in this area for over twenty years. Mr. Chair, they know what they are doing, they know how effective the

court was and they are willing – maybe the court needed some changes, but the court did not need to close and all of the members on the other side –

CHAIR: I remind the hon. member her time has expired.

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

I look forward to speaking about this again.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

I am sorry; the hon. the Attorney General.

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

I have been called worse.

Mr. Chair, I am glad to have the opportunity today to stand in this hon. House and have a few comments on the resolution for Interim Supply. This is a very important piece of business and it is usually the first order of business in the spring session of the House because government has to have the jurisdiction, the authority, to pay its bills in the interim period between the end of the fiscal year, which is the end of this month, and the time when the Budget gets approved. The business of government goes on, but the Budget is not approved until sometime later. So, the only way the government can get the authority to spend the money during that period of time is through this Interim Supply bill.

Mr. Chair, the figure on that is quite a staggering figure for such a short length of time: \$2,829,892,500 – I did not think I was going to be able to do that. During that short period of time in that Interim Supply period after the fiscal year ends and the new Budget is approved, for example, in the Department of Transportation and Works, in that length of time \$539,232,000 is needed. In the Department of Health and Community Services, there is over a billion dollars needed in that length of time. So, the business of government goes on and government has to pay its bills and pay its salaries, and pay

its contracts and all that sort of thing, but that has to be done and authorized through this discussion.

Mr. Chair, before I get into Interim Supply, I just want to digress a few moments if I could. I sat today with interest and listened while the Member for St. John's South followed by the Member for St. John's North took us on a fantastic odyssey around the world to various exotic places, and I sat here and fantasized about all of those beautiful places and legendary cities that they took us to. First the Member for St. John's South and then the Member for St. John's North.

Mr. Chair, as a young boy I had a great interest in geography. One of my favorite books in Grade 7 was an atlas that somebody gave me. It might have been part of the program from what I know, but it was an atlas that I enjoyed looking at. I used to play games with my brothers and sisters with respect to naming countries of the world and their capital cities, and we got good at it, to the point where we could name the capital city of practically any country in the world. We had that atlas worn to the point where the corners of it were worn down, and I had it for years after. As a matter of fact, I believe I still have it somewhere in the basement of my house.

Today, Mr. Chair, as I listened to the hon. members, I sat back, I closed my eyes, and I went to China, then I went to Brussels, then I went to Houston –

AN HON. MEMBER: Gander.

MR. F. COLLINS: No, I never got to Gander. I went to Africa, to Cape Town, legendary cities of the world, and I thought I was back in Grade 7 with my atlas. I thank the hon. member for giving me that opportunity, that experience today, to enjoy the odyssey around the world.

Mr. Chair, I would also like today, while I have the opportunity – I have not done it so far and I do not know if anybody over here has – to welcome the newest member to the House, the hon. the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace. I am sure as his first experience here in

the House, as indeed for all of us over here when we had our first experiences in the House, it is an eye-opener. We are used to doing our business around various tables, but nothing like the way business is conducted in the House of Assembly.

The hon. member was a mayor, as were several people on this side of the House, and we know what business is like conducting your municipal politics and municipal business around the table in a municipal office, but that is not the way business is done in this House, Mr. Chair. Certainly, when we come here for the first time it is a real eye-opener to us to see how business is conducted in this hon. place, and it is an hon. House – it is a very hon. House. It is the place where the laws of the land are made. Now, sometimes the debate in making those laws of the land can get very tedious, sometimes they get very testy, and we benefit from the cut and thrust of the debate.

They say there are two things you should never watch being made, Mr. Chair, and one of them laws, and after experiencing debate in this House of Assembly, it is easy to understand that; and the other is sausages. I do not why you would compare the two, but you should never look at either one of them being made. I guess that reflects sometimes on the debate we have. I have been involved in some of the laws that have been made that have been very interesting, I might add, but some of them very tedious as well.

Mr. Chair, this is an hon. place and the members here are hon. members. They are called hon. members and rightly so. Unfortunately, we do not get a very good rap in the public and on the Open Lines. The media takes advantage of that every now and then to sensationalize their stories. We are in that unfortunate group that nobody gives us very much credit. Not that we look for any, but we never get very much credit in the public eye as a politician.

Those of us on this side of the House, there are a couple, and a couple on the other side of the House who happen to be lawyers as well. We have a double whammy because the lawyers are

not held in very high esteem either. When we go from practicing law into politics, then it is difficult to know which direction we went, whether it is up or down in terms of social esteem. The members that I know on this side of the House are all dedicated, passionate, committed individuals whose only purpose in life is to make sure that they do good things for their constituency.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. F. COLLINS: They want to address the needs of their constituents, do what they can for their constituents, and do what they can to further the initiatives of their communities and in general to make improvements in their constituency. Improve their communities; improve the quality of life, that is what we are all about. I rather suspect, as a matter of fact I know the people on the other side of the House have the same focus. Everybody in this House has the same focus. We are here for that reason: to do what we can to better the conditions in our districts and in the Province in general.

I think we may have to give ourselves a pat on the back. We are certainly not going to get it from the outside. Maybe it is time every now and then that we do it ourselves, because we are all here for the same purpose. Sometimes we get political, and in the cut and thrust of debate we criticize each other and that is part of it all. We all know at the end of the day that we are all in it for the same purpose.

Having said that, Mr. Chair, I want to welcome the new member to his new position in this House of Assembly. Now that he has the benefit of my wisdom, I am sure he is better off.

Mr. Chair, with regard to the Interim Supply, did I mention this is a very important piece of business and always the first issue of business in the House this time of year? It is necessary so that government can carry on with the work of governing this Province. As I mentioned it outlines some of the spending that will occur in that interim period.

Mr. Chair, just briefly I want to say that everywhere you go in this Province, no matter who you talk to or where you go, people are saying the same thing: We were never in such better shape before. We have never before reached such a place where we are today. That is everywhere you go. Everybody says that and everybody talks about that. We are the envy of every province in the country. We lead the country in so many ways.

Mr. Chair, that has developed in our people a sense of pride, a sense of accomplishment, a sense of achievement. We are no longer the weak sisters. We are no longer going to Ottawa with cap in hand. We are no longer apologizing for our poor position.

Business is booming. More people are working. There are better wages. All you have to do is look at the houses that are going up and the sizes of them. I look at some of the houses that are being built, Mr. Chair, and I wonder if there are some rooms in those houses people never even get to.

I have a modest home, and there are rooms in my house I do not spend much time in, but some of these big mansions that are being built, Mr. Chair, is a sign of the times and people feel good about it. There is a sense of pride in our Province that never existed before. Mr. Chair, perhaps indicative of that is the fact that we are having problems supplying our own labour needs. Who would have thought that we would ever get to that position in this Province?

One of the things I find about speaking at high school graduations, I mentioned this before. I enjoy speaking at high school graduations. I spoke at dozens of them when I was in Education. They became a bit tedious after a while, but now I enjoy them because it is such a great time in the Province to be graduating from high school because the opportunities are limitless, the future is so bright. We are already in a place we have never been before and it is going to be better and it is going to be brighter.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. member his time has expired.

MR. F. COLLINS: Mr. Chair, I am out of time. There is so much I want to say about that. I am sorry for digressing so long, but I am sure I will have the opportunity to get back to this topic again.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Certainly, it is always an honour to follow the illustrious Attorney General after hearing his commentary. I am not going to get into any commentary on the sausages versus law, but anyway, I will just continue on.

I did notice that sometimes he said nobody gives you a pat on the back, and he gave himself one today and said that things are so great. Actually, I think the quote was: Everywhere you go people talk about how great it is; everywhere you go.

Do you know what? Certainly, there are some good things happening, but – and that is the key word there – I am going to talk about some issues that I think this government needs to address in the field of health care. Some people around this Province said do not think that everywhere you go things are so peachy.

The first place I am going to start and this is affecting many people all over this Province, especially in the Eastern Region, that is autism, whether it is the diagnosis or the treatment. I can guarantee you there are at least 379 sets of parents out there who do not think everything is so great right now when their children are waiting years to be diagnosed and waiting years to be given treatment.

Now, I am going to go back. I spoke last time on Interim Supply and I mentioned the Open Government Initiative. Well, this theory, because it is certainly not in practice. It is a theory right now. I am going to give the Department of Health credit. I asked some questions that day on autism and they came back

that evening, e-mailed me and said here are the responses to your questions. Do you know what? Good for them. They did a good job and I appreciate them getting back to me. Now the Member for St. John's North is probably not so congratulatory since he asked the same questions three months previous and could not get any answers to them. It is a start though, it is start.

You do not have to look far, you can look in *The Telegram*, or you can look in any newspaper in this Province and we look at wait-lists for children. When it is taking you twenty months to see a developmental physician, that is an issue, because we all know with autism early intervention is the key. That is something the Official Opposition, we have really been pressing, and I know a lot – especially the Member for St. John's North, we get a lot of e-mails. We get a lot of calls from constituents, not just in our own districts but from all over the Province.

They are having a tough time, these parents of young children who are having these issues. In fact, they have even taken it upon themselves now to go outside of the Province to get a diagnosis. Now you would think that would help, but the problem is when they get back they are still no further ahead in treatment – not any further ahead in treatment. God help them if they do not have any coverage under their insurance for things like OTs.

That is one area, and we are going to be discussing – that is going to come up. We brought it up in this House last week. We brought it up this week and it is going to keep coming up because as the minister even knows and stated, the numbers are going up, one in eighty-eight children. The word epidemic is starting to be used now, so we had better start looking into this and figuring out how we are going to stop this and how we are going to, I guess, handle this issue rather than stand up and throw your arms up, which is the equivalent of the answers I am getting so far.

I want to continue on with health care. One thing I have been hearing a lot about, actually it

has come up in my own district just recently. This is when it comes to emergency medical response, EMR, especially in terms of ambulance service, paramedics, PCPs, first responders. The Province today, ambulance review some time back, I guess it was last year – the review came out before the new year, and I will note that negotiations are ongoing. What I have seen so far, what I have been told so far is not encouraging.

The first thing to remember is that ambulance operators, private ambulance operators were asked by government to wait before you come out. Let's get the review back first. Let's get this review before we start negotiating because obviously there are flaws in the system. We need to look at these and work together. The ambulance operators did that. They negotiated in good faith. They waited. Now what has come out of that is basically ambulance operators are being told you have to provide the same level of coverage with less money.

I will just use the service out in Port aux Basques for instance, Mackenzie's Ambulance. It has been out there for years. We all rely on it. Out there, there are four emergency ambulances in Port aux Basques staffed around the clock using government formula. However, with the new proposal government has put forward, the new proposal will go down to one emergency vehicle.

Now you do not have to go far; you only have to go see one nurse in the Dr. Charles L. Legrow Health Centre to know there is more than one emergency that comes in sometimes in an hour; therein lies the problem. We are going to have a reduced quality of service. When I hear members on the other side talk about the golden age and how great things are, when we are getting cuts to emergency medical care, it is not a golden age, I can tell you that now. It is not a golden age.

I say to the minister, I hope you will get up and respond to the points I am putting forward because I am going to stick to health care. Again, that is 40 per cent of our budget.

This is an issue I have put forward a lot – we know the Budget is coming down on Thursday – and that is cystic fibrosis. I have made clear in this House numerous times now how basically we have a lower standard of care in this Province than we do in virtually the rest of the Western World when it comes to cystic fibrosis. We are already there. That has been established.

Not we, I am just advocating with this group. They are asking for newborn screening, something that is done in so many other places, but not there. I am hoping in this Budget, I am hoping there is something there. That would be a great start, and if they do, I will be the first one to clap my hands and say it was the right move. I hope that is somewhere in this Budget that is coming on Thursday.

I am going to move on. I have touched on a number of different issues, and one thing I want to talk about is pharmacists and pharmacies. I think the pharmacists in this Province – we all know how important they are, but do you know what? I think they have done a really good job in the last year of explaining just how important they are. Maybe in some cases – and I do not know if this is the right word – how we underestimate them and how we do not sometimes appreciate the work they do. They are front-line workers.

I will just use myself for an example. If I had to go to the pharmacy and I had to get something for my child, some over-the-counter medication; I do not wait to go make an appointment with my family physician. That could take too long. Why not ask a pharmacist? They have all the answers. They know everything there is to know about it. It can be done and it is the right move. It is the smart move.

We hear the term expanded scope of practice, but in this case we are not talking about an expanded scope of practice. We are talking about practicing to the extent of the scope that could already be done. It should be there. I know they have called for talking about injections. We had an issue this year. We talk about flu immunizations. The problem we have – and I see the minister is shaking her head – is

we are the lowest in Atlantic Canada. We are at the lowest level. We need to do something to get that across. Wouldn't making it accessible to pharmacists be a step in the right direction of increasing the number of immunizations, increasing the population who is getting immunized? It would seem to be a smart thing to do.

Pharmacists are not asking for much. They are asking for – again I will use the term – the increased scope of practice. They are asking when it comes to minor diagnosis, when they are talking about being able to do the injections, and little things like that. I know the minister is in touch with them and I know the minister wants to do the right thing. I am just hoping we will see the right thing. I do not know if that is a budgetary decision or not. We will see what comes out of that on Thursday.

I have covered off a number of topics here. I want to move forward. I do not have much time left. I see the clock is running down.

I want to talk about medical transportation. We have a program here in medical transportation. We do have a lot to be thankful for. No doubt we have a lot to be thankful for that there is a program there in the first place. There are limitations in the program. They have been identified, they have been expressed to government, yet we have not seen the change.

It is a burden on people in many cases, people who have to travel long distances for health care, in many cases over roads that are not so great. It is a significant cost on people. The amount of time they have to wait for reimbursement has a huge impact. In many cases they cannot do it and they are waiting this time. That is an issue we are going to bring forward as the Official Opposition. We are going to commit to bringing these issues forward in this House when it comes to health care and the well-being of the people in this Province.

In closing, I would say I would be silly not to recognize there are good things in this Province; however, let us not put our blinders on, and recognize there are issues in this Province that

need to be dealt with. Sometimes patting yourself on the back is not the right thing to do. It is time to listen to the people.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista South.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: Thank you, Mr. Chair and hon. colleagues.

I want to express my appreciation to all the constituents in the beautiful, historic District of Bonavista South. I am very passionate about that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLE: I actually come from the health care sector. I worked there twenty-six years. I can say without a doubt there are major improvements in the health care sector and I will, too, speak on health care over the next few minutes.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to supporting important social programs, strong communities, and the health and well-being of our children, families, and seniors, Mr. Chair. It is very important that we listen to what the people are saying, and we are listening as a government. We are listening and we are acting on what the people are saying in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Responsible infrastructure investments strengthen communities and support families, and we are all about supporting families and health care issues that are important to people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. This government will continue to support health care initiatives in all parts of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Ensuring access to modern and new health care facilities and equipment continues to be a

priority for this provincial government. This is demonstrated by more than thirty health care infrastructure projects that have been completed or are under development in all regions of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador over the past ten years, Mr. Chair. Since 2004, this government has invested more than \$1.2 billion to enhance health care infrastructure through new facilities – \$1.2 billion. We are not talking a small amount of money here.

We are committed to the people, the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and currently there are twenty projects ongoing throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador with, like I said, twelve of these existing projects to be completed in 2014. The investments we have made in health care infrastructure will ensure that families in rural and urban communities continue to have access to top-quality health care, and that is very important. We are committed as a government to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we know how important health care services are on a regular, daily basis, Mr. Chair.

In a Province with just over 520,000 people, it is important that we continue to invest in health care services. We have fifteen hospitals, twenty-two community health care centres, 114 community clinics, and twenty long-term care facilities. We have a large geographical area in this Province, and health care is important out in the rural parts. The numbers I have just shown in relation to where our facilities are and where we continue to be cognizant of listening to the people and actually keeping those facilities up to date, continually investing in infrastructure in health care as a government, we are definitely committed to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In my district, as I speak, there is a new protective care bungalow-style building being built, close to completion. I would like to commend the Minister of Health and Community Services, the people who work in the Department of Health, and the good people who are working in Eastern Health because they are doing such an outstanding job, and we listen. We listen to what workers are saying, we listen

to what the people are saying out in the communities, and we listen to the seniors. We are going to continue to listen to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and we will continue to invest in health care in the future.

Today in Newfoundland and Labrador we have more physicians than ever – more physicians than ever in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador – and right now, 54 per cent more registered nurses per capita than the Canadian average. That is a number that I can stand on my feet and be proud of here in this House and talk about the positives of what is happening in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I listened to the previous speaker, I listened to some of the comments, and we are all listening as a government. Can we do everything for everyone? To be honest, the honest answer is no; but we will evaluate it, we will review, we will continue to work with people in the health care sector and we listen. We are going to continue to listen to the people of this great Province.

We have moved forward with thirty-five major health care infrastructure projects in this Province. That is a large number of infrastructure projects in health care to be worked on. I have not seen such projects being done in the past with regard to previous governments. This government is spending large amounts of investments in the health care industry. We are listening to the people and we will continue to listen to the people; we will listen to the needs.

I intended to speak on the fishery, but I actually shifted, based on the previous speaker, and I would definitely like to have another opportunity to speak on the fishery because the fishery is very important to my district. I have a large number of plant workers, fisherpersons who are actually getting ready now to go out, whether it is during the seal hunt that we are about to see or the crab fishery, the shrimp fishery. I am very close to the fishing industry. Actually, I have people related to me who fish, my friends, my neighbors, and I kind of find it

hard to get up and not talk about the fishery in my district.

Based on the investments that are being put into the fishing industry and some of the announcements recently under comprehensive European Union, Canadian agreement, CETA, the \$400 million announcement that was made – this is what this government has done, the government of today. I cannot recall in the history of any government where such a substantial amount of funding will be invested into such a great industry.

We have companies like Ocean Choice International which is a big company in Bonavista, where I live, and they have invested millions of dollars into phase one of the facility there. There are over 300 workers working there and continue to work. Everybody in the district is ready to go back to work in the fishing industry and when you come out and look at the fishing industry around the communities in my district, you will see the vibrancy that is there.

I do not have enough time to speak on the tourism industry, which I wanted to touch on as well. I definitely will speak on the tourism industry in the future because my district is so unique. It has fishery, tourism industry, public sector, and health care. You can go on up to the upper part of my district and agriculture is a big industry in that part of my district. The forest industry is big in my district.

Some people look at Bonavista South and say it is all about fishery. It used to be all about fishery; it is quite different now. This government is working together with the different departments of government and people are investing in the future of rural Newfoundland and Labrador. This government, I can say, definitely supports rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. member his time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party and Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

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

I am very happy to get up again and speak as part of the Interim Supply discussion that is going on here in the House. Being a money issue and being Committee of the Whole, we are able to bring up many concerns we might have and speak about many issues we may want to raise.

When I have stood in the House before earlier in our session talking under Interim Supply, I made reference to the fact of the travel I did around the Province for about five weeks earlier in the winter. It was an extremely interesting time for me. What I found interesting, as I reflect on the many town halls I had and the many places where I stopped and met with people, was that the people who came to the town halls, even though they were raising issues of concern in the community, they were not raising issues that necessarily hit them. They were raising issues they saw in the community, things impacting other people in the community, and they came out of concern for the community.

They came because they do not want to see a society in this Province where people are hungry and because they do not want to see in their community people having to couch surf because they cannot afford to pay rent. They came out because they do not want to see in their community children in schools whose needs are not being taken care of.

What people in this Province want, Mr. Chair – and I think it is a hallmark of this Province – is to see everybody being taken care of. They want to see programs in our Province. Programs run by government whereby people's needs are being met. When they look around them and they see during a time when everything is supposed to be going so well in our Province – when they look around them and they see people in need, they get very concerned.

Many people who came out to the town halls, Mr. Chair, not everybody but a good number of them were people who were engaged in the community themselves, though they themselves were doing okay. They were not wealthy; they were not rich. They were ordinary members of the community but engaged in many ways in the community. Some, for example, volunteers at the food bank in their community, volunteers at the clothing bank in their community, and volunteers in the hospital in their community. People who were engaged in the community and because of that engagement, because they were outside of themselves, outside of their own reality engaged in the community, seeing the needs in the community.

What they were asking was: Why can't we do a better job of making sure that people are not in need? Why is it that in our community we have people who are lined up in food banks? Why is it that in our community there are people who cannot afford to pay the rent? Why is it in our community that we have elderly people in a hospital – and as one person put it to me, she said: Ms Michael, they get medically discharged from the hospital, there is no long-term care bed for them, and they are put up on that floor. She said: We have about twenty-five of them and they are dying in the beds.

They look at that as people in the community and they ask why. Why is this happening? Why when we have so much coming in can't government plan, can't government make sure that programs are in place whereby we are taking care of people in need? This is the question that kept being asked, Mr. Chair.

Sometimes I had people who were there not for themselves but for a family member. On a number of occasions there were people at the town halls who were there speaking for their parents, for example. I remember one woman in particular, and she had come home from outside of the Province because she knew her parents were getting older and she had been outside of the Province for a number of years. She came home because she felt they were going to need her. She herself is probably around sixty, and she came home to make sure that – and her

father is a veteran – she would be there in their need.

Since coming home, her mother has died and her father is on his own. He himself is now very much in need because he had a heart attack. She is low income. She was not low income before she came back, but she has not been able to get a job where she lives that is paying her adequate income. She is there taking care of her father who is trying to live on his own and who cannot get home care. She cares enough about the community that she is a volunteer in the food bank, yet she herself is just making ends meet. She was there not for herself. She was not talking about herself. She was talking about the community and others, her father and the people she sees in the food bank.

That is the kind of spirit that is out there, Mr. Chair. It is not people who are coming to town halls because they want to be negative. It is not people coming and speaking because they just want to point out what is wrong. It is people coming and talking about what they are seeing in their community –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: – and the lack of care and concern they see in the community, not because of the people in the community, but because we do not have adequate resources in place to help take care of the people in our communities.

This is what people were saying to me when I was going around the Province, and I promised them I would publicly say what I heard them say. So I stand here in this House sharing those stories. What they are saying is: What is government's plan? We are getting older. I heard this one over and over. We are getting older as a community, and there are going to be more of us needing help. What is government's plan as we age as a community?

Many people who came were people who had children outside of the Province, and their grandchildren are outside of the Province, and

they have no hope of their children or grandchildren being here when they are in need. What was being said to me was: What is government's plan for the future? What is government's plan with regard to our revenues in the future? What is government's plan for our social programs in the future? They ask me what are the plans and all I can say is I do not know because I keep asking to see the plans and I do not see them.

I keep asking to see a real plan, for example, for home care. Right now, what we have is a bandage. The new Home Support Program that government has come out with is just a band-aid. Instead of putting in place a real plan where we really see home care fitting into our health care system and a real plan where government has a program that is government administered and government regulated, where we have people being paid adequate salaries and where people do not have to wonder where home care workers are going to come from, government is going to give 250 families some money to pay a family member without any analysis of what that means, without any analysis if the family caregivers are going to be able to give the care that is needed, and without any analysis of the implication of family members being paid to do the work without any benefits and without any protection if they get injured or hurt by taking care of their family members.

There is no plan. This government just keeps putting in place things without any analysis of how the things they are going to do fit into a whole picture and what the implications are. That is the message. That is one of the messages I am bringing to the government today from the people I met with. People want to know what your plan is. People want to know what your long-term vision is because they have no idea. All they get is knee-jerk reactions and responses to individual situations without doing a complete plan for what health care, for example, in this Province should look like.

Mr. Chair, I will continue as we do Interim Supply to bring up other messages that I heard at the town halls I attended.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Chair, I am glad I got ahead of the Member for Bay of Islands. I just jumped up ahead of him just in time.

Mr. Chair, it is a privilege to get up here today and to say a few words on Interim Supply. First of all, it is my first time up now in this session and I really want to thank the people from my district for the continued support they show me.

I live in, as far as I am concerned, one of the most beautiful districts in the Province, Cape St. Francis. Everywhere I go I get a great reception from the people, no matter what event it is at. It is a really nice feeling to be their representative. I want to make sure that I ensure them I will represent them to the best of my ability and I do so as I can.

Mr. Chair, first of all, I would like to welcome the newest hon. member here from Carbonear – Harbour Grace. He along with myself have a lot of similarities. We were mayors beforehand and this is quite a difference in what it was as you were mayor, and it was different for me. As you get used to it, it is a great honour to be able to serve your people in a different aspect than what it is to be the mayor for their towns.

Another challenge he has, also, and the same thing when I came in; I had big shoes to fill. I came after the late Jack Byrne who did a lot for the District of Cape St. Francis and the same thing with the hon. member. He had a great member out there, too, in Mr. Kennedy. I was out doing a little bit of campaigning and I saw the work that Mr. Kennedy did out in that area. It is amazing because it is a great part of Newfoundland and Labrador when you see long-term care facilities, the roads, and the different things in your district. I am sure the people appreciate the work Mr. Kennedy did in that

district and I am sure you will do your best to continue. I wish you all the best here.

Mr. Chair, politics are an interesting time. People in Newfoundland breathe politics and we love it. We just look at the changes and how things just turn around from day to day. It is just unbelievable. I will be here, hopefully, please God, in August; it will be six years. In six years I will be after going through probably four leaders of our party, each with different aspects of what they brought to the table. It is very interesting.

I look at the first Premier I was here with, Premier Williams. I will always remember going to a function in Torbay one night. Great Big Sea was playing down there and we were down there. I can remember all of the people lined up to get their picture taken with him. He was like a rock star. He did so much for this Province.

Earlier one of the members here talked about where we have come since 2003, how we are not the poor sister anymore of Canada, and how people look at us in a different way. I attribute a lot to him because of the work he did that got us to where we are.

The next Premier I had was Premier Dunderdale. I will always think of Premier Dunderdale as a great negotiator. I think of some of the deals she did while she was Premier and while she held the portfolios that she did, agreements like Hebron, agreements like CETA, and White Rose Extension. If you look at what she carried to this place with Muskrat Falls, I think history will prove her to be one of the great negotiators in this Province. I want to thank her for what she has done for this Province.

I know a lot of people in my district ask me how she is doing and whatnot. I tell them I spoke to her a few weeks ago and I know she is really enjoying her grandchildren. I wish her all the best in the future. I want to thank her on behalf of all the people of Newfoundland, and especially the people in my district, for the great job she has done for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Chair, I just look at our new Premier now, Premier Marshall. It would have been so easy for him just to come in, sit down, and say: Listen, I am only the interim Premier here; I am just going to be here for a short period of time and I will just carry her through until we get to the phase where somebody else comes in and replaces me. No, he did not do that at all.

I have to tell him this. I am telling you right now, we all know in this House and we all know in Newfoundland how much Marjorie loves him. Well, I will tell you right now I have been talking to a lot of people down in my district, and they are starting to love him just as much as Marjorie. I will tell you right now there are a lot of Marjories around this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Chair, his first speech when he went down to Government House was a speech I will always remember. He talked about openness and what he was going to bring in the next couple of months, how he was going to listen to people, how we were going to be a more open government, and how everybody's opinion mattered.

As you look as we sit in this House and the different things he has brought in the past couple of months, that is exactly – I do not know how long he is going to be here for, but what he has carried to this House will be something that will be done in Newfoundland politics for years and years to come because his mark is going to be left on it. Again, I would like to thank him for the great job he is doing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Chair, today I want to talk about a very important part of my district, and I am sure it is an important part of everybody's district: education. Education, to me, is ultimate. It is our children, it is our future, and it is what we want to see our children

and grandchildren everything – we want them to succeed.

In order to succeed in society, as far as I am concerned, you have to have a great education. The better we can get our children educated, the better they will succeed in the future and the better off they will be for everything. Whether it is their income will be higher and they can afford more things, or whatever, they will be better people because of a better education.

Now, I listened to the minister the other day just talking about the increase in what we spend in education over the last number of years. We have increased education by 61 per cent since 2003. I just look in what we are doing for new schools. We built thirteen new schools in this Province. As far as I am concerned, that is amazing. That is unbelievable, and I attribute it to the extra money we got and the better financial situation we are in. I am not going back to years gone by and how many schools were built or anything like that, but we are in a position today to spend money on education and we are.

This year, I look right now, and we have eight schools under construction or in the planning stage. I have one in my district. My district is down in Torbay and I am in a part of the Province where growth is unbelievable. We have grown down there, I think, in the last four years by 20 per cent and there is a big demand for a school. We have answered the needs to Holy Trinity Elementary by adding a module classroom on one year and then this year we had to add on another one. We did it in Cape St. Francis where we had to add another module. It costs a lot of money to do these things, but we are doing it because we know the need is there to do it.

Education is all over the place. I listen to other members in different parts of the Province where there is a declining population and they are fighting to keep their schools. There is a lot of balance you have to do with different parts of the Province. I am fortunate to be from an area where we have growth, but some areas are declining and they are fighting to keep their

schools because we all realize how important education is.

Mr. Chair, I just look at some of the investments we are doing. I spoke to a teacher and she told me she was teaching for twenty-eight years. What she told me basically was that she has never seen the investments in the schools – I know when we went to school we had the overhead projectors and everything else, but today they have the latest technology: the iPads that they do fundraising for. I go to all kinds of different fundraisers at the schools and we raise money so our children have the best technologies. There are whiteboards – and I do not know how they work or anything like this.

AN HON. MEMBER: SMART Boards.

MR. K. PARSONS: They are called SMART Boards rather than whiteboards.

This technology today is what our children deserve and this is what our government is doing. We are investing big time in our education. I am very proud of the investments we are making in our education.

Mr. Chair, we look at post-secondary education. I just look at the new building over at MUN that is going to house a lot of the people coming in from different parts of the Province. There are 500 different units over there to take care of our post-secondary education.

Since 2005, we spent \$230,000 on just maintaining the freeze on tuition. I think it is a fantastic thing, because our priority has to be giving our people the best education there can be. I look at young people down in my district right now and I look at them with the new homes they are building and stuff like this. It is because they can afford it. They are well educated; they have great jobs. I know the hon. Member for Placentia was talking about these big homes they can afford. Sometimes I look at them and say: How do they afford it, but do you know what? We have good, educated people today. We have engineers, we have doctors, we have lawyers, and we have nurses.

Our incomes in this Province has gone up since 2003 like nowhere before. We have the second highest income in all of Canada. So, what does that tell you? Our kids are educated, our people are educated, and we have good paying jobs here. That is what we want, and it is all based on the education that you get. It is very important that we continue to invest in our children and invest in our education system.

Mr. Chair, I do not have much time left, but I just want to talk a little bit about my district. I am very proud of the people who are in my district, especially the volunteers. Most of the people in my district are on small councils and they volunteer their work. I have to say I am so proud of these people. I, one time myself, was one of these volunteers, but the time and effort that you put into your community – I just want today to thank all the people who volunteer in our communities, because I think you are heart and soul of Newfoundland and Labrador and you are the reason why we are what we are today. A big thank you to all the volunteers, not only in my communities but in all of the communities in the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Especially our municipal leaders – sometimes they have to make decisions that may affect their neighbours and may affect people down the street, but I know the majority of them make the decisions for the right reasons, so a big thank you to all the town councils and councillors out there.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. member his time has expired.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for the Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to rise and stand here for a few minutes to speak about something that was in

the House of Assembly here today, Mr. Chair. First of all, I do welcome everybody back into the House of Assembly. I always said it and I said it in this House: No matter who puts their name forward to run in politics, no matter who it is, you are trying to do your best.

I know the former Premier has moved on, but we as a group are all thankful for anybody who puts their name forth. I just wish everybody who resigns here, and the Premier, all the best in the future. It is a daunting task to be a Member of the House of Assembly, to be facing the public on a regular basis.

Premier, thank you for your service and all the best in the future. I know some day when we all move on we hope that we all pass on our best wishes with grace and with class to everybody who moves on from this House of Assembly. I just wanted to express that view also.

Mr. Chair, I also want to talk about how now I feel it is becoming the oops party – not the PC Party, the oops party. We have stood here in this House for about a year, year-and-a-half with Bill 29 talking about how open and accountable this government is. Now we see oops, we made a mistake; we have to go and change Bill 29.

Mr. Chair, we saw the Steve Jobs show the other day down in the lobby of the House of Assembly talking about openness and accountability. Oops, we have to prove now how open and accountable we are. Everything that has happened in the last five or six years now is all being changed, a new direction.

Yet for a year-and-a-half, two years we have been in this House of Assembly, we have been trying to pass on the concerns. We were even accused of wasting time in the House of Assembly over Bill 29. We were wasting time, Mr. Chair. Now they all have to stand up there and turn around and say oops, we made a mistake; we are hoping now that people are going to forgive us. Hopefully now what is going to happen is that people are going to be a bit kinder, a bit gentler to us.

We saw another oops today when it came to the justice system, Mr. Chair, where the minister today – and I welcome the decisions by the way that were made today. Hopefully we are going to follow up on the recommendations. It is all right, but you cannot just criticize every time someone asks a question and turn around a year later and stand up and apologize. Oops, we made a mistake; we have to reverse it now. Sometimes you have to take criticism, Mr. Chair, you have to take criticism.

Mr. Chair, I am just going to say there are some issues in the Bay of Islands, like roads. I know the minister is well aware of them, some of the bad roads out in Lark Harbour, that way, and John's Beach. Mr. Chair, there is very little money being spent in the Bay of Islands – even the four years prior when the former member was there, very, very little, the deterioration of the roads. Summerside, up on the Plant Hill area, and beyond to the extension where meeting into Meadows, they have been trying now for years, six, seven years to get money for water and sewer, to do the sewer up there. There has been no major work spent.

Every time you hear all these funds that are going to be announced, Mr. Chair, all these funds that are going to come out and we find out later, \$272 million was not spent last year. So that is why you cannot jump for joy just because you say it. Saying it is one thing, action is another thing.

Mr. Chair, I know, and I am working on behalf of residents in Summerside who are desperately in need of this sewer. Like I tried to explain to them, this government says we are going to spend an X number of dollars and just does not spend it, Mr. Chair. If this money was ever spent and there were major improvements, I would be the first to stand on my feet and acknowledge it. I have always done that, Mr. Chair, I have always done that.

Now, Mr. Chair, I want to speak on an issue today in Question Period about the regional land management out on the West Coast. I want to read what was in *The Western Star*, and I just spoke to the reporter from *The Western Star* who

stands by it. From my understanding, he just listened to the tape.

I will read it, Mr. Chair, and you tell me what you would conclude from this. “Don Downer, who independently chaired the committee, said he is surprised government has taken so long to move on the plan. Since vacating the position, he admitted he has not had much involvement with it. He said he heard about disagreements within certain government departments...”.

Mr. Chair, that is just one part, the information that the minister acknowledged today. The last payment for rent, for salaries, for expenses, for anything with the regional land development committee was July 18, 2012. This is what was tabled by the minister. Then he stands up and says, oh, I am not getting the information correct.

Mr. Chair, I just spoke to the reporter. The reporter stands by his statements. The freedom of information shows that there was absolutely no money spent in two years, over two years on this committee, absolutely no expenses, not one even for a telephone, not one even for any type of a meeting. There has not been a meeting held in almost three years in this committee – three years. If I say something in this House of Assembly, Mr. Chair, and I have the documentation like this, I sincerely believe in what I am saying.

The town councils out there want this to move ahead but they do not want a \$650,000 boondoggle. Mr. Chair, I will just add before I sit down. Some of the people who were on the committee are not even on the town councils any more, and here they are, sent out letters, going to go on the committee. They have not been on the town council, Mr. Chair, yet the committee is active. Mr. Downer is still the chair but he never had a meeting in almost three years. You can ask him. That is his word. You could ask him. I ask the minister –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. JOYCE: I will have a few words with you about McIver's and the commitment you made to McIvers and the kids in McIvers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: The Minister of Tourism wants to stand up, talk about the kids in McIvers. You promised them \$15,000. You stand up and you promise that. Where is the \$15,000 per district, Mr. Chair? Ask the Minister of Tourism.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Ask the Minister of Tourism where he committed in Hansard \$15,000 per district? Where is that, Mr. Chair?

Mr. Chair, I see it is time. I will sit and we will report rising.

Thank you, and I will be back again.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move that the Committee rise, report progress to the Speaker and ask leave to sit again.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, Mr. Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): The hon. the Member for the District of Port de Grave.

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Mr. Speaker, the Chair of Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and has asked leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of Committee has reported progress and has requested leave to sit again.

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

MR. KING: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: On tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again on tomorrow.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that the House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

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