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Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

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The House met at 2:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Today, before we start proceedings, I want to welcome some special guests to our gallery. We have the mayor and deputy mayor from the Town of New-Wes-Valley: Mayor Grant Burry and Deputy Mayor Kent Hoyles. They are accompanied by some councillors and staff: Winston Perry, Kelvin MacDonald, and June Linehan.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will have members' statements from the Member for the District of St. Barbe; the Member for the District of Conception Bay East – Bell Island; the Member for the District of Terra Nova; the Member for the District of Port au Port; the Member for the District of Bonavista North; and the Member for the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

The hon. the Member for the District of St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate Colleen Kennedy on being inducted into the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Order recognizes individuals who have demonstrated excellence and achievement in any field of endeavour benefiting in an outstanding manner Newfoundland and Labrador.

Ms Kennedy has certainly achieved that over the past twenty-three years of service to the well-being of her region. Colleen Kennedy's vision, integrity, and determination have been instrumental in the success of the Gros Morne Cooperating Association, Friends of Gros Morne, which has become recognized as one of the Province's leading social entrepreneurial groups.

Through her remarkable skill for building capacity through co-operation, she has been instrumental in ensuring that the successes of Gros Morne National Park were also the successes of the surrounding communities. Her contribution to the people and communities of Western Newfoundland has helped secure employment and vibrancy in this part of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating Colleen Kennedy on receiving the highest honour of this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand to recognize an organization in my district who continues to promote tourism as an industry for my district and this Province, while developing programs to engage citizens of every background; I speak of Tourism Bell Island.

This organization has, for the past three years, negotiated with all three levels of government to secure funding to enhance the tourism potential of Bell Island and Portugal Cove area. They have developed Bell Island Fest, a musical weekend that includes some of the Province's best musicians. They have constructed five kilometres of walking trails around the island for scenic walking and a photographer's dream.

This organization paid tribute to the late Harry Hibbs by constructing Harry's Lookout, which is a stage area that overlooks Conception Bay where artists can perform for tourists during the summer. They have just acquired the lighthouse keeper's home, which is being renovated as a cafe and interactive museum. This will be another major tourism attraction for the island.

They sponsored the ABE program for students on the island and have formed the island's 50 plus club, all organized and ran by volunteers.

I ask all members to congratulate Tourism Bell Island on the great work they are doing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I rise today to recognize a tremendous accomplishment by a group in my district.

On February 27 of this year, the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 41 Eastport was awarded the very exclusive and prestigious Prime Minister's Volunteer Award for a community leader in the Atlantic region.

This award was created, first, to recognize exceptional contributions that individuals, organizations or businesses make to improve the well-being of their communities; and, secondly, to highlight the best practices in community leadership.

The group was nominated by Mayor Squire and the town council of Eastport. While the competition was staggering with over 500 nominees – this small, but very dedicated group was justifiably chosen. From my own experience, I have witnessed first-hand the tremendous work done by the hands of these wonderful volunteers. They are truly second to none.

Mr. Speaker, with the award was a \$5,000 grant that the legion donated back to Gander's James Paton Memorial Hospital – a long-time recipient of the legion's charity. I want to congratulate President William Duffett and the branch's eighty-two members. Thank you for your service you provide not only to veterans but many others in the twenty-six communities you serve. You truly are to be commended on your community service.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Port au Port.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNETT: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this hon. House to congratulate Marigold Benoit of Stephenville for her accomplishments thus far competing in the sport of cross-country skiing.

It takes great sacrifice, Mr. Speaker, and determination to excel in sports. Marigold has committed many hours to her training and conditioning. Mr. Speaker, at the Newfoundland and Labrador Cross-Country Provincial Ski Competition held in Plum Point held on February 22-23, she took first place in the Junior Girls' 10km Free-style race and in Junior Girls' 10km Classic race.

Mr. Speaker, at the Newfoundland and Labrador Winter Games held in Clarenville, Marigold, as a member of the Western Region Relay team, finished first, yet giving her another gold. Her latest competitive accomplishment was a first place ranking at the Junior Girls' 20km at the forty-fourth annual Coleman's Newfoundland and Labrador Cross-Country Ski Marathon which was held at Whaleback Nordic Ski Club in Stephenville on March 8, 2014.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members of this hon. House of Assembly to join with me in congratulating Marigold Benoit for her dedication and commitment, and of course her achievements.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSS: Mr. Speaker, I stand today to honour the late Gerald C. Batstone.

Gerald paraded into the world at Nipper's Harbour on June 7, 1938. Upon completing school he went to Memorial University, and in 1958 he met his love and soul mate, Shirley Carter, of Badger's Quay. She was visiting her aunt where Gerald was boarding at St. John's, and the rest they say is romantic history.

In 1967, they moved back to her home and Gerald started teaching schools at Pool's Island and Badger's Quay. In 1972, Gerald Batstone, with other local leaders, initiated and founded the Lions 2910 Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corp. He remained active with this group for forty-two years, spending more than two decades as commander of the corp. He impacted hundreds of youth who paraded at Bishop Meaden and Pearson Academy, and went on to attend various summer camps at New Brunswick, around North America and Europe.

On February 28, 2014, the Lions 2910 cadets and their alumni throughout many parts of the world closed their eyes and in a personal moment of silence imagined the playing of *The Last Post* as tribute to one of their personal heroes. Major Gerald C. Batstone was laid to rest at Badger's Quay.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to pay tribute to a gentleman who was a Labradorian by choice, Mayor D. Blair Gillis of Cartwright.

Arriving in Labrador three decades ago to manage the Hudson Bay Company, Blair became heavily involved in volunteer work. He spent twenty-six years on the Eagle River Development Association, twenty-one years as

president, fourteen years with the Southeastern Aurora Development Corporation, and ten years as president. He also served on a host of other boards and committees.

Blair was elected as Mayor of Cartwright in September, 2013, but his term of office was cut short with his untimely passing on January 7, 2014.

Mr. Speaker, Blair's legacy lives on! His passion for youth, his community, and Labrador will never be forgotten, and others will now take up his torch to bring his dreams to reality.

Two weeks ago, I had the privilege to attend the opening of a new rink in Cartwright, one of the last projects Blair tirelessly worked on to see to fruition. In his honour, the rink has been named the Gillis-Davis Rink.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in paying tribute to a true Labradorian and a man who was a great confidant and friend – Blair Gillis.

Rest easy my friend, you have certainly earned it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform this hon. House that March 17-23 is Multiculturalism Week in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Since the introduction of the Provincial Immigration Strategy in 2007, and the launch of the provincial policy on Multiculturalism in 2008, the provincial government have supported initiatives aimed at building a more diverse society and increasing the number of immigrants

who choose Newfoundland and Labrador as their home. Through our Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism, we have been building an awareness of the benefits of living and working in Newfoundland and Labrador, and continue to promote this Province as a destination of choice to prospective immigrants.

Mr. Speaker, since the launch of the strategy in 2007, annual immigration to Newfoundland and Labrador has been steadily increasing from an average of 450 immigrants to well over 700. The increase is due mainly to the Provincial Nominee Program that is focused on addressing difficult to fill positions in our labour force.

With our unique and diverse cultural traditions, an abundance of natural wonders and expanding economic opportunities, Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador is the ideal place to have a career and raise a family. This week we celebrate new traditions and cultures, and the contributions made by people of all cultures within our Province.

This year, to mark Multiculturalism Week, the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism is supporting a variety of events being hosted by Grenfell Campus of Memorial University, the Newfoundland and Labrador Multicultural Women's Organization, St. Andrew's Elementary School, the Association for New Canadians, the Baccalieu Trail Welcome Home group, and the fifteenth annual Sharing Our Cultures event taking place at The Rooms this weekend, which I am looking forward to attending. I would like to acknowledge our partners and the countless volunteers who will have organized these events and the many other celebrations taking place across the Province this week.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, I encourage everyone to celebrate diversity. I welcome all newcomers to our Province, and look forward to seeing many more who I am certain will contribute to Newfoundland and Labrador's bright and prosperous future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, Census 2011 showed positive population growth for the Province for the first time in decades. Statistics Canada attributed this growth in part to immigration. Immigration is key to combatting the fact that we have the second-lowest fertility rate in the country and the oldest median age.

This government claims to support initiatives around immigration and multiculturalism, but I have to remind the minister that this government cut the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism in half in Budget 2013. We certainly hope that Budget 2014 will rectify this.

The Provincial Nominee Program helps facilitate this population growth and address labour mismatches. Our Province has one of the lowest annual nominee limits in the country, and we would encourage government to consider expanding this.

Aside from growing our population, immigration is positive in bringing diversity to our Province. Learning about other cultures helps us appreciate the diversity of the world and the uniqueness of our own culture as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Newfoundland and Labrador has about 700 new immigrants each year, which is fewer than PEI with a smaller population, as noted by the Population Growth Strategy report.

There is much room for improvement, Mr. Speaker.

The Provincial Nomination Program has begun to increase slowly the number of immigrants this Province receives each year, but we need more resources to increase our extremely low retention rates so that new Canadians will want to stay in the long term. For example, newcomers can attend ANC English as a Second Language courses for only a few months and ESL programs offered otherwise are quite expensive.

The Province needs to support all organizations whose volunteers do so much work to help remove barriers in housing, education, employment, and inclusion for immigrants to our Province. There is much to be done, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Fire and Emergency Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in this hon. House to provide an update on the implementation of Province-wide Basic 911 Service.

Expanding 911 Service to all residents of the Province is a priority for our government, and we have made significant progress to date on this critical project. Beginning with the establishment of a four-person Implementation Team, we have undertaken a number of activities towards the establishment of Basic 911 Service. The next stage of this process, which will commence shortly, is to undertake a series of consultations with municipalities and emergency service providers to establish emergency response zones.

Mr. Speaker, we have cast our net wide to ensure that this new service will meet the needs of stakeholder groups across the Province. The team at Fire and Emergency Services Newfoundland and Labrador has held

discussions with many groups including the Hearth and Stroke Foundation, the Combined Councils of Labrador, the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, Newfoundland and Labrador Chapter, and representatives from the deaf and late-deafened community.

As we continue to move towards full 911 implementation, officials are looking at how we can implement the best solution possible for our residents. One way we are doing this is exploring with telecommunications service providers the possibility of receiving text messages through the Basic 911 Service. We have also begun negotiations with the St. John's Regional Fire Department call centre to expand the Basic 911 Service call-taking services on the Avalon Peninsula. We are also exploring the location of a second centre elsewhere in the Province.

Mr. Speaker, approximately 40 per cent of the Province is covered by Basic 911 Service on landline telephones. The expansion of this service was outlined as a priority for our government in 2012. I am very proud to announce that we are well on our way to delivering on this service by the end of December 2014.

As our next step towards full implementation, I plan to introduce enabling legislation in the House of Assembly this session which will allow for administrative and logistical setup of the Province-wide 911 service. Once the bill has passed and implementation work has been completed, Basic 911 Service will be available to all those who have landlines and for mobile phones where a cellular telephone signal is available.

Mr. Speaker, this service will benefit all residents and is an important building block and a necessary step towards establishing Next Generation 911.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I heard the minister say that it is a priority for the government. I think this is my seventh ministerial statement and press release on 911 since they first announced it.

Mr. Speaker, you can almost hear the announcement coming out from the government, here is what we are going to do next but you cannot see any concrete examples of the service.

Mr. Speaker, what the minister forgets to mention in his press release is that this will be paid for by the taxpayers of the Province. At \$1 per month per line, with 600,000 phones, it is going to cost the taxpayers of this Province \$7.2 million. That was information given by the previous minister at his last press conference when he was talking about it, Mr. Speaker. We also know that people who already have cellphone service already pay a monthly fee for this service, so it is going to be a double fee.

Mr. Speaker, I will just mention this here, this has been delayed so long, the service itself, the basic service. Here is what the President of the NL Association of Fire Services publicly stated, "...the basic 911 service is dated and limited in its capabilities." I quote. "So here we are now and the basic service is 20 years behind the technology."

I do not think there is a lot to be thankful for here now when this has been delayed so long. It will not be new technology; it will be something that taxpayers will have to pay a lot of money for, Mr. Speaker. I am looking forward to see where the centre is going to be. The next centre was supposed to set up last year. The centre was supposed to be set up, Mr. Speaker –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

MR. JOYCE: So I look forward to the new announcement –

MR. SPEAKER: The member's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Even more disturbing when I hear about the progress of 911 – we are glad to see the government is working towards the end of it, that we will see some finalization of 911 being implemented in the Province, but we are not hopeful right now at this juncture with the work that has been undertaken so far that 911 is going to be in this Province before December of 2014.

Here is a good reason why: The Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission recently published a report on 911 saying how 98 per cent of Canada right now has access to the basic 911. The other 2 per cent, the federal government is putting their initiative up North. They are not looking East at all. So it is going to be trouble, number one, getting help from the feds.

The second thing that this government has to do is offer more money to municipalities so we can address the numbering system as regards to civic addressing in this Province. So we have a lot of work to do before we see 2014 (inaudible) –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member that his time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in this hon. House to acknowledge today, March 19, as Check Registration Day. This day is an initiative of the Canadian Securities Administrators and takes place every year during Fraud Prevention Month.

As an important part of Fraud Prevention Month, Check Registration Day increases consumer awareness about investment fraud. It promotes doing research to gain knowledge in self-defence against fraud, and encourages consumers to check for legitimate licences and/or registrations for individuals and companies in the real estate, insurance, mortgage brokering, and securities industries before entering into any investment agreement or business transaction.

Mr. Speaker, protecting Newfoundlanders and Labradorians from all types of fraud is a primary concern of the Consumer and Commercial Affairs Branch of Service NL. To check the legitimacy of any financial services provider, consumers can visit the Consumer and Commercial Affairs page of the Service NL Web site at www.servicenl.gov.nl.ca, where they will find a list of all currently licensed or registered service providers.

It is important that investors have confidence in trusting an individual or firm with their money, and one of the best ways to establish trust is to check registration. To check the registration of the securities provider, investors can visit the Canadian Securities Administrators Web site and use the national registration search engine at www.aretheyregistered.com or they can contact the Financial Services Regulation Division of Service NL at 709-729-4189.

Mr. Speaker, knowledge and awareness are the best defence against fraud. In recognizing the signs of potential scams and being familiar with the resources available to defend against it, consumers can protect themselves and their families from what can potentially have a financially devastating impact on their lives.

Consumers may also report any suspected cases of fraud to the Royal Newfoundland

Constabulary, the RCMP, or of course to the Financial Services Regulation Division of Service NL.

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.

First of all I would like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I would like to join the government in recognizing Check Registration Day and congratulate the Canadian Securities Administrators on this initiative.

Investment fraud happens way too often in our society. While the vast majority of individuals in this industry operate with honesty, integrity, and professionalism unfortunately, like in every industry, there will always be those among us who operate outside the law to take advantage of the most vulnerable in our society, particularly our seniors.

Anything we can do to bring awareness to this issue and encourage consumers to properly investigate the credentials of individuals and companies in the real estate, insurance, mortgage brokering, and securities industries before entering into any type of an agreement is a good thing. I would certainly encourage all consumers to do just that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. The minister has to be congratulated, I guess, in this part for the recognition of Check Registration Day. At the same time as that, Mr. Speaker, we also have to

recognize that an ounce of prevention here is worth a pound of cure. What this government did in the last Budget was institute a lot of layoffs, in particular to the Justice department, Crown Attorneys, that sort of thing.

If you want to make sure that somebody is going to be convicted for fraud – and we congratulate the police forces for the work that they are doing in stopping this and enforcing it – at the same time, we would hope that the Department of Justice would see a top-up of the financial resources available for expediency sake.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

MR. MURPHY: Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This afternoon we will be discussing a motion calling for energy conservation programs that will target all ratepayers in the Province. Government only has one program and only targets 500 homes. Yet, in the 2007 Energy Plan they said that they would create a culture of conservation.

I ask the Premier: How does cutting the only program you have in Budget 2013 and offer no incentives to the vast majority to conserve help create a culture of conservation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, energy efficiency and conservation is something that is extremely important for this

government. It goes across various departments. There is no one department that looks after all issues with energy efficiency. We have the REEP which is in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, we have the Home Heating Rebate Program which is in the Department of Finance, and we have the Turn Back the Tide which is through our Climate Control Office.

Mr. Speaker, there are various initiatives across government to encourage people to understand what energy efficiency is, to understand why it is important to conserve energy, and a lot of information for homeowners and people to take on initiatives to help support this cause.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister is saying this is extremely important and then she goes and quotes about the home rebate program, which is really about the strategy reduction program. In the 2007 Energy Plan, government stated that energy conservation measures would ensure we had sufficient electricity until the completion of the Muskrat Falls Project. We all know that government did not follow through on the energy conservation plan and they placed our Province in a dangerous position of limited power supply.

I ask the Premier: If you recognized in 2007 that energy conservation was key to bridge us to 2017, why did you ignore and even cut the program last year?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, as the minister previous stated, the REEP has always been a priority since it was first introduced back in 2009 as a pilot project. Sometimes you make difficult decisions in any Budget year. You have

your priorities; you identify your priorities in the process.

Having it budgeted to the tune of \$2 million, which supported about 500 homeowners last year, attests to the importance of energy efficiency for this government and how we have supported people right across Newfoundland and Labrador in regard to making their homes more efficient. We will continue to do so, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, it was a pilot project, but we will continue it up until this year. They will have to wait in regard to this year's Budget and see if we are going to re-budget it again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is from the same minister who actually said there were higher priorities in last year's Budget.

The government claims that conservation is key to our energy supply, but when power supply issues were identified in January, Nalcor only provided the public with two hours' notice to conserve. Nalcor knew days in advance but only told the public two hours in advance of the rolling blackouts.

I ask the Premier: If energy conservation could have helped prevent the blackouts in January, why didn't you ask the public to conserve days in advance when you knew about it first?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would certainly like to acknowledge the events in January. It was obviously a very difficult time for many people in the Province. During that period of time there was much discussion. There were

many questions asked and many questions raised, Mr. Speaker.

As well, I publicly stated that we too have questions about the event in January and we will work very hard to restore the confidence of the people of the Province in our auxiliary system. As a result of that incident in January, Mr. Speaker, the Public Utilities Board are doing an investigation. They will do a complete and thorough review of what took place. Many of the questions, and certainly some that the hon. member raises, will be addressed at that time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We will certainly look forward to seeing that process all unfold because the answer did not come. I did not hear the answer about the two hour notice, and Nalcor knew days in advance of course.

Mr. Speaker, Autism Spectrum Disorder is affecting one in eighty-eight children in our Province. Families are struggling with wait-lists in order to get their children diagnosed and treated for autism. Children are waiting for up to two years to be diagnosed.

I ask the Premier: Why has your government failed to address wait times for children with autism?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite is correct, there are a growing number of diagnoses of autism in this Province and in this country. That is something we are truly concerned about in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador,

and certainly in the Department of Health and Community Services it is a concern of ours.

Mr. Speaker, we have invested a fair dollar in autism at this point in time and we will continue to do that because we too understand the significant importance of making a difference and of early intervention. We have had some dialogue now with Eastern Health and we have also commissioned, or we are using research from a report that was done to help us identify ways in which we can more efficiently do the assessments that need to be done. So, Mr. Speaker, we are very concerned, and we are moving forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, moving forward would not mean that the wait-list is growing, and that we know. It is not bad enough that children would have to wait two years to get a diagnosis with autism; there is also a wait-list for children to receive the treatment that they need, and we all know that early intervention is extremely important.

Eastern Health has confirmed that it takes about one year to see an occupational therapist after they have been diagnosed. So, you wait to get the diagnosis then you have to wait to get the treatment.

I ask the minister: Why are children with autism having to wait for access to such valuable services?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to invest to the tune of about \$10.9 million annually in terms of services, and we will continue to do that because

we do see this as important, as members opposite see it.

We have invested in several of the last Budgets and that has enabled us to put more people in place, both in terms of the assessments that are being done and certainly in terms of the numbers of occupational therapists that we have. We are seeing now four new occupational therapists positions at Western Health, Mr. Speaker. We are seeing two new speech language pathologist positions at Eastern Health and at Labrador-Grenfell. We are seeing other social worker positions put in place and so on.

Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to do the work –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, in November 2013 there were 379 children on a wait-list to be diagnosed with autism at the Janeway. Eastern Health said last week that the wait-list is so long because there are too little staff and position resources to meet the needs.

I ask the minister: Why haven't the sufficient resources been provided by government to deal with these long wait-lists?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I can only reiterate that this is a concern of ours and we continue to work on ensuring that we have the people in place to make a difference here; but he is right, that the numbers of children who are presenting with autism are growing and so we are working to meet those needs. That is precisely why we have a 20 per cent increase in the number of physiotherapy positions, that we have a 30 per

cent increase in the numbers of occupational therapy positions, that we have a 29 per cent increase in the number of speech language pathology positions, and that we have a 14 per cent increase in the number of audiologist positions, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, we will continue to do this work; we, too, understand the importance of this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I again quote that number: 379 children still waiting to be diagnosed. We can quote these percentages; it takes almost two years to see a speech language pathologist in some parts of this Province – two years. Can you imagine telling a parent with a son who has a broken leg, go home and take care of him and bring him back in two years, and we will take care of him then? That is what this government is doing.

I ask the minister: Why can't government provide the services that these children so desperately need?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have four, right now, developmental teams who are working out of Eastern Health in terms of the assessment process. We also have a number of other pediatricians, psychiatrists, and psychologists who are able to diagnose and who are making the diagnoses as they can. We continue, as I said, to work on seeing, and we are putting in a new program or a new process in place to work with Eastern Health around seeing that we can more efficiently and more quickly get the diagnoses done.

We are working with the Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador. My colleague, the Minister of Education, and I are working forward on some initiatives around the ABA program that is now in as far as Grade 3 in our school systems, and so on, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, autism is a medical disorder and without the proper medical diagnosis and treatment, these children and their families continue to suffer. Last year, in November the minister said she was working with Eastern Health to see what they could do about wait times, the same answer we have gotten here repeatedly today. Parents have been e-mailing us, telling us they have been hearing the same thing for months now.

I ask the minister: When are you going to finally stop talking about it and actually do something concrete to address the wait times issue for children with autism in our Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite makes it sound as if we have been standing still and doing nothing, yet I have given statistic after statistic and I have talked about the differences that have been made. The numbers are high, there is no question about that, and we are aware of that. We are also diagnosing more than we ever did before as well in this Province. So those numbers are being addressed. They are then seeing the speech-language pathologist they need to see, the audiologist they need to see, the occupational therapists, and so on.

As I said, we will continue to make a difference in terms of autism for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I will continue to meet with the society as we find options and ways to move forward, and with my colleagues, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, teachers tell us while they welcome inclusion in schools government has failed to resource it properly. Children with special needs and their classroom peers are not getting the attention they deserve as a result of the under-funded inclusion model.

I ask the minister: When will you do the right thing and fund inclusion to make it work for all of the students in our classrooms?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times in this House, I do not think there is a government before that have committed to the education that this government has.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, we recognize that our children are our future, and that means all children.

Mr. Speaker, we have teams that are in place. We have spent, since the recommendations of 2007, Mr. Speaker, \$7.8 million supporting inclusive education. We continue to work with teachers, and the program specialists work with teachers. Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the record that we have as a Province for inclusive education.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, on top of this failure to provide adequate classroom resources and supports, government is forcing students on the wait-list for up to a year before they finally receive in-school assessments to determine their educational needs.

I ask the minister: When does he intend to end this discrimination and address these long wait-lists for in-school assessments?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, there is a process that we go through, schools go through. They sit as a planning team and they work out that particular plan.

Again, I speak to our record of inclusion in this Province. Mr. Speaker, we are as good as and better than many provinces in this country. We will continue to support the teachers and the parents in these roles because our aim is to have inclusion for all students, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, we have raised the issue of a lack of resources in the justice system in Labrador on several occasions which this government fails to recognize. Today, Mr. Speaker, we hear of Crown attorneys leaving Labrador, adding to an already existing crisis in the Labrador justice system.

I ask the minister: When are you finally going to admit that we have a resource deficit in Labrador and when are you going to get serious about this crisis?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Attorney General.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. F. COLLINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for his question.

We are currently going through a turnover issue with Crown attorneys in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. There is a requirement of one senior Crown and four Crowns in the Goose Bay office. As a matter of fact, in last year's Budget we added an additional Crown.

We are currently undergoing a recruitment process there. The senior Crown has requested a transfer after many very valuable years of service in Labrador. A recruitment candidate has been found and will replace him next month. In the meantime, we have measures in place to offset any vacancies that are there. With an active recruitment program in place, Mr. Speaker, we fully intend to have that office up to speed as quickly as possible.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, resources that were there in the past were not enough. The people affected by this crisis are the victims themselves. Because of all the delays, justice is being denied to victims while offenders continue to go unpunished.

I ask the Attorney General: Why are those victims being denied justice because of your failure to provide adequate resources to the justice system in Labrador?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Attorney General.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

The Department of Justice, the Attorney General's office is not aware of any discrepancies in terms of recent activities in the

justice system in Labrador. We are providing the services there that we have always provided.

With respect to the Crown attorney's office, which was the root of his question, Mr. Speaker, we fully expect to have that office up to speed in short order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, recent news reports say that Happy Valley-Goose Bay will soon be down to two Crown attorneys from a normal complement of five. This is partly because a senior Crown attorney recently transferred to the Island to work.

I ask the Attorney General: Why did he transfer a senior Crown attorney from Labrador to the Island before having a replacement to take over his caseload?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Attorney General.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. F. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, it is not uncommon in this department, or any agency for that matter, to undergo turnovers and transfers of people. The senior Crown requested a transfer and has been transferred back to the Island. We have recruited a very senior Crown from Ontario who will be on the job up there next month.

With respect to the two vacancies, we have two people assigned from St. John's who are handling the district circuit courts of Natuashish and Nain. Mr. Speaker, we have a Crown prosecutor over in Wabush who comes over regularly. We are prepared to send any extra Crowns we need from the Island to handle any excess files or excess workload they have in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General seems to overlook the fact that criminal procedure is far different in Ontario than it is in Newfoundland and Labrador. In Ontario, Justices of the Peace handle bail hearings and handle traffic court, and retired lawyers handle small claims matters that our Provincial Court judges are saddled with. One of the reasons that there is staff turnover is the crushing caseload for Crown attorneys in Labrador.

I ask the Attorney General: How many cases are these two remaining Crown attorneys forced to handle in Labrador today?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Attorney General.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. F. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, I do not have numbers for actual files that the Crown prosecutors have. I do know as a result of last year's Budget, we added an extra Crown to Happy Valley-Goose Bay in light of the need there. Mr. Speaker, it is our intention to keep that full complement of five Crowns in Labrador up to speed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace.

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, government signed the CETA deal for our Province in a shroud of secrecy and without any input from the people. The same goes for the \$400 million fishery investment fund. People are starved for information.

I ask the minister: When will government begin the first round of public consultations on this fund?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are very delighted in terms of Canada, the EU, and the agreement that was agreed to, and certainly what it holds for Newfoundland and Labrador. The hon. member requested last week that he meet with me and my officials. He had some questions in regard to CETA. There are three documents online from the federal government, quite extensive in terms of the agreement in principle and what it holds. I certainly encourage him to take a look at those.

In addition, at that time he indicated to me that he was speaking to people in his community and other areas who had questions on CETA. I told him I would be happy to meet with them, or my officials would. That was seven or eight days ago. To date, I do not think I have received any of those messages in regard to those people who wanted the information.

If there is information he wants, certainly ask us and we will provide it. If we do not have it, we will certainly find it for him.

Thanks very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace.

MR. SLADE: Mr. Speaker, that information should come very willingly from the minister, I would just like to add.

Mr. Speaker, other than a program to deal with the fallout at the fish plants folding, it is clear that government has no clear answers on what affect CETA will have on processing jobs.

I ask the minister: What is the long-term strategy to ensure the viable processing sector after CETA is implemented in 2015?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, the benefits of it is that it is going to drive the fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador. That was the intent of signing the agreement, and that is what is going to happen in the years to come.

The negativity and pessimism that we have seen from the other side, seen from this Fisheries critic, seen from the prior Fisheries critic, is not the direction this government is going in. We believe in trade agreements. We believe it expands opportunity for our harvesting sector, for our processing sector, for those who are investing in the processing facilities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

There is a wide market. Seafood is wanted around the world, certainly farming and wild. We are going to continue to grow this fishery. We have a \$400 million fund to do it. How this hon. member can stand up and somehow be critical of that is unbelievable, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I look forward to those public consultations.

Last year's scaling back of the adult dental plan was done with zero consultation with dental health professionals. Denturists cannot make dentures fit properly when beneficiaries can only be approved for half a set of dentures per year.

So I ask the minister: Will you amend this absurd policy in Budget 2014 so people needing upper and lower dentures are treated with dignity?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, again, the member leaves the impression that there was a cut to the Adult Dental Program. There was not. It was a \$6.7 million program last year; it is a \$6.7 million program this year. So there is no financial cut to this program whatsoever.

We will continue, Mr. Speaker, to find ways to make this program as good as it can be. Right now, it is one of the most comprehensive programs in Canada. There is no program in Canada that compares or is as good as the Adult Dental Program that we have in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, time for a quick question without any preamble.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I had asked the minister: Why would you give low-income residents a false hope that they can finally get their teeth fixed with your adult dental plan?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services, for a quick response.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know how they would do budgeting over their way, but \$6.7 million from our perspective is not false hope.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

An Ontario business, successful in landing a provincial government contract to relocate a long-term care facility, has been blocking the

release of its tender information, aided by Bill 29.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Do not the people of the Province have the right to know how their money is being spent?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: They certainly do, Mr. Speaker, and when the Budget is down, they will know exactly where every penny is going.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will ask the Premier then to be more explicit: Does that mean we are going to find the exact money that went to this company?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, under the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, anyone who requests information has a right to that information; but there are reasonable limits on it, just like in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Our rights and freedoms are not absolute; they are subject to reasonable limitations, as one would expect in a democratic society.

People will be entitled to the information – the people of the Province are entitled to know where their money is being spent, but obviously if there is certain confidential information, privacy information involving people, private business information that government has, government cannot release that. It is the same with Nalcor. We cannot do anything that is going to hurt Nalcor. It is owned by the people

of this Province. Anything that improves Nalcor helps the people of this Province. Anything that hurts Nalcor has an adverse effect on the people of the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We get a booklet two or three times a year that shows all the tenders that go out. Why not this one?

I am asking the Premier: Should not a company that wins a government contract expect the public to know the cost of that contract?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding every public tender that goes out and anything purchased has to be found in a book that is tabled in this House of Assembly. I assume that one as well will also be in that book.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If it is not, I will come back to the Premier about it.

I now ask the Premier: Was he aware when government introduced Bill 29 that it would stop the people of this Province from learning how their money was spent?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, we made a very important announcement earlier this week to appoint an independent, impartial review committee to review our Access to Information and Protection of Privacy legislation in its entirety to ensure that the public has full confidence in our Access to Information and Protection of Privacy legislation. That review is going to start very soon. From what I hear, the public has great confidence in those we have appointed to do that work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government's minister for Labrador Affairs has told people in Labrador that once Muskrat Falls' power comes online the Province will be interconnected and rates will go up.

I ask the Premier: Does this mean government will charge a uniform power rate for everyone in the Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am assuming the hon. member from across the House is speaking about some dialogue at the Combined Councils. The comment that I made is that the third transmission line was being built and that it will be part of a connecting grid to the rest of the Province. The comment that I made was to distinguish between the PUB and the government in that the PUB, as a separate arm from government, has the control as to say who will increase rates, if there will be any increase in rates, and that government does not make those decisions. It is done by the PUB.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, in Budget 2013, the minister cut the Residential Energy Efficiency Program by 50 per cent. Last April 30 and May 9, I asked the minister if he would reinstate that funding. He did not answer my questions. The people of the Province desperately need this program and now government and Nalcor are begging people to conserve.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister again: Will he reverse the short-sighted cuts to this program and reinstate funding to at least the 2012-2013 levels?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to answer her question now either, to tell you the God's truth, because she is going to have to wait for the Budget like everybody else in the Province, which will be brought down by the Minister of Finance in short order.

I will tell her what has been done under that program. Over 4,500 homeowners in Newfoundland and Labrador are being supported in regard to making their homes more energy efficient, and we believe in the program, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, this program was cut by 50 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, last April I asked the minister if he would put a freeze on the sale of all underutilized provincially owned vacant land and buildings until he comes up with an actual plan. He did not answer my question. Mr. Speaker, we are in the middle of a housing crisis

Province-wide, particularly for seniors and young working families.

I ask the minister again: What is his concrete plan for these properties?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, any time Crown land is used in Newfoundland and Labrador there is a process that we go through. Any time there is a need identified for the land, whether it is through housing or government buildings or private enterprise or cottage lots, whatever, Mr. Speaker, there is a process that we go through. If there is a need to free up land for housing, Mr. Speaker, we certainly welcome any applications and we will go through the process that is set up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister again: Where is his promised home ownership assistance program?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is going to have to wait for a little while, a few days or so to witness the Budget, and a great Budget that this government will bring down on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have invested heavily in regard to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. We have assisted homeowner's right across this Province, and we will continue to do so in each and every Budget that we will bring down on and into the future. She is going to have to wait and see exactly what we are doing with the Budget like anybody else. In due course, we will have that

Budget tabled in this House by the Minister of Finance.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: I ask the minister: Will he make rent subs portable to help seniors?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills for a quick response.

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member certainly does not understand the Budget process. There is a Budget day. The Minister of Finance stands in her place in this House and brings down a Budget for the people of the Province and this government. She is going to have to wait just like everybody else in this House, including ourselves, in regard to the details of that Budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

As a requirement under section 51 of the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act, I am pleased today to table the Annual Report of the House of Assembly Management Commission for the 2012-2013 fiscal year.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. KIRBY: 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 Autism Spectrum Disorder has been estimated to occur in as many as one in eighty-eight children; and

WHEREAS individualized and intensive early interventions are important for improving outcomes for children with autism; and

WHEREAS long wait-lists are forcing many parents to wait up to two years before their children receive needed pediatric assessments and diagnostic services; and

WHEREAS the Intensive Applied Behavioural Analysis Program is not available for children after Grade 3, while research supports the use of applied behavioural analysis throughout the lifespan; and

WHEREAS a co-ordinated multi-agency approach among key government departments and agencies is needed to ensure that individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder are provided with services that will promote independent living; and

WHEREAS a comprehensive Province-wide strategy for Autism Spectrum Disorder will decrease the lifetime costs of treating and providing services for persons with autism;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to develop a comprehensive Province-wide strategy for Autism Spectrum Disorder in consultation with parents, advocates, educators, health care providers, and experts in the autism community.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this idea is something that has come forward from the community from those who are advocates for persons with autism. I do know that several years ago the Minister of Health at the time – he no longer sits in a seat here in the Chamber – did say that government would not go in the direction of creating a comprehensive strategy for Autism Spectrum Disorder.

I think government is well aware that this is something that is needed, because at least on one occasion a minister of the Crown has said it is not something that he will do, but I still believe this is a good idea. The people who signed this petition still believe this is a good idea. Advocates in the community still believe this is a good idea. Health care providers still believe this is a good idea. Our educators believe this is a good idea, Mr. Speaker, and I believe it is a good idea.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. LANE: 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 humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS there are many individuals within our Province who have mobility issues; and

WHEREAS it is extremely important, as an inclusive society, to ensure appropriate access to

both public and private facilities and institutions;
and

WHEREAS a key component in the provision of access for persons with mobility issues is the provision of regulated blue zones; and

WHEREAS our provincial government implemented new blue zone regulations two years ago but has failed to adequately enforce them; and

WHEREAS this failure of our government to adequately enforce blue zone regulations has resulted in the continued denial of appropriate access for persons with disabilities to make public and private facilities;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to start enforcing its blue zone regulations in order to provide appropriate access for persons with mobility issues.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, as indicated by the petition, this is a piece of legislation which was passed in this hon. House two years ago. It was a piece of legislation that was endorsed by all members of this House. It was endorsed unanimously, but, Mr. Speaker, like any piece of legislation, if you are not going to enforce what is said in the written word, then it is not worth the paper it is written on.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of this legislation, it is very important for persons who have disabilities to be able to gain access to both public facilities, to be able to gain appropriate access to – basically, anywhere where you and I and anyone else would want to go, to have that access. The regulations are there. They are not being enforced.

If you drive around the City of St. John's you will see there are numerous examples where this legislation is not being followed. If you drive

around the City of Mount Pearl you will find it, and if you drive around CBS. I have actually gone and taken a look when I was out in Clarenville, Whitbourne, and so on, Mr. Speaker. It is time for the government to start enforcing these blue zone regulations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for petitions has now expired. It is now 3:00 o'clock, Wednesday, Private Members' Day. I call upon the Member for St. John's South to introduce the motion that is on the Order Paper in his name.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

MR. SPEAKER: It is now 3:00 o'clock, Wednesday, Private Members' Day, I call upon the Member for St. John's South to introduce the motion that is on the Order Paper in his name.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The motion is: THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this House urge government to consider developing and introducing energy conservation programs for all rate payers in our Province.

Mr. Speaker, I know what government are going to come back with. We know the messaging that they have, that 4,500 homes have taken advantage of the Residential Energy Efficiency Program, that the program is available, but that program has been cut in half. There were 1,000 homes a year that were able to take advantage of that program and it has been cut down to 500 programs.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to start by talking a little bit about government's Energy Plan from 2007. Their energy efficiency and conservation plan was as follows, "Reducing our energy use is the most direct way of reducing our energy footprint." They talked about the difference between energy efficiency and conservation.

“We can be more efficient in how we use energy....

“The advantages of both energy efficiency and conservation are clear: they help protect the environment – locally and globally – by minimizing pollution and GHGs. They also decrease energy costs both for individuals and businesses, and help us make our resources go further, benefiting our people today and in to the future.”

“Such measures can also help to ensure that we have sufficient energy and electricity until the completion of the Lower Churchill development and transmission link to the Island.”

Now that is from the Energy Plan in 2007, but they did not follow through on the promises in that Energy Plan. Mr. Speaker, they promised to establish an energy conservation and efficiency partnership to develop a co-ordinated and prioritized five-year energy conservation and efficiency plan by March of 2008. We did not see that. Other provinces have done that, Mr. Speaker, but we in this Province did not see that.

They say, “The Provincial Government will continue to promote and facilitate energy efficiency and conservation programs to encourage energy consumers to make the efforts and investments required.”

“The ECEP will be chaired by the Department of Natural Resources....” It “will investigate and develop collaborative approaches, share best practices and coordinate the measurement and evaluation of various efficiency and conservation initiatives. The first major task of the ECEP will be to develop, by March of 2008, a detailed plan for energy conservation and efficiency programs, including priorities and targets.” That did not happen. “This plan will include consideration of whether energy conservation/efficiency programs, and potentially other climate change programs, would be best delivered by a dedicated agency, as is the case in a number of other Canadian jurisdictions.” We did not see that, Mr. Speaker; that did not happen.

They say, “NLH and Newfoundland Power have jointly commissioned a study to examine the conservation and demand management potential within the electricity market. In addition, the ECEP will also ensure a focus on conservation measures for oil heating and transportation and recommend appropriate actions in these areas.”

Now, the only program they have, Mr. Speaker, is the Residential Energy Efficiency Program, and that is not available to people who heat with oil. The promise that was made in 2007 has not been kept. They did not follow through and have not included oil heat, even in the program they had. I am going to talk a little bit later about how that program does not measure up to what other provinces are doing.

They say, “The Provincial Government, through the Department of Natural Resources, will also continue to work with regional and national counterparts to investigate and develop collaborative approaches, share best practices and coordinate the measurement and evaluation of efficiency and conservation initiatives.”

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know where the plan is, because they did not develop a plan. The only thing this Province has is the Residential Energy Efficiency Program and they cut that back from 1,000 households to 500 households in last year’s Budget. It only includes low-income households, or a household with a maximum income of \$32,500 a year. It only includes people who heat with electricity, not with oil heat, so there are many gaps even in that program.

It says: Efficiency and Conservation Programs, “To encourage reductions in energy consumption through conservation and increased efficiency, the Provincial Government will establish a series of targeted programs, following a focused set of consultations. Different energy consumer categories have very different energy efficiency and conservation needs....” We did not see any such program in this Province, Mr. Speaker.

They talk about, “In assisting industrial energy users,” – so not only residential were they

talking about, but industrial as well – “work is required to examine new energy-efficient technologies, it is also necessary to assist with energy auditing and to introduce innovation through Provincial Government partnership with companies to determine” best management and specific energy consumption practices.

I am going to talk a little bit more once I stop reading from their Energy Plan, Mr. Speaker, about a local company that I know of – and there may be others as well – called Blue Line Innovations that I know have made representation to government on several occasions. Guess what? In other provinces of Canada they have made headway. They have been putting their smart meters in homes in other provinces of Canada. They are located in St. John’s. It is a locally-owned and operated company. It cannot get smart meters in the homes in this Province because government does not support it.

Mr. Speaker, you talk about residential in their Energy Plan of 2007, “For residential consumers, we will focus on reducing total energy consumption. As we develop a detailed plan” – I would like to see that detailed plan – “for energy efficiency and conservation, we will consider a variety of mechanisms, such as retrofit rebates, new heating technologies, basic home weatherization, programs to switch to more energy-efficient lights and net metering.”

They even talk about net metering, Mr. Speaker, but they have not done it. They have not focused on providing rebates or programs to residential owners to switch to energy efficiency lighting, new heating technologies, or other retrofits or rebates. They do have a program, not the government, Newfoundland Power does, Mr. Speaker, and I am going to talk a little bit about that as well.

Mr. Speaker, “The Provincial Government will also implement a variety of public education and awareness initiatives.” I think that is the only part of the plan they followed through on. We do have some advertising that takes place that government has invested in.

“As part of this Energy Plan, the Provincial Government will support residential pre- and post-retrofit energy audits.... In addition, the Provincial Government will provide significant funding to the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation for energy audits and retrofits in low-income households and continue to support the Provincial Home Repair Program.” That program has been cut in half as I have already mentioned, Mr. Speaker, the program that they promised to continue to support in the 2007 Energy Plan.

Mr. Speaker, in Newfoundland and Labrador we have your ENERGY STAR – your program provided through Newfoundland Power. They will provide rebates for windows if you purchase windows, for thermostats, but, Mr. Speaker, it is only for people who heat with electricity, not for people who heat with oil. It is only if you have a detached or semi-detached property. They will not cover you if you are in row housing or condo or an apartment, like they do in other provinces. It is only if your electricity usage is greater than 15,000 kilowatt hours.

They will look at insulation for your basement, Mr. Speaker. The rebates range between \$240 and \$480 for that. We are going to talk a little bit about, for example, what is available in other provinces as well, Mr. Speaker. They will cover a heat recovery system with a \$175 rebate.

Let’s look at what they offer in Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker. In Nova Scotia – and this is from the Nova Scotia Web site. “We recognize many Nova Scotians may not have the funds upfront to take on energy efficiency upgrades. That’s why we offer zero percent financing (OAC) for Home Energy Assessment upgrades, solar hot water equipment and green heat projects. The choice is yours – financing or rebates. You can choose what makes the most financial sense for you.

“Efficiency Nova Scotia has partnered with TD to offer zero percent financing” anywhere from \$2,500 up to \$15,000 a year, or they offer rebates, Mr. Speaker, on products that you purchase for your home.

“Efficiency Nova Scotia covers part of the cost of the assessment...” So you are only paying \$200 for your assessment. Now while the cut-off in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, to qualify under our program is \$32,500, in Nova Scotia they will cover you up to \$53,894. They are taking in middle-income families as well.

Mr. Speaker, in Nova Scotia, as an example – and I will talk about some of the other provinces as well – but in Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, they offer a rebate on doors. Here it is only windows, insulation, thermostats, and a heat recovery system, do not forget. They will offer rebates on doors in Nova Scotia. They offer rebate on light bulbs. They offer rebate on programmable thermostats, such as they do in Newfoundland and Labrador as well, but not on light bulbs, not on the doors. They offer rebates on light timers, or timers for your appliances or other timers.

They offer rebates on appliances such as refrigerators, washers, and even on clothesline kits, Mr. Speaker, to help reduce the cost of drying your clothes in a dryer. They offer rebates on weatherproofing. They offer rebates on solar heating. They offer rebates whether you heat by electricity or other methods, such as oil. They will look at row housing, whereas they will not here in Newfoundland and Labrador. They will include insulation for your attic.

The rebates, Mr. Speaker, are considerably higher with the Nova Scotia program than they are for the program in Newfoundland and Labrador. They offer rebates up to \$1,875. For skylights they have rebate programs. They offer rebate programs on a number of other initiatives as well.

I want to talk a little bit about Blue Line Innovations. The local company that has not been able to make any headway with the provincial government here or to get their smart meters into homes here or to have the provincial government or Newfoundland Power or Newfoundland Hydro provide incentives for people to put smart metering in.

In Ontario, Mr. Speaker, they use smart meters. A Newfoundland and Labrador company, Mr. Speaker, have received many contracts in Ontario. I wonder why they have not been able to get headway here. According to the 2007 Energy Plan, I would have thought they would be putting smart meters on all of the properties in Newfoundland and Labrador because that was one of the things they talked about in the Energy Plan, Mr. Speaker.

If you look at the program in Ontario, Mr. Speaker, they even have peaksaver PLUS. By enrolling in peaksaver PLUS you will receive a free energy display unit for your property which will help you to determine how to reduce energy consumption.

In Ontario, Mr. Speaker, they have time of use electricity prices, which means if you use electricity in off peak hours that electricity is cheaper than using electricity in peak hours. They are using that program in British Columbia as well, and I would say other provinces are looking at it. Why is this Province not looking at it, Mr. Speaker?

If we are going to offer true energy conservation initiatives we need to offer it on things like appliances, on light bulbs, on insulation, on smart metering and on time of day usage of electricity. There are ways this Province can help energy consumers in this Province reduce their electricity costs, Mr. Speaker. There are ways this Province can save and conserve energy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know my time is up. I will have another opportunity to speak.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the opportunity to have a few words today around conservation. As we all know, it is certainly a very important topic and a very important aspect of our utility system in this

Province. I will say I appreciate the opposite member's comments and I am certainly, Mr. Speaker, supportive of the spirit of the motion today without question.

I will acknowledge and I appreciate the opposite member reading from our Energy Plan, Mr. Speaker. It was developed in 2007. It is extensive. I appreciate the fact he is reading from it. I would read from theirs, but I do not know if they have one.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that opportunity, again, to talk a little bit about government, our utility system, and issues around net metering. We are working on a net metering policy, but we are always trying to find ways as well to support the ratepayers of this Province, whether it is through encouraging conservation or whether it is upfront subsidies on the backend to help offset some of the cost to their utility bills.

Mr. Speaker, the motion today references two WHEREASes in terms of government asking for energy conservation to prevent rolling blackouts, as well as, "Nalcor has issued two energy conservation requests to the general public in 2014". It further goes on to talk about the need for more programming.

Mr. Speaker, I want to give it a little context here for the people of the Province so they understand a little bit about our utility system and give that overview because ultimately that is what has driven the hot debate around conservation. As well, when you consider government and the decisions we make, particularly around budgeting and so on, the complexity of the system and how that influences the decisions we make.

Let me, Mr. Speaker, talk a little bit about our electrical system in the Province so people can understand that there are times when there are challenges and there are issues, and there will be times when there is a call for conservation, understanding and knowing that we have the generation capability in this Province to provide power to the people of this Province. We ran into some issues in terms of generation problems. Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro

has addressed those. There will be times when we need to make sure we pay extra attention to conservation.

Mr. Speaker, we have a very complex system in this Province. We have an Isolated Island system where there is a system in Labrador that operates on its own. We have a system in this Province. Added to that, we have 15,000 kilometres of transmission line. That is an amazing amount of transmission line that reaches out to all of our rural communities. Again, I think it highlights that there are times when there is potential for damage and potential for trouble, Mr. Speaker.

Add to that, those systems, in terms of hydro, diesel, and thermal generating in Holyrood, Mr. Speaker, and gas turbines, we also have twenty-one diesel systems operating in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have six on the Island and fifteen in Labrador. We have pilot projects going on in Ramea. We are doing work in Natuashish. We are doing work with Menihek as well around hydro and development for mining activity in the northern part of Labrador.

We see the complexity of it, Mr. Speaker, and all of this is interconnected in one way or another in terms of trying to operate a system to make sure that you are able to meet demand, particularly to meet peak demands from 4:00 to 8:00 in the evenings, and certainly from 6:00 to 10:00 in the morning.

Added to that, Mr. Speaker, when we look at a breakout of our utility systems, we have two distinct groups that manage that. We have Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, which is primarily responsible for generation. They provide about 80 per cent of the generation in the Province, but they are also responsible for some transmission and distribution, particularly in the southern part of the Province, in the northern part of the Island, as well as in Labrador.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we have Newfoundland Power who is responsible for approximately 253,000 residential and commercial customers in the Province. They as well have some

generation, but they primarily get their power from Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro. Again, they are responsible primarily for transmission.

I highlight those things, Mr. Speaker, because when you look at the system and there is so much to the system and so much feeds into the system, it is easy for there to be challenges and breakdowns. Weather has an impact, Mr. Speaker. The age of the infrastructure has an impact; all kinds of things can impact from one day to the next.

There are times – and I kind of want to point that out, particularly in January, we had a difficult time in this Province, no question. It is very unfortunate. There was a lot of conversation about it. We look forward to the PUB and their work around that particular issue, but the call for conservation at that time – again, what we saw in January, some of the coldest temperatures we have had this year for sure, but we had the highest demand in the past eight to ten years of our power.

The demand was high. Added to that, Mr. Speaker, there were some unscheduled repairs that had to be done to the generation. As a result of that, there was a concern that we would not be able to reach the demand, particularly during peak time. The call went out and as a result we were not able to meet peak demand and rolling blackouts had to occur.

Added to that, not only the generation issues, but there was a fire that impacted the transformer which ultimately knocked out the entire system, add to that the severe winter storms that impacted certainly the wonderful people at Newfoundland Power – and the wonderful people at Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro as we all know, regardless of the weather, are always there to be very proactive and go out and address any issues that may impact our utility system.

Mr. Speaker, that is the reason for the call for conservation at that time. There were multiple issues and that is being looked into by the Public Utilities Board.

As well in March, we had cold temperatures and a concern around conservation was raised – again, good public awareness. There were some concerns around other generating issues that did not create a problem, but it was important to make that call around conservation, particularly around peak times. The hon. member opposite referenced peak times and some strategies around peak times. At that particular time, particularly in January and again a couple of weeks ago when the call was made for conservation, the people of the Province, residential customers, the ratepayers, industrial commercial customers, they met the call on conservation and we certainly saw a decline in our usage and it helped get through the system.

With respect to conservation, Mr. Speaker, again, understanding there are times when we need to conserve but generally, broadly across government, as outlined in our Energy Plan, we have seen the need for conservation. One, in terms of conserving energy, particularly to save energy, but as well the importance of conserving energy on your utility bill. We hear lots of concerns about the cost of power. It is important that we not forget the message, the importance of conserving, not only conserve energy but also to save on your electricity bills, Mr. Speaker.

Back in January Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro consulted through a telephone survey to get some feedback on their call for conservation; 86 per cent of the people contacted practiced energy conservation and 76 per cent of the individuals who took part in conservation measures around the time in January indicated that their activities of conservation would continue.

Mr. Speaker, there is an important message here for all of us that the public have a better understanding of conservation. They play a role. It is not just government, it is not just the utilities, but the general public play an important role as well, and they have responded. I want to thank the public for that. In terms of talking about what government can do, in terms of programming, programming is only one aspect of it, Mr. Speaker. I want to say that it is a culture, it is an education, it is an awareness, and

ultimately the people of the Province have to buy in to that. Regardless of the program, regardless of the funding, it is a commitment that the people of the Province have to make.

Mr. Speaker, from our perspective and government perspective on a commitment that we have made, we have established the Climate Change and Energy Efficiency office, which is an important office for the Province. That office was set up by this government to focus on opportunities, to ensure that we have sustained in climate change and energy efficiency, to focus on research and analysis, to work with the departments across government, as well to advance the Province's interest and priorities with respect to climate change and energy efficiency.

There is an Energy Efficiency Action Plan that we developed, Mr. Speaker, and we follow as a guide. Ultimately, when it comes down to making decisions around programming – and I would agree with the member opposite, there are tremendous programs across this country. My colleagues today will outline some of the programs that we have invested in this Province and some opportunities that hopefully will come in the future.

Ultimately, as a government, we do have to make some fundamental decisions around budgeting and where we invest. We have made a conscious decision to make investments in climate change and energy efficiency through programming. We have also made a conscious decision to support the people of the Province in terms of the impact on their utility bills, whether it is the 8 per cent Provincial Sales Tax rebate on heating oil bills. That is a \$42 million program. That is \$42 million that goes back into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That is another way in which we can help support, Mr. Speaker.

The other program I will draw reference to outside of what my colleagues will speak about today is certainly the Home Heating Rebate subsidy, which again is a very important subsidy; it is a \$15 million program. I know there are many people out there - some people -

the working people, who are challenged to pay some of these bills. The seniors are at home, Mr. Speaker. It makes a big difference for them.

The rebate is up to \$500 in coastal Labrador, and it could be up to \$250 in the rest of the Province. These are key initiatives to help support all these ideas of energy efficiency and conservation, but ultimately supporting the cost that has to be paid by the homeowners. We know many people are struggling in trying to keep up with that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, again I want to reiterate the fact that whether it is programming or otherwise, it has to be a commitment across government. It has to be a commitment across the Province for people to buy into, to accept the culture, the understanding, and the awareness of the importance of conservation, Mr. Speaker, and the impact that will have.

I do want to say, Mr. Speaker, that when we look at energy conservation, we look at the issues around January and so on, it is about an increased demand in power. We have said it was going to come. We are seeing it. It is very important, Mr. Speaker.

When we talk about conservation, we talk about the need to save energy, but we also talk about the concern that people are paying high utility bills. Well, Mr. Speaker, this government, for some time, has been firm in our initiative, our approach, in developing Muskrat Falls.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to go into a big tangent about Muskrat Falls today, but I do want to say to the people of the Province, it concerns your utility bills and the future. One is where we are going to get that power, Mr. Speaker – and we need more power; and number two, how are we going to manage and control the costs of your utility bills?

Mr. Speaker, the answer for that has been very clearly researched, proven, validated by independent research, that the answer for that is Muskrat Falls. It is the least-cost option in the future that will help people pay their utility bills, Mr. Speaker, and keep it from rising 5 per cent,

6 per cent, or 7 per cent a year. Secondly, it will give us the power that we need. That we have identified we need, that we have experienced already this year.

We need that power, Mr. Speaker, and Muskrat Falls will provide us that power. Absolutely important, and I look forward to hearing from members opposite. Maybe finally they now see the importance of Muskrat Falls and why we need to do it. I understand, Mr. Speaker, they may not agree with how it is being done, but surely they have to agree that it needs to be done.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many things we can talk about in programs, but again, to reiterate our government's commitment to conservation, we invest in programs. I understand there is new technology, clean tech out there that is going to enhance our ability to work with the ratepayers of this Province to conserve, to lower their bills, but continue to make sure that we have a dependable, reliable system. Something that is affordable for the people of the Province, something that makes sense to do.

We are going to continue to do that. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, the opportunities to get the revenue back from the sale of surplus power of Muskrat Falls will allow us to make good, strong budget decisions that support the people of the Province, not only in conservation and energy efficiency, but in all aspects of what we need to do here in this Province.

So, Mr. Speaker, on that note, as I said in the outline, I certainly support the spirit of the motion today. I think my colleagues will demonstrate clearly our government's commitment to conservation. I will say, full support going forward that we continue to find ways to support the ratepayers in this Province and support the seniors who are at home and are challenged to meet some of those bills. That is a firm commitment that we make as a government, Mr. Speaker, and it will be outlined today.

What I would like to propose, in support of the spirit of the motion, is a slight amendment. If I

could read it, Mr. Speaker, the amended resolution would read:

WHEREAS government has recently indicated that energy conservation was necessary to prevent rolling blackouts; and

WHEREAS Nalcor has issued two energy conservation requests to the general public in 2014;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this House urge government to build on the initiatives it has already taken in developing and introducing energy conservation programs for all ratepayers in our Province.

Mr. Speaker, I submit that because I think it is important to recognize our government has been committed, and we certainly want to build on that going forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

We will take a few minutes to circulate the amendment and we will take a brief recess to consider whether or not the amendment is in order.

The House now stands in recess.

Recess

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

We have considered the amendment as put forward by the Minister of Natural Resources and the resolution, as amended, is in order.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I want to speak to the motion and, I guess, the amendment to the motion now that this House urge government to build on the initiatives. Well, it is not hard to build on the initiatives. Our initial resolution called to consider developing and introducing energy

conservation programs, which primarily would have been new programs as well. So, building on the existing programs this government would have is not really that difficult because we all know if you plan on building something, you are actually going to need some inventory.

When the Energy Plan was introduced in 2007, it was all about the energy warehouse and what was in that warehouse would be used to actually supply energy, not only to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians but it would then be sold to other markets.

We all know that since 2007 the world and energy has changed significantly. In that Energy Plan in 2007, there was a section that talked about conservation of energy. It speaks not only to conservation, but it also speaks about the efficient use or energy efficiency. So there were two different things.

Before I go into this, the minister spoke at great length about what happened with what has been known in January as DarkNL. I want to say before I go too far into this that we really appreciate, as all people in the Province did, the great work that was done by the staff and the employees of Newfoundland Power and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro during that very difficult time. It was not their issue. They could deal with what they had to work with. As a matter of fact, it was Newfoundland Power themselves who said: You get us the power and we will deal with this. So, it was a generation issue at that time.

When we look at what conservation measures would do – we see lots of this in jurisdictions, not only in other parts of Canada, and there are lots of example that we could use, but we see it around the world where conservation measures actually challenge people. They challenge people to be creative, to be innovative, in the way that they would use their own energy, no matter what it is, if it is residential or if it is the business world. They look for those conservation measures so that they can be more efficient and they can conserve energy simply because it makes the business world that they work in, it makes them more competitive. That

is important that we have those measures in place.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, one of the things that have been a disadvantage to us is Bill 61. This was a piece of legislation, along with Bill 60, where we had a filibuster in this House in December 2012, that piece of legislation is a significant, what we would call, game changer in the supply of energy to people in this Province; because what it does is it really gives Nalcor a monopoly on the supply of energy in our Province. In doing so, it takes away the creativity and the innovative solutions that you would actually see as they would evolve in the energy world.

I spoke about the resolution, and there are two things in the Energy Plan in 2007. It speaks about conservation. That, of course, is about avoiding the use of power. So how do we put programs in place where people could actually avoid the use of power? The second part of it is about energy efficiency. How do we make wiser use of our energy? How do we be more efficient in the use of our energy?

This is important. The minister spoke about many seniors right now in our Province. When you look at their electricity bills every month, this is a significant portion of their income. They have to make a very difficult decision, whether they buy food – actually I have seen many seniors, even in my own district and other districts around the Province, where they have actually taken curtains and they petition off parts of their house just so that they can actually control their heat. That was their way of using their energy more efficiently. That was their way of conserving energy. Well, in 2014 it is not my view of what seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador should be using.

You ask yourself the question: What have we done so far in energy conservation, as a result of the Energy Plan in 2007? Well, we have a takeCHARGE program and, essentially, that takeCHARGE program really lacks a lot of substance. It is a PR campaign, it is an educational campaign, and it gives us some idea how we could actually use our energy more

wisely; but it is not the conservation and the incentives where people would actually get a benefit from conserving or avoiding the use of energy that we are suggesting needs to be put in place.

Essentially, it is the takeCHARGE program, but I want to talk for just a minute or two about how that program works. What we have here – and this is not to take anything away from Newfoundland Power or Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro; they are the ones that actually deliver that program. Now, keep in mind that they are retailers of energy; they sell energy. So, really, it impacts them if there is less energy use. They become less profitable; that is the world that they live in.

What we have seen in other jurisdictions, in places like Nova Scotia as an example, they have set up separate entities, Efficiency Nova Scotia as an example, non-profit, and they actually promote the conservation of energy. That is a stark difference in what we see right here in our Province. We have the energy retailers in our Province that are actually delivering the program.

Right from the Energy Plan of 2007, when you use your own words, it says the advantages of both energy efficiency and conservation are clear. They help protect your environment, locally and globally, by minimizing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. When you look at this, what they talked about in 2007 as being the foundation for all of this, when you talk about building on projects, you have to have a strong foundation. This was the idea behind the Energy Plan. There was a lot of great words in it, but there was very little action. Even though they want to build on this today, there is no problem in actually building on this because there is not a whole lot there now to build on.

I talked a little bit about the takeCHARGE program. There is also one other program which is called the Residential Energy Efficiency Program known as REEP. We all know that in last year's Budget in 2013 – when you talk about building on programs and those programs being extremely important to us, as they should be,

what happened last year in Budget 2013? We saw this program cut. Where in the past we had 1,000 people who took advantage of this, in the last year we had just 500. As the minister said earlier, it is down to \$2 million right now. When you also look at the other incentives that are based on that, they really do not add up to much, when you look at potential savings for energy users in our Province.

When you go back to the Energy Plan in 2007, there were a lot of nice stories that were told about where we should be; things about improvement in transportation, we would use our energy wiser in transportation, industrial use, commercial and institutional use, and residential use. The words were all there I say, Mr. Speaker, but they were not backed up with action.

When you talk about building on a plan, if you take this foundation there was very little done. That was seven years ago. As an example, residential audits, where you would go into someone's house and you could promote and suggest areas in those houses where you could save money – those programs are now cut as well.

I want to go back to when you talk about building on a plan now, as we receive this amendment to the resolution that was there. There is no problem to build on a plan. There is lots of room for improvements.

I want to go back to energy efficiency. This comes from a document that was updated on February 24, 2014. It is from the Office of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency. Energy efficiency, as it says, "...refers to using less energy to provide the same or better level of service." It also improves our energy security. It improves our energy reliability.

We do not want to go back into January, in the days of DarkNL, because we know the crisis that caused in our Province. This is what the Office of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency said in February, 2014. It says this, "Despite the potential to reduce costs, many households and

firms are often not realizing the full potential of energy efficiency.”

It goes on to say, “The barriers to action include: low awareness, knowledge and confidence in new processes and technologies; lack of availability of new technologies; long payback periods; budget constraints; and” – listen to this – “weak incentives”. As an example, it goes on to say, “...building owners lack no incentive to invest in energy efficiency improvements where tenants pay the energy bill”, and it goes on.

This is the Office of Climate Change. They are saying the work of this government is just not working. The incentives are just not there for people to go in and bring those creative and innovative ideas so they can actually use energy more wisely and use less energy.

Now what we have done, however, is in January we indeed sent out public advisories. I asked earlier in this House about the conservation measures and why it was just a couple of hours before the people in this Province knew about the rolling blackouts, when indeed they knew well in advance this crisis could occur.

When you have the debate, and we have said now publicly on many occasions, the 2007 plan, which is now, as I said, almost 7 years old, it is really an outdated plan. It needs to be updated. Conservation needs to be more of a focus in that plan right now if indeed we are truly committed to using our energy wiser.

The minister was talking about the solution to all of this being the Muskrat Falls Project. The less energy we use, no matter what the source is and no matter where it is generated, will give us power that we can use more wisely or use to create economic development in other ways. There is no way you could ever make an argument that using more electricity is the way to be.

When you look at the options we have, you do not have to go very far. There are options in Nova Scotia and lots of options in Ontario. You can go to just about every other province right now, and we are not seeing those things occur

right here in this Province. As an example, time-of-day usage, we see this in Ontario. We see smart meters being used in many different provinces right now. You say: Well, what is the point of smart meters? What smart meters do is it helps you plan and it helps the consumer conserve and make better use of the energy.

We are seeing this in Ontario with time of day. They have three different ways to price power. Of course, it lets the consumer involved be part of the decision. They can make better choices and, indeed, save money, and it is working. We have the off-peak hour, mid-peak hour, and the on-peak hour, which is the highest and most expensive.

The key to all of this is, what I found very interesting, that in Ontario what they have done is they have taken ownership and looked for ways to save money in the way they use their energy. In terms of the off-peak use, right now 64 per cent of the people in Ontario take advantage of off-peak use hours. What they have bought into – as the minister mentioned earlier, the people in Newfoundland and Labrador would have to buy into this program. It is quite obvious that the people in Ontario, no different than the people in Newfoundland and Labrador, have bought into that program, if those programs were available to them.

This is the time-of-day use. It is happening in many, many parts of the world right now. There are lots of ways, even in our own residential units, we could use the less expensive time. People, I believe, would do that. Just like in Ontario, where 64 per cent of the power is used there.

As an example, in the off-peak it is at 7.2 cents a kilowatt hour, mid-peak it is 10.9, and in the on-peak, which is the most expensive time, it is at 12.9. So it goes without saying why people would take advantage of those savings; therefore, that is more money they could use, that they have in their pockets to spend on other things in their lives. That is what I mentioned earlier about seniors.

Nova Scotia – and I know I only have about a minute or so left here. Nova Scotia has been very creative. They have extended their conservation plans and efficiency uses in Nova Scotia way beyond. They are even to the point where they have put in financing. If people were interested in making home improvements they would help with the financing. They have put programs in place with various chartered banks at a zero rate of interest.

The list is very extensive in Nova Scotia. It talks about even appliance retirement, air conditioners, financing assistance, as I said, home energy assessments, home heating reports, home heating solutions, and the list goes on and on and on. There is an aggressive piece there on low income, and new homes are included. They are not included right here in our Province.

Mr. Speaker, as my time runs out, I just want to remind the people of the Province right now that this particular government has said that conservation – they talk the talk about it, it is part of the Energy Plan, they have not delivered. It is no problem at all to build on the programs, because there is not a whole lot there right now. You need to put the foundation in place, put the programs in place. I believe Newfoundlanders and Labradorians would indeed take advantage of that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, it is a pleasure for me to be able to stand and be back here in the House of Assembly with all my colleagues and be on the floor of the House to debate over the next number of weeks leading into the spring, issues for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is a pleasure this afternoon to get up and speak to the resolutions that are on the floor, and indeed speak to the amendment that we brought forward. Just to follow up on what the Leader of the Opposition just said, that is the sole purpose really of the amendment that we have put forward: to build on the good initiatives that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has implemented in the last number of years.

The two speakers on the other side of the House this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, have already spoken to the good things that are taking place in Nova Scotia. I can imagine today somewhere in Nova Scotia that there is a member of the Legislative Assembly over there looking at some of the good things that we have in Newfoundland and Labrador, that we have implemented in Newfoundland and Labrador, and they are saying to the people of Nova Scotia: Why don't we copy some of the things that Newfoundland and Labrador is doing, as the Opposition want us to do?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: We all have a Budget to bring down. Nova Scotia will bring down their Budget and they will set their priorities. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador will bring our Budget down in the next number of weeks and we will set our priorities.

What this amendment does, Mr. Speaker, it looks at the good things we have done in the past, but it gives us the opportunity to build on the good things that we have done in the past and, indeed, we could implement programs in Newfoundland and Labrador that are currently in Nova Scotia or currently in other provinces of the country. So, this is why I will support the amendment that the minister brought down this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few moments to talk about energy conservation and sustainability and efficiency; but, at first, I want to try to put it all in perspective in my own way. As most of you know and most of the people in Newfoundland know, I was an educator for nearly twenty-five years. I started teaching in

Stephenville, but the second year I was in Corner Brook at the G.C. Rowe Junior High school. There was a class at that particular time that we called extension and challenge.

They were students that challenged teachers, they learned in a different way, and they were always questioning and they were always looking for different ways of doing things. I remember, Mr. Speaker, going to one of the very first science fairs that was taking place – and keep in mind that this was nearly quarter of a century ago when I started teaching in Corner Brook. I remember seeing all of the science fairs that were lined up along the wall and up and down the gymnasium of that particular school.

This young gentleman had a science fair project that caught my eye; he had developed a model of energy use and consumption of a city block that had three dimensional figures. Homes were lit up, businesses were lit up, while others had lights that were dim and businesses had lights that were dim, Mr. Speaker. Some businesses had their exterior signs on and exterior signs off during business hours.

I recall a lamp post that was there in this particular project that said 4:00 a.m., indicating that it was in the morning. He was comparing energy consumption with houses that still had lights left on and businesses that had their lights left on, and it was about a change in mindset, what this young gentleman was trying to portray to all of us. It was about a change in mindset.

I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that twenty-five years ago many of us were not concerned about energy use or energy conservation. Electricity was cheaper. Furnace oil, as an example, could be purchased at cents a litre. In actual fact, Mr. Speaker, when I bought my first home in Corner Brook I was paying twenty-six cents a litre for furnace oil and now, when I purchased it just a little while ago, it was over \$1 a litre.

With the exception of David Suzuki on one of the CBC programs back nearly twenty-five years ago, the residents of the Province back then never had the luxury to have the computer

technologies or the Internet to be able to go, look up, and understand what energy efficiency was or conservation was, and we often would listen to what David Suzuki would have to say. That is the only means by which, for the most part, the regular Newfoundlander and Labradorians and, indeed, the regular Canadian sitting in their homes would have had twenty-five years ago to talk about conservation and energy.

It is all about a change in mindset. I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that issue of energy usage and conservation is a mindset that is in its infancy here in the Province for many of us, but has evolved over the past few years. Pardon the pun; in the last few years, some of the initiatives that we have introduced here in the Province, over the last half-a-dozen years or so, it has actually picked up energy.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen evidence of that in this Province with the establishment, for example – it has been recognized by the speakers across the aisle the other day – of the Office of Climate Change in 2009 here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would also argue, Mr. Speaker, that energy efficiency and energy conservation is a social responsibility. The minister alluded to that in his words that he had this afternoon. The Energy Efficiency Action Plan, released by this government in 2011, illustrates the social responsibility in a number of ways and in real terms. It includes forty strategic commitments to improve the Province's energy efficiency. It also includes a target to reduce energy consumption in the Province, or 20 per cent below business as usual practices by 2020, Mr. Speaker.

In 2013, the Office of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency released a guide to building energy-efficient homes, Mr. Speaker. This guide assists people in understanding minimum standards, following an update to the national building code across the country, that requires all new homes in Newfoundland and Labrador and all small buildings to be built to meet energy-efficient standards, Mr. Speaker.

We all have a part to play; every single one of us has a part to play. When you and I, Mr. Speaker, and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, appreciate fully our responsibility towards climate change, that is when we will see the full benefit of what we are talking about on the floor of this House today.

Mr. Speaker, what that young fourteen-year-old student in Grade 8 was trying to show us back nearly a quarter of a century ago in that science fair was about social responsibility, to conserve energy for today and future generations.

Mr. Speaker, I am no scientist. In actual fact, I did not even teach science in school, but I concur with the experts in the energy field about conservation being a mindset to preserving and improving our lifestyle with less energy consumption.

Climate change is a real thing. Just a few years ago it was something in the future, but today we all know that climate change is taking place. As climate becomes increasingly solidified in our mindset and conversations, we will judge each other on the use of our power. We will judge our towns and our cities on the use of its power. We will judge our corporations' effort and contribution to a sustainable world environment, Mr. Speaker, on the use of our power. By placing energy conservation in a different mindset for ourselves, our towns, and our corporations, we will be on the way to contribute a greener community.

Mr. Speaker, what are some of the benefits? We have highlighted some of them today. I want to talk a few minutes about some of them. There is a financial benefit. Energy conservation, whether at home or in our businesses, helps reduce the total overall cost of operating that business and makes it more competitive. Changing lighting, as an example, will give you long-term savings.

A number of buildings in Newfoundland and Labrador today are being constructed for energy-efficient LEED status. I understand twenty-seven provincial buildings and nine municipal buildings in the Province already have

LEED status in the Province. I remember going to an event last fall in Corner Brook where Corner Brook city hall was granted LEED status. Nalcor's new employee residence in Churchill Falls, Mr. Speaker, has silver certification under the LEED program.

Mr. Speaker, another benefit would be prolonging equipment lifespan. A very simple concept in science, energy conservation will prolong equipment lifespan. In order to save energy equipment has to be maintained well to operate efficiently. Equipment that uses less energy will experience less wear and tear, and by experiencing less wear and tear, using less energy thus saving energy for that business or corporation and for a homeowner, and saving money at the end of the day.

I heard someone say a while ago – or I read somewhere, I cannot remember exactly where it was. The statement was something along these lines: The least expensive energy is the energy we do not use. That kind of caught me. It made a whole lot of sense to me, and it still makes a whole lot of sense.

We have debated in this Province, in this House of Assembly over the last number of months about the least-cost power. The minister talked about Muskrat Falls today and we debated Muskrat Falls on the floor of this House. The least-cost power is the power we do not use, Mr. Speaker. I want to put that into a little bit of a mindset for all of us as I speak to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador today.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I was guilty of not understanding this: overusing the washer and dryer, keeping lights on in rooms of my house that were not occupied, having televisions on in rooms where there was no one watching, not turning the thermostat back a notch or two in the nighttime, and doing all of these things. We do not need much training or much education to understand these things, but doing these simple things can have a huge role to play in energy conservation in this Province and indeed in any province in any nation of the world.

Turning back your thermostats, adjusting your thermostats; some of us like warmer temperatures and some of our seniors may want it even warmer, but adjust it in your home such that you are comfortable, Mr. Speaker. Retrofit your home through new windows, if you can afford new windows. When you do through the programs we have in the Province and national programs, the thousands of dollars that have been given out to others in the Province to help replace windows, siding, and insulation in their homes are good programs.

Seal your home with caulking around windows and doors. These are all common, easy things for people to do, Mr. Speaker. Insulate hot water tanks, especially if your hot water tank is located in a cooler portion of your house or your garage, if you have it located in a garage.

Electronics and appliances, Mr. Speaker; turn those off, unplug them, have a power bar and turn them off. Buy equipment that is blue label, Energy Star-compliant equipment. I read somewhere a while back by just unplugging or turning off appliances in your house can save you about \$20 a month, overall – \$20 a month by just unplugging the technology in your house.

Mr. Speaker, that young student at my school twenty-five years ago had it right. Today, the scientific evidence is clear that the earth is warming and that human activity is playing a pivotal role there.

I said at the beginning that I wanted to talk a little bit about what we have done, and the motion on the floor today reiterates what the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has done in the last number of years. This new amendment to the motion will talk about and give us the ability to be able to move forward, to be able to adopt some of the good things that are probably taking place, as the Leader of the Opposition brought forward, in Nova Scotia and other provinces of Canada.

I want to say to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador; I have sat with residents since I have become elected in Humber West. I have sat with residents in Corner Brook, and gone

through applications with them, Mr. Speaker, as they filled in programs for retrofit. I am glad to say that when I would get a callback from them a week, a month, two, or three down the road, they would tell me they got the money to be able to put in new windows, put on new siding, put in new insulation, or to outfit their home to make it a little more comfortable.

Many of these were seniors, and it gave me a great deal of pride to be able to sit down with these seniors so they could avail of such programs that we have had in the Province and that we will continue to avail of for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, this government has made strategic investments in energy efficiency programs over the years. I just want to talk for a few moments about EnerGuide, and there are a number of these. I will not get a chance to go through all of them in the next couple of minutes that I have, but bear with me here and I will take you down through a few of them.

Most notably, Mr. Speaker, our government partnered with the federal government on the EnerGuide program. Natural Resources Canada ecoENERGY Retrofit-Homes Program provided homeowners with grants up to \$5,000 to offset the cost of making their home improvements, Mr. Speaker.

This government announced the EnerGuide for houses program as a complement to the ecoENERGY program of the federal government. The goal was to assist the Province's homeowners in retrofitting their homes while subsidizing a portion of the energy evaluation costs. The provincial grant was based on dollar for dollar matching of the federal program up to a maximum of \$1,500, and many people in the Province availed of that, Mr. Speaker.

The total maximum combined rebate for the provincial and federal governments was \$6,500. In order to receive a grant the homeowner

required a pre and post retrofit evaluation by Natural Resources Canada. I know people in my own district who took advantage of that, as did people on all sides of the House and all over Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

The federal program required the homeowner to pay for the evaluation cost to remove the barrier to retrofit grants. The Province provided an additional subsidy of \$300 towards the retrofit evaluations. Our government funded the travel cost of retrofit energy evaluators, such that they could get out to the houses of people around Newfoundland and Labrador so the people throughout the Province could avail of such programs. Mr. Speaker, over the four-year life of the program, government invested nearly \$4 million in that particular program.

Mr. Speaker, other programs were also funded during this time, including the Save It Forward Program. The Save It Forward Program had three key objectives. That is one we talked about with regard to students and schools in the Province. It was about to engage youth in creating a culture of energy efficiency and conservation, to encourage positive attitudes towards conserving energy and using energy more efficiently in the Province, and it created awareness of energy conservation and efficiency principles and practices among youth.

Mr. Speaker, I know my time is getting up. I just want to say we brought in a lot of good programs and this amendment that the minister brought in this afternoon looks forward. This is a forward looking government, and we are going to continue to move forward on these kinds of initiatives.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I take pleasure in rising in my place again and talking about energy conservation and the debate

ensuing. It is interesting to hear government patting itself on the back for killing so many energy efficiency programs. It is really unusual to hear.

You are talking about the REEP, how many people actually benefited from REEP; yet, government saw fit, particularly in the last Budget, to cut the numbers, the dollars that were available to people. They saw fit to cut the number of houses that were going to be available for retrofit here. Last year 500 homes, according to government's own figures, and \$2 million lost. I wonder how much that is in kilowatts. In 2012 there were 1,000 homes done. All the way back to 2009, 1,000 homes were done every year.

The argument last year too that we had in this House, and it was a very good argument, when we talked about energy conservation on this side of the House, was that government did not believe in it; yet, when we talked about the need for energy conservation programming that was not readily available and that should be improved upon, we were almost laughed at in this House. People did not believe it. People did not believe it, in spite of during the Muskrat Falls debate, Mr. Speaker, when the former Natural Resources Minister was up, and I can still remember it to this very day, how he stood up in this House and warned of potential brownouts or blackouts as early as 2015. I could not believe it when I heard it.

I do not think the people of Newfoundland and Labrador believed it when they heard it because they always looked at Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro as being an integral part of their own lives, if you will, and also of the government's whole budgetary process and the handling of affairs on the part of the people. They thought Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro would look after them. Maybe there was a little bit of doubt on myself too, at the same time that was said in the House, that we could have the potential for brownouts in 2015.

I will tell something to the other side of the House, we will in this next Budget, we will have energy conservation programming in this

Budget. There is going to be one reason why it is going to be there, and if it is not going to be there in this Budget, every single person in Newfoundland and Labrador should be totally disgusted with the government all together with it. It is going to be there because of DarkNL.

It is going to be there because people had to do without electricity this time around. Rather than having to wait for government, for no other reason than conservation, then government was forced to do it because of what happened with Nalcor and the loss of power situation. That is the reason why energy conservation will be there in this Budget this time around.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say a word or two about the amendment. First, because as critical as I have to be in the government role, sometimes I roll up my eyebrows and I have to say I cannot believe that they are actually doing this. Because they say in the line, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this House urge government to build on the initiatives it has already undertaken in developing and introducing energy conservation programs for all ratepayers in the Province.

The Member for Humber West just got up and he was talking about the fact how they partnered with government on the EnerGuide program for houses. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? Both of those governments – the provincial government and the federal government – also got together and conspired to tear apart the program and end it at the same time. Let us not forget that.

So while they started on something good, they stopped. Where are we now today? We do not have a program. We have REEP – and we will talk about that for a little bit at the same time, the reason why it has to see more strategic investment. Because it is not only in their own numbers, Mr. Speaker. If I can haul out the release here that government put out in January 6, 2012, government's own papers here on this. When I saw this release, I was amazed. It talks about not only the potential of electricity that could be saved, but the potential that it could have for a lot of people out there when it came

particularly to government's Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Let's talk about it for a second here. It says, "The Residential Energy Efficiency Program was run as a pilot project for two years. During this period approximately \$7 million in grants enabled 2,000 homeowners to make retrofits." Listen to this one, "This resulted in an average household energy savings of 35 per cent" – 35 per cent – "and cash savings of nearly \$800 per year."

Now, if we had a good, aggressive energy efficiency program in this Province that really meant something to government, that was really going to get in there, get into people's houses, perform the audits, on a knock-on-door basis, if you wanted to, if you really wanted to be aggressive about it – if you had the potential to save 35 per cent of your energy savings, and I will just go with the Island on this one, to prove a point, if you wanted to save 35 per cent of your energy on the Island portion of the Province alone, we have the potential to flick the switch on Holyrood generation.

That number speaks for itself. What are we talking about when it comes to Holyrood generation, Mr. Speaker? We are talking – I think during the debate we heard various figures – 18 per cent to 20 per cent during the winter at peak.

So we had the potential here to make a very big impact. That opportunity was lost on the part of government when they cut these programs – both federal and provincial. The initiative is not there. As a matter of fact, the initiative to consume electricity has been placed upon the taxpayer or by the ratepayer of this Province by the provincial government.

We can go back to the Muskrat Falls agreement itself and look at the take-or-pay arrangement under Muskrat, where the electricity coming into Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro has to be purchased by them after being sold by Nalcor. We, the taxpayer, the ratepayer, are going to be forced to pay the end price for our electricity anyway, regardless of what we are doing when it

comes to our own energy conservation needs. Great, we are put into the mixer on that.

When it comes to Bill 61 – and the Leader of the Opposition spoke right on it, when we are talking about the initiative of people wanting to put electricity into the grid again. It was taken away. How is that showing an initiative by which, as the amendment would say, build on the initiatives that government has already taken in developing and introducing energy conservation programming? Tell me how?

Energy conservation is not just about energy conservation. Energy conservation has its positive measures behind it, too. When you are talking about Muskrat Falls for example, a lot of people would argue about the environmental costs. That is what we are talking about when we are talking about energy conservation, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the day, we are talking about conservation in general. That could be wildlife. That could be the polluting of a pond with mercury. That could be the pollution in this case of mercury that could end up ruining a food supply in Lake Melville all for the simple fact that we did not have a proper conservation program on the go years ago that could have addressed this problem.

We knew years ago. Let there be no mistake, the Member for Humber West already talked about it. He talked about high oil prices back in 1972 back when the OPEC countries started raising the price of oil. We had the warnings back then and we did not listen. We had various programs on the go throughout the years federally. Federally we did with the programs with urea-formaldehyde, for example, when they started. It all turned out that urea-formaldehyde was bad for homes anyway, so then they had to come up with another home retrofit program behind that.

Over the years, we have had spotty programs. We have not had anything that was steady, that was reliable, that the people of this country could depend on, or that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador could depend on. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that in this particular case when it came to an energy

conservation program, there were a lot of people who were being impacted positively by that.

This release goes on to state, when it comes to putting money directly back into the taxpayers' pocket – it says, "It also addresses the long-term goals of the Poverty Reduction Strategy which are to improve the housing circumstances of low-income households and help create healthier communities."

Mr. Speaker, I am speechless that the government can come out and say that they have already built on initiatives when they have taken them apart. I am literally speechless, even though I am up here talking about it; it is an odd thing I guess. At the same time as that, "In addition, it supports Moving Forward: Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2011, which outlines the Provincial Government's vision for improving energy efficiency throughout the province."

Mr. Speaker, I think that the actions of this government speak totally contrary to what the reality of the situation is. If we are going to see energy efficiency and proper programming happening, it is going to be because of DarkNL and it is going to be in this Budget; the funding has to be there.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to point forward to what other provinces have been doing, at the same time. I bring attention to Nova Scotia who is on a proper course now of energy efficiency, in spite of, I guess, putting a lot of electricity and everything in the grid, they pay attention to both. We have not here. We spent an awful lot of time here on consumption.

Let us go to New Brunswick who have, I guess one, of this country's best energy efficiency programming. When you are talking about energy efficiency programming, a lot of people in my district in St. John's East were asking the same question at the same time, if you had industrial savings of electricity – and the potential of this still has to be talked about when it comes to industrial programming. For example, they would not be looking across the street and seeing Sobeys at Howley Estates with the big mercury lights going on in the parking

lot while across the street they did not have electricity and experiencing a brownout.

We have the ability to put in place programming and save electricity and save our environment at the same time. Sometimes there is just not a willingness to do it. I do not know what it is; it is like a lackadaisical approach when it comes to conservation. We do not think, sometimes, these programs all the way through. We try them out and then we give up on them. I do not know why that is, and REEP is a good example of that.

DarkNL taught us a lot of things when it came to a conservation program, the importance of it. Everybody is talking about it now, Mr. Speaker, and it has become most important in the minds of a lot of people these days, because it is a necessity now. Before when it was talked about, maybe it was not so much on everybody's mind like it is now, but the need for conservation has been enforced on people in the Province rather than being mandated.

Mr. Speaker, in my research you meet people who have an awful lot to say about where government programming has gone on with this. One of the common threads that keeps coming back – I know government has been talking an awful lot about social responsibility for people to conserve. Yes, we all recognize, I think, that is a social responsibility to do that, but some people can do things on their own, which is a positive thing.

Sometimes when you do not know about a certain issue you like to look for leadership. Leadership, I think, is a big, important word when it comes to this particular issue of energy conservation. When we look at the history of energy conservation or conservation programming, we are really only young into the game – we really are. Over the last ten years or so it has become more predominant out there, particularly in the media and in regard to where our energies are being expended.

One of the most important comments I think I heard to reinforce that particular topic of leadership was brought up at the Public Utilities

Board this February 5, 2014 in the pre-hearing conference. I can go down through the list of presenters who were there. One of the things they presented was a particularly interesting piece of reading by Mr. Curtis Mercer and Mr. Jack Parsons who are both into the construction of homes in this Province.

The one word I notice that jumps out at me here when it comes to this, recognizing of course that municipalities have taken a leadership role in this, the one missing ingredient they mostly talk about here that everybody else in the Province is thinking of after DarkNL – and government still has to step in there and take that leadership role. Leadership is where it is going to matter.

We expect to see leadership when the provincial Budget is going to be released on March 27. We expect that government would step forward, take the initiative, and show some leadership when it comes to conservation programming, but they certainly have not done so up to this point.

I see my time is up. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Port au Port.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand in my place this afternoon representing the great and cultural District of Port au Port, in fact, the great people of Port au Port who put me here, to take part in this debate on the private member's resolution as brought forward by the Official Opposition. In particular, Mr. Speaker, and more importantly, on the amendment that was brought forward by our minister.

In the original motion it was, "THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this House urge Government to consider developing and introducing energy conservation programs for all ratepayers in our Province."

Our amendment, Mr. Speaker, will be: THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this House urge government to build on the initiatives it has already undertaken in developing and introducing energy conservation programs for all ratepayers in our Province.

Mr. Speaker, I was listening attentively to the speakers previous to me. I was listening to the mover of the motion, the Member for St. John's South, and he made a couple of comments in his remarks. I want to clarify – I believe, Mr. Speaker, he said that the Provincial Home Repair Program was cut by half. I say to the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, not so.

MR. OSBORNE: Residential Energy Efficiency Program.

MR. CORNECT: Okay.

Also, Mr. Speaker, he said that people using oil to heat their homes –

MR. OSBORNE: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: A point of order, the hon. Member for St. John's South.

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I said that the Residential Energy Efficiency Program was cut by half, and it was in last year's Budget.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for Port au Port.

MR. CORNECT: Also, Mr. Speaker, he said that people using oil to heat their homes are not eligible for the Home Heating Rebate Program.

MR. OSBORNE: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: A point of order, the hon. Member for St. John's South.

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I did not say that either, I said they are not eligible for the REEP.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for Port au Port.

MR. CORNECT: Mr. Speaker, I say to the hon. member, and the hon. members across, not so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNECT: I think he is being confused with the federal program.

AN HON. MEMBER: In any language; tell them in French.

MR. CORNECT: Monsieur le président, qu'est-ce que qui est dit dans ce grand discours.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNECT: Today, Mr. Speaker, what I will do, I will provide an overview of the Residential Energy Efficiency Program, REEP, which is offered through the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. This program is designed to assist low-income households in making energy efficient retrofits to their homes.

Mr. Speaker, government has made significant investments in energy efficiency and conservation programs such as REEP in this Province. I also want to take the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, this afternoon to highlight other programs being offered to assist many people of this Province through the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at the Residential Energy Efficiency Program, or REEP as we know it. The Residential Energy Efficiency Program is designed to assist low-income households, \$32,500 or less per year, in making energy efficient retrofits to their homes. These retrofits make housing more affordable and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Homeowners can avail of a grant of up to \$3,000 per unit, Mr. Speaker, on the Island portion of the Province, and up to \$4,000 per unit in Labrador. Repairs under the program are identified through an energy evaluation which

determines the best possible solutions for energy efficiency. A post-energy evaluation is also required to confirm that identified work was completed. These evaluations, Mr. Speaker, are completed by trained Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation employees. As an example, some repairs that would create energy efficiencies are basement and attic insulation, and draught proofing.

The Residential Energy Efficiency Program is set to expire in March of 2014; however, we have been pushing to have the program extended for a further three years. We have to wait for the Budget to see if this is going to happen.

This year, Mr. Speaker, we were able to invest \$2 million to serve 500 clients. To date, we have been able to assist more than 4,500. Yes, 4,500 homeowners with energy retrofits through the residential energy assistance program –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNECT: – with an estimated average energy savings of 32 per cent, or \$735 annually.

Mr. Speaker, the average client profile is sixty-eight years old with an annual household income of \$20,395. They are living in a forty-nine-year-old home, generally in a rural area, in my area. I know a lot of people in my area have benefitted from this program as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNECT: Another piece of our important programming, Mr. Speaker, is the Provincial Home Repair Program or, as some people call it, PHRP. This provincial-federal, cost-shared program is administered and delivered by the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. Low-income households are provided with modest financial assistance to improve privately owned households. Items that clients may be eligible to upgrade are, Mr. Speaker, windows, doors, siding, insulation, roofing, and heating systems, all of which, as you know and we know, can improve the energy efficiency of a home.

The program assists approximately 2,000 clients annually and benefits primarily seniors. Mr. Speaker, the average homeowner recipient is sixty-eight years of age, has an annual income of \$18,646, and occupies a forty-eight-year-old house in the rural part of our Province.

Mr. Speaker, government has been active. I want to reference now the Home Modification Program, or HMP. The Home Modification Program is designed to provide funding to low-to moderate-income homeowners, \$46,500 or less, to seniors and persons with disabilities who require significant accessibility changes to their residences. The program helps promote independence, self-reliance, assist with a better quality of life, and enables individuals to remain in their own homes for a longer period.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, government is offering other initiatives to reduce cost for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, such as the Residential Energy Rebate subsidy. It was introduced in 2011. It is a rebate of the 8 per cent provincial sales tax on residential electricity and home heating oil bills for all customers Province wide. In 2013, customers received approximately \$42.3 million as a result of this rebate.

As well, Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro and Newfoundland Power are offering the takeCHARGE initiative. This helps to save residents energy and money. In November 2008, the two utilities joined together to help raise awareness of the importance of using energy wisely and encourage more people to take action today to reduce their energy usage.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a little earlier the Member for St. John's East was up on his feet speaking to the debate today and I think he said that the provincial government was conspiring with the federal government to eliminate the ecoENERGY program. As a government, we were devastated when they cut that program. So we are advocating very hard to keep that program by the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, energy conservation is the responsibility of everyone in Newfoundland and

Labrador. While government-funded programming can be beneficial, personal decisions can also play a role in making our homes more energy efficient. Energy efficiency and conservation has long been a commitment of this government but it has to be a commitment of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, as well. We are all in this together.

I just want to talk about some of the conservation things we can do around our homes and in our work with equipment we have and so forth, simple acts, Mr. Speaker, such as, “Only heat spaces where necessary. Reduce heating spaces used for only short periods. If possible reduce temperatures or shut off heating in vestibules, stairwells, lobbies and unused spaces. Keep shades and curtains open during the day so the sun can warm your space and close them in the evening to keep the heat in. Lower your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting when your business is occupied. Set the temperature back further when the business is unoccupied. Review programmed schedules for heating and ventilation equipment for opportunities to better match the schedule to actual occupancy and reduce run times.”

Mr. Speaker, we have been active in advising our people how to conserve energy efficiently and effectively. I will conclude by saying that the Residential Energy Efficiency Program as well as other programs offered through the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation assist households in making positive energy efficiency choices in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I thank you for this chance to speak this afternoon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for St. John’s South to close the debate.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to talk a little bit again about this resolution put before the House and I wanted to refer to some of the comments by members opposite. We heard them talk about a plan to reduce emissions by 2020, climate change, and bringing out a new home building guide in 2013. I will address those first.

It is great to put plans on paper, but we saw a plan that the government opposite put on paper in 2007, the Energy Plan, and that plan talked about establishing an energy conservation and efficiency partnership to develop a co-ordinated and prioritized five-year energy conservation and efficiency plan by March of 2008. That did not happen.

Mr. Speaker, they talked about developing collaborative approaches, sharing best practices, co-ordinating the measurement and evaluation of various efficiency and conservation initiatives. They talked about having in this very detailed plan for energy efficiency and conservation a variety of mechanisms, such as retrofit rebates, new heating technologies, basic home weatherization, programs to switch to more energy-efficient lights, and net monitoring. None of that happened. You can talk about plans, but plans and action are two different things. We have not seen the action by government opposite the same as we have seen in other provinces.

They have talked heavily about the Residential Energy Efficiency Program and that is a good program, Mr. Speaker. It is a good program and it has helped a lot of people. There are a couple of concerns with that program. One is you have to have an income of less than \$32,500 as a household in order to qualify for that program. It does not help middle-income earners or others who are suffering high energy costs and high heating costs. There is a large part of the population overlooked by that particular program. The other problem with that program is the fact they cut it in half in last year’s Budget. A program that was working, a program that was helping people, was cut in half.

Mr. Speaker, just to give an indication of the mindset of government opposite, during the blackout of 2014, there was a public notification put out at 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon, two hours before the rolling blackouts started at 4:00 o'clock, not enough time for people to get out to stores and buy lights, emergency lights, or food that could be prepared and eaten without being cooked, and so on; very little notice for people to prepare for those blackouts. That was a large part of the reason people were upset during those blackouts.

Mr. Speaker, you look at the comments. For example, one of the ministers opposite, when questioned about this by a member of the media just last week, said that energy efficiency and conservation is not a high priority; you would have to take away from other programs such as health in order to implement it. That was one of the comments made.

Another comment made by the Minister Responsible for Emergency Services during the blackout: "I would like to thank all residents for their patience during this difficult situation and encourage you to monitor local radio stations for important advice from authorities as it becomes available." He went on to say, "When power is restored, residents should limit usage and continue to conserve electricity until the system returns to full capacity." Limiting use of electricity or conserving electricity until the system is back to full capacity is a lot different than what we are talking about here today, Mr. Speaker, in real conservation measures.

We heard members opposite talking about changing your lighting. Well, government does not offer any incentives in this Province; in other provinces they do, for energy-efficiency lighting. There are no initiatives offered by this government for energy-efficiency lighting, so they are saying to people to go out and do it yourself. This resolution is talking about doing what other provinces are doing by offering rebates for energy-efficiency lighting. Turn back the thermostat; it is great advice, but, Mr. Speaker, it does not do anything to put dollars back in the pockets.

The only incentive is through takeCHARGE and, again, there is an income limit on that. It does not help all people. There is an income limit. You cannot be in row housing; you have to have a semi-detached house or a detached house. You cannot be in an apartment building to qualify for that program, Mr. Speaker. You cannot be in a condo to qualify for that program, like you can in other provinces. There are limitations even to that program.

Do not overuse your dryer. Well, Mr. Speaker, in other provinces they offer rebates for energy-efficiency appliances. We do not in this Province. That is what this resolution is about.

Seal your home with caulking. There are no rebates in this Province for caulking and weatherization, Mr. Speaker. There are in other provinces. They offer real rebates for people who seal their homes with caulking and can provide the receipts.

Buy ENERGY STAR appliances. Well, again, in other provinces you get a rebate if you buy an ENERGY STAR appliance; not in this Province. That is what this motion is about.

Government put an amendment into the motion saying to build on what they have already done. Well, what they have already done, Mr. Speaker, is come out with an energy efficiency plan in 2007, their Energy Plan, but they have done nothing with it. They have not done anything with that plan as they promised, a detailed plan, such as retrofit rebates, new heating technologies, basic home weatherization, and programs to switch to more efficient lights and metering.

I said in my opening comments, Mr. Speaker, that there is a Newfoundland and Labrador company –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. OSBORNE: – owned and operated by people in Newfoundland and Labrador. They are operating in other provinces providing smart

meters and other technologies, but they cannot get their foot in the door in this Province. We have shut the door on a local company that is providing real benefits in other provinces and saving people money on their energy bills.

The cost of their product, Mr. Speaker, which is covered in other provinces, is about \$100 per household. It is unbelievable that local company can operate in other provinces and be supported by the governments of other provinces, but here we do not do it.

AN HON. MEMBER: Shame.

MR. OSBORNE: It is shameful – shameful – Mr. Speaker. That product they offer is about \$100 for a smart meter. You do not have to change out your meter. They put an addition on to the existing meter on your house. It is about \$100 and it will help people save money.

Mr. Speaker, what has been done? They have talked about what has been done and talked about the Residential Energy Efficiency Program, but not one of them mentioned that program was cut in half in last year's Budget. Now, I hope in this year's Budget we will see an increase to that program again because it does help people on lower incomes do energy efficiency upgrades to their homes. We need more than that. That helps people up to \$32,500, but in Nova Scotia, for example, they help people up to \$58,000. That is a big difference – a big difference.

Helping people with rebates on things that this Province does not do, like ENERGY STAR appliances, energy-efficient light bulbs, and so on will make a real difference to the bottom-line energy costs people are paying in this Province. It will make a real difference to the energy usage in this Province, therefore allowing the energy utilities the ability to provide better services in times of high, peak demand that we have seen this winter where there were rolling blackouts. We could have avoided those if the plan in 2007 that they talked about putting into place and having ready by March 2008 was actually done. We may have avoided those rolling blackouts because we may have had energy efficiency,

things such as energy-saving light bulbs, ENERGY STAR appliances, and so on in this Province that we have not seen. It is shameful, Mr. Speaker, that government can stand up and say they have done all kinds of wonderful things when really their 2007 plan has not been acted on. They promised by March 2008, but it is seven years later and it has not been acted on.

Mr. Speaker, they said they brought in a lot of good programs. Not one of the programs they have talked about in their 2007 Energy Plan was implemented. Now, in contrast to that we hear them saying there are 4,500 homes in this Province where homeowners have less than \$32,500 that can help through the Residential Energy Efficiency Program. That is great and I applaud government for that. I say shame on them for cutting it in half in last year's Budget, but that was 4,500 over the several years that program has been in place. They have cut it down to 500 per year.

Now, in contrast to those 4,500 homes over the many years that program has been in place so far in this Province, Mr. Speaker, we look at Nova Scotia as one example. I have already talked about how in Ontario they are using a Newfoundland and Labrador company to put smart meters in. They are doing it in Alberta; they are doing it in British Columbia. They are not doing it in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have already talked about the smart meters and how that could help. Well, let us look at the rebate program they have in Nova Scotia for people to buy energy-efficiency light bulbs, appliances, and so on, something we do not have in this Province.

They have retired 7,976 inefficient refrigerators, freezers, and air conditioners and replaced them as a result of the rebates in Nova Scotia. That would take a huge strain off the energy demand at peak times in this Province; there is no doubt about it. Rebates offered on efficient products resulted in 274,610 products purchased in Nova Scotia, energy-efficiency products. That is huge, Mr. Speaker; 8,700 energy-efficiency light bulbs, which last longer, result in less going to the landfills, and use less electricity.

Mr. Speaker, they have completed upgrades. Now, keep in mind, under the program in Newfoundland and Labrador, there were 4,500 homes over the years. They completed energy efficiency upgrades to 28,397 homes in Nova Scotia, resulting in an average annual savings of \$182 per household in energy costs. An estimated 12,000 of those were low-income households. We have 4,500 low-income households; they have done 12,000 low-income households and on top of that they have done another 16,000 or 17,000 households for middle-income families.

Mr. Speaker, that is what we are talking about in this. Government can dress it up and do an amendment to say build on all the good things we have done, but there are good things happening with energy conservation in other provinces. That is what we are asking for in this Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Shall the amendment as put forward by the Minister of Natural Resources carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

On motion, amendment carried.

MR. SPEAKER: Shall the resolution as amended carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

On motion, resolution as amended carried.

MR. SPEAKER: This being Private Members' Day, Wednesday, the House now stands adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, at 1:30 p.m.