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*Speaker: Honourable Wade Verge, MHA*

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**MR. SPEAKER (Verge):** Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Today we are pleased to welcome to the public gallery a group of students from St. Bonaventure's College, Careers Class, with their teacher, Mr. David Martino.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** I understand you have a young lady in your group by the name of Jane, whose proud father sits as the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

#### Statements by Members

**MR. SPEAKER:** Today we have members' statements from the Members for the District of Port de Grave, from the District of Labrador West, from the District of The Straits – White Bay North, from the District of St. John's East, from the District of Exploits, and from the District of Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

The hon. the Member for the District of Port de Grave.

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize and congratulate Dylan Bradbury, a sixteen-year-old resident of Shearstown. Dylan is legally blind, but this has not stopped him from participating in his favourite sport: hockey. Dylan was the only athlete selected from this Province to recently play in the 2015 Courage Cup at Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto.

Dylan got this opportunity when Courage Canada came to St. John's to seek out potential players for a camp in British Columbia. Dylan attended this camp with a dozen other players to hone his hockey skills. From this camp, Dylan was selected to Team Atlantic to compete in the 2015 Courage Cup.

Dylan says playing blind hockey is different. Players follow the sound of the puck on the ice and in the air. On faceoffs, players shoot the puck to the other end of the ice and the goalie relies on hearing the puck, with the top half of his net covered, and there are no slapshots.

I ask all hon. members to make some noise for this courageous and determined young man to play the game he loves: hockey.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for the District of Labrador West.

**MR. MCGRATH:** Mr. Speaker, I stand in this hon. House today to congratulate and recognize a Labrador City Winter Carnival Committee on another successful event. This year's carnival, chaired by Labrador City Recreation Director Evelyn Ryan, along with a committee of eighteen dedicated volunteers, provided the citizens of Labrador West with ten days of fulfilled events and showed the meaning of true family and community spirit.

From March 6-15, over seventy-five events were available, starting with a night of performance by some very talented high school students from Menihek High. During the week, young ambassadors showcased their talents and in the end Bradley Leonard and Keisha Ryan were crowned as teen ambassadors and both received a \$1,000 scholarship for further education.

During the past year, seven families competed in many different challenges hoping to be crowned Labrador City's first royal family. The winners are Jennifer and Michael Byrne and their daughter, Ellysa.

Labrador City's winter carnival started in 1962 and fifty-three years later, it is still going strong. It is a way to celebrate the long winter, welcome the upcoming spring, and bring families and the community together.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating Labrador City on another successful carnival.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize the spirit of a fighting Newfoundlander.

Gavin ‘Guv’Nor’ Tucker, a twenty-eight-year-old Ship Cove native, on February 28 won MMA Featherweight title in an Extreme Cage Combat in Halifax, Nova Scotia taking his record to 8-0. It was a long journey as just two weeks from the title fight in 2013, he got injured. He remained focused on the future, trained hard, and was ready for his next fight. Tucker hopes his performance will enable him to be the first Newfoundlander to fight in a UFC match-up.

Coming from a tiny rural community on the Great Northern Peninsula, Tucker’s opportunities for intense training was limited, but his determination aided in his success. He also showcased his talents as a musician, being heavily involved with the Stephenville Festival – it was his love for music that initially brought him to the mainland.

Tucker is an example of how people from small places can make big things happen, but their hearts are never far from home. He was quoted after his significant win, “The only thing I can think about is getting a trip back to good old Newfoundland.”

I ask all hon. members to congratulate Newfoundland’s own MMA Featherweight champion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are many fine high schools in the Province, but I will confess to a little bias by saying the finest is probably Gonzaga High

School in St. John’s East, of which I am a proud alumnus.

Today I rise in this House to congratulate Darcy Taylor, a Grade 12 French immersion student at Gonzaga, who has been selected as one of just thirty Canadian Loran Scholars for 2015.

Mr. Speaker, 3,800 people applied for the award this year; fewer than 1 per cent passed through the rigorous selection process. Their applications are screened, and that is followed by two separate interviews. They are assessed based on character, commitment to service and leadership potential as well as academic achievements.

Darcy, for example, is involved in several fundraising activities as well as sports. He represented this Province as a tennis player at the Canada Summer Games.

In addition to the Loran Scholarship, valued at up to \$100,000, Mr. Speaker, Darcy has also been offered a \$24,000 award by the University of Ottawa and \$78,000 by Queen’s University. It is quite remarkable. So far, he has been offered in excess of \$208,000 in scholarships.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Mr. Darcy Taylor, an outstanding Grade 12 student at Gonzaga High School and a future leader in this Province.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for the District of Exploits.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. FORSEY:** Mr. Speaker, on September 27, the Botwood Collegiate Warriors Girls Softball team competed in the Girls 4A Regional Softball Championships, hosted by Lewisporte Collegiate.

The Warriors opened the tournament with a win against Exploits Valley High Eagles and after the round robin the Warriors went on to face the host team in the finals.

The Warriors took to the field with determination in the championship game against the host team, Lewisporte Collegiate Lynx, and defeated the host team 10-4 in the final to claim the regional banner – sorry, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the girls attribute their win to their experience of playing together as a team for a number of years and to their coaches Jerry Woolridge, Denise Woolridge, and teacher sponsor Shawn Reddick.

I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating the Botwood Collegiate Warriors on winning the 4A Regional Softball Championships.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I was delighted to hear this year that the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival will be returning to its traditional home in Bannerman Park, one of the jewels of my district of Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

Bannerman Park has always been special to many of us, for the Folk Festival and many other reasons. Earlier this month, archivist Larry Dohey informed us that Bannerman Park was redesigned in 1891 by Johnny Burke, the Bard of Prescott Street and famous for wiring songs like “The Kelligrews Soiree.”

Bannerman Park has been used by the public since at least 1864, making it the oldest and most historic park in the Province. The City of St. John’s created and worked with the Bannerman Park Foundation to restore this Victorian gem – and how successful they have been!

The Park is popular year-round. In the summer, you will see swimming, softball, slacklining, and splashing. In the winter, now, The Loop is a huge attraction for outdoor skaters.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating the City of St. John’s, the Bannerman Park Foundation, and all the hundreds of volunteers and donors who contributed to revitalizing Bannerman Park and restoring it for future generations.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

#### Statements by Ministers

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise in this hon. House to provide an update on our Province’s Cancer Control Policy Framework. Over the past decade cancer control has seen a total investment of more than \$172 million and we continue to work to honour our commitment to enhance prevention and screening, as well as diagnosis, treatment and support.

Cancer touches all of us at some point in our lives, if not directly as a patient, then as a relative or friend of someone with cancer. The impacts of this disease are multiple and far-reaching, affecting people of all ages. Our department works closely with the Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development and other government departments, regional health authorities, school districts, and community partners to implement programs and policies aimed at cancer prevention including smoking cessation and other healthy living initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial government has achieved a number of important goals to date with respect to cancer prevention and screening in Newfoundland and Labrador. In 2011, we introduced a ban on smoking in vehicles with a passenger present who is under the age of sixteen. Between 2013 and 2014 we brought in further changes to more closely regulate tanning bed facilities, to cover the cost of smoking

cessation medications for people with low income, and to expand the Province's Colon Cancer Screening Program.

The provincial government has also made achievements in recent years with respect to diagnosis, treatment, and support of those with cancer, as well as their families and support networks. In 2011, we launched the Cancer Patient Navigator Program to provide support to patients and their families by helping them access a variety of medical and community services in a timely and efficient manner. In 2012, we supported the launch of the *Cancer Transitions: Moving Beyond Treatment* program, which provides invaluable support to cancer survivors and empowers them as they transition from active treatment to post-treatment.

Mr. Speaker, tele-oncology has also seen increased uptake in recent years as cancer specialists have offered patient consultations through Telehealth. Finally, we have made strategic investments in reducing endoscopy wait times and wait-lists to ensure residents can more quickly and easily access these diagnostic services.

We continue to strive for increased awareness and cancer prevention, while at the same time working as a government to find new ways to mitigate risks and provide timely diagnosis, appropriate treatment, and support.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I would like to begin by recognizing the work of health care professionals working in cancer care. Living on the West Coast, I, like many on this side, have many people who have to travel back and forth to St. John's for treatment, and they always comment on the compassionate care that they receive.

Telehealth is something that we could certainly do a little more of. Again, it is something that has a huge impact on those who have to travel for care. We were once a leader in Telehealth; it is something we need to utilize more, given just our geographic spread and the impact it would have on those who are forced to travel for care.

I am very proud of the work that our caucus has done, especially our leader, and the Member for Bay of Islands on pressing the need for radiation services on the West Coast to enhance access to diagnosis and treatment. This government gave many excuses in refusing to do it, but once they finally commissioned the report, they realized the need was there. We should also thank the health care committee in Corner Brook for the work that they did advocating for this.

Again, the minister's opening statement was on the money spent on cancer control but not on the outcomes. The Conference Board of Canada talks about the D-minus ranking. We have the highest incidence of cancer in the country, the poorest outcome in lifestyle factors. We should be talking about the outcomes, not just on the money.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Yes, we have made good progress in providing support for cancer prevention and support, but since not all treatment can be available everywhere, and people understand that, people need adequate financial support to travel for treatment. Although medical travel grants have expanded, there are still barriers such as the need to pay upfront, the lack of coverage for shorter distances, and the need for more accommodation coverage, which is very stressful.

We hear from families who are suffering a lot of stress because of these barriers, trying to come up with the money for travel for treatment. I ask the minister to put that on his list.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

Our government recognizes the importance of ensuring that children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador have an opportunity to grow, thrive, and succeed in a safe and nurturing environment. In fact, our Premier has made public safety and protection, particularly that of children, among his highest priorities.

On an ongoing basis, we continue to reinforce and enhance the child protection system in our Province, investing more than \$140 million in the past year alone. An important element of this work is the vital role that foster families play in providing a positive and supportive environment for children and youth in care. Fostering provides temporary and sometimes longer-term care for children and youth who are unable to live with their own families. Foster parents are key members of a team dedicated to helping children and youth through difficult situations by offering supportive and caring environments.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, it is critical that our government and community partners continue to raise awareness of the significant need for additional foster families in the Province. To this end, we launched a targeted foster family recruitment campaign in 2012. I am pleased to report that since its launch, the *Foster a Future* campaign has helped to create approximately 115 new foster families, who have opened their hearts and homes to approximately 175 children and youth in care.

We must continue to raise awareness of this important issue, Mr. Speaker, as there is still a critical shortage of foster homes in our Province. We have children and youth in our Province who have complex needs and require caring families while they are unable to live at home; others need foster families who share their

Aboriginal culture; and some need foster placements a little closer to their home communities.

The decision to become a foster family is a significant one. There are numerous ways families interested in fostering can help, even if it is just for a short period of time. I encourage anyone who is considering opening their home to become a foster family to contact my department or the Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association.

It is only by continuing to raise awareness that our government and community at large can ensure we have a loving foster family for every child and youth who need one, perhaps at the most vulnerable period in their lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. J. BENNETT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I am pleased to take this opportunity in the House of Assembly to recognize the critical role that foster families play in helping meet the needs of some of our most vulnerable children.

Opening their homes and hearts to children is kind and commendable. More foster families mean fewer children in Alternate Living Arrangements. ALAs are less than ideal environments for children. Providing stable nurturing home environments for these children is a critical piece in child protection.

Mr. Speaker, the *Foster a Future* campaign has been a great success. I extend my sincere thanks to any foster parents who have already accepted the challenge and made the commitment to foster vulnerable children. Further, since they already fully understand fostering, I would ask them to spread the word about the rewards of fostering so we can engage more families in fostering.

Finally, anyone interested in learning more about fostering call the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services or your Member of the House of Assembly. Any one of us will help you get involved.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS ROGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I want to thank the additional 115 foster families who have opened their homes to the children of Newfoundland and Labrador since the campaign began in 2012. I want to thank the staff of CYFS and the foster care association who are part of the success of this campaign. Bravo to them, Mr. Speaker.

We know there is a need for more social workers to provide more support to the generous foster families and to ensure the continuity of care for our children in care. We owe it to the foster families and to our children.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in this hon. House to speak to the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs review of the current Lands Act and associated service delivery model.

The Lands Act guides the management and allocation of the Province's Crown lands. A comprehensive review of the Lands Act and its service delivery model is required to ensure it is relevant, and it is the most effective way to manage, administer, utilize, and protect our

Crown lands for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Some of the specific areas we are looking to address through this review include: ways to make the act clear and concise so it is well understood by those who use it and can be interpreted and applied consistently; internal business processes and policies to determine their necessity and if changes are required to improve timelines; internal referral and consultation processes; as well as current technology used to support the operations of the act.

An independent review committee has been established of three individuals who are educated, experienced and knowledgeable in the areas of law, policy and business process review. An advisory committee supporting the review committee by providing input and information sharing throughout the process. We are pleased to have the Law Society of Newfoundland and Labrador as a key partner in this review given the significant interaction their membership has with this legislation in their day-to-day work.

The consultation process is about to begin and the locations of the eight consultation sessions throughout the Province can be found on the department's website. The page also outlines the various ways interested parties can get involved and submit their feedback, including through online and written submissions. The Terms of Reference for the review can also be found on the department's website.

I encourage all residents to either participate in the in-person sessions or provide a written or online submission.

When consultations are completed, a "What We Heard" document will be released on the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs website.

The provincial government is committed to its focus on listening, collaborating and innovation. This review demonstrates this commitment and will lead to practical and informed recommendations to ensure the Lands Act aligns with best practices to better meet the needs of residents and shareholders of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**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 the advance copy. When I saw the Lands Act review, I was happy for two reasons. First, it is going to save the taxpayers money by having Don Downer, who wasted over half a million dollars in a Land Use Advisory Committee which had no role out in Corner Brook, just because he was on the payroll, Mr. Speaker. So I assume he is gone now and this here has meaning.

Mr. Speaker, I compliment the minister on putting this forward. It is something we all asked for, for a number of years. We desperately need the inventory for Crown lands across the Province. Mr. Speaker, MNL has been asking for this for a number of years for Crown lands within their town as an economic generator that they could use in their towns. I compliment the minister for initiating this.

Having affordable Crown lands within municipal boundaries, Mr. Speaker, is something that is going to benefit all of the Province. With this comprehensive review, I just ask that when the report is completed that the government will follow and act upon the recommendations of the report because it is better for all the Province. I say great job to the minister because it is well needed.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement here today. Mr. Speaker, I hope the government hears from and, more importantly, listens to the many interest groups on the issue of the Lands Act. We will be listening to these groups express their views on the need for better

protection of valued lands, particularly traditional rights-of-way, ecologically sensitive areas, the protection of coastal trails, and the important issue of land use within municipalities.

We look forward to hearing the outcomes, Mr. Speaker. Again, we would like to thank the government for opening up the consultations when it comes to the Lands Act.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It has been almost a year ago since the news broke of a potential deal with Rentech to develop timber resources in Central Newfoundland and the Northern Peninsula. We have heard very little since and there is nothing in the minister's mandate letter on this potential development.

I ask the Premier: People in Central Newfoundland are finding it odd that we have not heard anything in months and there is nothing in the minister's mandate letter; so why didn't you include finalizing a deal with our timber resources as part of the minister's mandate?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture and Minister Responsible for the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. GRANTER:** Mr. Speaker, discussions have been ongoing with Rentech in the last number of months, over the last fourteen or fifteen months. They continue. It is a very sensitive negotiation that is taking place for Central Newfoundland, as well as the Northern Peninsula, Mr. Speaker. We are looking very

closely at those negotiations and hopefully we can finalize a deal in the not too distant future.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The question, I guess, directed to the Premier, was more about him mandating his current minister to deal with that, just as he did in other mandate letters on issues affecting the various departments.

In the mandate letter for the Department of Justice several infrastructure initiatives are mentioned, but missing from the mandate for the Department of Health and Community Services and the Department of Transportation and Works is anything on the new hospital for Corner Brook or the new Waterford Hospital.

I ask the Premier: Since infrastructure developments like courthouses and new penitentiaries are mentioned, why did you leave out the development of these hospitals out of the mandate letter to your Minister of Health and Community Services?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am glad the member opposite is asking this question and I am glad he has taken the time to review the mandate letters, which have been made available publicly for the first time in history of Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Made available online to the public and listed under all of the minister's websites, if anybody is interesting in looking through them.

Mr. Speaker, mandate letters, in many ways, are based on discussions of priorities, concerns, issues, and matters that have been discussed between myself and directly with ministers. They are, in no way, all-encompassing of the roles and responsibilities that are placed upon

ministers. They highlight some general overview and, as well, some specific projects that I, as Premier, wish for those ministers to look at. In reality, Mr. Speaker, they are in no way encompassing of all responsibilities placed upon them.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When you review the mandate letters – and we have taken our time to review all of them, I say to the Premier – one of the things that is missing, and since the Premier brought it up about various discussions and it being a priority, will you please clarify then why such a priority for the people in Western Newfoundland and Labrador and why the Waterford Hospital – it being a priority for everyone that I am talking to and all the members opposite that has gotten up and spoke on this issue. Why are they such a glaring absence from those mandate letters? Why are they not there?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell the member opposite that infrastructure, and certainly health care infrastructure, is very important to us as a government. We have had many successes in projects that we have undertaken as a government – major projects, like Corner Brook.

I am on the record very clearly with where I stand and the commitment we have for the people of Western Newfoundland and the commitment that we have made for a hospital for Corner Brook. So, Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt about that.

Again, infrastructure is important. These mandate letters are not exhaustive lists of responsibilities, Mr. Speaker. They vary from minister to minister depending on discussions and priorities and, in some cases, a change in

focus for those departments from when I took over, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is very clear that to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, you will see clearly in that mandate letter that infrastructure is mentioned but is absent from the Minister of Health and Community Services.

The Premier and the Minister of Natural Resources have said they will not be bound by the mandate letter ordering a deal with Statoil by the end of this year.

I ask the Premier again: Why did you mandate a deal with Statoil for this year, 2015, if you had no intention on following through on that directive?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is amazing to sit over here – I have to be honest – and to look at the spin that quite often is put on comments by members opposite. It is certainly interesting to watch for sure, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker.

What I said here yesterday to this House was that if the deal is not a good deal for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, mandate letter or no mandate letter, it will not be a deal that we are going to support, I can tell you that, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, what is important is that we pursue our discussions with Statoil.

What Statoil discovered off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador in 2013 was the largest oil find in the world in 2013. It was the

largest find that Statoil ever had outside of Norway, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you they have a solid foothold here in Newfoundland and Labrador. They are taking a long-term view, Mr. Speaker, and they are going to be a partner with the Province and this government for years to come.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can certainly say to the Premier and all members opposite, this is not spin, this is a very critical deal and important to the future of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. To weaken a negotiation on that by clearly saying that you want a deal by 2015 is not the right place to be, I say to the Premier.

The Premier's mandate letters were only written three months ago, but now we understand that ministers and even the Premier are not following through on those directives, the words have just been spoken.

I ask the Premier: What is really the point of those mandate letters? Are they just a PR exercise?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, mandate letters are a part of a course of business. I can tell you now that there has been a change in the roles and responsibilities for several ministers – and ministers in my government have now accepted additional responsibilities. For most all the ministers of my government, they have accepted those additional responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, in the weeks to follow I can tell you the mandate letters – there will be new mandate letters issued that will reflect those new additional responsibilities. That is an ongoing process. When you assign ministers their roles and responsibilities we are going to do that.

I will tell you what is important to us. When these mandate letters were issued –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** We put these available for public consumption, Mr. Speaker. It is the first time in the history of our Province that we want to make these available, reflective of conversations. They have an overview – I invite people to look at them, an overview of roles and responsibilities. Again I have to reiterate, they are certainly not an exhaustive list of those responsibilities.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. J. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, in her Status of Recommendations report last month, the Child and Youth Advocate expressed concern that as of November 2014 the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services had no plan to develop a policy requiring every child be critically observed during every home visit.

I ask the minister: Has he since directed such policy be developed as recommended?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

I am happy to have the member weigh in on this because I know when the Advocate came forward with her recommendations and the great news that it was, he was nowhere to be found. I am glad he is weighing in now.

There were 179 recommendations brought forward, ninety-nine of which were CYFS. I am happy to say and report to the House that eighty-eight have been fully completed, ten are under development, and one I can talk a little bit about in a supplementary question, if he wishes.

With regard to the question he had put forward, I am happy to say we are working with the Advocate. That is actually one of the ten that is under development now. I think we have come to a place and I should know very shortly whether it satisfies her needs as well. I think it was just a matter of semantics and language and I think we have gotten by that. Anyway, I will be happy to report when we finalize it.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. J. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, this department and this minister has delayed and deferred and ignored recommendations for years now. The Advocate said it was obvious that if the children in two of her investigations had been critically observed during every home visit, identification of abuse would have occurred earlier and the children would have been removed earlier. In one of those cases, turning a blind eye, several children suffered thirteen years of abuse in the family home while Child, Youth and Family Services was involved.

I ask the minister: Will he get moving on this recommendation so he can rescue abused children earlier?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

Once again, I thank the member for bringing it up and talking about the progress we have made in the department. I think it is important at this point to talk about why the department was created. We talk about a number of studies and the cases that were in the past, and certainly that is something we have reflected on. That is where those recommendations were born out of.

It is because of those very recommendations, in part, that this department was formed. So, many of those efficiencies have been dealt with. There are a couple, like I said, that we are working on.

The one in particular you have mentioned, I think we have come to a resolution, but once I can confirm with the Advocate – I will be meeting with her actually next week, our quarterly meeting. I will discuss that with her then, and if it satisfies her I would be happy to report to the House and the member that that recommendation is satisfied.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, last September the school board changed the promised new school for Torbay from a Grade 5-7 school to a 5-8 school, effectively adding a fourth grade of students and classrooms. Parents in the Torbay area are left wondering what this will mean for their children.

Will the minister responsible say which communities are being affected by this decision, and how this changes the plan for the new Torbay school?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS SULLIVAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the goal always, with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, is to ensure that adequate education and adequate school facilities is provided to all of our students.

In Torbay there was a recognized need, and the need was for a Grade 5-7 school, Mr. Speaker. That is what we are proceeding with, and that is what we have guaranteed to the people of that area. The exact communities he is asking about, I can certainly get and provide for the House.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Well, Mr. Speaker, despite this government's board deciding the change, the

new Torbay school from a 5-7 to a 5-8 school – last September they made that decision – the tender was still issued months later for the construction of a 5-7 school anyways. This government's record of building schools too small is bad enough already, now they are planning to squeeze an extra grade of students into a school that was built for three grades.

I ask the minister: Why can't you get new school construction right? Does the left hand, the government, know what the right hand, the school board, is doing with our education system? Do you know? It does not sound like it.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS SULLIVAN:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in response to his first question in terms of the communities, it would be Torbay, Pouch Cove, Bauline, and Flatrock. The decision was made around a 5-7 school, and that is exactly what it is that we are tendering for and will be constructing in that area, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS SULLIVAN:** Mr. Speaker, in terms of the right hand knowing what the left hand is doing; I can tell you that my colleague in the Department of Transportation and Works and I work collaboratively on all of these schools. We have 261 schools in the Province, Mr. Speaker, for which we provide oversight and for which we ensure the best education for our students as possible.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, the *Manolis L* sank in 1985 near Change Islands

with 500,000 litres of oil and fuel, and has been leaking since 2012. In two years, the provincial department has confirmed writing only four letters.

I ask the minister: Have you met with or spoken to the federal minister since your last telephone call made December 16, 2014?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. CRUMMELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, everybody in this Province is onside. The *Manolis L* either has to go or the oil has to come out of that ship. We all agree. Everybody in the Province is onside. The Opposition is onside, our federal politicians are onside. We are onside over here, Mr. Speaker.

I have spoken to Minister Shea; I spoke to her just before Christmas. Her tone had changed in terms of how they are going to go about with the future plans for the *Manolis L*. It sounds like now they are talking about a long-term plan. It is exactly what we have asked for. I have asked her for timelines around that, Mr. Speaker. She was not ready to offer that up, but, Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to put her feet to the fire. I suggest that we are going to hear something in the coming weeks. It is an election year for them as well. So I think, Mr. Speaker, we should hear some good news.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, I would say months of not taking any follow-up call or action shows gross negligence in this matter. The *Manolis L* bunker fuel must be removed immediately to avoid ongoing environmental and economic damage due to chronic leaks, and potentially a catastrophic oil spill if the wreck breaks up.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** The lack of action shown by this government is gross negligence and bad management.

I ask the minister: What is your plan to ensure that the Canadian Coast Guard is held accountable and that the oil is removed? Because your current action is pitiful at best.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. CRUMMELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, everybody knows what needs to be done here. We all get that, we understand that. The federal government has taken responsibility for this. They have said overtly that it is their responsibility. We know that, and you know that as well.

I did not see you in Twillingate when we had a protest march. Myself and the minister next to me were in Twillingate a month ago –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. CRUMMELL:** – in the dead cold of winter.

Mr. Speaker, we are working with the people of the communities. We are working with the people of the region. We are working with the concerned citizens committee.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. CRUMMELL:** Mr. Speaker, we will do everything we can –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. CRUMMELL:** – to keep the federal government to their responsibilities, and make

sure they take care of their responsibilities just like they should.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

**MR. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I say to the Minister of Environment, I did not see anybody from the government at the meeting that the *Manolis L* committee had in St. John's. We were there and the NDP were there, but there was nobody from the government.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. LANE:** They did not even know what was going on.

Mr. Speaker, last year we found out Service Newfoundland and Labrador was not collecting all audited statements for funeral homes engaged in selling prepaid funerals as required by legislation. We have now learned that government amended its insurance legislation so that agents no longer have to submit audits of their trust accounts. The Insurance Brokers Association of Newfoundland and Labrador feels this is a step backwards in protecting consumers.

I ask the minister: Why are audits no longer required of insurance agents?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. CRUMMELL:** Mr. Speaker, Service NL, our officials in our department, we think we do a very good job of protecting consumers in this Province. We have oversight in all our departments and all areas of our commerce in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the prepaid funerals, when we realized there were some funeral homes that were not in compliance, we put their feet to the fire as well. We are now close to 100 per cent compliance there.

When it comes to the situation that you are talking about there, the oversight we are providing at our level within government, we are making sure that they are doing all the right things. There are audited statements that are followed up on. Mr. Speaker, we are doing the right work at the right time.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. LANE:** Mr. Speaker, I had a meeting with the insurance brokers and that is not what they are telling me.

Mr. Speaker, Service NL held public consultations for amending the Residential Tenancies Act. It also held consultations for a statutory review on workers' compensation.

I ask the minister: Why did you amend the key section of your insurance legislation without consulting key industry stakeholders?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

I thank my colleague for the question. With regard to consultation, obviously we know how seriously we take consultation as a regular part of practice for us.

With regard to the statutory review, we take the recommendations very seriously, the consultations that went forward with that. In the very near future, we are going to be coming forward with an action plan, and that obviously will be borne out of that statutory review and the consultations being part of that.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The long-term care facility being built in Carbonear has had significant cracking in the concrete. When myself and the member for the area met with two officials at the site, we were told that the top layer of wire mesh was not installed in the floor. However, a spokesperson for the Department of Transportation has said it is not accurate to say that the top layer of wire mesh was missing.

I ask the minister: Why would the company say the wire mesh was missing, but government say it is not? Who is right? How did you miss this?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. member for that question. Obviously, our oversight on any project is to make sure that the people get what it is that they pay for. In this case, our individuals, our consultants, on site noticed that there was a hairline fracture in the flooring. That was not acceptable to us.

We wanted to make sure that product was done to our specifications. We went back to the contractor and said that this has to be repaired. As part of the repair process, the skewing is done, the repairs were made – and I know you went on site and you saw it when it was skewed out, which was great for me, because I knew they took the due diligence to do it properly.

It is a norm in the curing of concrete that you will have hairline fractures. That has been since rectified. The contract was being done up to spec. Our engineers and our consultants were quite happy that the job was being done right –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. BRAZIL:** – and has been rectified, and that contract is moving forward.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** The reality, Mr. Speaker, is the wire mesh missing – their department said that was not the case, which was not accurate.

Mr. Speaker, there were obviously issues with the wire mesh. There were issues with the drywall, Mr. Speaker, that was installed and had to be removed because it was put in place before the roof was on or the windows were in – and guess what? It rained; the drywall got wet.

Mr. Speaker, with a government office on site to oversee the construction of this facility, I ask the minister: How is this bad management happening?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we hire very due diligent individuals. Our own staff and our civil servants were very proud of the qualifications they have and the great work that they do to make sure and to ensure that the taxpayers' money is protected, and that is what has happened in this case.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, this is a prime example on how the officials in my department and the consultants that we have in place did their job, to ensure that what was not up to spec got repaired and got put back the way it was supposed to be as part of the contract.

Drywall, that is the contractor's responsibility. Our responsibility is to ensure that the contract is done to our specification. If the drywall gets wet, it is told to be replaced, brought up to our specifications, at the cost of the contractor not the taxpayers, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. SLADE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, government just released the seafood industry in review for 2014. Rather than seeing our fishing industry grow, as it should, it has taken a nose dive in value by 13.1 per cent, a loss of \$150 million.

I ask the minister: What is your plan to correct this serious decline and mismanagement?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. GRANTER:** Mr. Speaker, we all know the total value of the fishery in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and how important the fishery is to all of the rural communities, and we saw there here on the floor of the House in the debate that we had yesterday.

I can tell you that the problems that we had last year, the difficulties we had last year in some of the fisheries and the total value was a decrease of less than \$1 billion, but keep in mind – and I spoke to this, this morning – that the total value of money that went into the harvesters pockets last year was more than it was in 2013. The total value that went to the processors was down, but the total value in the pocket of the harvesters in the Province went way up, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. SLADE:** Mr. Speaker, what the minister said that time is about as clear as mud.

Mr. Speaker, since the RMNS fiasco this government has absolutely no interest in the wild industry, especially on marketing or diversifying the fishery.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. SLADE:** Mr. Speaker, the 2014 review also showed job losses in the fishing industry and are down by close to 5 per cent.

I ask the minister: What are you planning to do to stop job losses, missed opportunities, and properly manage and grow our fishery?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. GRANTER:** Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely appalling to hear a member from the opposite side say that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is not interested in the fishery of the Province. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador in the last number of years, more so than anyone sitting on the other side, has invested heavily in the fisheries of this Province, wild fisheries and aquaculture fisheries, Mr. Speaker.

We cannot help if in the aquaculture industry last year that there were some diseases.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. GRANTER:** We have invested heavily in the fishery. We are looking forward to more investments in the fishery, to look at the CETA fund. That is where our fishery is. The fishery of the future is bright for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. GRANTER:** It is appalling – it is absolutely appalling that you would say, Mr. Speaker, that the fishery of the Province is not a priority for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

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

**MR. HILLIER:** It is the same bay, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Wellness Plan, Phase 1, is dated 2006-2008. Seven years later, in his mandate letter, the minister is tasked with developing Phase 2.

I ask the minister: Why has it taken seven years to begin Phase 2 of the Provincial Wellness Plan, and when can we expect to see it implemented?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, all we have to do is to take a look at one thing, in particular: This year, the Premier set up a new department. I will outline to the member: Seniors, Wellness and Social Development. Very keen on that is the whole wellness component.

If you look at what we have done, Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last number of years around smoking cessation, the programs that we put in the schools and so on and so forth, we have made tremendous advances.

The development of this plan is underway, Mr. Speaker. When it is near completion, I will announce it.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

Yesterday the Premier gave examples of where private business has done, in his words, a very good job at providing services and programs to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask the Premier: Does he really believe that a privatized child care program is working for the

parents and children of this Province in the face of blatant evidence to the contrary?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the member opposite is trying to suggest that private child care operators are not providing a good service to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Is the member opposite trying to suggest that hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who work careers in childcare, Mr. Speaker, in Newfoundland and Labrador are not providing good service to the children of Newfoundland and Labrador?

Is she trying to suggest that the training and benefits that are being provided to some of those workers now, with investments by this government so they can be better trained and better qualified to deliver services to the children of Newfoundland and Labrador – is she suggesting they are not providing a good service, Mr. Speaker?

I ask the member is that what she is trying to suggest, that private business operators, child care operators in this Province, are not providing good service to the people of the Province? Outrageous, Mr. Speaker, terrible.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

He can try to sell that to the parents who are giving up jobs because they cannot afford child care. So, let's try another one.

Can the Premier show evidence that a privatized home care program is working for seniors and other people with home care needs? Let him try that one.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I certainly can. She only needs to go down the road to Chancellor Park where private operators are providing quality services to long-term patients in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** She only needs to speak to operators throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, who provide quality services in personal care homes in this Province to the people of our Province.

If she wants to talk about quality child care, we have a ten-year plan on child care in this Province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** It is about quality, it is about sufficiency of spaces, Mr. Speaker, and it is about affordability. We have invested heavily in child care in this Province.

Just a couple of years ago we were investing \$26 million a year. This year, Mr. Speaker, we are up to \$42 million and our goal is to reach \$56 million a year by the end of our ten-year strategy.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** That is investment in the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is investment in the future of this Province, Mr. Speaker. We stand by working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you. If he is being so generous, maybe he can give me more time now.

I ask him another one: Where is the Premier's evidence that privatized ambulances –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS MICHAEL:** – work for the people who need them and the emergency workers who staff them? Where is that evidence?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, I caught a bit of her preamble and then I did not catch the rest of her question. I can tell you that we are investing heavily in child care. The facts are clear.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**PREMIER DAVIS:** We established in 2012, Caring for our Future. It is a ten-year plan for child care in Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Speaker, a decade ago there were about 4,600 regulated child care spaces in this Province. Today there are about 7,800, a significant increase.

We have provided opportunities for workers who have careers in child care to expand their own training, Mr. Speaker, so they can go back to school and they can become better educated and better skilled so we can provide better services to those children. We are supporting that. We are investing in that.

We are also investing in family care homes, over 150 new homes now with over 800 family care spaces in our Province, Mr. Speaker. We are making progress in child care.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The fracking review panel has not announced its schedule for public consultations yet. I wonder if the minister can update the House as regards to what is going to be happening.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. DALLEY:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, as we know, we have an independent panel put in place to do a review of the fracking, particularly on the West Coast of the Province. It is an independent panel. I know the panel have met and I expect them to have a website up and running real soon.

It is my understanding that they will give a ninety-day notice of when their consultations will begin. I assume they are waiting until the spring, Mr. Speaker, so everybody can have a chance. I think it is important that I reiterate that. When the panel do start and consultations begin, everyone out there who has a view on fracking will be given an opportunity to have input and an opportunity to share their views with the panel. From our perspective as a government, that is really important that people be given that chance to have their input.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Question for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

**Petitions**

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS many parents have expressed concern about the impact of overcrowding at Beachy Cove Elementary on the student's mental and physical well-being; and

WHEREAS many parents have questioned the impact of major space restrictions at Beachy Cove Elementary –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I ask all members for their co-operation, please.

The Member for St. John's North to continue.

**MR. KIRBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

– and the ability of the school to continue delivering quality curriculum to their growing student population; and

WHEREAS many parents have expressed concern about government's prolonged timelines to plan, tender, and construct the approved intermediate Grade 5-9 school in Portugal Cove-St. Phillips;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to provide all necessary resources in Budget 2015 and beyond to have the Portugal Cove-St. Phillips intermediate Grade 5-9 school constructed, commissioned, and operational for students in September 2016.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, myself and the Minister of Transportation and Works attended a meeting last night in Portugal Cove-St. Phillips where parents discussed a number of issues related to the delay in constructing the new school.

The new school was promised about four years ago. Over that period of time, instead of building a new school, they have almost built a new school within a school because there are almost a dozen temporary or new classrooms after being added to Beachy Cove Elementary over that period of time to accommodate the growing school population. That school was designed to accommodate somewhere in the order of 400-odd students; now they are approaching 700-plus.

Last night, some of the stories we heard from there were just absolutely mind blowing, the things that are going on in the school. For example, thirty-four students in a class with two teachers and no windows, in a temporary classroom cut out of a cafeteria.

Other stories about, if this school – and the minister said he was hopefully optimistic that the school would be ready for September 2016. The school council people who were there said if that is not ready for 2016, they are going to lose their learning resources centre and their computer labs. They are going to lose the library, basically, which is the heart of the school. It is one of the few places they have to have professional development, or if the public health nurse is coming in, or they are doing some other sort of co-curricular or outside of curriculum activity. That is the only space they have now, because the cafeteria is classrooms. All they have is the gym. We heard all kinds of stories about that.

I would say in Question Period today I really was not very impressed with the responses. In September of last year the school board decided to change that Torbay school to a 5-8 school, and they do not seem to know that.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

**MR. KIRBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has the greatest percentage of the workforce earning the provincial minimum wage in Canada, with women, youth and those from rural areas making up a disproportionate number of these workers; and

WHEREAS there has been no increase in the minimum wage since 2010, which has had detrimental impacts on the purchasing power of the most vulnerable members of the provincial workforce; and

WHEREAS minimum wage earners do not earn enough money for the necessities of life, and even full-time minimum wage earners barely meet the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) of \$19,496 a person; and

WHEREAS government ignored the recommendations of its own 2012 Minimum Wage Review Committee for an immediate increase to reflect the cost of living, and annual adjustments in line with the consumer price index, and instead legislated a twenty-five cent increase in October 2014, and a twenty-five cent increase in October 2015, with no indexing; and

WHEREAS other provinces and territories have been raising their minimum wages, leaving Newfoundland and Labrador on the low end;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to implement the recommendations of the 2012 Minimum Wage Review Committee and legislate an immediate increase in the minimum wage to reflect the loss of purchasing power since 2010, and an annual adjustment beginning in 2015 –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I ask all members again, please, if you have to have private conversations take it outside the

Chamber. The Speaker is having difficulty hearing the person who is talking.

The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi to continue.

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

WHEREAS government ignored the recommendations of its own 2012 Minimum Wage Review Committee for an immediate increase to reflect the cost of living, and annual adjustments in line with the Consumer Price Index, and instead legislated a twenty-five cent increase in October 2014, and a twenty-five cent increase in October 2015, with no indexing; and

WHEREAS other provinces and territories have been raising their minimum wages, leaving Newfoundland and Labrador on the low end;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to implement the recommendations of the 2012 Minimum Wage Review Committee and legislate an immediate increase in the minimum wage to reflect the loss of purchasing power since 2010, and an annual adjustment beginning in 2015 to reflect the cost of living index.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, people have been speaking out to us about the minimum wage issue for a long time. I think the last WHEREAS here is extremely important and that is “WHEREAS other provinces and territories have been raising their minimum wages,” leaving us far behind.

We were leaders when changes were made back from 2008-2010 where over a two-year period the minimum wage was brought up significantly. Now, Mr. Speaker, we have six provinces that are ahead of us in the line-up.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I remind the member her speaking time has expired.

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have to bring this in again.

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

**MS DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS most communities in the District of Cartwright – L’Anse au Clair do not have adequate broadband service; and

WHEREAS residents, businesses, students, nurses, and teachers rely heavily on the Internet to conduct their work and cannot afford to wait until 2017 to access a potential plan in partnership with the Muskrat Falls development; and

WHEREAS there are a number of world-class tourism sites in the region, including an UNESCO site at Red Bay, Battle Harbour Historic Site, and the Mealy Mountains National Park;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to work with the appropriate agencies to provide adequate broadband service to communities along the Labrador coast.

Mr. Speaker, what is happening right now in my area in a part of my district, I feel, is that a lack of sufficient access to communities in my district has contributed to a digital divide that is exasperating a lot of the inequities between the rural and the urban. I am going to put it that way.

I will give some credit, Mr. Speaker. I have been petitioning for improvements to broadband in my district from my first day in the House and we have seen improvements. I believe by mid-April from Red Bay to L’Anse au Clair we are going to see some improvements and that area is going to be open to sales. That is half of my district. However, we have some very, very

serious issues going on down in southeast, in the area, St. Lewis, Mary's Harbour, Charlottetown, Port Hope Simpson, Pinsent Arm.

So I am going to urge the government because, right now, people cannot carry out their basic daily activity. Businesses are suffering because of it. Professionals are suffering because of it. We see the government, Mr. Speaker, departments like Service NL, Motor Vehicle Registration, we see fishermen have to renew their licences online, we see things like BizPal being promoted; yet we have rural communities that are far from government services that have not been given the infrastructure that they need to keep up with the times. Mr. Speaker, sometimes, yes, you have an area of vast geography and a sparse population, but we can look at many other successful models in other countries where this was overcome.

I am urging government to work with the service provider, to work with the federal government, to connect the communities in southeast Labrador. Right now there are a lot of disgruntled people. I know there are petitions out; they are circulating. They have contacted lawyers to see if they would have a case to sue the service provider. It is very sad, Mr. Speaker.

I hope the government will continue to work with us in this area and that we will see improvement to the speed and that we will be able to open up this handful of communities to sales again. I will continue to petition for the same.

Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Humber East.

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

WHEREAS the 2009 Throne Speech clearly states that the government has provided free textbooks to students; and

WHEREAS this is an investment in education; and

WHEREAS unfortunately, students attending independently funded schools have been deprived of equal access to this assistance; and

WHEREAS the Department of Education is perceived to show discrimination towards parents who exercise a choice of schooling for their child; and

WHEREAS all schools operate under the guidelines of the Schools Act;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government, beginning immediately, to ask the Department of Education to provide free textbooks to all students who attend any schools that follow the requirements of the Schools Act, 1997 (amended) Chapter S-12.2.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking that the minister get involved in this. The Premiers, both now, have promised to the people of the independently funded schools that these textbooks will be provided free. I am asking that the minister stop discrimination and provide these textbooks free to the people in the independently funded schools.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for St. George's – Stephenville East.

**MR. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a petition today on health care in St. George's and surrounding area.

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

WHEREAS there is not a permanent doctor in the Town of St. George's; and

WHEREAS this absence of a permanent doctor is seriously compromising the health care of people who live in the town and surrounding area causing them undue hardship; and

WHEREAS the absence of a doctor or nurse practitioner in the area leaves seniors and others without a consistency and quality of care, which is necessary for their continued good health;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to take action which will result in a permanent doctor or other arrangements to improve the health care services in St. George's and surrounding area.

Mr. Speaker, this is a serious situation that has gone on for a long time in St. George's. St. George's lost its doctor in December, but other communities in the area such as Jeffrey's, the Jeffrey's clinic, and the communities served by the Jeffrey's clinic lost their doctor over a year ago. So this is a serious situation that is developing in the area. Lots of people are suffering because of the unavailability of a doctor.

I have talked to officials at Western Health. I have talked to the minister. He is aware of the situation there and the urgency of the matter.

It is important to note that the people in the area are concerned that they do not have a continuity of care. They had some locums who come to the area on a periodic basis, but they have not had a continuity of care that allows them to have good health and good service at the clinic there in St. George's.

It is important to note that the people are not requesting new positions. These are positions that have been budgeted for in the area. These are positions that have been in place for a number of years. So this is not a new position that people are looking for. It is the filling of an existing position. It is a recruitment issue that the people want dealt with as soon as possible.

Some of the concerns that have been raised: people who have to have prescriptions filled; people who need to get testing back or be sent for tests are having trouble getting those things done because of the unavailability of a doctor in a reasonable time.

What has happened is they have had to travel long distances, sometimes in inclement weather,

wait in a waiting room for sometimes all day to get service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to this problem being dealt with soon.

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

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

I have a petition. 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 the Applied Behaviour Analysis, ABA program for children with autism, is funded by the Department of Health and Community Services; and

WHEREAS the program was introduced in 1999 and is in serious need of revision; and

WHEREAS with the advances made in early diagnosis of autism, the number of high functioning children being diagnosed with autism has drastically increased; and

WHEREAS the current ABA program does not take into account that children on the autism spectrum are involved in many educational, recreational and social activities outside of the home; and

WHEREAS the current ABA program requires that the therapist be accompanied at all times by another adult which is not only inconvenient but can be quite costly when a parent is unable to be that second adult due to work or other obligations; and

WHEREAS the current ABA program ends at Grade 3 but autism is a lifelong social disorder;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House to urge the government to implement a review of the ABA program with considerations given to alternate programming options, and to extend autism programming beyond Grade 3.

Mr. Speaker, I have entered this petition in the House before, and I have done so after meeting

with parents in the Autism Involves Me aim group out in Port aux Basques. They represent the Southwest Coast, but I have taken the opportunity to meet with members of the Autism Society, to meet with FEAT group, again, generally just to get calls from parents with children with autism all over this Province.

The fact is that ABA is a great program, but it is in serious need of revision. It was done in 1999; it is now 2015. The numbers since then, the increase in diagnosis has skyrocketed. I believe right now the number is one in sixty-eight. That is a huge change even from just five years ago.

These parents are looking for help. We are looking for a review of the program. The program works, but right now it stops at Grade 3. The problem with autism being on the spectrum is that it does not stop at Grade 3. It is a lifelong disorder. We need to work with parents and work with children to make this happen. Again, the first start is to review it. It is a good start but we need to make sure this happens.

I have had ministers on the other side talk about how much money we have invested but they are not talking about outcomes, and that is the problem. They try to throw money at a problem – money is good, money is necessary, but you have to talk about the outcomes here. That is the important part.

I am calling on government to heed what these parents are saying. They are trying to talk; they are just hoping that you are listening.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS ROGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the Family Violence Intervention Court provided a comprehensive approach to domestic violence in a court setting that fully

understood and dealt with the complex issues of domestic violence; and

WHEREAS domestic violence continues to be one of the most serious issues facing our Province today, and the cost of the impact of domestic violence is great both economically and in human suffering; and

WHEREAS the Family Violence Intervention Court was welcomed and endorsed by all aspects of the justice system including the police, the courts, prosecutors, defence counsel, Child, Youth and Family Services, as well as victims, offenders, community agencies and women's groups; and

WHEREAS the recidivism rate for offenders going through the court was 10 per cent compared to 40 per cent for those who did not; and

WHEREAS the budget for the court was only 0.2 per cent of the entire budget of the Department of Justice;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reinstate the Family Violence Intervention Court.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, we know, everyone in this House has acknowledged, that family violence is one of the major societal problems in our Province today. Every member of this House, I am sure, takes it very seriously and wants to see an end to family violence.

Wouldn't it be great, Mr. Speaker, at this point if we did not need a Family Violence Intervention Court? The hard reality is that we do need a Family Violence Intervention Court.

It is a curious thing at this point in our history to know that the police have endorsed the Family Violence Intervention Court. Prosecutors have endorsed the Family Violence Intervention Court. Defence lawyers have supported the Family Violence Intervention Court. Even the judiciary, Mr. Speaker, has endorsed the Family

Violence Intervention Court. Social workers have endorsed the Family Violence Intervention Court. Child, Youth and Family Services have endorsed the court. Victims of domestic violence have endorsed the court.

Mr. Speaker, the government knows how effective this court was in addressing the root causes of domestic violence, which is what we all want to do. We want to address those root causes. The research on the court has shown that the recidivism rate has dropped drastically, which means in cases in families where there has been domestic violence, that because of the programs through the court, the repeat of that violence has been minimized by the effectiveness of the court and its programs.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SLADE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS on average, there are over 700 moose-vehicle accidents in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador each year; and

WHEREAS approximately 10 per cent of those accidents result in serious injury or fatality; and

WHEREAS moose-vehicle accident mitigation measures like moose fencing, brush cutting, and hunting quotas have reduced accidents in other provinces, in particular, New Brunswick;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to increase moose-vehicle accident mitigation measures, including moose fencing, brush cutting, and increasing quotas, and to provide financial assistance to those most seriously injured as a result of said collisions.

As is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I brought this here earlier in the week. I am going to continue to bring it here. This particular gentleman worked with the Wildlife Division. He was a wildlife officer, a very young man, and his standard of life is certainly after changing. Right now he is a paraplegic.

Mr. Speaker, we have to continue on here and we need to really seriously take a look at what we are doing. I am not sure exactly what the sum of money was we spent on this moose lighting on the Trans-Canada and down across the Island, but it certainly did not work. We need to look at other avenues where we can do it, probably more so the most heavily populated areas in moose sightings, or something like that, to make a start on it. Then continue something each year to make sure that this kind of thing – we do whatever we can here on this end to make sure that we bring down the numbers on that.

Now, I am of the understanding there has been fifteen accidents right now in the park already this year, over in the park there. So it is certainly something we should look at and do something with. Of course, all those victims – I do know there have been a number of deaths, too. I can go back and think of a couple there from our area. Actually, one of them was an MP at one point in time or other. He ran into one there in Clarendville.

So it is a serious issue, and it affects each and every one of us who sits in this hon. House, Mr. Speaker. It affects every one of us and it is happening in our communities all across the Province, and I think that this government should take an initiative to start doing something with it and start doing it now.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day.

#### Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Deputy House Leader.

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 1, Committee of Supply.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion is that the House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 44, Interim Supply, and that I do now leave the Chair.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

### Committee of the Whole

**CHAIR (Littlejohn):** Order, please!

We are considering the related resolution in Bill 44, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2016 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It is indeed a privilege to get up here today and represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis. Mr. Chair, this session of the House is a session that I really enjoy. We have a lot of money bills that are on the go and it gives us an opportunity to talk about so many different things related to our district and related to government in general. It is an opportunity – once we do Interim Supply, we do the Budget, and the Thorne Speech, it gives us all a chance to really be able to get up and express ourselves and let the people out there know what we do as MHAs, know what our concerns are, and where our priorities are to.

Interim Supply is a big bill, there is no doubt about it. When you are talking about granting funds of \$2.7 billion, it is a lot of money. I know it is very important to the people, but it is important too that we pass this bill and make sure that monies go forward to the different departments.

Mr. Chair, this session, I am going to just try to talk a little bit on different topics and today is a great day to talk on a topic because there was a question already asked in Question Period today that I was very interested in – it was from the Member for St. John's North – and it had to do with education.

That is where I would like to go today about education because, as an MHA, I like to focus on a couple of different groups of people. Now, I represent everybody; but, to me, I think our youth, our young people, are a major concern for me. I know that every opportunity I get to visit a school or whatever, I take it. Also our seniors – if a senior calls me to complain about home repair programs and stuff like that, I like to visit their houses and help them fill out the application if that is what needs to be done. I take great pride in that as an MHA.

I just want to talk about education today. The member brought up a question about the school in Torbay. I have to say it is probably the number one priority for me since I have been elected. It is probably the biggest file I have had since I have been elected because it is a huge concern. My area is a very fast-growing area. We have come so far in education in the District of Cape St. Francis that it is unbelievable. Yet, our growth is high and the concerns down there – I am not saying we have all the problems fixed, but we are after fixing an awful lot of problems when it comes to education in Cape St. Francis.

Mr. Chair, I just want to go back because the tender went out on our new school that we are going to have there. It is a Grade 5, 6, and 7 school. I have to give credit to the school councils in the area. We had a focus group first when we started and we came together with three school councils; one from Holy Trinity Elementary, one from Holy Trinity High, and the other one from Cape St. Francis Elementary. We got together. We set up a committee. We

went to the school board. We did all the consultations and presented our case. The school board did agree that, yes, they definitely do need a new school in the area.

We wanted to do it in a way that K-4 would be at Cape St. Francis and K-4 would be at Holy Trinity Elementary, and we did not want to take too much out of the high school because a lot of times the principals were all involved. The curriculum they could have in their school is based sometimes on the population of the students. So we were worried about the high school, which was really 7-12, and the concern was that we did not want to take too many students because there are different courses that could be offered because of the number of students. That was very important. That is the reason why it is a Grade 5, 6, and 7. I wanted to let the member across the way know that.

Again, the tender is after being called. It closed only the other day. I really look forward to, hopefully in the next week or so, talking to the school councils and doing some kind of announcement on that new school because it is needed in the area, there is no doubt about it.

I have to go back because there are a lot of times people will say, well, it is very poor planning in the area. Mr. Chair, I was the Mayor of the Town of Flatrock in 2005 when the former MHA, Mr. Byrne, was here. He was so proud to get the new school for Torbay. At that time, there were 563 children at Holy Trinity Elementary. As the Mayor of the Town of Flatrock, you look at all your growth in your town and everything else; we never anticipated the growth that went ahead.

The school was planned in 2005. At the time, the housing starts, when I was the Mayor of Flatrock, were like eight, seven a year for the three years. Then all of a sudden in 2008 we jumped from seven in 2007 to about thirty-five the next year. The growth is just unbelievable. The Town of Torbay in the last four years has grown by 20 per cent. I do not know if someone did not predict it or whatever, but when you look at an area where the growth is like that, you are looking at young families coming in, young families and young children, and that is why the growth in the school.

I really have to thank the Department of Education and the school board; they have done a fantastic job in the area. People, I laugh – when I went to trade school, we used to go out to the portable classrooms and you put your coat on before you went out there because they were cold and the windows were open, but these new modular classrooms that they built in the schools – there are four now at Holy Trinity Elementary and one at Cape St. Francis – they are great classrooms, I have to say, and the parents are very, very pleased with them.

Mr. Chair, I just want to say that the growth in the area and what is happening there, we are very, very lucky with the investments that this government has made in education since 2003. I go back to 2003 – and I am not blaming any government. There were different circumstances in the 1990s than what were in the 2000s, different circumstances altogether. The money was not there like it was there for the last ten years; I am not blaming that at all.

In 2003, there were a number of schools in this Province that the biggest issue was mould. When you listen to Open Line shows in 2003 and 2004, it was about our education. It was about people calling in with mouldy schools, leaky windows, roofs where the water was running in, and there were buckets on the floor. We saw it all the time. That was the number one conversation. We do not hear that any more.

I am going to give a real good example now of that too, Mr. Chair. In the Town of Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove, there is a gem. There is a beautiful little school down there. There are 263 children there this year. I have to say, the people in the community are so proud of their school and the support that they get from the parents and everybody else. It is a great little school, but in 2003-2004 that school even thought about shutting down because there were so many issues with it.

This government invested a million dollars in putting a new roof on the school, new windows, new siding –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Hear, hear!

When you walk inside that school today, it is an absolutely beautiful school. The teachers are so proud of it. The parents, they just love the school. Like I said, it is a fantastic school, but it was a great investment to make.

Since 2004, there have been 1,900 repairs or maintenance to schools in this Province – 1,900, \$236 million. That is just in maintenance and repairs of schools. That does not include the fourteen new schools that have been built since, nor does it include eight schools that are also in planning.

I know the hon. Member for Virginia Waters got up the other day and she was wondering what we did with our money. Well, I can tell you what has been done with money in my district. In my district, there has been a huge investment in schools. There is a million dollars invested in St. Francis of Assisi for repairs. There were also a bunch of other repairs that were done. A new parking lot was paved down there.

Holy Trinity Elementary, a \$15 million school that was built and opened in 2011. That is not a waste. Granted, the population has gone up and there are issues there, but there are four new modular classrooms that were put on there for a cost.

We also have another great school in my district. Cape St. Francis just had a modular classroom. I am hoping now, Mr. Chair, in the near future, that the tender comes out and we will have another school. It will address the needs of the growing population because we are seeing now that the K-5 has stabilized. The growth is not going up like it was. The numbers are there, and they have a great idea of what we need in the area. The new school is going to have about 450 children in it to about 500, and that will elevate all of what is happening in the area.

Mr. Chair, I want to talk about some other things too. As a parent growing up and having two children who were going to school – and I was a single parent, Mr. Chair. The biggest thing I think that this government has done for education – and I heard the minister the other day talk about his life as a principal of a school and how they had to address the needs of some of the parents who were coming through who could not afford to go to school.

I tell you, Mr. Chair, I am not ashamed of it, I was one of those parents who had a hard time. The day two of mine came home with their list I was worried because I wanted to know how I was going to pay for those books. Before then, I was after talking to my friends or someone else who had a child in the grade before to try to work on getting books for them.

I remember one time there was a scientific calculator that came home, and it was \$120 for the calculator. I was trying to figure out where I was going to get the money for it. Do you know what? Parents today – then the Member for Virginia Waters is wondering where the money has gone to. I would like to tell her, talk to all the parents who now today do not need to worry about when they come home from school to see that they get free books in the school.

Mr. Chair, I can go on talking about education for a long while. I am hoping they are going to give me an opportunity to speak again because I want to talk about seniors, I want to talk about municipalities, I want to talk about a lot –

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** All right, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am happy to stand and speak to this bill. I find all this very interesting. The member who spoke just then, the Member for Cape St. Francis, talked about the Torbay school that is going to be constructed, well, sometime between now and 2017 or something like that.

In 2011, the former Eastern School District decided that they needed to have –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. KIRBY:** – a Grades 5-7 school in Torbay to serve the surrounding communities. Last September, according to the September 19 minutes of the Executive Committee of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District, they changed the designation of that school from Grades 5-7 to Grades 5-8. I do not know if they unchanged that decision since then, but I am surprised to hear that from the member.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis on a point of order.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Yes, I would like to just address the member's statement there that time. It was always considered to be a 5-7 school. I think there was some consideration given, too, that it could go to Grade 8. When they looked at the curriculum that was there, they decided to go from 5-7.

**CHAIR:** There is no point of order.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Chair, I just want to clarify, because the Executive Committee of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District has redesignated that school. The tender, I understand, is soon going to be issued for that, or it is going to be awarded. They issued it in January for a 5-7 school.

Months after the board changed it from a 5-7 to a 5-8 school, the government went ahead and issued the tender for the smaller school, not the larger one that the board has changed it to. I hear what the member is saying, but the member over there is not deciding what kids in what grades and what ages are going to go to that new school. The Newfoundland and Labrador English School District is going to do that because they are going to designate the catchment areas for that school and it is going to have Grades 5-8.

Basically, you are going to be trying to shove four grade levels into a school that was tendered. Well, if the tender is issued for 5-7, it is one grade level less than what the board decided last September 19 for that school to be designated as. That is what I understand. Unless the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District has subsequently made a different decision, then that is a problem because you are trying to put additional grade levels into a school that is going to be built too small.

Now, it is interesting because at the same meeting on September 19, 2014, the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District also decided that they had a problem with Holy Family School out in Paradise. At the same meeting they made that decision that they would potentially bus kids from Holy Family out to the Newfoundland School for the Deaf.

Now, if the member is not aware of that decision, I am not surprised because parents of kids who go to Holy Family Elementary never found out about the board's decision until January, when one of their children came home from school and said, mommy and daddy, guess what? I am going to be taking the bus into St. John's now for forty-five minutes to school, that is what somebody said.

I think at least the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, somebody there should read the minutes of the school board that they appointed several years ago. This is symptomatic of a larger problem that we have around school planning.

Out in Paradise, it is projected to have a student population going up somewhere around 1,000 students, I believe, in a school that was built for several hundred fewer students than that. One of the options they are talking about, which makes no sense to me, is to bring in no less than four portable classrooms and some sort of, I do not know, I will call it a portable toilet room. It is like a washroom on wheels. They do not have enough washroom space for a school with that many students, so they are going to try and have a portable washroom as well. I do not know how any of this is going to work.

The other option to that is they are talking about busing kids from Grade 2 to Grade 6 into St.

John's in the former location of the Newfoundland School for the Deaf. That is really not a reasonable option either. I had a gentleman call me the other day and said: I have one child who is in Grade 2, and another child is in Grade 1, one is going to be going one way and one is going to be going the other way; how am I going to deal with child care in that instance?

That is going to be a real problem. It is going to put a real burden on parents, and it is symptomatic of the larger problem that we have had. Basically, if you paint a line from Mount Pearl over to Torbay, school planning on the Northeast Avalon has been, for lack of a better term, a shemozzle for a good while now, and largely under this government's watch.

I presented a petition on behalf of the parents out in Portugal Cove-St. Phillips, and like I said, in that school, in Beachy Cove Elementary there, they were promised a school four years ago – four years ago. The Minister of Transportation and Works said last night that he was hopefully optimistic that that school would open in September 2016.

Now, my colleague, the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, was supposed to have a school, a new school that was promised to be open in Charlottetown in September 2014. Do you know how many students, Mr. Chair, are going to school at that school right now? None, no students in that – that was supposed to open last September.

Like I said in the debate, Beachy Cove Elementary has had eleven temporary, reconfigured, modular, portable, all of these sorts of classrooms –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. KIRBY:** There is one classroom out there they call the hallway, it is so narrow. Parents were saying last night, and I cannot corroborate this, but parents were saying, basically they had to move the students from side to side because they get a sore neck because they are leaned against the wall one way or the other. That is

how narrow they have them jammed into that space.

Thirty-four students with two teachers trying to do French in a cafeteria classroom with no windows.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. KIRBY:** You have to question the air quality too, with no windows. The cafeteria was never meant to be occupied all day long like that.

All kinds of these situations existing in Paradise, in Portugal Cove-St. Phillips, and now government is going to do the same thing all over again when it issues this tender for a 5-7 school in Torbay, where the board decided last September they are going to put an extra grade level and nobody over there knows anything about it. They are saying oh, you are wrong, you are wrong.

It is written right there. In the minutes of the board, September 19, 2014, they said the decision we made – the former school district, the Eastern School District, made a decision to have a 5-7 school. Now we are going to change that decision. We are going to change it to a 5-8 school.

What did the Minister of Transportation and Works do? He went and issued a tender call for a 5-7 school. Now soon, he is going to award that tender for a 5-7 school and then they will have Grade 8 show up. Where are they going to go?

Mr. Chair, unfortunately, do you know where they are going to go? They are going to go in portables, in modulars. They are going to cut the cafeteria up. In Portugal Cove-St. Phillips – if the minister's hopeful optimism does not work out, because I am sure the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair was hopefully optimistic that government would keep its commitment to open that school in Charlottetown in 2014. If there is not much to that hopeful optimism, then they are going to lose their learning resources and computer lab out in Portugal Cove-St. Phillips at Beachy Cove

and they will have thirteen temporary classrooms in that school.

Kids out in Torbay, in Pouch Cove, in communities all along there, they can look forward to having that from day one when they put all of these Grade 8's in a school that was never designed to accommodate them. That is unfortunate.

How much consultation was there with parents about changing that school from a 5-7 to a 5-8? There clearly was no consultation with the member from the area. That shocks me. I do not even know if there was any consultation with the Minister of Education because she is sort of shaking her head, I do not know. None of that makes any sense to me.

You cannot continue to make these mistakes over and over and over again: Paradise, Portugal Cove-St. Philips, now Torbay. We have had all kinds of problems with Carbonear, when they moved into that school. Practically the next day they brought in portable classrooms to accommodate the number of students who were there and they said, well, we cannot project the population growth.

I tell you what, the guy who used to sit in that seat over there, the former Premier of the Province, Danny Williams, he had no problem projecting the population growth on the Northeast Avalon, so much that he is building a subdivision the size of Gander or something out on the outskirts of Mount Pearl. Now, he has no problem figuring out how many people are moving in this area. He never told the rest of you before he left?

It makes no sense to me. You cannot continue to build schools too small. It creates too many problems and it has a long-term impact on educational outcomes and the curriculum. That is the facts, folks, and we have to change this way. We have to change this; this is not working.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I had to listen to that for about ten minutes and it almost made me sick just to listen because he has no idea what he is talking about. When you talk about consultation, I can tell you that the school councils in my area were involved right from day one. The parents in my area and parents were so involved in what happened.

We decided to get a group together right at the start of this when there were problems coming. As soon as the school was built down in Torbay, yes, we understood there were going to be problems with issues with the number of Kindergartens that were coming in and down the road, there was going to be a major issue and there was going to need modular classrooms. The school councils are the people who put their proposal together to the school board for a 5, 6, and 7 school.

The high school down at Holy Trinity High right now is not at full capacity, and that has Grade 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12, the reason being that they wanted a 5, 6, 7 and not a Grade 8 for a larger school. They wanted to keep the students down to about 500 which would be, right now today if it opened tomorrow, I think it is about 440 students.

**MR. JOYCE:** Is the school board wrong?

**MR. K. PARSONS:** I do not know if the school board is wrong or not, but I tell you the parents and the school council are getting what they asked for. The parents in the area and the school councils asked for a 5-7 school and that is what is going to be built in Torbay.

In Torbay, Mr. Chair, it is going to address three schools, three areas that we have problems with right now. It is the K-6 school that is in Pouch Cove, a K-6 school that is at Holy Trinity Elementary, and the high school itself. Because as the students come from 5, 6, and 7 the increased numbers are going to be in the high school.

They have looked at all this, and the parents and the school councils are in full agreement with the type of school that is getting built. They are very happy that it will be built, and it will take care of a lot of the issues in the area.

Mr. Chair, I just want to talk about another thing too. I looked into investments that we have made in schools in my area. I have been fortunate over the last couple of years that we have received some grants from the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development. They got different grants and each school got \$20,000 to improve their resources, like laptops and iPads and everything else. These schools are just so happy with those grants. That is something that I would like to thank the government for, the investments.

I talked to a teacher who just retired last year. She told me she was twenty-eight years a teacher and she never, ever saw investments in schools like she has seen in the last number of years.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. K. PARSONS:** When I walk into classrooms today – and I can remember walking in. I went down last week. Like I told you, I was down with a Grade 5 class. They had two students did an interview and then teachers asked me to stay around. Then all the students had a chance to ask some questions and we got talking about everything.

To look up – and I think they are called SMART Boards or whiteboards or something like that. All the classrooms with the technology that they have today, I am very proud of those investments. I think the money that this government spent on education, last year I think the budget was \$1.2 billion; I think it is a very good investment in our children. I think that we have to continue it.

In my district, sure, there are issues and it is issues with population growth, but we are addressing those issues. In 2003 the issues were completely different. They were mould and leaky windows and leaky roofs and everything else. This government, like I said, has done 1,900 repairs and maintenance to different parts of the school, major projects that have been done

to our educational facilities. I am very proud of that for this government. I am very proud that we do the job we do.

Education is a very important part of all of us here in this thing. We want to make sure that the children today get the best possible education that they can, and they are.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KIRBY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am happy to respond to those comments from the Member for Cape St. Francis. Look, I understand, this is an issue that is close to him. It is his district; of course he is concerned. He is concerned now that the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District decided last September that they are going to send an extra grade level into the school that parents were under the understanding was going to be 5-7. Of course he is concerned. We are all concerned about that.

He says he does not know if the school board – look, go onto the school board website, look at the executive minutes of September 19. It says the former Eastern School District in 2011 made a decision to construct a 5-7 school in the Town of Torbay. We are changing that now to a 5-8 school. That was in September. Then in January, I understand it, the Department of Transportation and Works went ahead anyway and issued a tender for a 5-7 school.

The member is right, the parents are going to get what they asked for. They are going to get a 5-7 school, but it is going to have Grade 8s in it too. It is going to be too small, okay, unless they build it.

He said it made him sick to sit there and listen to me. Now, that is fine, but do you know what? If he wants to see sick, go out for a month in a school that was constructed for 400 students; go in a windowless classroom in a school that has

700-odd students in it and sit there with that lack of air circulation and all of that; eat your lunch at your desk; watch movies for gym because you do not have any gym class; be crammed up in a room that was never constructed for that.

Go out to Paradise, go to Holy Family Elementary. Go to school there for a week and see how sick you feel after that, because it makes me sick. Parents think it is unsanitary for children. Kids with all sorts of anxiety problems and everything, they cannot go to the washroom; lineups for the washroom. All the horror stories that I have heard from parents in Paradise.

I say to the member, I have been to all of the meetings when it comes to this stuff here on the Northeast Avalon. I have been to those meetings and I heard firsthand. I have a notebook here full of the notes that I made of what people said. I am not making this up. These are the facts.

Then he talks about consultation; they were not consulted with. Okay, he was not consulted with, clearly, on this decision to change it from 5-7 to 5-8. I do not know if the Minister of Education was. I guess the Minister of Transportation was not consulted because he issued a tender for something other than what the school board is planning to deliver.

The Minister of Transportation and Works came out to the school meeting in Portugal Cove-St. Phillips last night and he rolled out the plan for the school. He rolled out the plan for the new school. Somebody said to me, no one consulted any of us. The architects are out there and they are drawing all of this up. No one talked to a single parent, no focus group, no survey, no consultation whatsoever.

This government has a whole department dedicated to public engagement. No parents who have kids at Beachy Cove Elementary, or are going to have kids at this school, were consulted on that plan, not that I understand. None of the people who were there last night were consulted on that plan. That was the consultation: Here is the plan, look at it. There you go. I do not know.

We have not seen the tender call, despite four years ago this government promising people in

Portugal Cove-St. Phillips that they would get a new school. Four years have gone by, and the minister said: Oh, these school developments, all this process has four stages. They said: Well, how come it did not happen in four stages over there? He said they did the four stages all at once. Why didn't they do the four stages all at once in Portugal Cove-St. Phillips?

I was out at that meeting in Paradise the other night. You talk about trying to get yourself out of trouble, which I believe that is where this government is on this issue, because as I have said, I am not making any of this up. It is all there in black and white for people to read.

We were at that meeting. There were probably a couple of hundred parents there who are very divided on whether their Grade 2 to Grade 6 kids should spend forty-five minutes on a bus to go into St. John's now. All these people bought their homes in Paradise, many of them, so their kids could walk to school. Now they have been told that their kids are going to be bused. People are talking about selling their homes out there. People are irate.

Then the other option is have four more portable classrooms jammed into this space with some sort of washroom on wheels set up to accommodate kids going to the washroom and so on during the school day. So we are sitting there, and the meeting was scheduled to begin – you cannot make this stuff up, Mr. Chair, you cannot make this stuff up. The meeting was scheduled to begin at 6:30, and I have the press release right here. At 6:20, the Minister of Transportation and Works issues a press release saying: tender awarded for the new school in Paradise.

Ten minutes before the meeting was going to be begin, and not an MHA from the government side at that meeting – ten minutes. I went up and showed it to the trustees, and people just – like Newfoundlanders say, you have to laugh, because what is the alternative? I went over to the mayor and I showed other people and said, look. The meeting is going to begin in five minutes and they just issued a tender for the new school, more or less trying to back your way out of a problem. There is no way of backing your way out of that problem.

The minister, as well intentioned as he may be, he can be as hopefully optimistic as he likes about that school being constructed and open there by Octagon Pond for September 2016. All you have to do is talk to the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, she will tell you, because no one is in that school yet, the one that was promised for Charlottetown. Talk to the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace, he will tell you, because they built that school way too small. That is a new school full of portable classrooms, basically. It is absolutely incredible what has been going on.

I know the Member for Cape St. Francis wants to serve his constituents well, but he is not serving his constituents very well by getting up there and advocating what the Minister of Transportation and Works has done, because what he has done is wrong. The school board decided to change that school in Torbay from a 5-7 school – you can almost say it right along with me over there, I have said it so many times here today – change it to a 5-8 school. They made that decision months before the Department of Transportation and Works issued a tender for a school that is too small.

They must be tired of hearing people over here saying stop building schools too small. They must be tired of hearing school councils say stop building schools too small. They must be tired of hearing teachers say stop building schools too small. They must be tired of hearing students say stop building schools too small, and parents saying stop building schools too small, because that is what you are doing. You cannot continue to do it.

You cannot say, yes, now they are going to get what they asked for, and we have changed the rules all of a sudden. The board is going to send an extra grade level there. So we are going to build another school too small and they are getting what they deserve.

I would not do that to my constituents. I would not say that to my constituents, you are getting what you deserve. Those parents do not deserve that. Those kids deserve a good education. Those people work hard; they pay taxes in this Province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KIRBY:** They deserve to get a decent education, and that is not what they are going to get by doing this. It is the wrong decision, and if the minister is going to award that tender I would say take it back. Take it back, because I am going to say there might be a legal challenge, who knows, and you continue to fool this up. You continue to fool these tenders up. Do you know what is going to happen if you continue to fool up these tenders?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. KIRBY:** Do you know what is going to happen? Then there are going to be further delays, and there goes your hopeful optimism. There goes hopeful optimism, because you have to issue – the other point about all of this, it is this government's appointed school board trustees who made that decision. The member over there appointed all those people. So there is no communication at all – no communication at all, it seems.

I do not know what to say about it. It is very frustrating. I apologize again to the Member for Cape St. Francis if he feels ill about this, but I am telling you, talk to those parents about this. Talk to those parents, because they are sick with worry. They are sick with worry about what the long-term impact on their kids is going to be, jamming them all in these spaces that are too small to accommodate the number of kids that the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District is deciding to send to those schools.

The member over there does not decide that. The Minister of Transportation and Works does not decide that. The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development does not decide that. The school board has decided to add an extra grade level to that school, so it is just as well to build a school that is big enough to accommodate Grade 8's out in Torbay.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I had the opportunity to listen to my colleague from the Opposition here who would be the critic for closing schools. That is all I heard from that rant for the last ten minutes. This Administration is about opening schools. It is about offering better quality education. It is about working with the stakeholders.

Contrary to what the hon. member has said over there, we work with the stakeholders. We work with municipal councils. We are working with the school district. We are identifying. That is why we have built twenty-four schools in our Administration – twenty-four. We have repaired fifty-six other schools.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** That is how we give back to the taxpayers of this Province. That is how we improve education, Mr. Chair. It is what we do.

Let's look at where we are. Right now this is an immediate what we are doing under new schools. In Paradise, you are right, a tender is out, a tender is awarded and ready to go. A contractor is ready to do their job. In Torbay a contract is ready to go, tenders are closed, and ready to go to market. The town is engaged, citizens are engaged, and the school council is engaged, another part of our process.

In CBS the tender is out. The hon. member asked about that a couple of months ago. The CBS tender is out. The site is done, bought, paid for, and ready to go. Grubbing will be done soon. It is all done, Mr. Chair, and ready to go.

In Portugal Cove-St. Phillips, the design is done. The community saw it, had engineers last night. The citizens looked at it. They all love it. They think it is wonderful because it reflects the input they have had over the last number of years when we have been looking at it.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** The town is engaged with it, Mr. Chair. I have been to twenty-seven different meetings with the people of Portugal Cove-St.

Phillips regarding the school needs, including going and lobbying the school district to change the configuration of the school district itself and how many grades would be in that. It was very successful.

I give credit to the citizens; I give credit to the town council that takes a real leadership role in this. We were very successful. Now we are going to the fact that we have land already purchased. With money that was paid to the town, we are going to reinvest back into other amenities for students in that area. They have invested \$4 million around that particular school. It is another positive investment there.

There are new schools here in St. John's. Have you seen the west end school? It is state of the art, second to none in this Province.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** When is it opening?

**MR. BRAZIL:** It will open in September.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Six years wait.

**MR. BRAZIL:** No, September, ready for the students in September.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible) Labrador too.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Schools in Labrador – I have not even gotten to Labrador yet. The money we put in Labrador and the other parts of the Province is equal to everywhere else because we take care of people and students in every part of this Province.

In the old says what I can remember – do not forget, I was a civil servant. I worked for the Department of Education, in a Liberal Administration. I can remember having to deal with mould in schools. I cannot remember new schools. I cannot remember going and cutting a lot of ribbons in those days. I remember a lot of schools being closed. That I can remember in the old days. We have gone beyond that.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** We talk about quality of education. We talk about safety for our children. That is what this is about. We talk

about new programs and services. Do not forget, we are the same ones who brought in all these extra services when it comes to free education, free books in schools, courtesy busing, all the other services within the school system itself. All of the programs and services that we have come through this Administration, Mr. Chair.

Let's look at what we have done: Gander, a new school; Charlottetown, our member there from Labrador.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** When is that one opening?

**MR. BRAZIL:** Oh, very soon. It will open very soon. That is up to the school district. We just build them. It is up to the school district to decide when they want to move in. We have a working relationship in that we build the school, we tell them – as I mentioned earlier in an answer to your critic for my department, we make sure the school is up to par. Once I am comfortable with that, my officials come to me, we will sign off, then we pass it over to the school district. The school district then decides when the best time to move students into that school is.

Sometimes it is right at the beginning of the school year. Sometimes it is after the Christmas break. Sometimes it is after the Easter break. They are the three normal times that you move kids into a school. The school district will do that. That is a replacement of a school, a commitment this government made because it was identified that the school had been dilapidated up there was not up to par. We wanted to make sure the students had quality education in a quality school, and we have delivered it. We will get a chance for the students to be in that in the near future, Mr. Chair. We have done that. We have managed to pass it around.

Let's just talk about investments since 2004 in education. In Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, \$12.1 million in the K-12 system; \$1.6 million allocated in fiscal 2014-2015 to do some additional stuff. That is Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi. I just want to show how this is diversified, how we spread it around. It is not based on

geography. It is not based on what your political affiliation is or who represents you.

Do you know what it is based on? The need of the students of this Province, Mr. Chair. The need of the communities telling us there is a challenge there, particularly in areas where there is growth because we have such a robust economy here and because we have been doing so many things to encourage families to stay in their home communities and raise their children and get a better quality of education. We have delivered on that in Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

The District of St. John's East, \$8.5 million that we have put into that district. Again, spreading it around. When people need it, it is identified, and we do our job. We meet with our school councils and work very closely with the school district to make sure the proper facilities are done.

St. John's Centre, \$25.5 million – and it changes around because some schools have different demands. Some schools have a different catchment area. So we want to make sure that the quality of the school also represents the sizing. Contrary to what my colleague had said earlier, we take into account live births. We take into account forecasting what the needs will be, and that is what we do. That is why we build the schools that we do that are appropriate for the population.

The District of Humber Valley, \$6.5 million – do you see it? We are all over the Province right now. We are spreading in all geographic areas and all political genres. Let's look at here: Virginia Waters, \$18.5 million, an investment by this Administration. These are only since 2004. If I went back prior to 2004, we would probably be in the hundreds of thousands, maximum. We are into the millions in each of these districts.

The District of St. Barbe – my good friend for St. Barbe – \$16 million; great schools up in your area, a great education system up there, spreading it around to make sure everybody has a quality of education.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. BRAZIL:** There is more coming.

Let's just talk about the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, \$32.7 million – the winner, jackpot, deserving to the people up there and we delivered on that. What an investment in education, what an investment.

The District of Torngat Mountains, \$3.5 million – everybody gets their fair share because everybody deserves it. The taxpayers get the service they deserve; that is what this Administration is all about. We give back to the taxpayers. It is their money, we want to make sure it is going to help the next generation, and that is why we invest in education.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** My good friend for Bay of Islands, \$7.9 million – you have done all right.

**MR. JOYCE:** For what?

**MR. BRAZIL:** For what? For the people, for the children, for the future, that is what we have invested in, that is what we did it for: \$7.9 million for the people of the great District of Bay of Islands and for the young people there, their parents and their future, that is what this is about.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** The District of St. John's North, \$7.1 million – spread it around. Mr. Critic there, \$7.1 million, a good investment and more to come in that district, Mr. Chair. We have been doing great investments for everybody in this Province. It shows our investment here.

The District of Mount Pearl South, \$5 million, and more in the works; engaging of the citizens, engaging of the school board, all about serving the people in that district also.

Let's talk The Straits – White Bay North, \$24.1 million; you have done all right. Good job. The people up there deserve it, the students deserve it, and that is why we have a good quality of education right across this great Province of ours, Mr. Chair.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BRAZIL:** St. John's South, \$4.1 million; not as big a demand there, Mr. Chair. They have had good infrastructure there and it is a different growth area there. The outlining areas are also a feeder system there; \$4.1 million, still investing in education for everybody in this Province, Mr. Chair.

My good friend for Burgeo – La Poile did all right, \$4 million. You have been good. You had a decent school there before; \$4 million we put into your school system and another \$100,000 this year in just doing some base repairs there. We have invested for everybody here.

St. George's – Stephenville East, \$5.7 million – we are investing. Everybody gets their fair share, because education is that important to us. The future is that important. The economic growth that we have had, we have spread it around. People deserve that. That is how we have done it.

The District of Carbonear – Harbour Grace – we have not left anybody else out – doing pretty good also, \$25.1 million. Everybody is doing extremely well here. The District of Conception Bay South, after announcing a new school – this is what we have already invested prior to that – \$12.1 million prior to that one. I am afraid to add what will be on that, because you might have won the jackpot on this one – another \$12.1 million.

Humber East, a great investment there too, \$23.7 million – again, spreading it around. Every region gets their fair share, and deservedly so. We have done this across this great Province of ours, Mr. Chair. We have invested over a billion dollars in our infrastructure for education, because the people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve it. The future of Newfoundland and Labrador is dependent on our education system, particularly on our primary and secondary education system, Mr. Chair.

Your Finance critic asked the other day what we have done with our \$20 billion over the last ten years. Well, there is a billion dollars of it directly gone back in to making sure the young people of this Province have the proper education and are in a good, safe environment.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is interesting to hear some of the numbers that government is putting out. They are putting it out for the basic infrastructure, I guess you could say, they are putting it out for maintenance –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. MURPHY:** Yes, I think that everybody in this House would recognize that government did have a big problem when it was first elected in 2003 when it came to maintenance. They have a good team of workers in the various school boards around the Province under the CUPE banner who worked diligently and did very hard work over the last couple of years to bring things up to scratch, and sometimes they still struggle with it. Hats go off to the CUPE workers who are out there, the school board employees out there who are doing the upkeep on these schools. I have to say, on a personal basis, and I will make no argument on it that while there are still maintenance issues with the schools, it is not as bad as what it was in 2003. I will commend the government on that –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MURPHY:** – but – and I will say this – while they are doing pretty good, they are not doing too bad on some of the maintenance programs, I think there are still issues out there, and government has to recognize that. More importantly than that, Mr. Chair, it is the services that are needed within the school.

We heard earlier – and I have to recognize the Member for Burgeo – La Poile when he got up and spoke about autism issues. Autism is a big challenge and going to be a bigger challenge for some of the schools that are in my district particularly. I can think of one school right off the bat that is going to be dealing with six kids

with autism in a Kindergarten English class next year.

It is more important at the same time while government is investing in the infrastructure of schools, that are sorely needed in some areas of this Province, that they also invest in the important personnel and support infrastructure that is required within some of these schools because that is what makes a school. It is okay to build a school for educational purposes, but it is just a building if it does not have the proper supports within it to maintain the educational system.

I will point that out to government. Hopefully, you will keep that in mind when this next Budget comes down because I think it is going to be a grave concern amongst some of the parents out there who are dealing with struggles such as autism. It is not the only thing that is out there that some of the parents are dealing with; we know of others.

Mr. Chair, I am more than pleased to stand up and talk to this particular issue on Bill 44 when it comes to Interim Supply. As the Member for Cape St. Francis has said, it gives us an opportunity to get up not only and talk about what is happening in our districts, but what is happening in the Province as well. I just gave a sampling of what is happening in the district. It is not the only issue that is there. We are also going to be dealing with, for example, when it comes to schools, some of the schools in our area are probably going to have to look at some further expansion. I can think of one school there that is obviously going to have an issue next year. We also have condominium developments, for example, that are happening in the District of St. John's East.

There is probably going to be more kids in the neighbourhoods there, and we do know that the City of St. John's is growing as well and a lot of people are moving into St. John's East. So, I would expect that government would be addressing the future needs of some of these schools and looking at the plans too for the expansion possibly of some of these schools.

Mr. Chair, when it comes to Bill 44, some people may call it a waste of time; I do not. I am not agreeable with the term. Some people

may seem to want to get on with it and pass \$2.7 billion of taxpayers' money. It is very important, yes, and we will have that discussion of course as the time goes by until it comes time for the passing of the legislation.

Mr. Chair, there are other matters out there and I think this gives an opportunity to give a chat as regards to where the Province has been in the past, particularly when it comes to the revenues that it has taken in, what it has done with the money, and what are we going to do in the future. Because we really, really do not have a plan yet, even though government is talking about putting in a five-year plan.

One of the things that I want to talk about is what has happened over the past. I think that it is pretty apparent what has happened over the last couple of years. When it comes to the revenue end of things, we have gotten royalties in, for example, from oil. We have seen it go into the coffers and then we have seen it pour right back out again without having necessarily saved a big lot of money in the jar for the future for future planning.

We did see government put \$2.3 billion in a kitty that ended up being spent on Muskrat Falls. The debate is done on it, the project has gone ahead, and it is probably too late to stop. Could government have done something better with the \$2.3 billion and then waited in the future for example? Could they have spent more time putting more money away for example? Did they see this coming down the pipeline that the price of oil would crash? I do not know. I knew that there was going to be some sort of a decline in the price of oil, but I did not imagine that it would crash the way it did.

I knew that there was going to be something happening out there when it came to US domestic, but at the same time maybe our expectations were a little bit too high. Maybe we had blinkers on and refused to see the change that was happening in the world around us, be it if it was the advancement of the countries of the world getting into more home retrofit and energy savings programs, I do not know. Maybe it was the simple fact that we overproduced and over pumped oil out of the ground that it ended up in the glut situation we are. Maybe consumers are more conscience and they are conserving a little

bit more. That is a good thing in some ways that we are conserving in all sorts of ways.

Mr. Chair, still I keep coming back to value added. We do not have any refining of that product, the sales offshore. We do not have that refinery that would produce it. We do not have those good, solid jobs that were in refining. We know that in the oil industry right now, while they are not making money off a barrel of oil, they are making a fortune because they had to force out to refine it, some companies out there. That is what makes it great that North Atlantic is out there, that these jobs are solid now because of the acquisition price for the barrel of crude oil. So we have that end of things.

We can talk about the fishery if we wanted to. We know that there are some companies out there that are exporting to China. Far be it from me to say anything about which workforce is doing it, but what I am talking about here, Mr. Chair, the simple fact is that because the resource itself is not being processed in the Province, the government does not make a cent in income tax revenue or the generation of jobs because it is sailing away from us. It is going away somewhere else. It is going away to China to be processed.

We see some resources that are processed here but we have also seen plant closures, and that is an important point for rural Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Chair. If we see fish plants closing up in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, we are exporting people shortly after that. We are seeing municipalities ending up in financial trouble and having to go out and get monies elsewhere, and not having the tax base or the people in residences and then having to end up with the challenge of maintaining infrastructure, because the people have gone away. Mr. Chair, it is more important than ever, that if government is going to be looking at job creation that they look to these means.

I will touch on shipbuilding, because the Minister of Transportation and Works was on his feet the other day talking about the Damen Shipyards new boat that is going to be coming to the Province in the next little while. It is going to cost us an extra \$25 million in tariffs to the federal government, but at the same time, like I just said, Mr. Chair, it is being built in Romania.

We did not have the foresight to look at a shipbuilding industry in this Province, a means to keep people here in Newfoundland and Labrador and a means for government to increase its tax base as well and generate revenue from other sources.

What I am saying, Mr. Chair, is that my interpretation is this, over the last couple of years we have become resource dependent. That has created jobs. Yes, that is a good thing, but it has not created a full potential of what we have from our resources that could have been generating more revenue for government. At the same time, supporting the people of the Province, keeping them here, building even more new schools because families are growing here, making available better health care, because we are not going to have to worry about cost, for example, generation.

I will leave that thought with government. I will have more to say on this in the future, Mr. Chair. There is going to be plenty of time to talk about this. I think we should be rethinking things at the same time. We have issues in this Province and big challenges in this Province that government is going to have to bring forward their ideas for, and we are going to be faced with no choice but to challenge them on it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS PERRY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is certainly a pleasure for me to rise in this hon. House today and speak to Bill 44. This is actually a very important bill in the House of Assembly. For the purposes of our listening audience, Mr. Chair, I would like to explain a little bit about what Interim Supply actually is.

Every spring, of course, when the House reconvenes, there is always an Interim Supply bill. It is a main Supply bill which is used because our Budget, which we put in place every year, runs until March 31. A new Budget always begins on April 1.

The process, of course, is usually such that the Budget does not get passed until about May or June, so we need an Interim Supply to ensure that cheques can continue to be paid to our health care workers, to our families who need support, to our people who require cancer treatments, to our public servants. It authorizes the advance of approximately one-quarter of the amount of funding to be contained in the main Estimates and it permits government to cover the needs of the public service from the end of the fiscal year, which is March 31, until the main Budget is passed.

That is what we are doing here today, Mr. Chair. In such a bill we are given latitude, and that is why you hear many of the speakers here today talking on a number of topics. We can speak to things that are important in our district, to things that are important to us in governance.

I would like to focus today, Mr. Chair, on what politics means to me, I guess, in a way. I came to politics in 2007, and I came into politics on the back of the Green report, the infamous Green report. As a result, I have deeply ingrained values of integrity, and what happens in this House to me matters.

I heard my colleague earlier from Cape St. Francis stand up and say how upset he was to have to sit here and listen to some of the rhetoric. When you are generally committed about people of the Province, the rhetoric is hard to listen to sometimes. I certainly am a strong believer in focusing on governance and pure action.

We are at a time in our Province right now, we are at a time in our country and in our globe right now, where we are facing challenging times. The price of oil is impacting everybody, everywhere. We are seeing job losses in Newfoundland and Labrador, sure. We are seeing them in Nova Scotia, we are seeing them in PEI, we are seeing them in Ontario, we are seeing them in Alberta, in far larger numbers I would argue than what we are seeing here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would argue, in fact, that given the policies and the superb management in place by the PC Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, we are in a position to ride this storm once again,

like we did in 2007 and 2008. We rode it out better than the rest of the country, Mr. Chair, and we are going to do it again.

Looking forward, Mr. Chair, I have every confidence that our policies will offer the best positioning for our Province to continue growing in the future. We have to navigate through some rough times, as do every other jurisdiction in the world. Are we going to do it successfully? Absolutely. Are we going to do it with Progressive Conservative values? I strongly believe we are.

I frequently get asked, Mr. Chair: So, Tracey, the election is coming up again, are you going to be running again in 2015? To that I say, absolutely! I feel that I have a responsibility to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure that honesty and integrity remain as paramount values in managing our Province. They did not exist prior to 2003, as we all know from the Green report.

Based on some of the rhetoric I hear sometimes, I greatly fear that if our government were not in place we would see them disappear again, and we plan on staying around for a long time. We know that we offer the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador a very clear option for a progressive governance that results in sustainability and better times.

As we heard the Minister of Transportation and Works elaborate on earlier, the investments made by this government never the likes of which have been seen before in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MS PERRY:** I have to say, Mr. Chair, I am getting some heckling across the way. I do actually feel sorry for the Leader of the Opposition, he has such a mixture of NDP thinkers and Tory thinkers that I have no idea how he is going to form a Liberal platform for his election platform. Anyway, I am sure he will struggle through it.

Mr. Chair, I would like to touch on something else today. We had some fabulous news this morning. It was great to see in the new Angus Reid poll that our Premier has gone up by seven

points. The Angus Reid poll reports people in Newfoundland and Labrador are warming up to Premier Paul Davis, and why are they? Because they see he is a man of vision. They see he is a man of honour. They see he is a man of integrity. He is willing to sit back and take a look. All we have to do is just look at the reform we are bringing in in ATIPPA.

We have a new leader who said: Do you know what? The people of Newfoundland and Labrador are saying to us they want to take a second look, and I, as Premier, I am taking a second look. What did he do? Not only did he fix it, he made it the best piece of legislation that we are going to see anywhere on the globe.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS PERRY:** According to the Centre of Law and Democracy, we are going to be leaders in this area as well as we are in many other areas in the Province.

I am really proud of the work our government has done to improve the economy in our Province and social programs in our Province. I will be a little bit biased and focus once again on my district and aquaculture, because the investments we have made in aquaculture have enabled an entire rural, remote district of Newfoundland and Labrador to thrive and prosper. We see housing starts. We see the need for new schools because we are continuing to have children. We have a need for more improved, better roads because we have increased traffic on the roads and people are still living in rural, remote Newfoundland and Labrador. Opportunities unlike we have ever seen before, and sustainable opportunities at that, Mr. Chair.

There was questioning again today about the drop in aquaculture for last year. Let's look at BC when they had the avian bird flu. Was there a call to shut down the industry? Absolutely not. When there is a crisis in farmed food, you do not throw the industry away.

I greatly fear that a Liberal government would do exactly that to aquaculture. The industry is one where you are growing food and there will be tough years, just like there is going to be

tough years when there is a drop with growing wheat. You have to stay the course.

I absolutely believe that the aquaculture industry in Newfoundland and Labrador will, I think, quadruple in size by the time we reach our maximum capacity. Our government is certainly committed to standing behind the people to see that happen, Mr. Chair.

I do not know if I have said this already in my speech but I had a really interesting conversation with someone. They said the best thing a politician can do is speak the truth and speak from the heart. That is what I like to do, Mr. Chair, when I get up in the House, and like my colleagues frustrated to no end at some of the incredulous spin that happens here sometimes.

In our new leader, Premier Paul Davis, we have a man who is going to ensure that the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador are the very first priority over and above everything else. I believe, Mr. Chair, that as more people get to know our Premier, they are all going to feel much like we do here on our side of the House.

What an incredible, intelligent man who is willing to do whatever it takes to make sure that the people of this Province are in a good position to ride the storm that is ahead for the next year or two and to be leaders in this country. That is the vision we have, Mr. Chair, for Newfoundland and Labrador. That is the vision we are going to deliver.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

**MR. HILLIER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have sat around for the last couple of days, Tuesday and most of today, and I have listened to all the members opposite talk about how they have squandered the \$20 million.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Billion.

**MR. HILLIER:** Billion, I am sorry – billion? I thought it was only \$20 million, but it is billion. Obviously, Mr. Chair, they all have the same writer.

Eventually when they tell the story twenty-eight times, they will tend to believe it. Nobody else will believe it, but they will believe their own stories after twenty-eight times telling it, Mr. Chair.

I set out to start talking about schools, not knowing that everybody else in the room was going to talk about schools before I got a chance, but we go back to Tuesday when the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development talked about the fact that – and listed all the schools that have been built under that \$20 billion. Then the member opposite this afternoon talked about the same schools that have been built. There are four of those schools that have not been built, and they have been still wasting the \$20 billion.

Mr. Chair, I want to go back a little bit to when this Province was very, very young. We go back to 1949, we became part of Confederation. Over the next ten years we struggled with taking our place in Canada. In 1954 the first regional high school was built at Foxtrap: Queen Elizabeth Regional High School. Between 1958 and 1962, Mr. Chair, there were six new high schools built in St. John's: Gonzaga, Holy Heart, Brother Rice, Booth Memorial, Prince of Wales –

**MR. F. COLLINS:** Bishops College.

**MR. HILLIER:** Bishops College. Thank you very much. Thank you, Felix. Bishops College – I knew there was another one. Six brand new high schools. Just imagine the building boom –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. HILLIER:** There was just so much of it.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. HILLIER:** Yes, just like the Finance Minister – six, Mr. Chair.

Imagine the building boom in St. John's between 1958 and 1962. Not only did they build six new high schools, they threw in a university

besides. Mr. Chair, there was not a cent of oil money that went into it. So, it is not only this party that can build schools, in the 1950s the party of the day built schools and did not waste any oil money.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HILLIER:** Mr. Chair, the reason I want to go back to the schools – and I know education is the big piece, but these schools were built as a result of our baby boom, and we understand the concept of a baby boom and the increased population of children in the late 1950s. Well, Mr. Chair, that same group of children in the 1950s are the people now that we are trying to deal with as seniors, and the issues that we have to deal with in health and housing and so on.

Mr. Chair, sixty years ago, we knew that we were going to have an aging issue. Through the 1980s and 1990s I taught social studies in one of those high schools, and one of the things we talked about was population pyramids. Now, those who do not know, a population pyramid is simply two bar graphs showing male, female population and the percentages of population in each of the age groups.

Students in Newfoundland in the 1980s and 1990s learned about the issues that we were going to have to face in 2015 with an aging population. I know they did because I was one of the teachers who taught it.

Mr. Chair, we have known for sixty years that we have an aging population. We have known for sixty years that our population would decline as a result of that aging population. We have known for sixty years the impact on our health care system. Mr. Chair, we have known for sixty years that the fewer people who we have in our workforce would not be able to support the aging population that we have. We have known for sixty years.

Our Minister of Health, our Minister of Transportation, our Minister of Municipal Affairs, our Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services all attended high school in the 1980s and 1990s, they were all faced with that population pyramid. They all knew what our Newfoundland population was going to look like and now, Mr. Chair –

**MR. BRAZIL:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works, on a point of order.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Mr. Chair, I appreciate and I am flattered. I did not go to high school in the 1980s and 1990s; mine was in the 1970s. I do appreciate that, though.

Thank you very much for that.

**CHAIR:** There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

**MR. HILLIER:** I apologize to the member opposite; he has an excuse for the mistakes that he has made.

Mr. Chair, we have known for sixty years that we were going to have a problem with our aging population.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. HILLIER:** We have ministers opposite who learned that in high school; yet, all of a sudden it is oh, gee, we have an aging population. What are we going to do about it? That is where we sit today.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. HILLIER:** Practising for Opposition are you?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. HILLIER:** Mr. Chair, a couple of quick points. Currently, one in six Newfoundlanders is over sixty-five years.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. HILLIER:** By 2025, that number will be one in four. We spend the most in health care of all provinces; \$7,000 per person, 35 per cent of our population. Eighty-five percent of our

seniors have one or more chronic diseases: arthritis, high blood pressure, heart disease.

Mr. Chair, I speak with seniors on a daily basis. I speak with seniors when I come out of church. I speak with seniors at the supermarket. I speak with seniors at the gas station. They want to know: Rex, what are you going to do for us? What are you going to do for us seniors?

Sometime ago, about two weeks ago, I decided to sit down with the seniors in my community. We sat down with the seniors group at Worsley Park, the over-fifty club. First of all, there was a little bit of suspicion that an MHA would come in and sit down and talk to them and ask them how they felt, what their issues were. When I told them, I said look, we are trying to put together a policy for Opposition, for our party; and in order to know what the stakeholders in this Province want, what the seniors in this Province want, we need to sit down and talk to seniors.

I said to them, last fall I ran in a by-election and in knocking on the doors in the by-election there were a lot of seniors who wanted to talk to me about issues that I did not understand, and I made a commitment for them then to sit down and talk to them and find out in detail what their issues were.

Mr. Chair, that is what we did for a full afternoon. Our seniors had a bunch of concerns. They talked quietly. Some talked more animatedly about where they – these are the people who grew this Province. These are the people who were in high school in 1958 and 1960. These were the people that we knew then were going to get old, were going to age, and we were going to have to look after them. They are saying to me: What are you going to do for me?

They are concerned about health care. They are concerned about access to prescription medication. They are concerned about housing. They are concerned about recreation opportunities. They are concerned about long-term care.

Mr. Chair, that group of people should be able to go into their retirement, go into their golden years, without those concerns. I say, what are

seniors' issues in this Province should be the issues of every single one of us in this Province.

Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MCGRATH:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It certainly gives me great pleasure to stand here and talk for ten minutes or so on the Interim Supply. I thought that the Minister of Finance gave a great preamble as to what Interim Supply is all about in asking for that \$2.7 billion to continue the economic future of the Province.

We will all get an opportunity, several opportunities for some of us, to stand up and talk about different things. Most of us are going to talk about our districts. I have noticed Tuesday and today, there has been some lively debate here today mostly on education. I am going to touch on a little bit of education, but I am not going to focus on education. I think there has been enough talk about it for today on both sides.

It is very interesting to see – I have listened to members on both sides of the House talking. If there is one thing I can say when I stand here on my feet and I say that I am going to work on something, as the MHA it is something that I probably worked on in my district long before I was an MHA. I am going to use the hospital in Labrador West as a prime example. I stood up and I am sure –

**MR. JOYCE:** (Inaudible).

**MR. MCGRATH:** The Member for Bay of Islands is heckling over there now. He will have his opportunity to get up and have a few words, I am sure, when he gets his hospital.

In 2006, I stood on my feet in a gravel pit and I said – I actually emceed two rallies to this government, to the Progressive Conservative government. I emceed two rallies, but I said I would do it in a way that I was not going to be yelling, screaming, bawling, and putting down a

government. I was going to go ahead and I was going to debate with the government.

At that time, the Minister of Health came into the district and he debated with us. In 2006 when I stood in that gravel pit on the back of a pickup truck and I asked government on behalf of the people of Labrador West to listen to what we were saying and why we were saying it, government listened.

I was very proud last month, with the Minister of Health and with the Premier of today, to stand up and officially open a \$90 million facility in Labrador West. I feel that I accomplished something, not just as an MHA but as a citizen of Labrador West. I think that is what is very important. When we sit here as MHAs, we have to remember that we are also citizens of the districts that we represent. We were put here in the House of Assembly to represent those people. It does not matter if you sit in the Opposition, if you sit in government, or if you sit in the Third Party, it is important that you represent.

Some of the debate I will call it, for lack of a better word that I have listened to today, I do not think was good representation to the people in their districts. I heard one member stand up and say how this government has squandered \$20 billion. I will challenge that member – and if that member would like for me to sit down and give up the rest of time, I can do that. I challenge that member to stand up and explain to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador how \$20 billion was squandered.

I just gave an example of a \$90 million facility in my district. I can guarantee you, that is not money squandered. Next to that \$90 million facility we also have a \$22 million facility –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR (Pollard):** Order, please!

**MR. MCGRATH:** – which is the new College of the North Atlantic.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Start adding it up.

**MR. MCGRATH:** That was all added up – I hear the member opposite there heckling me

now. The Minister of Transportation and Works stood up and very adequately talked about some of the monies that was spent in the Opposition districts. I remember a year ago when I stood up and did the exact same thing, so this government has not squandered the money. This government has looked at forty-eight districts throughout this Province and I think spent very wisely.

When you go back to 2003 – and I am not saying which government it was; it is not necessary. In 2003, when this present government took over, they took over a major problem. You do not hear people talking about mould in schools today because there were new facilities built. On top of new facilities being built, there was also money invested in present infrastructure.

Again, I will go back to my district. In my district I had two schools close down, but they also said before the schools that we are using now get into the condition where we have to close those also, let's fix them and we invested in the infrastructure that was still investable. That is where your \$20 billion has gone.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. MCGRATH:** This government will continue to invest like that, but now we have built an infrastructure. Over the last decade, you have seen a new infrastructure built. You have seen it in the education system, you have seen it in the roads system, you have seen it in the transportation system, you see it in your bridges, and you see it in your health care system. You are going to run out of fingers because obviously you could not get further than five when you were saying six.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. MCGRATH:** So, let's be careful here.

I just want to say that as an MHA here I think it is very important that you represent your district. I was on one of the Open Line shows just last night. I heard a caller on the Open Line show

talk about the transportation system between Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Labrador West. He talked about a lack of services, from the patrolling with the enforcement, from our police officers, our RCMP, our RNC. He talked about a lack of the – with the inspectors on the weigh scales.

I felt compelled, and I had to go on, and I knew the Minister of Transportation and Works was in a meeting and time was running out. I was not going to say anything outside my realm, but on behalf of Labrador West and the road between Labrador West and Happy Valley-Goose Bay, I had to get on and I had to give kudos. Number one, to the RNC; number two, to the RCMP; number three, to the inspectors, because I drive that road on a regular basis.

What a lot of people in the Province do not realize is that between Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Labrador West you have 655 kilometres of highway that this government has built – 650 kilometres of highway that this government built.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MCGRATH:** I know for a fact, because I deal with them on a daily basis, the RNC themselves have put programs in place where they go out and patrol that highway, not on a daily basis but on a shift basis. There are two twelve-hour shifts a day. I know the RNC, between Churchill Falls and Labrador West, they patrol that so the whole highway is covered.

I also know that the RCMP, between Churchill Falls and Happy Valley-Goose Bay, do the exact same thing. I felt compelled, that I had to get on and say the system in my district, and certainly my colleagues district, is well patrolled and well taken care of.

The weigh scales; the inspectors always carry portable scales with them also. The biggest complaint I hear from a lot of the transport operators in my district is that it is too strict. Because one time they could leave Labrador City and they could be overweight, and they could have faults there, not any more. This government has made sure that infrastructure is there and that the human resources are there to

use the infrastructure, and I am very proud to be a part of that.

Another couple of things I heard people talk about was housing. I am going to run out of time, but I want to talk about – I made a list as I was listening to some of the different speakers, and I have single-parent housing there. I know before I was elected, and certainly since I have been elected, I have been working on single-parent housing. I remember in my district, which was considered one of the lucrative districts – again, I heard it last night about the booming economy. I can guarantee you the economy is not booming in Labrador West today. I can guarantee you that.

The economy in Labrador West is not booming. We are in a rut right now in Labrador West. I do not care what anyone else said, but I can guarantee you, I am living it every day. The rut that we are in now, I saw it 1982, I saw it in 1986, I saw it 1992, and 1996. I know we are going to get through it, but there was a lot of pressure on me, as an MHA, to build new Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. We are not going to need it, but right now I am proud to say that I did just get funding for a \$1.5 million complex for single-parent housing.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MCGRATH:** That was done in consultation with the people on the ground. That was a need that was there. I know in my district for sure there is lots of consultation done, and we will continue to consult, and we will continue to work with the population, and we will continue to build a better future for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I am very happy to stand today to speak to Bill 44, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain

Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2016 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

Mr. Chair, what an important job we have. Each and every one of us in this House of Assembly, we are tasked by the people we represent to ensure that their well-being, to ensure that decisions that are made in this House are for the betterment of all our citizens, and for the betterment of our Province, of our communities. It is about taking care of the needs of our people that they are experiencing presently, but it is also about planning for our future.

I am very happy, again, to be able to be part of that decision making here in this House, to talk about the issues that affect the lives of the people in our Province, to talk about how we see the future. Really, our role as legislators is to look at, what are our resources? How can we best use them? What does the future look like for us? How can we develop our resources and maximize our resources? So, it is a big responsibility every time that we come in this House of Assembly. It is a big responsibility that is on our shoulders, that has been placed there by the people of our districts who are saying we entrust that responsibility to you, and we entrust that you will be part of making good decisions.

Mr. Chair, the Premier on a number of occasions has warned the people of the Province and has warned all of us here in the House of Assembly that everything is on the table. When he says that, it is a bit scary. I am hearing from people – I am sure that we are all hearing from people in our districts. We are hearing from people who are working in non-profit organizations. We are hearing from our public servants, people who have dedicated their working lives to taking care of the needs of the Province. We are hearing from them that they are worried. They are worried about whether or not they are going to have jobs after this next Budget comes down.

We are hearing from non-profit organizations. They are worried about whether they will have the money to be able to do the work that they so desperately do on behalf of the people of the Province. We know that because of Budget 2013, many of those groups that are doing life-saving work – many of them that are doing work

taking care of people who have really complex needs, many of them that are doing the kind of work that has helped prevent crisis and prevent problems, they got cut pretty bad in 2013. Their budgets got reduced a lot in 2013, so they know they are already working with bare bone budgets.

We are talking about non-profit organizations that are working in the field of mental health, that are working in youth services, and that are working with seniors. The Seniors Resource Centre in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, their budget was so drastically cut. They are doing incredible work with seniors in our Province, and the women's centres, the eight status of women council and women centres across the Province.

When the Premier says everything is on the table, I feel that he has done a great disservice to the Province because he has created an atmosphere of fear. He has created an atmosphere of instability. I would like to say – and I know we are saying this in our caucus – that not everything should be on the table. That is not the role of government to say everything is on the table. There are some things that should not be on the table, and I would like to talk a little bit about that.

Now when we know that there are economic challenges – and there are, because of the price of oil and because this government has basically not diversified the economy enough and has been so reliant on oil which affects everybody in our Province. Now is not the time to panic. We are all in this boat together. The Premier must not – his role is not to make people feel that they are even more precarious. His role is not to make people feel afraid. His role should be a steady hand on the tiller saying that we are going to navigate our way through this, but that is not the message he is giving. That is not the message he is giving at all. The message he is giving is everything is on the table, everybody should be worried and, boy, tough times are going to get even tougher. That is not leadership, Mr. Chair.

I would like to say that there are some issues, there are some programs, and there are some services to the people of the Province that definitely should not be on the table. In tough

economic times, they are services that actually should not be reduced, but, in fact, they should be strengthened because we have to weather the storm, if in fact, the storm is as bad as government makes it out to be, which it might very well be because of the drop in the price of oil.

On February 26, the eight status of women councils across the Province wrote a letter to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women – who was the minister at the time, she no longer is – because of persistent rumors they had been hearing that their budgets were going to be reduced. So they wrote the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women outlining why there was no room to cut, and why they were doing such incredible work on very low budgets. They said that the status of women councils and women's centres provide women-centred supports and service throughout this Province and have done so for four decades.

I can remember, Mr. Chair, over thirty years ago I worked at a women's centre in St. John's. I worked at the St. John's Status of Women Council at that women's centre and boy, we did a lot of really important work. It was at a time before we had our transition house. We had just started the rape crisis centre. We were working with women who were victims of domestic abuse, but there was no transition house at the time. Out of our women's centre we did start our transition house.

We worked with women who were victims of sexual assault and of incest when there were not that many services available and when those issues were not out there on the public agenda. They were not in newspapers. They were not on radios. They were not on TV news programs. So we were doing the work that nobody else was doing. Thank God there is more awareness now and there are programs that address some of those issues.

Nobody has reassured these women's centres. Their fiscal year ends March 31, which is only less than two weeks from now. I have spoken to some of the executive directors of women's centres in different parts of the Province. I spoke with them today. They do not know A, how much money they are getting and when they will get it. Their fiscal year ends in less

than two weeks. They do not know if they are going to have enough money to run the programs that they are running now. They do not know if their budgets will be enough in order to keep all the staff they have on now.

The current Minister Responsible for the Status of Women is saying that this is fear mongering. Mr. Chair, we did not start this, the Premier started this. Then the fact that nobody on government's side has assured these women's centres that the funding they have come to expect will be renewed to the same amounts come April 1. They do not know that. They have asked.

I have written the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, the previous one. I have asked. I have asked three questions in the House. Nobody is assuring these women's centres which are doing such incredible work. We know with economic downturns that women are more negatively affected and disproportionately affected than anyone in the community; women and their children.

Mr. Chair, someone on government side has to assure the people who are working so hard in women's centres across the Province because I am sure every member on this side of the House wants to know it too for the women's centres in their districts. Somebody has to assure them the money that they have come to rely on – not out of charity but because they are providing such life and death services to the people in their communities. Someone has to assure them the \$127,000 they have been getting for five years – although they were supposed to be getting increases, but they have not had an increase since 2011. Someone has to assure them that money is coming.

I would hope, Mr. Chair, that the MHAs on government side will press government to do that.

**CHAIR (Littlejohn):** I remind the hon. member that her time has expired.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. POLLARD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is certainly an honour and a privilege for me to stand and speak to Bill 44, Interim Supply. I am humbled and privileged again on behalf of the constituents of Baie Verte – Springdale and of course the people of the Province to speak to Interim Supply.

I have been here now over seven years. I have witnessed every MHA articulate the issues concerned. I have utmost respect for every member here. They work hard. That was the way we were raised, Mr. Chair. Our parents taught us a strong work ethic and to do our very best. I have seen every MHA up close and they do work hard I am sure. Although sometimes we get razed about it by our friends in the general public, but all the MHAs in here, I am sure, do their very best. I want to point that out first of all.

I want to go back to 2003, Mr. Chair, if I could, when we assumed office. We were on the brink or the precipice of bankruptcy at the time, therefore, tough decisions had to be made. A sound, solid policy had to be made at that particular time. That is how we overcame that hurdle.

At that particular time we also cast a vision. That vision was based upon four main principles, if you will, Mr. Chair. They were: decrease debt; decrease taxes; increase infrastructure spending; and have a sound, solid, fiscal management plan.

Mr. Chair, over the course of the past ten years or so since we have been in office, we have put \$744 million back into the pockets of ordinary Newfoundlanders and Labradorians by reducing taxes and reducing fees. We have reduced debt to about \$4 billion. We have spent about \$6 billion in public infrastructure on schools, long-term care facilities, bridges, ferries, you name it, water bombers, long-term care facilities like I said earlier, and the list can go on. That is money well spent I am sure. We spent \$16.7 million on a K-12 school in Baie Verte.

With respect to solid fiscal management, Mr. Chair, we have been a model really for the rest of Canada, which was pointed out by the former Governor of Canada at the time, Mr. Mark Carney. It was also pointed out and our work was applauded by the bond rating agencies. As a result, we have been given a super credit rating, the highest in our history and, of course, we have become a have Province. Recently, with the Hamilton Bulldogs we have become a Hab Province much to the Leafs' chagrin

In 2003, Mr. Chair, let's review a moment. We overcame hurdle number one. That was near bankruptcy. Then, in 2008, we overcame or weathered hurdle number two, the economic tsunami at that particular time. That was another hurdle. Now we are facing hurdle number three right now. You say, well, what is that hurdle number three? Well, it is the sudden nosedive in the oil prices that reduces funds in our coffers, which in turn potentially could limit or cramp our ability to offer programs and services.

Mr. Chair, I am confident that with the right balance and the right approach we will overcome and wrestle this giant to the ground as well, and we will overcome that hurdle as well, that hurdle number three. Nobody in the world could predict this sudden nosedive, just like they could not predict the sudden nosedive of the Maple Leafs. Well, I do not know, Mr. Chair, I guess we could all predict the sudden nosedive of the Leafs – but I digress, Mr. Chair. As an avid Leaf fan, I digress.

With respect to oil prices – with the five minutes I have left, let us talk about this. How did we arrive to where we are today when it comes to oil prices? I do not expect to overtake the Member for St. John's East; I respect your knowledge on this, sir.

Now, a few years ago our global demand was surging for oil, no question. China's economy was booming; there was a big demand for oil. There was not enough oil being produced at that particular time to keep up with demand. So we saw around 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 the oil price was running over \$100 a barrel at that particular time. So, what was the result of that? Many energy corporations found it very profitable to start extracting expensive oil at that particular time in difficult places, and they drilled in

difficult places because they could afford to do it, because the price was so high.

Around five years ago, well, we know what happened in the United States. New technology came about, new techniques like fracking and horizontal drilling got oil from the shale formations. We know what happened today, such as North Dakota or Texas, the high oil prices enabled these companies to make a profit to invest in these very expensive projects – but the price was so high they could do it. So this led to a boom in oil production in the United States and, of course, could probably have the potential to make the United States energy independent. So, the United States suddenly added about 4 million barrels of oil per day to the global market from 2008 on, Mr. Chair.

So, at first, along with the increases in Canada and Russia, these increases had very minimal impact at that particular time. Mr. Chair, you might ask the question: Well, why was this so? Why did they have such a minimal impact? Because there were geopolitical conflicts going on in key regions such as in Iraq, there was a mess. Libya was not producing because there was a civil war going on. In Iran the oil sanctions were crippling their economy by the United States and Europe at that particular time. These conflicts took about 3 million barrels per day off the market. They produced below capacity at that particular time: Libya and Iran.

What happened after that, Mr. Chair, around the fall of 2014? Things changed. There was a sudden change in the geopolitical scene. In that region, Libya, all of a sudden, increased their production because things settled down, politically. Then we had the demand in Asia and Europe; the demand for oil was decreasing. China, their economy was slowing; Japan was slowing; and Germany was slowing.

This combination of weakening demand and a rising supply, a glut in the oil production, caused the oil to drop and drop and drop to \$115 a barrel, \$100, \$90, \$80, \$70, \$60, \$50. I do not know what it is today, probably the low fifties.

Let's go back to OPEC. What role do the OPEC countries have on this, the twelve countries? OPEC produces about 40 per cent of the world's oil, Mr. Chair. Historically, OPEC could

increase or could influence oil prices by two ways: increase production or decrease production. If they increase production, they would lower prices of oil. If they decrease production, they would increase the price.

Everybody was waiting with bated breath, Mr. Chair. November 27 was the big date. In a place called Vienna everybody was waiting. All over the world the big oil countries that depend on oil were waiting for that decision by OPEC.

Countries need a high price to make their economy sustainable. Even in the cartel, even OPEC like Venezuela, Libya, Iran, Iraq, they need \$100 or more to carry on their activities so they would not go bankrupt. Qatar, UAE, or Saudi Arabia of course, the big one, they disagreed. So Saudi Arabia said no, we are not going to cut production. We are going to do nothing. We are just going to stay the same.

Saudi Arabia opposed production. What was the result of that, Mr. Chair? OPEC could not agree so production was unchanged and so prices continue to fall – nosedived, just like the Leafs.

What is the impact, Mr. Chair? Some US producers may go bankrupt, probably that is what OPEC wanted, go bankrupt. The result of that would be the oil prices will after a while stabilize and OPEC will maintain its share of a market; they want about 40 per cent of the market.

Now, Mr. Chair, it is anyone's guess to where the oil will go, where it will bottom out and stabilize; but let's make this point clear: no action of this government precipitated this nosedive in oil prices; no inane or vacuous actions by this government precipitated this nosedive in oil prices. This is a result of OPEC's action or inaction. We have no control over the rise and fall of global oil prices just like we have no control over the weather.

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

**MR. POLLARD:** Thank you very much and have a nice evening.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde.

**MR. CROCKER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is my pleasure this afternoon to rise and speak on Bill 44. That is a bit of a hard act to follow. First of all, Mr. Chair, I want to speak briefly about yesterday's PMR. Being the Member for Trinity – Bay de Verde the shellfish industry is very, very important to the people of the district and the entire Bay de Verde Peninsula, no different than it is the entire Province.

I congratulate the member yesterday on his PMR and the unanimous support of this House. Our leader back last year, Mr. Chair, was the first person to call for the All-Party Committee, and it is great to see that the All-Party Committee has reconvened. It is time that we as politicians from Newfoundland and Labrador ensure that the Harper government's feet are held to the fire and LIFO becomes adjacency, which should have happened a long time ago. This issue is way too important to be drawn on party lines.

Mr. Chair, I want to talk about something else, and it is the economy and look back at the numbers that the government likes to talk about when they took power in 2003, about the fact of the debt or deficit that they inherited. If you move forward to today, nothing has changed. We are going to have the same –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** It has gotten worse.

**MR. CROCKER:** Yes, in actual fact, public debt will rise to the highest it has ever been in this Province.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. CROCKER:** It is true.

Mr. Chair, when you look back at this government's plan, we look at the 10-Year Stability Plan that was done just two years ago and this government was looking at \$103 oil, and we have always bid on the high side of oil and that causes a lot of the issues we have today. Twenty billion dollars later, the government talks about infrastructure investments. Well, Mr. Chair, there are still a lot of infrastructure investments needed in this Province.

Long before the decrease in the price of oil, Mr. Chair, we had debt and deficits. Of the Budgets that this government has brought in, of the thirteen Budgets, seven of which have had deficits; only six surpluses in their time in power, and that is with \$20 billion in oil revenue. That is the thirteen Budgets, Mr. Chair. If you take out the Atlantic Accord, this government has only ever recorded three surpluses.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. CROCKER:** I remind the member, my favourite number is number seven.

A lack of long-term planning, and now the government finds itself in a position where they want to put money away for a rainy day. We had an opportunity to create a rainy day fund, Mr. Chair, and we did not do it. Now the money is not there. We are at oil at \$55 a barrel today, and our opportunity to create a rainy day fund is not in the foreseeable future. The government itself is predicting five years of deficits, to go along with the other seven years of deficits that this government has had.

Mr. Chair, when you talk about money and money wasted in our Province, we do not have to look too far. Some of these numbers are not huge, but let's just put some in perspective. The review of Bill 29 cost the taxpayers of this Province \$1 million, Mr. Chair. This Party led a filibuster that lasted for days, the longest one in history, against Bill 29, telling the government at the time that it was not going to work.

Mr. Chair, for six years I drove in over the Trans-Canada Highway every day and reminded of waste every time I pass by the moose warning system. That the only thing that was ever permanent with the moose warning system was the out of order sign. Thankfully, now the signs have been replaced; but, Mr. Chair, the people of the Province will remember the money that was wasted into this moose warning system.

Mr. Chair, you go back to last year with the bungling of the Humber Valley deal and the money that cost the taxpayers of this Province, and the small businesses in our Province that were left being told by the government to go to Small Claims Court. Well, I come from a small

business background and it is not that easy to go to Small Claims Court, and you will probably never get your money regardless.

Mr. Chair, when we look at a lot of talk this afternoon about schools, one thing that was not mentioned about the schools in our Province is that \$1 million a year that government continues to pay to keep schools that have closed – the heat on, the phone lines still in place, snow clearing on the parking lot. There is a case in my district, Mr. Chair, where there is a school that has been closed for two years and the bell still rings. That is a fact.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible) once and see if you got them all (inaudible).

**MR. CROCKER:** Yes, the bell worked, I say to the member.

Abitibi, Mr. Chair, we got ourselves a mill one afternoon here in the House of Assembly that is going to cost the taxpayers and the future taxpayers of this Province forever and a day. The government's failed population strategy is another waste of public taxpayer's money.

Mr. Chair, we failed to diversify the economy. We had an opportunity, we had \$20 billion, and we did not do it. Look no further than the department which I am critic for, the Department of Business and look at the Business Development Corporation. I asked the minister back on Tuesday about how much taxpayer's money has been written off, and the minister did not have a number. He could not tell us how many jobs have been created by the Business Development Corporation.

Mr. Chair, we look through other opportunities that this government has missed in my own district, and come back to 911 for a minute actually. The idea of 911 is a very good idea, but we do not have the basic infrastructure. In the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde, it is not much good to have 911 because we do not have cellphone coverage. Without cellphone coverage, the basic principle of 911 does not work. We are all in our houses, we have land lines, sure, but we are just going to call our regular fire department numbers, our ambulance numbers.

Mr. Chair, 911 is important when you are on the Heart's Content Barrens or the New Harbour Barrens and you have an accident or you come upon an accident; 911 is no good. So the seventy-five cents that every phone owner in the District of Trinity – Bay de Verde has to pay today on their line is useless, unless you are stood up in your kitchen.

Mr. Chair, government always goes back to the fact that cellphone coverage is a federal issue. Yes, well it is a federal issue, but there are lots of investments that could be made by government. Government can become a partner of the companies to ensure that as we move forward there are new technologies that we need to explore to find a way to build a stronger cellphone system throughout our Province. Mr. Chair, 911 will not work if you cannot get a signal.

Mr. Chair, if you look at other issues in our Province with broadband and as we go forward things that could have been done. The environmental liabilities that we have had, the coastal management problems that we have had. The ten-year stability plan back two years ago, that is totally out the window now.

The government talks about finally bringing in a five-year budgetary plan. Where was that thirteen years ago when we had an opportunity with \$20 billion to plan? We did not plan, Mr. Chair, we did not plan.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** They did not.

**MR. CROCKER:** I am sorry, you are right. They did not plan.

We look at the Muskrat Falls Project, Mr. Chair, and even reports today that there are more issues daily with the Muskrat Falls Project. We looked at our leader yesterday, asking questions of the government on Muskrat Falls and its oversight and overruns, but no answers, Mr. Chair.

Again, we go back to the issues with the government and the Premier's mandate letters, mandating that ministers make deals by the end of the year. We look at the mandate letter for the Minister Responsible for the Department of Business, no mention of trade, Mr. Chair; no mention of trade in the mandate letter to the

minister. In a situation with a low US dollar, it is a good time for us to be looking for trade opportunities, but, Mr. Chair, we are not doing it. We are not doing it.

Anyway, Mr. Chair, my time has expired, but I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the bill this afternoon.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Attorney General.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

It is a pleasure today to have an opportunity to offer some comments on the debate in Bill 44. A bill for Interim Supply for approximately \$2.8 billion to tie this government over until our new Budget is approved.

Of course, an Interim Supply bill gives you an opportunity to speak on any number of issues, and usually the field is wide open to what you want to talk about. It is interesting today that most of the debate has been taken up on education, and it is a very interesting debate and very spirited debate today. It is fun to be involved in it.

Sometimes in these kinds of debates people will talk about their districts, and the ministers might want to talk about things that are going on in their departments. Today, as I said, it was education. I was trying to think of what I might talk about. I cannot talk about the Toronto Maple Leafs because it will offend my good friend from Baie Verte – Springdale.

I do want to talk today about the fiscal position that we are in in this Province and our five-year plan to do something about it. Now lots of times when people write papers or make speeches, they start off with a quote from some esteemed writer or thinker or person in the world that says a quote, that they use that quote for a focus and a theme of their speech.

Well, I am going to use a quote today from an esteemed member from the other side over there,

the Member for Bay of Islands, who stated – I think it was yesterday or the day before – talking about the fiscal position of the Province. He said: I will tell you what we would do. We would not have gotten ourselves into this mess.

Now, that can put you in a lot of directions in a speech or a paper. As a matter of fact, I really struggled how to narrow it down to one direction. We would not have gotten ourselves into this mess, he said. My response probably should have been: Where were you in 2003? How do you rationalize 2003?

Anyway, let my talk about the fiscal position we are in. In ten minutes, you do not have much time to speak – seven minutes left. There is no doubt, Mr. Chair, we are in a difficult position in this Province today, fiscally. Who would have thought what happened to the oil price? Nobody predicted that. Nobody knew that was going to happen, and I am saying nobody – this side of the House or that side of the House – knew that was going to happen. Nobody in this Province knew that was going to happen.

Despite what they say, nobody could have prepared us for that. No one was prepared for it. We were not prepared for it, the Opposition was not prepared for it, nobody was prepared for it. We took advice from the best experts in the world on determining oil prices, and we have to continue to do that. We have to; it is our only option. People understand that. People get that.

What happened was completely unpredictable, not only in our Province – Alberta, every country that depends on oil revenues experienced that. The impact has been tremendous all over the world, and we have seen it every day. Projects were placed on hold. Look at what is happening in Alberta, thousands of people being laid off. I understand the other day a company laid off a thousand people, left them in the camps and they had to find their own way home. Hundreds of Newfoundlanders returning home with no jobs.

Mr. Chair, in my own district in Argentina –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. F. COLLINS:** – the Husky development project, West White Rose Extension, the wellhead platform has been deferred because of oil prices. It is important for my district. We were so happy to go out there a couple of years ago with the Minister of Natural Resources – his first day on the job, actually, as minister – along with the Premier, and made that announcement and how important it was to the district.

Well, that is on hold now, and that impacts my district. Hopefully we will see the oil prices coming back. All the indicators are that they will, and we will continue the resumption of that work and the economic prosperity for my region.

What is happening fiscally in this Province, I equate it with a correction in the markets, the stock markets. You get a bullish market to go up and up and up over the years, and then all of a sudden they have to draw back because it gets too hot, and it pulls back, the prices drop down, a bit of a correction, and we are going through a correction in this Province now with regard to our fiscal situation.

Mr. Chair, we take comfort from the fact that our economy is very strong in this Province. It will stay strong because our natural resources, including oil, and the seismic studies that have been done off our shores indicate that our future is very bright. So we can take comfort from that. We will be in a great position to rebound and rebound we will, make no mistake about it.

We are not in the situation we were in 2003. It was interesting to hear the previous speaker say nothing has changed, Mr. Chair, since 2003. My God, I know he is young, that is probably why he cannot remember much about 2003. To say nothing has changed since 2003 is a bit of a stretch.

We remember when we took over the bankrupt Province. The Province was bankrupt – financed and bankrupt from an infrastructure perspective. We took that Province by the bootstraps, Mr. Chair, and we jerked it up to a position we are in today. We literally took it by the bootstraps and brought it to a place where we are today where our economy is strong, we are a have Province leading the country still in so many ways, and produced a group of

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians proud to call themselves Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This government did that in ten short years. The transformation in ten short years has been amazing, what we have done.

I hear the people on the other side talking about how we squandered the money. Well the Minister of Transportation talked today about how we squandered it in Liberal districts. I do not see him going back to the district and saying we should not have spent that money, look at the money they squandered in my district. I do not hear any Liberal members saying that, look at the money squandered in my district.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. F. COLLINS:** Look at the money they squandered in my district; I do not hear them saying that. We invested billions. Yes, we spent billions and we spent billions and invested billions in infrastructure. We had to. We had to rebuild this Province and rebuild it we did.

You do not hear today anybody complaining about mould in schools. You heard it in 2003 and you heard it for several years after. You do not hear it today. We spent it on social services. We spent millions and the Minister of Transportation outlined it today what we spent just in education alone. We had to. Then people have the nerve to say you did not save any money for a rainy day. I say, Mr. Chair, 2003 was a bloody rainy day.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. F. COLLINS:** As a matter of fact, it was pouring in 2003. We spent money to end that rainy day. When the Member for Bay of Islands can say we would not have gotten ourselves into that mess, boy, you can go a long ways with that. Can you imagine that? We would not have gotten ourselves into this mess.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. F. COLLINS:** Mr. Chair, having said all of that, we happened to develop a plan. This

Premier, this Finance Minister, this Cabinet developed a plan going forward over five years to get us through those difficult years and the people of the Province expect no less. This is an election year. We have an election year Budget, but it is going to be a different kind of an election year Budget. It is going to be a Budget that shows fiscal responsibility because that is what the people want.

We will show, Mr. Chair, we are the party to do that. We will show a plan, we will show leadership, we will show responsibility, we will show vision, we will show that we are the party to bring this Province through the next five years, unlike the Liberals, who have no plan. They have no plan. Nothing, no plan, zero, zilch, not one iota of an initiative have they come up with if they take over government. Mr. Chair, they are saying leave it to us. Just leave it to us. We are going to care of it. Leave it to us; we will make things right.

Well, I talked to people in my district, Mr. Chair, and they get it that we have transformed the Province over the last ten years. They get that we have rebuilt this Province. They get that we have to do a plan to correct, to draw back, to develop a sound plan to move forward to get them over the next five years; they get that.

Our Premier is showing the leadership in that, Mr. Chair. Our government is going to show the leadership in that. It is evident by what is happening in the polls in the last couple of days. They are a little bit worried about that over there, but it is happening. We are going to move forward with a plan that is going to get this Province through the next five years. It is going to be difficult for some people. It is going to be bad news for some people, but it is going to show responsibility. Mr. Chair, we are the party to do that.

To say that nothing has changed in ten years, eleven years is irresponsible. When you see what we have done to rebuild this Province and to say nothing has changed, that is a bit of a stretch. To say that we would not have gotten ourselves into this mess – where were we in 2003? We got ourselves out of the mess. We rebuilt this Province and we made it a place for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians proud to call

their own and proud to say they are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Again, it is a pleasure to stand, and I have to say I had a little chat with the hon. Member for Baie Verte – Springdale and quite a nice gentleman. I tell you, he has some of his facts straight, but he still does not sound a bit like George Murphy.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MURPHY:** He has shown the interest in oil and his message on oil was pretty good. He has some of the messages that are out there in the markets and that.

We had a little talk about opportunities too. Of course everybody knows that we as members will get together with another member of the House and talk about constituency issues that need dealing with by ministers and everything. We had a little chat. We talk about opportunities too that are available in this Province. I am optimistic that this government or any government is going to do things right by the people. They are not going to go ahead and do something off the cuff that would be totally off the wall. Then again, dot, dot, dot.

We got into talking about opportunities. One of the things we talked about, Mr. Chair, was the offshore. We hear in the House that government is indeed talking to Statoil because they think there is an opportunity there. I believe that there is also an opportunity there.

Back in the early 1990s when this government was trying to develop the offshore they came upon the Hibernia Project. It took a lot of gumption. It took a lot of get up and go to get a deal done, to get that first platform out there, to kick-start Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore.

At the time, Mr. Chair, I think the dollar amount – somebody can correct me if I am wrong on this one, but the dollar amount was somewhere around \$16 a barrel at the wellhead to make the project work. There was a lot of opposition to that. I think it was \$16 a barrel. Maybe the Minister of Natural Resources can stand on his feet later and reference what that cost.

Today, geared to inflation it is a little less than \$24 a barrel. What does that tell you? There is opportunity there. We have to be optimistic that a deal will be done to promote the offshore and to be able to draw on more oil resources. We have to be optimistic based on that simple fact.

We are competitive still, I believe that. At the same time as that, if oil prices, for example, are going to stay low and government is going to depend on those resources, it is obviously not enough oil revenue there to cover off the expenses that are going to be needed in the future for the government to be looking after things like education. We have heard a lot about education today including what is happening in my district.

We are not going to have a lot of revenue to be dealing with an aging population. Those numbers are forecast to increase. I think by the year 2026 – I think the last statistic and I could be wrong on this one – about 30 per cent of our population, or 40 per cent of our population, somewhere around there, is going to be aged sixty-five and over. We have an older population. We have a declining birth rate. We have to do more to promote that. How do we do that?

Like I said, I think that the answer has to be a bigger focus on value added. That could be refining. That could be shipbuilding. We have to look at who we are and get back to who we are: fishers, processing and fish plants; supporting municipalities that way, their own revenue; supporting a population; supporting the schools that are in the smaller communities; supporting the small businesses that depend on the bigger businesses; supporting those businesses that are keeping the money rolling; keep generating taxation so that we can keep programs and everything like that on the go.

The previous speaker stood up – the Member for Placentia – St. Mary's got up and he spoke about how nobody could predict this. Well there were two interesting predictions that were out there and we talked about those during the Muskrat Falls debate. I know I did.

There was a gentleman by the name of Leo Maueri who came out – he is a brilliant economist by the way. He used to work for a rather large Italian energy firm, E-N-I, or Eni as some people would call it. I guess you could say he is an instructor or teacher, if you will, a professor down at the Kennedy School of Government which is part of Harvard University I believe it is, if I got the title right.

He predicted, at that particular time that the price of oil had a really good chance of dropping down to \$50 a barrel. His main number that he was kicking around was between \$70 and \$75 a barrel. Hansard will show we talked about that during the debate. We asked the Minister of Natural Resources at the time about that, if they were concerned about it, and there was no concern. We have since run into another report from PIRA that was out in 2012 which called for a pretty good chance of oil slipping down to \$50 a barrel.

There were some predictions that were out there. Some of the predictions that were used in government's own Budget books and everything had people from some of the various energy forecasting companies – Bloomberg and that sort of thing I believe, including Wade Locke – all predicting oil at around \$100 a barrel. I cannot fault government for that because the majority of reports out there at the time were saying \$100 a barrel. There were some futuristic thinkers out there who did call for the possibility of a collapse.

I wonder if government at that particular time considered those, if they had read those reports. If they had said to themselves back then when the money was rolling, what if? What if the price of a barrel of oil collapsed? What would we do? I do not know if that question was asked. I really do not know. That might be something that was carried out under the guise of Cabinet meetings and that sort of thing. Maybe there are some notes that we will get

some time in the future that might talk about that. I do not know.

Mr. Chair, what can they do now? I have no other choice but to reinforce what I believe government can do. I would seriously hope that they would take it into consideration to keep the money going in the Province, to keep it circulating; to keep social organizations, for example, from generating their own revenue; for construction companies, for example, in a downturn in the real estate industry, to keep them going so that homeowners at the same time may be able to participate in doing home retrofits to bring up the value of their homes.

Put people to work. Simple nuts and bolt work. Simple construction work, for example. Investing in home retrofits keeps the construction company going and allows for the consumer to save on costs for the heat. It allows the consumer to maintain the value of their home and increase it at the same time. There is nothing wrong with that. It is a plus for government.

It might also save some oil generation and possibly save some oil generated out in Holyrood because God only knows how long we are going to need that before it breaks down again. They might be able to take some of the money, the taxation that is brought over and put it into Nalcor so that they can upkeep the Holyrood plant and put in the proper investments for some proper generation.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible) stay open now?

**MR. MURPHY:** Mr. Chair, it is obvious that we are going to need it in the future. According to Nalcor's own documents we have to have Holyrood as a backup in the future. It is going to be there and the Natural Resources Minister should know that. In the plans for Muskrat Falls we had to have an anchor for generation. We know it still has to be there. We cannot say we are getting rid of it. Right now as it stands we are not going to have any other choice but to keep it.

Mr. Chair, the other thing I wanted to talk about too as regards to keeping money circulating – for example look at what government did when

it comes to the electronic products recycling. They decided to put a surcharge on, charge people for it, and then leave the people to bring it to a depot instead. What they could have done was put a bit of a rebate on it. Sure, a \$10 fee, but allow the consumer at the same time to get the \$10 back when they turned in the product. We did not do that.

We allowed urban mining to happen, sure, and a major corporation to benefit, but at the same time, we already had companies here too. I can think of one company right here operating in St. John's that was more than willing to pick up your electronics, to have that piece of electronics turned over to them so that they could take it and they could generate revenue from it.

Do you know what? We did not go there. We have probably a dozen jobs for this person who still has his company on the go, but this could have been Island wide. We could have social organizations, Mr. Chair, that could have been using this as fundraising initiatives, for example, so that they could have revenue too. Instead, where do they get it? Like I said it was an opportunity lost, but it is not too late.

I urge government at the same time to go back and look at where we can keep the money turning over in this Province and keeping it here, creating green jobs and creating more opportunities.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. S. COLLINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am the Minister Responsible for Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission.

Mr. Chair, I am a bit shocked to hear the member from the NDP pleading that we keep Holyrood open and saying it is going to need to stay open. That is somewhat frightening. I have not read his book, but apparently it is in his book that he has written.

Just so the member is aware, Nalcor has said quite clearly that there would obviously be a transition period. That is where the Holyrood Generating Station would stay open for that amount of time, perhaps two or three years. It is not being kept open indefinitely. That is not part of the plan, it never was the plan, and certainly will not become the plan.

I have a few things to talk about today, but I also want to touch on – I was out in the district last week and I was attending some function at Anthony Paddon school in Musgravetown. I left the school; I had a great time down there at the school.

I was listening to a call-in show on the way home. The Liberal Member for St. John's North was on the show. He was talking about the school system, the deficiencies, the lack of investment, yada, yada, yada, all the same things we hear day in and day out.

There was a point where the host had asked the member, he said, so what do we do? Do we just simply go out and close rural schools, schools in rural Newfoundland? It kind of caught him off guard. I do not want to quote the member, but I feel quite comfortable in paraphrasing him when he said, well, perhaps that is something we have to look at.

As a rural MHA and someone who represents rural areas and certainly has rural schools in his district, that really struck home. You have a member from St. John's who obviously has no idea outside the Overpass what exists or how the school system works or anything of that nature, and that is fine.

**MR. KIRBY:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for St. John's North on a point of order.

**MR. KIRBY:** Perhaps the minister could table a transcript of that because I do not remember saying anything about us closing rural schools.

**CHAIR:** There is no point of order.

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

**MR. S. COLLINS:** There isn't, Mr. Chair. Perhaps the member would travel outside the Overpass so we would not have to have these arguments.

Whatever the case, as opposed to him thinking he knows what he is talking about I am going to explain to him that the schools out in rural Newfoundland are just as important as those in metro. I can tell you the work that has been done in those schools in rural Newfoundland has been tremendous over the last number of years.

When I hear comments from the Liberal Education critic simply saying, well let's try to fix metro's issues by closing schools in rural Newfoundland, that sends a shiver down my spine. Because, Mr. Chair, it is not that long ago when the Liberals were in power and that is exactly what they did do. They did close schools out in rural Newfoundland.

So, I want to make sure the people understand that it is alright for him to represent his constituents, but when he stands in the House of Assembly as an Education critic, he is representing the entire Province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. S. COLLINS:** I can tell you, a big part of this Province is rural Newfoundland and Labrador. That is what I am here to certainly be an advocate for, and it worries me when I hear statements such as that coming out of the Education critic's mouth.

Now, if I may get a little bit more lighthearted, Mr. Chair. This past weekend, March 14, I was in Gambo for the 47th Anniversary Charter Night of the Lions Club there. Of course, I do not have to tell anybody in this House of Assembly how great our Lions Clubs are, not only in this Province, but nationally, of course, and across the world in the work they do.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. S. COLLINS:** It is funny, when I got the invite saying we want you to come to our 47th anniversary, I said, absolutely, I will be there –

as I always do to any invite I get. So, I called my wife and I said, Sam, we are going to need a babysitter for Saturday night. She said, oh my goodness, you remembered. I said, remembered what? She said, our wedding anniversary. So I said, well – no, I did not remember, but I said we are going to the anniversary of the Lions Club on our anniversary.

Anyway, I am happy to say we are still married today. She did attend with me, and I was happy to celebrate, actually, with the King Lion, Gus Greene, who many people know here. Gus has been involved with the Lions Club provincially for years. Gus and his wife, Flo, actually celebrated their 47th wedding anniversary at the same time.

It was a great event. It is nice to recognize our service groups, particularly the Lions Club on all the great work they do. It is also nice to recognize our spouses, and it is also great to remember our anniversaries. So let that be a lesson to everyone. I will say publicly, I am sorry for missing that one, Mr. Chair.

As many of you know, it is National Social Work Month, and I read a ministerial statement just a couple of days ago. It was the following day – actually, it was yesterday that I went out and visited with staff in the metro region at the Bell building. They had a little meet and greet set up there, and they have some events going on for recognition week. It is so important that we recognize social workers. As I had said in the statement, they carry out some of the most important work in the Province. The work they undertake is done in some very challenging situations, and not easy circumstances, I can assure you.

It has only been a short time since I have been Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services, but certainly I have gained a new appreciation, or a better appreciation for the work that our social workers do. So, it is always nice to understand what they do, but appreciate it as well.

I do not know if people get the full scope of what social workers do. There are over 1,500 registered in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Obviously, a good portion of those work in the Department of CYFS. Just in the

Department of CYFS, you have over 5,000 children and youth receiving protection intervention services – 5,000 children and youth. You also have 1,000 children and youth who are in care. These numbers are approximate, of course, they move somewhat from time to time.

You have 6,000 children and youth being serviced by some of the greatest professionals you could ever meet. It is nice to go out and meet these folks face to face. I have had an opportunity as minister – even though I have only been here a short time, I have gone out to visit a lot of our regional offices and speak to the social workers. Not only to hear about all the great things that are happening in the department, and I get up every day and talk about them, but also about the challenges, because there are challenges. By the very nature of the beast of the work they do, there are going to be challenges and there always will be. I want to make sure I am a minister who is supportive of that and someone who responds to it. I think we have made great progress.

When I am out in the offices, whether it is out in Deer Lake or Corner Brook – a couple of weeks ago I had the opportunity to travel to Labrador. We talk about challenges. It is always nice when you read something or if you have someone brief you, but when you experience it firsthand, Mr. Chair, I would argue you get a far greater appreciation. I will admit, I have a far greater appreciation for the work that our social workers do in Labrador.

I had an opportunity to visit Happy Valley-Goose Bay –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. S. COLLINS:** I will get to the mitts in a second.

I travelled to Happy Valley-Goose Bay, to Sheshatshiu, to Natuashish, and Nain. I met with all of the staff in all of those communities. While in both the Innu communities, I met with the leadership there from the Innu leadership and discussed some issues.

We have done some great things in the department, particularly as of late, with regard to the Aboriginal groups, both the NG and the

Innu. We have developed MOUs, and they are up for review. I am hoping to have some news on that review that we have done with those current MOUs very soon.

What we have seen is by collaborating with the Aboriginal groups, we have gotten much better results. We understand the cultural differences. I cannot speak for what happened ten or twenty years ago, whatever the case is, but we must do better. I think we have been doing better. It is through that collaboration and that co-operation with the Aboriginal groups, we have seen some huge returns on that. I am not talking dollars and cents. I am talking about outcomes, tangible outcomes where we are talking about the care of children and youth.

I want to talk a little bit about Labrador, if I can. I only have a couple of minutes left. As I said, Labrador obviously has some unique challenges. One being its remoteness, and trying to get in and out. I joined the Member for Torngat Mountains on the way down from Nain. He got on a plane with me and we sat side by side. The plane is so small you sit side by side with everyone, I suppose.

I just want to talk about some of the things we have done, because we have been innovative and we have done quite a few things. Some of the things we have done, we talked specifically about Budget 2014 because there was an allocation of \$190 million to enhance services within CYFS, and a good portion of that was in Labrador. You have a couple of things going on there. Things that I saw that are paying dividends in the communities, particularly, as I had said, in the ones that I visited: Sheshatshiu, Natuashish, and Nain. I hope to get up to the other communities in due course as well, but what we have up there now, we have mentoring teams. We have turnover in the department. A lot of that is due to the fact that we have younger employees, many of whom are females, so you have maternity leaves that happen perhaps in our department more than any other. You have young workers just getting into the workforce that then go on to do other things. So with that turnover, you have to have the support in place.

One of the things that we put in place to try to help with that is a mentoring team. What you have is you have lifetime social workers who

have been in practice for years and years and bringing that skill and that experience with them, they will go in from time to time and work on the ground with the social workers in these remote communities, and it has been great. We have obviously heard from the mentoring group, they think things are going well; but, more importantly, we have heard from social workers on the ground and they say that support has just been fantastic and it has been priceless. We are continuing to do that, and we are going to look at expanding that as well perhaps.

Another big part is we talk about remoteness, but we have also had a fly-in, fly-out service into Natuashish. Recruitment is hard in any part of the Province for some positions, but it is particularly hard when you get into coastal Labrador and remote communities in Labrador. What we have had now is a fly-in, fly-out service in Natuashish where we have workers go in for two weeks, come out for two weeks. That again has been absolutely fantastic. While it has been challenging to recruit full-time social workers, if we allow them to come in and come out, we have had good uptake on that and the results have been very good.

We have also had things like new community service workers, where they would be local people, they would have a firm understanding of the language and the local culture and they would work hand in hand with our officials.

There is a bunch of things going on in Labrador, as there is in the entire department, but I just wanted to highlight a few of those. Hopefully I will get an opportunity to have another word again.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

**MS C. BENNETT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am thrilled to stand today to speak for the first time in debate since this session opened, and I thank the House for the opportunity. I do want to take a moment, as a parent, and to echo the feelings of many of the members of the House in

saying that I am thinking about the family of the Member for Bonavista North on the passing of his son. Certainly I know we are all, in this House, keeping him and his family in our hearts as they go through their grief journey.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS C. BENNETT:** Mr. Chair, I listened to the debate this afternoon and we have talked about schools and education and all kinds of great issues, and I think one of the things that I would like to start the conversation back to is around the area of fiscal responsibility. Quite frankly, I do not believe that the people of the Province have confidence in this government any more. I think they do not have the confidence for this government to actually lead and manage through what is a crisis in our economy.

People of the Province are feeling the changes in the economy. We have had sixteen months of consecutive job losses. That is about 10,000 jobs in the last two years. That is contrary to this government's forecasted job growth in the last two Budget documents.

People are losing their jobs, they are worried about making mortgage payments, they are worried about retirement income, and they are worried about the future. Mr. Chair, effective governments, smart governments, plan for the future and they anticipated the unexpected. If you are planning for the best and worst case scenarios, then you are planning for the possibility that oil prices, the Canadian dollar, and production are going to be impacting your budget.

Mr. Chair, let's be clear; this problem that the people of the Province are facing, they are facing because this government put them in that position. This government well before oil prices changed, when oil prices were over \$100, forecasted a \$600 million deficit. That certainly does not speak to strong fiscal management.

In the last thirteen years, if you take the Atlantic Accord money out, this government has ran eight out of thirteen deficits. The five more that they are forecasting, if my math is correct, brings them up to thirteen deficits in fifteen years. I think the people of the Province are very concerned about that.

Mr. Chair, when members opposite spoke about schools and they spoke ad nauseam about the investments that they have made, what is interesting is I thought my experience as a business person would be my most important skill that I brought into this House. Quite frankly, what I am realizing is that it is my skills as a parent that are my most important skills here. It is time to take the credit card away from this government so they can no longer waste taxpayers' money –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS C. BENNETT:** – and not make sure it ends in programs and services that are in the best interests of the people of the Province. When a minister stands in this House and lists the long list of buildings they have built without having a conversation about the educational outcomes, people in the Province know the difference.

There are less than 50 per cent of our graduating students – 50 per cent of our graduating students – who do not meet the entrance requirements for MUN. How is that possible in an education system that this government touts as being so important?

**MS SULLIVAN:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Education, on a point of order.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS SULLIVAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I am proud to say that we have had a 93 per cent to a 95 per cent in the last three or four years of graduation rates in this Province, and the highest percentage ever of honours graduations.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MS C. BENNETT:** Mr. Chair, I am so happy that the Minister of Education stood up and mentioned that number, because in my district there is a community centre, as there are community centres in many of our districts on both sides of this House, and I can tell you that the graduation rate for the children that are in those communities is nowhere near the number she pontificates about on that side of the House.

There have been hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of kids who have not been able to make it through the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador and end up finding a job. Mr. Chair, this discussion. –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MS C. BENNETT:** This debate is going to be about not only the fiscal responsibility and accountability of this government, but about the decisions they make that are going to impact our economy. Our Province is on the verge of facing not just a fiscal crisis that they created, but an economic one as well – one which will have very serious implications and significant economic impacts.

As I mentioned early, job losses are multiplying, with the closure of Wabush Mines in Labrador, the shutdown of the aquaculture plant in Harbour Breton, and the loss of retail service and restaurants throughout St John's. The real impacts of our economy have not even begun to show themselves yet. When the slowdown in Alberta, one of the largest slowdowns that that province has ever faces, results in – here is a fact – eight weekly chartered flights taking Newfoundlanders and Labradorians out of their Province to go work in Western Canada, eight flights cancelled on a weekly basis – where do you think those Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are today? They are in this Province trying to find work.

Mr. Chair, quite frankly, people do not have the confidence in this government. People in the Province are feeling the effect of change, and they want to understand why this government has got them to this position.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible) Muskrat Falls.

**MR. C. BENNETT:** I hear a member on the opposite side of the House heckling me about Muskrat Falls. I am really glad that they give me that opportunity to talk about it, because one of the problems that this government had is they made an extremely expensive commitment on behalf of the people of the Province and did not do their homework to make sure they had the money to pay for the investment. Now, because they did not make the tough decisions yesterday, they expect the people of the Province to think that now their crisis is everybody else's crisis.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MS C. BENNETT:** People are very concerned about what is going to happen in this Budget. They are very concerned about whether this government is going to show leadership, whether they are going to show politics, whether they are going to show the same priorities that they have shown for the last number of years, which is putting, quite frankly, Mr. Chair, their own political survival ahead of the needs of the people of the Province.

Low oil prices are a significant concern, and, Mr. Chair, members on the opposite side of the House can make excuses and can pontificate about the things that they see are right, but when are they going to accept accountability for the things that have not gone right?

The Auditor General has repeatedly recognized that spending is an issue with this government. More importantly, not just spending, financial management, accountability to every single penny. I look forward, Mr. Chair, to continuing to talk about the importance of good financial management.

People of the Province elect members of this House of Assembly to come in here and steward not only government policy but also steward the investments that are made on behalf of the people of the Province, and they expect us to do that in the context of always making tomorrow better. Quite frankly, I think it is difficult for anybody to listen to the conversation that goes

on in this House about what happened yesterday when people today in our Province are scared, are afraid, and are worried about the decisions this government is going to make.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. WISEMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I know that we are getting near the end of the day, but I do want to take a couple of minutes. I cannot let the member opposite stand and make the comments that she made without challenging her.

She talked about us standing and talking about the last ten years since we have been in power. We are proud of the last ten years.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. WISEMAN:** If you ask any Newfoundlander and Labradorian today, are you better off today than you were ten years ago? The answer would be yes.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. WISEMAN:** Why? Because of the significant investments we have made in the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador; because of the kind of leadership we provided and the kind of decisions that we have made in the interest of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I want to assure the member opposite, and all people in Newfoundland and Labrador, that this government in this budgetary process will be making decisions that will be in the long-term best interest of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. WISEMAN:** Unlike members opposite who are standing in their place –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. WISEMAN:** – walking around the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador pretending that they are in government. They are suggesting in their smug arrogance that we are the government in waiting and we have all the answers, but they have not shared it with anybody in Newfoundland and Labrador. They have not shared their vision at all with anybody in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. WISEMAN:** I want to remind the member opposite, that the reason she could not find anybody to work at her restaurants in Newfoundland and Labrador is because they are all employed because of the vibrant economy.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. WISEMAN:** So when we start talking about next year's Budget, I want to assure her and all people in this Province that whatever we do, as we have done in the past, will always be in the best interest of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

**MS C. BENNETT:** A point of order.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters on a point of order.

**MS C. BENNETT:** Mr. Chair, I remind the member opposite that there is absolutely no value in talking about yesterday, when people are worried about today and tomorrow.

**CHAIR:** There is no point of order.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. WISEMAN:** The reason the member opposite does not want to talk about the past is

because she is afraid we will go back to the last time the Liberals were in power and the mess they made.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. WISEMAN:** No one will want to go back that far, when they left us on the brink of bankruptcy. Make no wonder she does not want to go back in history because the last ten years is the only part that she could boast about as a resident of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Chair, we are about to adjourn for the day, but I just want to leave on this parting note: To remind people again, that as we have done in the last ten years and we will continue to do, we will make decisions in the best interest of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

That is what you will see in this year's Budget, and that is what you will see in the plan for the next five years.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**MR. KING:** Mr. Chair, I move the Committee rise, report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

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

Is it the pleasure of the Committee to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

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

**MR. SPEAKER (Verge):** The hon. the Member for Port de Grave.

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of Whole has reported that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred, ask to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

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

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that the House do now adjourn.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion is that this House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

This House remains adjourned until Monday at 1:30 o'clock.

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