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Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Today I want to welcome to our public galleries Renee Osbourne, who is a Grade 12 student from Blaketown in the District of Bellevue, and she is accompanied today by her parents Bill and Norma Osbourne. Renee was selected by Samaritan's Purse to represent Newfoundland and Labrador.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have members' statements from the Member for the District of Bellevue; the Member for the District of Cape St. Francis; the Member for the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune; the Member for the District of Baie Verte – Springdale; the Member for the District of St. John's Centre; and the Member for the District of Lake Melville.

The Member for the District of Bellevue.

MR. PEACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Renee Osbourne, a Grade 12 student of Crescent Collegiate. She resides in Blaketown in the District of Bellevue.

She will be going to Costa Rica from April 17 to April 26 to deliver thousands of shoeboxes through the Operation Christmas Child Program. These shoeboxes are packed with hygienic items such as school supplies, toys, and candies to help celebrate and also brighten the children's day.

Renee was selected to represent Newfoundland by Samaritan's Purse. Operation Christmas Child was started in 1990, and to date, over 100 million shoebox gifts have been collected. Renee will be joining a group of Canadians at the Toronto airport, and they will be travelling to Costa Rica together. They will be interacting

with the children through various activities, as well as delivering the shoeboxes.

Renee has completed many fundraisers to support her trip. She has been selling tickets, bars, and cold plates. She is very excited about this trip, as it may be a once in a lifetime experience for her.

Please join me in congratulating Renee on her hard work and dedication that has successfully earned her this opportunity. We wish her all the best on her trip.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

I rise in this House today to commend a group from Logy Bay–Middle Cove–Outer Cove called The Concert Crowd.

What started back in 1968 as a concert fundraiser in the community school and church grew in popularity. The group consists of thirty amateur actors, singers, dancers, and musicians. Most hail from the community; they have gained a few members from other areas along the way, with some of the founding members still with the group.

This started in a school in the town at the beginning and has moved to the Arts and Culture Centre to sold-out shows. The Concert Crowd has performed at conventions, festivals, RNC parties, and many other functions.

The Concert Crowd donates its proceeds to charities like the Red Cross, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Kidney Foundation, Rainbow Riders, Community Food Sharing Association, VOCM Cares, Day Break, School Lunch, CNIB, medical emergency support, the town museum, and the St. Francis of Assisi Cemetery. The show also partners with VOCM Cares Foundation.

I ask all hon. members to join with me in thanking these dedicated people for their time and effort they put in to helping others. To date, this group has raised over \$400,000.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate Christina Fudge, presently a Level III student at St. Peter's All Grade School in McCallum, who is the recipient of an emerging artist award in the Junior Division of the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts and Letters Awards last year.

Mr. Speaker, Christina is a bright young woman with a natural talent, ability, and strong passion for writing, as evidenced by her winning story entitled *Strike* – a fictional prose about a young person in an abusive relationship. She scored in the top ten of seventy-two entries overall.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial Arts and Letters Awards Competition is over sixty years old, and recognizes outstanding talent among the Province's writers, visual artists, and musicians. We are all very proud of Ms Fudge, and look forward to her continued literary works.

I ask all members of this hon. House to join me in applauding Ms Christina Fudge as one of our Province's emerging writers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Baie Verte – Springdale.

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to acknowledge the accomplishment of the Springdale Braves Bantam hockey team. They captured the gold

medal in the twenty-team mega provincial tournament that was hosted by Mount Pearl from April 4-6.

Their endurance was tested as they played six games in total, dismantling the Harbour Breton-Bay d'Espoir team in the championship game. Throughout the tournament, the Springdale Braves had only three goals scored on them with three shutouts – a very good feat indeed, Mr. Speaker.

Members of the team include: Brenden Keats, Brandon Roberts, Andrew Brown, Nicholas Newman, Nicholas Clarke, Skyler Budgell, Brandon Burt, Riley Huxter, Rylie Young, Eddie McKay, Noah Butt, Christian Howse, Tanner Inder, Joshua Groleau, and Justin Thomas.

Coaches Tim Howse and Wayne Clarke, manager Melanie Morey, and trainer Danny Huxter are also to be commended for shepherding the team to a provincial title in the C division.

Throughout the tournament, fans were treated to very exciting and very intense hockey moments as the athletes gave their all, creating unforgettable memories.

I ask all colleagues in this hon. House to join me in congratulating the Springdale Braves Bantams for bringing home gold.

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.

It gives me great pleasure to stand today to honour Becky Pendergast and her team at the HUB Print Shop. Located in the heart of St. John's Centre, it is the largest independently run print shop in the Province, providing excellent service to government, business, individuals and community groups.

Becky has worked with the HUB for thirty-two years touching the lives of many. She has been responsible for creating an open and supportive environment in the Print Shop, where people with disabilities learn all aspects of the trade and participate fully in the operation of this successful service.

Becky runs a professional shop that values and respects both the needs and the strengths of the workers she trains and supervises. She has developed a team committed to their work, often working far beyond the call of duty to serve their clientele.

Becky is also an incredible, generous, dedicated volunteer, helping out with social activities providing persons with disabilities fully accessible and supportive recreational and entertainment events. She is at the very heart of what makes the HUB a fantastic organization.

I ask all members to join me in thanking Becky Pendergast and her team for their great work and by saying bravo.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today in this hon. House, Mr. Speaker, to recognize the recent success from the Goose Bay Judo Club at the recent Atlantic competition.

Four members of the Goose Bay Judo club travelled to Truro, Nova Scotia to attend this competition. Each member of the club did exceptionally well and should be commended.

Jared McCauley competed in the Men's Under 15 under 66kg division, just missing the podium with a fourth place finish. Dawson Sampson competed in the Under 18 under 66kg division and won the silver medal. Toni Beaufield

competed in the 70kg plus Under 18 division and also won silver.

Rebekah Whey, who was recently graded to a black belt for the Goose Bay Judo Club – and might I add, the first woman in the clubs thirty-seven year history and only at eighteen years of age – won the gold in the Under 21 under 63kg division.

Terry Whey, their Sensei, accompanied them out to the competition and was very proud of their accomplishments. Jared, Dawson, and Toni have plans to continue their training and compete for the chance to represent the Province at the Canada Winter Games.

I ask all hon. members of this House to join me in celebrating the great accomplishments of these Labrador Judoka.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Ministerial Statements.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured today to rise in this hon. House to commemorate the recent ninety-sixth anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

It was on a spring morning in 1917 that 10,602 young Canadian soldiers representing four divisions of the Canadian Corps fought together for the first time ever, and against all odds took Vimy Ridge from the German Sixth Army.

Mr. Speaker, the Battle of Vimy Ridge has considerable significance for Canada. Although the battle is not generally considered the greatest achievement of the Canadian Corps in its importance or final result, it brought our forces

together like never before. This unity saw soldiers from all across the country fighting alongside of each other. This image of national unity has been seen by historians as a symbol of our country's national identity and has widely been identified as a moment of nation building.

At 100 hectares, the Canadian National Vimy Memorial is Canada's largest overseas memorial. It was opened in 1936 and serves as a constant reminder of the commitment and the dedication of our soldiers to fight for the freedom of our neighbours in foreign lands.

Mr. Speaker, that commitment continues today. Our peacekeeping forces have been involved in many missions since World War I and have worked to protect, defend and safeguard the innocent and helpless.

Canada remains an important partner in UN peacekeeping missions. This country has sent over 120,000 troops as part of UN peacekeeping missions, and has the second highest number of peacekeeping fatalities with 114.

Mr. Speaker, as we watch our troops standing tall and proud as they continue on today's important missions, we look back with pride at those who fought and those who died so many years ago defending our freedom at Vimy Ridge, Lest we never forget the contribution and sacrifice which they made.

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.

We too would like to join with the government to recognize the Battle at Vimy Ridge and the contributions that our soldiers made at the time and how it was definitely a nation building episode in our history. We will never forget the fallen soldiers and the people who today are still

offering the ultimate sacrifice to keep Canada free.

Mr. Speaker, I just had the experience of – we had some medals delivered to our family sixty-five years ago. We were going to donate them to a museum. When we traced them down they were not our families, they were a distant cousin. I just had the privilege of delivering those medals to the three sisters, eighty-seven, eighty-six, and eighty-four in California.

If you had to see the pride in their faces of their dad in the First World War – that is outside of Newfoundland and Labrador but with their roots in Newfoundland and Labrador, the pride in their face that their father was involved in Newfoundland and Labrador in the First World War is evident all throughout North America and all throughout the world, the contribution.

To all the soldiers and to the families who are still making contributions, I say thank you very much. To all the families who have to endure while their soldiers are away in Afghanistan and in the peacekeeping, we thank you very much on behalf of all people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I also have to note that it was yesterday, ninety-six years ago in history, that the Newfoundland Regiment had its biggest loss, next to Beaumont-Hamel, ever recorded with the loss of 460 men in one flank of that particular battle, the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Of course, at Monchy-le-Preux, we had 460 casualties; 166 killed or missing, 141 wounded, and 153 that we had captured on the second worst day in Newfoundland and Labrador history, I guess, in that particular context.

Like our party, we also take time to remember the fallen. We take time to remember those who are making the ultimate sacrifice when it comes to peacekeeping. They are also subject to some sights that hopefully you and I will never have to see or anybody else in this House for that matter.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to just clue up with four words: We shall remember them.

I would like to thank the minister for the copy of his statement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Member for St. John's South have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: No leave.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to announce that for the first time in the history of the Voisey's Bay Development Agreement, we have achieved the commitment from Vale to develop an underground mine in Northern Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, this commitment was secured through amendments announced on March 28 which further strengthen the original agreement that was made in 2002 between the provincial government of this Province and Vale Newfoundland & Labrador Limited.

The development of the underground mine, in addition to the above-ground mine, will extend the Voisey's Bay mine life by another fifteen years and provide hundreds of construction jobs after the project is sanctioned in 2015. Once in operation, employment is estimated to be 720 workers, an increase from the current mine employment of about 285.

Mr. Speaker, an underground mine is important to the continuity of operations at Voisey's Bay and will provide a future feed supply for the Long Harbour Nickel Processing Plant, which will offer additional employment to the people of the Province. This agreement will allow additional time for the construction of the plant at Long Harbour and it will provide a limited exemption from the primary processing requirement over the next three years. This ensures, Mr. Speaker, that operations at the Voisey's Bay mine will be uninterrupted, as well as result in enhanced industrial and economic benefits and additional revenues to the provincial government of over \$100 million over three years.

Mr. Speaker, with the promise of underground mining to go along with the other mining that is taking place now and the ongoing construction of the Long Harbour site, the Voisey's Bay project has greatly exceeded the original expectations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MARSHALL: Projects such as this ensure that the Province will reap the full benefit from development of valuable mineral resources with new employment and new economic opportunities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MARSHALL: This government will continue to support future mining operations that will ensure that the maximum benefit goes to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister, by the way, for the advance copy of the Ministerial Statement. I am actually thrilled today to stand here as Leader of the

Official Opposition; I have a lot of good memories about 2002 when this development was first announced. As a matter of fact, I was President of the Deer Lake Chamber of Commerce at the time when the current Cabinet Minister then in the Liberal government, Rick Woodford, came out and made the announcements and shared the good news with us in our community of Deer Lake.

This recent announcement actually brings a lot more benefits to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, in particular to the Aboriginals on the North Coast.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: The Province as a whole will benefit, as I will say, on the foundation of the agreement that was first signed in 2002. It extends the mine life, as the minister says, for fifteen years and adds stability, there is no question, to people in that area and to people in the Province.

One thing that we did not see in all of this, however, was the determination of where the power would come from. As we know, during the discussion last year on Muskrat Falls the mining developments in Labrador was a piece of that. We understand now that that will not happen in this particular case, and I am not surprised to hear that.

The other thing with this agreement that we did ask on the March 28, when this was announced, was what remedies would be in place just in case the company here, Vale, did not fulfill all their commitments. I understand that remedy is in place, it is substantial, but the exact details of the remedy have not been disclosed, and one that I would like to see.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, this is good news for the people of the Province. We will benefit, the people on the North Coast, and definitely the people in Labrador will see tremendous benefit from this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Obviously, I am very glad to see this development going ahead.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS MICHAEL: When I served on the Voisey's Bay Environmental Assessment Panel, one of the things we saw as being really important was the longer-term viability of the mine. One of the things we were very grateful for was the possibility that going underground looked like a real possibility. So, I am delighted to see this finally happening.

I am happy to hear the minister speak about the benefits for the people of the Province. I hope he also is talking about the workers who will be working at this mine. We know that at Voisey's Bay itself we have had a couple of protracted strikes there, one of which went on for eighteen months. I hope that caring about the workers will mean putting in place anti-scab legislation so that this employer will never again keep our workers on the picket line.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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.

Last week the Premier reversed some cuts to the Justice Department saying there were new compelling arguments that were brought forward.

I ask the Premier: Since the minister says that you have the final say, how did you miss such compelling arguments in the pre-Budget meetings?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just to be clear, budgetary decisions are a matter for Cabinet, not just the Premier, number one, and caucus. Number two, any decisions made in the Department of Justice rest with me. I take full responsibility as the minister for that.

What we did last week was demonstrate to the people of the Province that we were prepared to listen to the concerns they had. Upon listening to the concerns, a discussion occurred between myself, the Attorney General, the Minister of Finance. We concurred that we would chat with the Premier and share the concerns and share a suggested approach to respond to the concerns that were raised.

With her direction and concurrence, Mr. Speaker, we responded accordingly. I will say that the response we provided, Mr. Speaker, was almost exactly what we were asked to do by the stakeholder groups who attended the meeting in question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, it was very clear in the media reports that the minister did say that the Premier would have the final say. That is the reason why I put that in the question, Mr. Speaker.

Even though this government claims they have completed a year-long core mandate review, it is obvious there was no consultation with stakeholders for the cuts ahead of the Budget.

Some of the Justice cuts were revisited and revised just after one meeting with justice officials because of these so-called compelling arguments.

I ask the Premier: What is the definition of a compelling argument?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, let me say first of all, the groups who were represented on the committee came from a variety of interests that are party to the justice system. They brought in valuable advice and guidance to us as part of those discussions.

As I said a few moments ago, if you take for example the Sheriff's Office, we have responded by putting back in the system every resource that we were asked to provide by the High Sheriff, as an example, Mr. Speaker. We also committed to do a thorough review of the Sheriff's Office, the Legal Aid system, and of course the Crown prosecutor's office. As minister, I will certainly be taking a look at that myself anyway.

In the broader question, Mr. Speaker, there is a clear difference between making a budgetary decision and doing a core mandate review. A core mandate talks about the activities you ought to do in the department, the Budget talks about how you fund them.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The question will be a quick one. Since these were key stakeholders in this process in terms of justice, why were they not included in the initial Budget consultation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, when we did our consultations before bringing down the Budget, I consulted widely, along with my colleague, the Attorney General. That would have included consultations from the Legal Aid, it included consultations from the Director of Public Prosecutions, and it included consultation from the High Sheriff's Office.

Very clearly, Mr. Speaker, there is a difference between consulting and doing exactly what people tell you to do. We consulted. We sought information, we asked questions. They provided data to us. We did an assessment of that, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the process, as minister, I made some decisions that I brought forward for government to consider supporting.

We clearly communicated, Mr. Speaker, but there is a difference between – excuse me, consulted. There is a difference between consulting and doing what people expect you to do, but they were certainly provided an opportunity to give input.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I heard is they listened to them the second time around, but they really did not pay any attention at all the first time around. The Premier has mismanaged this process from the beginning. To make matters worse, she is making up an arbitrary definition of compelling arguments. According to the Premier, if you are a justice official your argument is compelling, but if you are a student or you are a teacher, your argument is noise.

I ask the Premier: Why aren't thousands of students protesting in the streets over cuts to the ABE program at the College of the North Atlantic not considered to be a compelling or just noise?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2013 is a good, solid budget for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: We have talked for a whole year, Mr. Speaker, about doing a core mandate review that tells us and assures the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that we are spending every five cents on their behalf effectively.

Mr. Speaker, you listen to what people have to say. You do a consultation. When people see the effect of the recommendations, there may be things that were not considered and they come back and say: I need to reconsider what I said; will you have a look at this?

Mr. Speaker, nobody has made a compelling argument to me at all, nor have I received any letters or representations on the ABE program. Perhaps you would like to (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am not here to be the expert on the ABE program or the College of the North Atlantic, but what I will tell you is that they were not given the chance to consult with this government, Mr. Speaker. On March 8, the

Premier said she expected there would be less than 500 layoffs in this year's Budget. We now know that this number is well over 1,000.

I ask the Premier: How did you grossly mismanage the Budget process so that your budgeted cuts that were expected to be 500 are now over 1,000?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Mr. Speaker, consultation happened with CNA; it happened right across the whole education system.

Mr. Speaker, if somebody wants to come and make a compelling argument to government why we should spend \$9,400 per person per year providing ABE in CNA, when we can do it cheaper through the private colleges, when we can do it cheaper for CNA, when we can have a higher success rate, when we can provide it more ably in other parts of the Province, broaden the delivery, when we can bring the cost down somewhere closer to \$2,300 per head that they are paying in the rest of Canada, I am more than prepared to listen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, what you normally do in that situation is you would go and speak to those people in advance. I can tell you that discussion did not take place with the officials at CNA.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has said that employees will be treated with respect through the transition period and that the process would be handled professionally and carefully; however, employees are telling us that they are being called into an office, there for a few minutes, given the news, and then asked for their keys.

I ask the Premier: Why are you treating the layoffs of hardworking Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with such cruelty and a callous fashion?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I expect better from the Leader of the Opposition to engage in such an inflammatory comment and derogatory comments about the officials who work at the Human Resource Secretariat, Mr. Speaker.

These people are professionals who act with dedication and they have tried their best in this process. I am aware of one situation where it is alleged that an individual was called into an office and told peremptorily, for lack of a better term, Mr. Speaker, and that person was a contractual employee.

If the member opposite has examples of that happening, certainly provide that to me and I can assure you I will investigate that and determine what is going on. To simply criticize people, Mr. Speaker, and to, again, cast aspersions on people who work in our government is shameful.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, I believe the minister just did not listen to the question. At least he did not give the answer to the question. What I am talking about is the cruel and unprofessional fashion in which this has been handled.

I can guarantee the minister it is not me saying this; there are thousands of people out there now with their families who know this. This has been done in a callous and a cruel fashion. Just speak to the people who are on the front lines in this in your government.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has just laid off 1,000 people in this Province. Now we hear that there is an individual who was laid off at the Eastern School Board who has been given a senior position, a senior appointment, in the Department of Education.

I ask the Premier: Is this true and can this be justified?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I need to deal with the preamble of the Leader of the Opposition's question. Mr. Speaker, it is not the Premier or the Cabinet ministers who issue layoffs. We hear them stand in this House of Assembly day after day and talk about our professional public service, and they are. Every opportunity that I have to praise our public service, I do it, Mr. Speaker, because they are worthy of such praise.

Then he stands, in the next breath, and accuses the very same people of treating people who are being laid off in an unprofessional, callous way. Now, what is it, one way or the other? Because I am backing the public service. You need to prove what you are saying. Bring the examples forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The announcements for the layoffs and people who have lost their jobs was done right here in this House. It was explained outside there in media interviews – lots of them after this.

It was this government, and as a result of the actions of this government, that people are out of work in this Province today. The Premier said

there would be no more than 500; we are now over 1,000.

Will the Premier please explain how we got from 500 to 1,000?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know again where the member opposite is getting his numbers, but there have been, and I have seen the full list, 485 people laid off in the core public service. That is the sixteen departments within government, Mr. Speaker. There are 243 permanent employees, 206 temporary employees, and thirty-six seasonal employees. Then in the outside agencies there are approximately another 450 layoffs, for a total of 935.

What we did do, Mr. Speaker, we eliminated 246 vacant funded positions that existed in government for whatever reasons and there are another 190 retirements. We will determine whether or not those retirements will be filled. So the number of layoffs is 485 plus 450, which is 935. Mr. Speaker, that is still a lot of jobs, and its impact on people and we realize that.

If the member opposite has information that we should know as to the way people were treated, then please provide it to us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I think the minister knows there will be extra layoffs that are coming from management at CNA and we are expecting more layoffs that will come as a result of the school board amalgamation.

Now, I want to go back to the other question before we got sidetracked there. The minister has just laid off 1,000 people, as I said. What did not get answered was the new appointment as the ADM in the Department of Education.

Is the minister or the Premier aware of this appointment?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, there was a new ADM hired. I believe the individual starts next week. This was an individual, a position that was vacant, went through the normal routine of interviews and was filled.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, workers who are on the chopping block are now required to make compelling arguments to the Premier to save their jobs, but they are not able to do this publicly because this government refuses to bring in whistle-blower legislation. We all saw what happened to a Legal Aid lawyer who spoke out publicly against cuts to the Justice Department.

I ask the minister: You first promised whistle-blower legislation six years and four ministers ago, when are you finally going to make good on that promise and protect workers in our Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have any number of pieces of legislation that provides protection for workers in this Province. The member opposite who asked the question

would certainly know that. If the member has specific examples he would like to raise with me in private where he needs some attention paid, I will certainly do that. I will say to you, we have no intention of bringing that forward at this particular point in time in this session of the House.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, current students of ABE at the College of the North Atlantic will be transitioned to other ABE providers.

I ask the minister: What guarantee can you give us that this transition will be complete in time for the school year and that ABE will be offered in as many locations as now?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, the ABE program is offered at the various campuses of the College of the North Atlantic, and approximately 800 students attend ABE at the College of the North Atlantic. I assume a percentage of them will graduate, will complete the program this year. The remaining students will be offered positions and will be able to continue their ABE in a venue other than the College of the North Atlantic, whether it is a private college or a community group. We have a number of community groups and the non-profit agencies that offer ABE as well.

Our intentions are that the people who have not finished ABE by the end of this school year will transition. Mr. Speaker, I will also note that through the private institutions or through our community groups we actually offer ABE in more communities through those venues than we actually do through the College of the North Atlantic.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, we are hearing reports today that a criminal matter was delayed in St. John's this morning because there was no sheriff's officer to escort the accused from his holding cell to court.

I ask the minister: How did you allow it to get so bad in the justice system that criminal matters are now delayed because of a lack of staff?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, one thing I can assure the member of is I do not spend my mornings scheduling sheriffs to work in courts, I guarantee you that.

What I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, is the member might want to raise his question with the High Sheriff. I can only say that we met with the High Sheriff last week. He guaranteed us that court security was not an issue. We added some resources back to the system that would more than compensate for his challenges around scheduling sheriff's officers.

I do not know the particulars of the incident the member has raised. If he would like to give me more detail later, I will certainly follow up. I can say to the public that it is not the Minister of Justice who does the scheduling of sheriff's officers. It is done by the Office of the High Sheriff, independent of this government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, government's decision to collapse school boards has outraged many who feel our education will be downgraded.

I ask the minister: Why did he deny the public an opportunity to present compelling arguments against this misguided decision?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, the member is going to be hard pressed to find a government better than this one that has invested in education the way that we have, Mr. Speaker, I can guarantee you that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: I can stand up here and I can rattle off the investments that have been made in education that places this Province as leading in class size, in student retention, graduation rates. Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member, moving forward with this new board, the education in this Province will remain that top-notch quality education.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, one of the regions hardest hit in this misguided, ludicrous decision will be Labrador.

I ask the minister: How does he ensure that the special challenges to deliver education in Labrador will be addressed with one board in St. John's?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, the perfect question. I do not like to say that to him too often, the perfect question. Mr. Speaker, the strong educational presence in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, in Gander, in Corner Brook, that is exactly the reason for this.

Mr. Speaker, they focus solely on education. They do not have to worry about the finances; they do not have to worry about the busing issues. They focus on what should be the ultimate aim of the education system. That is the success of our students, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Today, the Finance Minister released the Salary Details for Budget 2013-2014 on the day that the Budget Estimates discussions start, as he said he would. However, Mr. Speaker, the Salary Details book does not show any of the positions the government eliminated in this year's Budget.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Why is this government deliberately obscuring how many public sector workers they have let go in each department?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last year we were criticized for not posting the Salary Details. I committed that I would put the Salary Details up so that they could be dealt with during Estimates.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of the layoffs and the workforce adjustments going on is that we are reflecting the layoffs up until March 31, 2013. However, there are a number of people whose position eliminations will not take place until after March 31, so we could not put that in the Salary Details. They will not be reflected until next year.

We could have delayed it, Mr. Speaker. We could have delayed the posting of Salary Details. We would have been criticized for that. What

we thought best was to put the Salary Details out there so that the members opposite during the Estimates would have those details and could ask questions about it.

Mr. Speaker, this is the situation that exists. We are certainly keeping the commitment of posting the details.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, I point out to the minister that the salaries document was released this morning almost three weeks after the Budget, giving the government ample time to update the numbers. Especially, since some of the people who are getting laid off after March 31 received their notices before March 31, Mr. Speaker.

Why is the Premier and her government trying to hide – what are they trying to hide by not releasing the real up-to-date Salary Details?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: Mr. Speaker, we have outlined in the Salary Details the positions that exist as of March 31, how much people are paid, and we have outlined the number of people who are in those positions. What I understood last year, one of the criticisms of the failure to put the Salary Details out was that they did not have it for the Estimates procedure where it was needed, so we have posted that.

Mr. Speaker, we are certainly not hiding anything. The documents are there. They are out there for the people to see and to be used during Estimates.

We found earlier today, Mr. Speaker, duplication in two positions that we will have to

correct. What we had to do was after the Budget when the positions were starting to be eliminated. We have had three weeks to work on it. The commitment was to provide it prior to Estimates, and we have done that, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I say to the minister, if they were able to produce a Budget document showing up-to-date budget cuts to Government Services, one could assume they would be able to produce up-to-date Salary Details. We are going into Estimates with old information, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I ask: Why do the Premier and her government continually want to keep the people of this Province in the dark about their motivation and actions around job cuts?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, I did not expect it from the Leader of the Official Opposition. I did expect these kinds of disgraceful comments from the Leader of the NDP.

We have had finance officials who have been working day and night throughout the Budget process to put these materials together, Mr. Speaker. To criticize them here today for not being able to give her what she wants to do her work, Mr. Speaker, is indicative of how little respect that party opposite shows for the public service.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that she should apologize to the members of our public service

and the Department of Finance who worked so hard to put these official documents together.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I will not even dignify that comment with a response, Mr. Speaker.

On March 27, the Premier told this House that she would very shortly have an explanation of how she planned to spend \$90 million assigned without explanation in the Finance department's budget. It is three weeks later, Mr. Speaker.

I ask: Is the Premier now ready to explain to the members of the House what the \$90 million is for?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the NDP has a habit of getting up in this House of Assembly and saying what she likes. I challenge the Leader of the NDP – we have Hansard here, Mr. Speaker. It is a record of what gets said in this House of Assembly. It comes back to haunt you every now and then, I say to the Leader of the NDP.

You show me where in Hansard that I said, other than when we had allocated the \$90 million, that there would be a public announcement. I said there would be a public announcement of that. Hopefully, we will be able to do it shortly, but not five cents of that money was going to be spent without the people of the Province knowing on what it was spent.

We have not spent five cents. When we do, we hope you will get here in the House of Assembly

and laud us for another good judgement on behalf of the people of (inaudible) –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

The people of the Province have no idea what plans the Premier has for the \$90 million and she is not telling us again now. I am sure they know it will not be spent on worthy projects like ABE, wildlife, public libraries, or a host of other important services.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Does she really expect her backbenchers to vote yes on the spending of \$90 million when she will not explain to their constituents what it is going to be spent on?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, let me remind the Leader of the NDP that there is approximately \$185 million in this Budget for business development and community organizations within this Province –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: – who are going to apply for that money to drive economic development in their communities. We do not know what projects are going to be applied under that fund yet either, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, one thing we are not going to do is continue to have waste, extravagance, and poor spending in this government. That does not

serve the students of ABE, that does not serve the people in Newfoundland and Labrador, and it does not provide cancer drugs to people because we do not have the money.

We are certainly not going to embrace her solution, which she announced two weeks ago, to raise taxes on hardworking Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That is not our plan, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member for St. John's North.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, government's Outlook 2020 report claims there will over 70,000 new job openings in the Province between now and 2020. They have been telling people in the Province to get a diploma or get a trade because about 70 per cent of those jobs require some form of post-secondary education.

So why is this government now pulling the plug on Employment Services and slashing college training programs instead of providing a plan to meet the growing demand for skilled workers in this Province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, listen to what the NDP are saying. We had a look at our labour attachment funding and we found that we had \$15 million tied up in the administration of the program rather than going to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who were trying to reattach to the workforce.

While I appreciate the cases made by organizations like the John Howard Society that

lost some funding in that instance, I remind the people of the Province that we put \$1.25 million in grants every year into the John Howard Society to help their membership with this kind of activity, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that our people are ready, that the money is being spent appropriately, that we are not wasting money creating jobs in organizations but funding (inaudible) –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, millions of dollars in funding cuts to College of the North Atlantic have caused the college to eliminate dozens of programs including Adult Basic Education programs, transition programs –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: – trades programs, and engineering technology programs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: College campuses across rural Newfoundland and Labrador are being forced to bear the brunt of these cuts.

I ask the minister responsible or the Premier for that matter: Why is this government intent on gutting program offerings in rural Newfoundland and Labrador?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is ensuring that money that is earmarked for people to get education and training to reattach to the workforce is being spent on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in that position.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: LMD money is not meant to keep chambers of commerce going in communities; it is to help people reattach to the workforce, Mr. Speaker.

What we are doing in ABE is cutting the high cost of trying to deliver a program through that organization that costs three times more than it does anywhere else in Atlantic Canada. It costs more than it does in the private sector. It costs more than it does for not-for-profits.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to offer ABE. We are going to offer it in more places in Newfoundland and Labrador and more cost effectively. We will reinvest the other money (inaudible) –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member for St. John's Centre.

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of Justice held a special committee to review the drastic cuts he made to the justice system that left the provincial court system in absolute chaos. In the media, the Premier said that all cuts were made based on year-long departmental core mandate reviews.

Mr. Speaker, I ask: Will the minister table the Department of Justice core mandate review to the House?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, it is regrettable that the member is challenging the views of the chief judges and justices of the Province, of the High Sheriff, of the Director of Public Prosecutions and of the head of the Legal Aid Commission, all of whom participated in a process to assess the system just last week and all of whom are supportive of where we are. It is very regrettable that the New Democratic Party does not stand behind those respectable people who represent those organizations in the community.

Also, Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear that the core mandate review that was completed on departments, just like the Department of Justice, was a review to determine which activities ought to be part of the core job that you do. In other words, in the Department of Justice we have policing services, we have court services and we have –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The member has time for a quick question without preamble.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This morning a court matter in St. John's was delayed because there was no –

MR. SPEAKER: A quick question without preamble, please.

MS ROGERS: Okay.

I ask the minister: Is there a compelling enough argument now to have him table the justice core mandate review?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: We have time for a quick answer.

MR. KING: As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, core mandate in justice would include policing services to ensure the laws of the land are followed. In instances where the laws are broken, we have prosecutors, we have a legal aid division and we have court services. Where needed, then we have correction services. That is what constitutes the core mandate of the Department of Justice.

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.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. KENNEDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act, No. 2". (Bill 4)

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, "An Act To Amend The Services Charges Act". (Bill 5)

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

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act". (Bill 6)

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

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Mr. Speaker, I move the following private member's resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House (1) commends the government for returning half a billion dollars a year to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians by reducing personal income taxes; and (2) supports the government in its decision not to increase personal income tax rates to address the Province's fiscal challenge.

This is seconded, Mr. Speaker, by the Member for Cape St. Francis. This will be the motion to be debated on Private Members' Day, Wednesday, April 17.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that the private member's motion just introduced will be the one debated this Wednesday coming in the House of Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. BENNETT: 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 with declining enrolment, distance education by Internet is now an accepted way to deliver educational services to students living in small communities; and

WHEREAS students have little to no say in where they or their families reside; and

WHEREAS many families do not have the ability to relocate so that their children can access educational opportunities in larger centres; and

WHEREAS many small businesses rely on the Internet to conduct business; and

WHEREAS high-speed Internet permits a business to be more competitive than does slower dial-up service; and

WHEREAS no high-speed Internet service exists in the community of Bird Cove; and

WHEREAS there are no plans to offer high-speed Internet to residents of this community;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to partner with the private sector and offer high-speed Internet service in this community.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is a number of petitions from the residents of the Town of Bird Cove. Bird Cove is on the Great Northern Peninsula. It is the northernmost of the incorporated towns. In that particular part of the district most of the communities are unincorporated. Some are local service districts, others are simply unincorporated. Bird Cove is incorporated. It suffered significantly over the last twenty years with the downturn in the fisheries. Its population shrank from, in the order of 600 or so to maybe 180 or so.

Recently, when there was an announcement about high-speed Internet, it looked like these people were going to get high-speed Internet. They only discovered later that the range that could be reached meant that their town would not get high-speed Internet. In fact, it is even

worse than that, Mr. Speaker, because the installation is north of Bird Cove.

The operator had to go past the town in order to set up the high-speed Internet transmitter. Then this is broadcast backward to the south. In fact, initially it looked like it would come to the edge, the very boundary of the town, but now it seems like some homes in the community have the service and some homes in the community do not have the service. A lot of people who are very concerned are high school students, people who want to use distance education.

If you can imagine, your town generally is cut out. You were supposed to receive the service. You did not receive the service, and then a few people in the town did receive the service. Now one family member in – one brother whose family may live on one street has the service, another brother whose family lives on another street does not have the service. You have children going to school in the same classrooms receiving the same assignments, and some of them within 100 yards or so of others can actually get on the computer and pursue their education while the others cannot. Mr. Speaker, this is completely unacceptable and I urge the government, as do these petitioners, to move forward on this initiative.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS there is an identified need for all levels of care in Labrador; and

WHEREAS the Paddon Home is a suitable building for all levels of care;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the

House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to conduct a needs assessments to identify the needs of all levels of long-term care in Labrador, and to reopen the Paddon Seniors Nursing Home located in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, to provide all levels of care.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I spoke to this petition last year and there was a need identified then. The reason I am bringing it up again is because the need has increased. In Budget 2013, there was announcement made of \$500,000 to extend the long-term care facility and certainly we do appreciate that.

I would like to go back a little further, Mr. Speaker, when this government sacrificed jobs to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for a cash amount of \$100 million in lieu of giving away module construction on the Hebron Project. I was glad to hear that out of this \$150 million funding would be allocated for long-term care in Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I did not have the large calculator over here, but I figured \$500,000 is approximately one-third of 1 per cent of the \$150 million. I am sure the Member for Lake Melville and the Member for Lab West are well aware of construction costs in Labrador. I think at best we can expect maybe three extra rooms.

Mr. Speaker, the other point I want to bring across, and this was just recent figures, out of the just under thirty beds available at the hospital in Goose Bay, seventeen patients are waiting for long-term care. They are waiting for a room in the long-term care facility and they cannot get rooms because there simply aren't any. I think the need is much higher than what this government has committed. Our seniors in Labrador have just as much a right to reside at retirement homes in Labrador.

Just one other fact, Mr. Speaker: the seventeen patients waiting for long-term care in Happy Valley-Goose Bay does not include the ones that

are outside of Labrador who want to go back to Labrador.

Thank you.

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

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

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

WHEREAS the process of slickwater hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, injects hazardous chemicals into rock formations to extract oil, and is polluting groundwater and air across North America; and

WHEREAS the Government of Canada has commissioned an assessment of the potential environmental impacts of shale oil and gas extraction in Canada, including fracking; and

WHEREAS Quebec, Nova Scotia, and a number of US states have halted fracking, and others are introducing regulations specific to fracking; and

WHEREAS it is incumbent upon the provincial government to ensure that our natural environment is protected from harmful industrial processes;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to impose a moratorium on slickwater fracking until it develops comprehensive regulations and ensures that each proposed project undergoes a conclusive environmental assessment to determine whether it is safe for the environment, the integrity of water supplies, and human health.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I was truly honoured last week to have an invitation to attend the fracking meeting on the Port au Port Peninsula last Sunday afternoon. There were a huge crowd in the context of the number of people that would show up in a small area like the Port au Port Peninsula. I think three hundred and twenty people was the final count as regards to the number of people that showed up. It was a huge crowd; it was at capacity.

This is a concern for the people directly in the Port at Port Peninsula, but not only in the Port au Port Peninsula it entails everybody right across the Province, Mr. Speaker. I have names here from Corner Brook, a few names from St. Johns, and people are signing it all over the Island, all over the Province. It is one of these direct concerns that I think government has to address; it can easily be addressed.

We already know of the New Brunswick example, for example. They have already come out with ninety-seven regulations contained in about 106 pages, I think it is, Mr. Speaker, the type of changes that they have made to their drilling regulations. They are very comprehensive regulations, and I would suggest the government have a look at those and address the needs of the people.

Of course, the people are just looking at protecting their water rights and they are looking at protecting their environment. These are direct concerns and hopefully government will address them.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: 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 of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS students of the Adult Basic Education program at the College of the North Atlantic do not wish to attend privatized educational facilities; and

WHEREAS College of the North Atlantic has the most accredited Adult Basic Education program in Newfoundland and Labrador; and

WHEREAS students are concerned as to the availability of private institutions and whether or not they can accommodate additional students; and

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reverse this damaging decision to students and reinstate the Adult Basic Education programming at the College of the North Atlantic;

And as in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is just one of many petitions which have been handed to me by students at the College of the North Atlantic, and it is not just students. It is family members, its staff, and its people in a lot of areas of this Province, the urban and rural.

I heard the Member for Mount Pearl talking. I do not know if he was at the function that was here on Friday. We saw the importance of this, the fact that there were walkouts all over this Province at every College of the North Atlantic. People sang that they wished they had an opportunity to have some input into this process and make that compelling argument which apparently is necessary in order to have a conversation.

The first thing I will say is that the numbers are wrong. The 31 per cent success rate which government trots out here is actually insulting to the people in the College of the North Atlantic. I will just give you one example.

A young girl who is part of the College of the North Atlantic in Port aux Basques did the ABE

program. She did four courses and then she went on to get a trade. She went on to get a program. She did not complete the course but her moving on to getting a trade and getting a program, is that not success in this Province? Is that what we have to do, demean these people and use stats to back up our faulty math?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. A. PARSONS: I think it is necessary that we acknowledge this. There are a lot of people in this position who are using it to upgrade to where they can continue on. Advance their life skills and advance their ability to have employment, and to advance in their post-secondary careers.

I know there is going to be an RFP going out soon. I look forward to seeing that. I am hoping government is going to make sure that all factors are considered here and that we have students who will get this education starting again on September 1. I am not confident.

I know the Premier said today that it is going to be offered in more places than it was previously. All I can say, I hope that is the case. I will be watching carefully to make sure that is the case. This should be a concern for members of all sides of this House because it affects every single one of us. It affects all of our districts.

People have a right to Adult Basic Education. I have heard a lot of commentary over the last number of days and weeks about this. I am sure it is going to be addressed a lot more in this House as we continue on. I appreciate the opportunity to present this on the numerous students in the College of the North Atlantic who are having this program taken away.

Thank you very much.

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 humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador currently has the highest unemployment rate in Canada; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador anticipates a labour shortage of 70,000 people by 2020; and

WHEREAS eliminating the career practitioner knowledge base is contrary to attaching people to the labour market; and

WHEREAS Employment Assistance Services (EAS) agencies are grassroots hubs in communities providing services like skills development, resume development, interview skills, facilitating attachment to the labour market and the community; and

WHEREAS EAS agencies help individuals with complex needs find and maintain employment in communities throughout the Province; and

WHEREAS EAS agencies have been serving thousands of people for years, building expertise and rapport; and

WHEREAS loading the workload of 226 employees onto 139 Advanced Education and Skills employees would be an overwhelming expectation, increasing staff turnover and thus decreasing rapport with clients; and

WHEREAS EAS funding comes from the EI fund – the Employment Insurance fund – built by workers to help them when and where they need it most; and

WHEREAS moving services away from people who lack the means to travel long distances is not in line with the Labour Market Development Agreement's principle of citizen-centred service;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of

Newfoundland and Labrador to reverse the decision to cut funding to EAS agencies in the Province.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said before in the House of Assembly, I have certainly heard a lot from individuals who work with Employment Assistance Services providers across Newfoundland and Labrador. This really started what precipitated now likely over 1,000 jobs being cut all together by this government.

Many of these people will be displaced from their communities and will probably be forced to move on and move out, maybe outside of the Province even, in the eventuality that government does not see that this decision to shut these EAS agencies, to cut funding to Employment Assistance Services providers – government does not come to the conclusion that this is a wrong-headed decision, that does not do anything to help our labour market particularly in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly when it comes to some of the most vulnerable individuals in our communities across the Province.

I hope the government will hear the pleas of these petitioners. I hope members will see that this is overturned because it is certainly the wrong way to go.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

WHEREAS there has been an agreement between the Federation of Newfoundland Indians and the Government of Canada to recognize the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band; and

WHEREAS persons submitted applications, with the required documents, for registration in the band up to the application deadline of November 30, 2012; and

WHEREAS the reported number of applications received by the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band is in excess of 100,000; and

WHEREAS the reported number of applicants now registered as members are approximately 22,000; and

WHEREAS the agreement between the Federation of Newfoundland Indians and the Government of Canada for recognition of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band was scheduled to end on March 31, 2013; and

WHEREAS the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band Chief has requested, but has not received, an extension to the agreement to process the remaining applications; and

WHEREAS to date, there is no decision on how to deal with the remaining applications;

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 Newfoundland Federation of Indians and the Government of Canada to provide a fair and equal review of all of our applications.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is a matter which keeps on going. The length of time to file the application was November 30. The deadline to have the applications approved was March 31. March 31 has now come and gone. The issue is still a live issue and people have no assurance, no certainty, and no way of knowing if their applications will be approved appropriately.

Mr. Speaker, this is not to say that every applicant will qualify. Clearly, many may qualify; potentially, most of them will qualify. We just do not know that. For people who have

for years and years done the work necessary to establish their genealogy, their heritage, to have gone the entire process and realized that many people are being recognized but different members in the same family, some are recognized, some have now filed their applications and they have no way of knowing if the applications will ever be considered.

Mr. Speaker, clearly, it would be a denial of fundamental justice to these individuals if their applications are not looked at, and that is the purpose of this petition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: 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 transgendered people face high risk of discrimination, violence, underemployment, and lack of access to housing and other services; and

WHEREAS a recent EGALE Canada survey found that 90 per cent of transgendered youth hear transphobic comments regularly from other students and one-quarter hear such comments from teachers; and

WHEREAS the Public Health Agency of Canada reports that nearly half of trans youth seriously considered suicide and one-fifth attempted it in this previous year; and

WHEREAS all individuals should have equal opportunity to live their lives and meet their needs without being hindered or prevented by discriminatory practices based on gender identity or gender expression; and

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the

House of Assembly to urge government to amend the Human Rights Act to include gender identity and gender expression in the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I presented this petition in the House a number of times on behalf of not only transgendered people themselves but on behalf of the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who believe this is just a basic right. It does not cost the Province anything. What it does is it reaches out to some of the most vulnerable, the most vilified, and the most discriminated against people in our community, from all parts of Newfoundland and Labrador.

People who are transgendered occupy all parts of Newfoundland and Labrador. They work in all kinds of professions. They are our brothers, our sisters, at times our mothers, our fathers, our aunts, our uncles, our teachers, our doctors, and our lawyers.

At this point, we see that human rights legislation is being changed not only in Canada, Mr. Speaker. We can see it in a number of provinces in Canada that have changed or on the verge of changing their human rights legislation to include transgender rights, but we see it happening the world over. The United Nations have supported this. They have included gender identity and gender expression.

At this time for our Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to not do it is nothing short of shameful. It is absolutely shameful at this point. There is no compelling argument. There is no compelling reason at this point for the Province to not go ahead and change its human rights legislation. As a Newfoundlander and Labradorian, I am embarrassed by the lack of progressive thinking in our Department of Justice to not proceed with this. There is no justifiable reason to not do it. It is negligent and it is shameful.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to rising again to bring this issue before the House.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask your indulgence for just one second.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 1. I apologize; I do not have the sheet in front of me, Mr. Speaker, but I think it is Order 1.

MR. SPEAKER: Motion 1, the Budget Speech.

MR. KING: Thank you very much. Yes, I have it here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 1, that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government – the Budget Speech.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is now my privilege to reply to Budget 2013. Of course, this was a Budget that was first announced in this House on Tuesday, March 26. Since that time, we have had the Easter break, and we have had a chance to really analyze the Budget.

Mr. Speaker, based on what we saw in the House on March 26, there was a fair amount of response that came from the Budget and from across the Province. As the details of the Budget really became known, became widely known, as people had the opportunity, both inside government and across the Province to really analyze the impact of Budget 2013 and what it actually meant to the people of the Province, there was a lot of information that came out, a lot of more detail around the Budget

that really caused a lot of concern. It caused a lot of concern for us, as the Official Opposition, but more so for the families and the employees and people who were impacted by this Budget.

As I rise today in this hon. House, it is to deliver my remarks to Budget 2013; it is really not what I would consider to be an hon. Budget. If you had to give a grading scale to this Budget, this is not one that would get a favourable scale. As a matter of fact, outside the day of the Budget when we looked at the feedback, this Budget received really a failing grade from most groups. There was some support amongst the St. John's Board of Trade and the Employers' Council, but on the whole, this Budget did not get a passing grade.

I agree with that, because regardless of what we heard leading into the Budget, the breadth of this Budget and the depth of this Budget, in terms of its cuts and the impact on families across this Province, this was not something that we indeed were expecting.

As we talked about today in Question Period, the number of cuts, the number of lost jobs, we were anticipating, believing and listening to what the Premier said in advance of the Budget, that there would be somewhere in the vicinity of 500 jobs that would be lost as a result of this Budget. We know that the number of jobs have been significantly higher than that, when we add up all the people who have been impacted by this Budget.

Most people who I am talking to are calling this Budget, really, a catastrophe. They are saying that it happened too fast. They did not take the advice of a lot of people, the so-called experts in the field, who said you had to be extremely careful, that you had to be very careful what you would do when you had to make such deep, deep cuts.

The Minister of Finance said in his speech that those receiving layoffs, as I said earlier, that they would be treated with respect. Even in Question Period today, Mr. Speaker, I was challenged about the way that this has happened. I would not be up here today talking about how

those people were not treated in a professional or a careful way if I did not know what I was talking about.

Just minutes after this Budget was announced we saw all the members opposite, they were standing on their feet and they were cheering and clapping their hands about the success and what they felt was a great Budget. This was really not a sign of respect for the 1,000 people who were out the door as a result of this Budget, the people who were losing their jobs, Mr. Speaker. It was actually alarming.

Some people even said to me that this is something that you need to keep a picture of this because people across the Province, they do not agree with this. When people are standing up and clapping their hands and saying good things about a Budget that puts 1,000 people out the door, they considered that to be indeed very disrespectful. Disturbing was another word that I had heard used during the time.

Mr. Speaker, this was what was happening here in this House on March 26. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Finance of the day, he may have been feeling the warmth and he may have been feeling that his Budget was being embraced. Mr. Speaker, in the communities across Newfoundland and Labrador I can tell you that this is not a Budget that was being embraced. The people, the employees of this government, these are not the people who were embracing this government and the announcements that they were hearing.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at and you consider the decades of loyalty that we have had amongst our public sector workers, this is not a way that they expected to be treated. They are worried and they are still worried. There are still a lot of worried people, a lot of worried families. They are now concerned about the people who have lost their jobs, those 1,000 people who have now lost their jobs as a result of this Budget. They are now wondering and they have to make their own decisions what their next path forward will be, how they will pay their own bills, how they will meet their financial commitments. It is

causing a lot of anxiety amongst the people in the Province.

It is actually atrocious, Mr. Speaker, the way that this Budget has rolled out. I will say, I know this for a fact, because I know even members of our own community and people that I have talked to, I can tell you many, many examples of people who heard about these layoffs on Budget Day. It was days and days that passed by before they finally realized that this Budget did impact them. Even today there are people still left wondering if they will be impacted by this Budget. It makes it very difficult for people to plan their future.

What this Budget was, Mr. Speaker, what this Budget is, is all about cuts. It is about cuts and more cuts. This government's motto over the last ten years has really – if you had to consider how we got there, why is it that we have to make such significant cuts across the public sector in this Province? It can only mean one thing, because we were not in a situation here where we have had to deal with a surprising cash situation.

There has been nothing new here that we did not know was coming. All of those things we could plan for. It has been, Mr. Speaker, I have to say, we have spent money. We just spent it because it was available. Many people that I am talking to, many, many groups that I am talking to are talking about financial mismanagement of this particular government, Mr. Speaker.

After ten years in government now – this is a government that came in in 2003 with a lot of plans, I might add, and two years of actually preparing, in election mode from 2001 to 2003, preparing to take government in 2003. They won that election, and ten years later what we get is a Sustainability Plan.

Mr. Speaker, for me, I would say that has been extremely disappointing, to realize we have a government in place for ten years and only now we are getting a Sustainability Plan. When you look through the Sustainability Plan, even that in itself is a very weak plan. I think it is highlighted if you go to the Sustainability Plan, I

think it is somewhere around page 11, where you will see that there are four steps to the sustainability. It really does not give a lot of detail. It talks about returning to surplus in year three.

Mr. Speaker, this Sustainability Plan, after ten years, has been very disappointing to see that ten years later we are just getting to the point where we have to develop a Sustainability Plan. When you look at the amount of wealth this Province has generated over the last ten years, and just now getting to a Sustainability Plan is certainly a missed opportunity, I say, to secure the future of the Province.

Then there is a question about its sustainability and the sustainability of our Province. Who is this for? This government is showing the public sector workers – as they show the public sector workers the door with the layoffs we have heard about in the last couple of weeks, they have slammed the door on Employment Assistance offices. We know the history about this in March. These are offices that have supplied very valuable services to not only rural areas of the Province but in a lot of our larger centres as well.

These offices have been given the axe. They have given the axe to teaching positions and eliminated college programs. I know this has been a source of great debate. Even in Question Period, as I said, today we have heard a lot of comments about program cuts and what have been happening within our education system.

The Employment Assistance offices are a group I feel have been really grossly misunderstood. Not until you talk to those people do you realize the vast amount of work and what they have done that was really outside of the scope that not many people would actually pinpoint and point to this particular office as this is what they have done. They have done an extraordinary amount of work for people in the communities where the sites were open.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I say, this government is not only jeopardizing the administration of justice by cutting down attorneys, legal staff,

and sheriff offices. I might add it is almost somewhat of a farce to a folly that these cuts were reviewed last week. I have to say that we called for those reviews as the Official Opposition, as did many other people involved in Justice.

This part of it, this piece of the review I agree with. I say it was a good thing, Mr. Speaker. When you call for something like this, when you see a program that needs review, they respond and the government responds, as they did in this particular case. It is the right thing to do.

You do have to wonder and you do have to ask yourself: Why did we get to this situation in the beginning? If there was meaningful consultation done in advance of this, one of two things would happen: either you would be able to make the right choice and you would not be in the situation that you would have to review the program; the other thing that could possibly have happened is that you talked to the wrong people, therefore you made the wrong decision. It had to be one or the other. What was the consultation? It obviously had to be the wrong choice or the program would not have needed review as it did, Mr. Speaker, so quickly after the Budget.

I ask again, Mr. Speaker: Who will really benefit from this so-called Sustainability Plan? It is not the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who are benefiting from this Budget. They are the ones suffering the consequences of this government's horrible financial planning over the last ten years.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the experience of this Budget and what has the experience been for the people of the Province, well I can tell you, the people of Newfoundland, this is what they are experiencing. First-hand, they are experiencing the cuts of this government's mismanagement.

Mr. Speaker, they are also experiencing cuts to public sector employees and, indeed, to the services that those valuable employees provide. That is the experience of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador; that is their

experience with Budget 2013. We have seen cuts to the public service and we are seeing loss of services for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, loss of services throughout the Province.

Over the next couple of hours, I will expand more and talk in more detail of those services and certainly about some of those cuts. Mr. Speaker, one of the programs that I will briefly touch on right now is the dental care program. While Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are currently suffering from an inferior dental care program right now because this government just recently cut funding to this – they simply not only just went in and cut funding, Mr. Speaker, they actually cut funding without doing any meaningful consultations with the people who were involved.

One of the other areas that have been affected by this Budget, Mr. Speaker, is around fees and around ferries that actually connect many of our isolated communities. If you live on an isolated community now that depends on a ferry as a means of transportation, you have to pay a higher fee now as result of Budget 2013, as a result of this Budget that was read into this House on March 26. It is a 10 per cent more fee.

If you have to leave your isolated community to go to work, if you have to leave there to go to some kind of health care appointment, if you have to leave there just because you needed to go pick up groceries or something, Mr. Speaker – it is a way of life for those who live in those isolated communities. Right now, because of the increase in ferry fees, it is going to cost you 10 per cent more.

MR. A. PARSONS: Ramea, Fogo, Bell Island.

MR. BALL: If it is Ramea, if it is Fogo, exactly, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Burgeo – La Poile reminds me that he has many communities in his district that are affected by this, but not only people who live in his district but in many of the districts. If you live on Fogo, as I said, you have to deal with now those 10 per cent fee hikes for the ferry service.

Mr. Speaker, we are also seeing that there is one project, there is one piece of this Budget, what we have been told has been ring fenced and it is sheltered really from the spending and not affected at all by this Budget. Of course, that is the Muskrat Falls Project that I am talking about here. This project in itself has been excluded from any of the increased costs this year by this government.

While this government –

MR. LANE: (Inaudible).

MR. BALL: The Member for Mount Pearl is telling me right now that this Budget is not impacted by that. I will explain later to the member how it is and how it can be. There are certain rules around accounting –

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

MR. BALL: – where Muskrat Falls could have a tremendous impact on the deficit of this government. The Member for Mount Pearl, I can explain to him that there are certain –

AN HON. MEMBER: South.

MR. BALL: Mount Pearl South.

There are certain principles around the accounting rules. Even though this year's deficit is not impacted by it, when we get to this project there is considerable danger that it will impact the deficits of this government.

I will ask the Member for Mount Pearl South right now if he would believe, if he has every confidence, that he can stand there now and not expect to see cost overruns on this project. I ask the Member for Mount Pearl South, when he gets his chance to stand on his feet, will he do with all certainty, tell that this project will not have a cost overrun.

So, Mr. Speaker, this government, as I said, as it ring fenced its pet project, this government shoves front-line public servants through the door, their election workers, by these election workers, they were rewarded. The election

workers for this particular government, they have been rewarded by plum appointments, I say, Mr. Speaker. They have posts in senior levels of government. These were not affected by this Budget.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is one person, I will say, though, on the opposite, who has been impacted by this Budget. There is one person who has been impacted by Budget 2013, and that is, of course, the past Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. I am pleased of the fact that this Premier and the Minister of Finance has reduced the size of Cabinet and we now have one less Cabinet minister.

I do, however, suggest that we could have done with a few more cuts in the Cabinet. We could have lived with a much smaller Cabinet. This is something, Mr. Speaker, just to remove the one, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, really was not enough. We needed a smaller Cabinet. This was indeed a missed opportunity, and it is an area that we should have seen more.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, some colleagues of mine have been saying lately that maybe we need to open up a new portfolio, or roll one of those portfolios in so we could have a minister of reconsiderations so some of those bad decisions in Budget 2013 could be reconsidered. A place for people to go and review the decisions – we call that the minister of reconsiderations. It is time to open up that new portfolio, I say to the Speaker.

The Premier is also saying that the Office of Public Engagement, after this core mandate review, for some reason the Office of Public Engagement is now considered to be what? It is considered to be core mandate.

AN HON. MEMBER: No, core mandate?

MR. BALL: I cannot believe that, Mr. Speaker. I actually thought that was the first office that was going to go, core mandate. It was core mandate. It is now enshrined, Mr. Speaker. This is something that this government believes is absolutely necessary. While we can make cuts to wildlife departments, while we can make

cuts to dental programs, and while we can cut, cut, cut, the Office of Public Engagement stands strong. It stands there now as a core mandated office with this government, Mr. Speaker, I say.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I would ask all members for their co-operation.

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The other office, I must say, that escaped the core mandate review, which really surprised me, was the Office of the Population Growth Strategy. That was an office that actually survived the core mandate review.

I ask all members, even members of government, how many times in your constituency office have you ever heard, and how often did someone walk in and say: I need the telephone number for the Office of the Population Growth Strategy? I have to have it. I need to post that on my fridge, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you now, Mr. Speaker, not once did anybody come in through my office door and ask for those numbers. Not once did anybody ask me for the number of the Office of Public Engagement and not once did anybody look for a number for the Office of the Population Growth Strategy. I have not seen it, Mr. Speaker. It is now core mandated, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you this was another opportunity in Budget 2013 that those offices could have been done away with.

The message, Mr. Speaker, that this government is sending, if you are a public servant, if you work in the public service of this Province what you get is not even a thank you, out the door, have a nice day. That has been the feedback I have been getting. I have been getting it through e-mail after e-mail after e-mail.

Mr. Speaker, I brought a lot of those e-mails – these are samples, just in case people think that I

am just saying that. These are all samples of e-mails. I will be more than happy, because we have a lot of time here today. I have two hours and forty minutes to respond to this Budget. I can tell you now there are members opposite who have been copied on a lot of those e-mails. I can start reading those one at a time so you can see that this is not an isolated case, the way people have been treated since they have received their layoff notices as a result of Budget 2013.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is another area where I believe there was a missed opportunity in this particular budget, in Budget 2013, and that is along the lines of the parliamentary secretaries. Right now, I believe we currently have five parliamentary secretaries. People keep asking me, parliamentary secretaries for what? Why do we need those parliamentary secretaries? Obviously, it is an extra expense to government.

We have a Parliamentary Secretary in the Office of Public Engagement. This, of course, is in an office that receives a multi-million dollar budget already in the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development. This is a department that receives millions of dollars. Now they need an Office of Public Engagement as part of that department as well.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this is all about the core mandate review. I cannot believe that a year in this process, after a core mandate review, after speaking to many, many experts in the field the Office of Public Engagement survived. It is still there. It is an absolute necessity according to this government, that the Office of Public Engagement be kept in place, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, they have five parliamentary secretaries. One of them is in the Office of Public Engagement. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, that in 2013 we believe that this Office of Public Engagement is a necessity?

Mr. Speaker, the government, however, does not mind trimming back in other areas. They do not mind cutting back expenditures when it really does not affect their own. That is the message I am getting in all of this, Mr. Speaker. When it

comes to the Muskrat Falls Project, we cannot go there. We are not going to cut back there, but when it comes to the services and public sector employees with this government, well that is where the axe starts to fall.

Mr. Speaker, there are benefits to many people who live in Newfoundland and Labrador. I want to talk a bit about Muskrat Falls because you have heard me say many times in this House that the development of Muskrat Falls should be a good news story. It really should be a good news story.

I mentioned it in Question Period today. There was a lot of debate that took place here in the House late last fall on Muskrat Falls. One of the things we talked about is support for the mining industry. On March 28 of this year when going underground with Voisey's Bay was announced, well guess what, Mr. Speaker? There was no mention whatsoever, no mention at all of Muskrat Falls power. Instead, they will be looking for alternate forms of power for Muskrat Falls. Now they are actually talking about wind power for Voisey's Bay.

We were not allowed to talk about wind power in this House, not for months and months. It was not something we should be pursuing, but for Voisey's Bay to go underground as a source of power now, Mr. Speaker, well guess what? One of the options we are considering is wind power, I say, Mr. Speaker, and added to that another development of a run of the river near that area, but no Muskrat Falls. That is off the table now for the development of Voisey's Bay.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, I was fortunate last week to spend some time in Labrador meeting the Combined Councils. The meeting is called the Combined Councils meeting. This is a group of community leaders who get together on an annual basis. There were other MHAs there too representing the various parties.

It is always a great learning experience to hear first-hand of the many challenges that the people in Labrador – first-hand the things that they had to deal with. Mr. Speaker, I went to the Combined Councils and I was there last year as

well and many of the same people were there. Do you know one of the things that I heard? This is right in the area, just really next door to development of Muskrat Falls. I talked to a lot of people and what a lot of people are telling me, what they did tell me however, Mr. Speaker, is that the true benefits – we thought we were going to get work there; local companies thought that they were going to get work there.

I will challenge everybody who was actually talking to the business community up there that there have been an awful lot of people thought that they would see the benefit, that they are not getting it. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I heard one story which was a little – I must say you want to hear a compelling argument, well I will give you a compelling argument for a company in Newfoundland. We have many companies in Newfoundland who can do this.

The brush cutting now from Muskrat Falls to Churchill Falls, which as we know we will put a transmission line there to connect it to because we need the reliability at Muskrat Falls and we will be in a situation where one of the projects will actually debit and credit the other. We need the transmission line to connect the two so the reliability is in place.

There is a long transmission line that has to go from Muskrat Falls to Churchill Falls. There are trees there, and so we have to cut the trees now so we can build a transmission line. I see my member here for Torngat Mountains; there are certain parts of his area where he does not have a lot of trees. From Muskrat Falls to Churchill Falls there are a lot of trees.

Guess what, Mr. Speaker – guess what? The company that is going to cut that transmission line, guess where they are from? They are not from Newfoundland and Labrador. They are not from Labrador. They are not from the Island part of Newfoundland. They are from Alberta. They are going to bring in loggers and they are going to bring in a company from Alberta that is going to cut the transmission line from Muskrat Falls to Churchill Falls.

Tell me that Newfoundland companies do not know how to cut wood, Mr. Speaker, that the benefit from that transmission line is going to go to a company in Alberta. The taxes from that company are going to be paid to a company from Alberta.

On top of that there is even a lot of other work, a lot of surveying work that is going to be done, not by Newfoundland companies. That is going to come in from another province: New Brunswick.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. BALL: Now, I hear the minister over there defending this again. He is defending the fact that we are going to take a company from Alberta, we are going to take a company from New Brunswick, and we are going to bring them in here simply because they say they are going to provide jobs. However, Mr. Speaker, what I know is that the taxes paid – we have had many great people in from Central Newfoundland and many people from the West Coast of Newfoundland who could easily do that job. The benefits for that particular project will not be seen right here.

I challenge the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale how he feels about this. Does he support those companies coming out? The minister is saying: Where are the employees coming from? Well, maybe the minister should tell us where the employees are coming from because they do not know yet. We are getting a lot of concerns. There are a lot of people questioning where those employees are coming from, and we heard that here last week. Where is the commitment?

What we do know, however, is that the taxes paid by those companies will not be left in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. They will be from outside companies, and the minister knows that. This is an easy project. This is an extremely easy project that could be done by great Newfoundland and Labrador companies.

Mr. Speaker, I really have about fifty pages prepared here. I am not even at page five yet. I

have lots of time to speak to this Budget. The reason I have lots of information on this particular Budget is because there is a lot of bad news in this Budget. There are a lot of things in this Budget that impact and affect people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to some of the financial planning. I talked about financial mismanagement. Early last month, Scotia Bank – and, of course, Scotia Bank is one of the leading chartered banks in this country. They issued a report on the spending by governments in Atlantic Canada, all of the governments in Atlantic Canada: the governments in PEI, in New Brunswick, in Nova Scotia, and of course in Newfoundland and Labrador. So what did the report say? What were the findings in that report?

Well, Mr. Speaker, the findings are that this particular government, the government in Newfoundland and Labrador, is the biggest culprit in Atlantic Canada when it came to increases in spending. Now, of all the warnings we have had in the last three or four years, this Province continued to spend. I am going to get into a bit about that. There is a lot more about that there when it comes to increases in spending.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what it comes down to is when you increase the spending here, when you look at the revenue, and I have a spreadsheet and a history of when you look at this, when you look at this and the increase in expenditures over the last number of years, even last year when we knew we had to rein back our expenditures, what happened last year? We even spent more, I say, Mr. Speaker.

People always question: Where would you spend it or what would you change? Well, there are a number of things I would change, I say to the members opposite. I would not be out doing PR campaigns on projects. I would not be opening up an Office of Public Engagement or the growth strategy, all of those things, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: A tea party.

MR. BALL: Yes, a tea party, a party that did not happen.

Mr. Speaker, there are many, many areas. We need to get to – when you look at expenditures there is no doubt that there are lots of areas in this Province that required upgrading, it required investments into infrastructure, but you need to spend it with a strategy. You need to know that when you invest money, when you spend that money it is in the right place. We have heard that the expenditures that were put in, the money that we spent in health, that we are not getting the required outcome. Lots of people are telling us that, Mr. Speaker. Lots of people are telling us this. Scotiabank was one of the groups that have been telling us this.

If you look at that a little bit further, the analysis of 2005 to 2010, we see that this particular government saw the highest annual growth in spending amongst all provinces, Mr. Speaker. So we have to be careful. What we were warned was that we had to put in long-term expenditure controls. This was important.

Mr. Speaker, in the three-year period that this particular report studied, the spending was ratcheted up even more. We started to increase even more. When Scotiabank came in with that suggestion, we did not listen to that. We just kept going and we kept going and we kept going.

We did not listen to the fact that Scotiabank was telling us at that particular time that we had to put in long-term expenditure controls, because this is where we were going. It was coming to a collision. The longer you wait to put in those strategies, the longer you wait to put in long-term expenditure plans, well then of course what happens is it makes the situation much worse and it leaves a stronger and bigger impact when you put in expenditure controls.

Mr. Speaker, that decision back three years ago was a wise decision, but Scotiabank was not the only group giving that suggestion. The members opposite, of course, we know now after the release of Budget 2013, they did not

listen. They did not take that advice because the evidence is all over Budget 2013.

Mr. Speaker, instead of sitting down and reviewing this decade, instead of sitting down and taking a real good look at this decade of spending, we have to ask ourselves: What was the response? What happened? Mr. Speaker, instead of analyzing where they went wrong and really crafting what would have been a careful strategy to help us, first of all keep us out of the financial mess so that we did not get into it in the first place, what happened?

One thing that happened, Mr. Speaker, is this government realized that it is now 2013. We have had a lot of money to spend over the last ten years. They have had a lot of money from what I consider to be good deals, and I would say most of the money that came into this Province was as a result of good deals that were done by past governments and by good planning by other governments.

The members opposite know that. They know the benefits from Terra Nova, the benefits from Hibernia and Voisey's Bay that we talked about earlier today, these are benefits – and White Rose – these are deals that were not signed by this government. Mr. Speaker, this is about doing the right thing for Newfoundland and Labrador and how you spend the money. This is what I am talking about now.

In 2013, Mr. Speaker, we realize we are facing a financial crisis. We were actually spending too much money and we now need to change the course. What happened, Mr. Speaker? How did the government respond? Mr. Speaker, what happened was, no question, there was some panic that set into this government. They realized that this is not sustainable and there was some panic that set into this government.

One thing you cannot do as a government, and they were warned about this too – this government, Mr. Speaker, was warned about this – is you need to get focused. You need to put a strategy in place, but one thing you cannot do, you cannot panic. You have to remain focused on the problem. You have to remain focused on

the challenge. You have to go looking for the solution, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will talk to that again. I will talk a little bit more about the sustainability and how the panic of this government actually set in, and talk a little bit more of why and the symptoms of how that happened. Mr. Speaker, the evidence of how this government panicked is all over this Budget.

Instead of just trimming the expenses strategically and carefully, the Premier and her colleagues, what they did is they cut and they went to departments. They challenged the departments to continue cutting. They paid no attention, in a lot of cases, where the cuts were made, because in a lot of areas there was potential revenue associated with some of the cuts that were made.

You have to be careful at any time you go in and you just make cuts that you are not actually taking away programs that actually contribute to the finances of the Province. We have seen that. We have seen this throughout this Budget. We have seen cuts in areas that are actually contributing money to the Treasury of this Province, I say, Mr. Speaker. When you look at where you cut, where you look for the excess, you have to be very careful that you are not taking it from an area where it can actually be a financial contributor to your Budget.

Mr. Speaker, what was needed, however, was a strategy and what was needed was vision. This is the reason we are actually in this position. This is the reason we are where we are today: there was no vision. There was no long-term vision. We have asked for this. Where is the vision for this government? It is not there.

As a matter of fact, if you remember just last year when we went looking for a five-year infrastructure strategy program, it was not there. The Auditor General, I believe, asked for this. Where is it? Then we were told, no, that was just an evolving plan. That really is not a document; that is an evolving plan. It was not there. So there was no long-term strategy to

make investments into the diversification of this Province.

Mr. Speaker, what we did hear from the other side, however, was that we had to rebuild the Province. Of course, rebuilding the Province meant spending money and there was a significant amount of rebuilding that had to be done. If you look back at the history of that and you say how much rebuilding did we actually do? We did quite a bit. There were things that were done. There were some good things done with the money over the five- or six-year period. I will have to say, with that aside, there was an awful lot of waste. I do not think anyone would disagree there was an awful lot of waste that took place over the ten years.

I think members opposite would agree that if we had to live this all over again we would do things differently, Mr. Speaker. They would not want to be in this situation. They would do things differently if they could, I am sure.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, they are left with a situation that they cannot blame anybody else any more. They cannot blame a past Administration any more. When you look at the way this government has mismanaged and spent the money over the last three or four years, there is no one else to blame except this government themselves.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at what the expectation would be of anyone who lives in this Province, hardworking citizens of this Province, hardworking Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, day in and day out they pay their taxes. At the end of the year, they would expect that a government would spend their money, spend it wisely and they would manage the funds, manage the affairs of this Province, that they would manage it effectively.

That is the promise, by the way, that was made. That is the promise, the commitment, which was made by this government. They would manage the affairs of this government; they would do so in an accountable and a transparent way. Well I say, Mr. Speaker, that is not a promise that they

delivered on. They did not deliver on that promise, I say, Mr. Speaker.

Do you know what? The members opposite, they can scream and they can shout all they want about the Liberals time in government – all they want, Mr. Speaker. We have heard that. We have heard that a number of times. The truth is when the Liberals was in government in this particular Province back prior to 2003, there was only a fraction of the money available – only a fraction of the money. We had oil that was down between \$25 and \$30 a barrel, I say, Mr. Speaker. The money was just not there. The amounts of money that we are seeing floating around today is quite different.

I will say that as a result of many of those projects, they have made significant contributions to the revenue in this Province. Right now, we have seen for the last ten years a very steady cash flow.

Mr. Speaker, we are extremely fortunate to have such an abundance of the natural resources. Of course, as we use those natural resources, that gives us the opportunity to avail of royalties from oil and minerals. While this is not all good, Mr. Speaker, we do have to question where it is come.

Mr. Speaker, one thing that I have noticed in a lot of the reports, in a lot of the interviews that have been done, is that we always refer to oil and gas royalties. Well, in actual fact, we are not there with gas. I have often wondered when you look at what is happening all around the world, why is it that based on the reserves that we have, reserves that we had that was even mentioned in the Energy Plan, this government's own Energy Plan in 2007, why we have not developed an industry around gas when it is happening all over the world. All over the world, it is happening, even in the UK.

MR. LANE: The prices are too low.

MR. BALL: The Member for Mount Pearl South is just telling me the prices are too low; we cannot do it here. Well, maybe we need to ask the people in the UK if their prices are too

low because they are certainly developing a gas industry over there. Maybe we need to go to Saudi Arabia right now because I understand that Saudi Arabia is looking very favourably into developing a gas industry over there now.

Maybe the Member for Mount Pearl South needs to go to the US. I understand one of the problems that we are having, if he is watching the financial impact at all, how it is affecting the Dow and the TSX, I think he will realize that it is having a significant impact of what is happening south of the border, I say to the Member for Mount Pearl South.

MR. LANE: Volume (inaudible).

MR. BALL: The Member for Mount Pearl South brings up volume. Interesting that he does that. Go to your 2007 Energy Plan. Go listen to what Nalcor said just a few weeks ago off Labrador and then you go and do it. You take that and you study, and you compare that to what is happening in the UK right now, I say to the Member for Mount Pearl South. You go do the comparison and then you tell me that you cannot put a gas industry in this Province. Then you go and tell me that you cannot do that.

I challenge him to do that, Mr. Speaker, but this is what I am saying. We keep saying oil and gas, but there is no gas. It is simply that way.

What has happened here in the last ten years, Mr. Speaker – and by the way, just a reminder, now we are at a time now in the history of our Province that we have to spend responsibly. You ask the question: Have we spent responsibly? Have we managed responsibly? I say, Mr. Speaker, was it responsible? Was it as a result of responsible decisions to balloon the size of the public service and only to turn around weeks later and callously cut over 1,000 jobs?

I say, Mr. Speaker, this is not about the people; this is not about the individuals in these jobs. When they were hired, they would have thought that they would have had a career, that this is something that they could have done for many, many years. We hired those people, but we now find ourselves in the situation that we have

allowed this to balloon, and now we cannot afford to have those positions any longer.

Was it responsible to ignore the advice of countless financial institutions and renowned economists who warned the government to curb spending, I say, Mr. Speaker? Was that the responsible thing to do, was to ignore this advice? Was it responsible to spend lavishly when times were good and not to save for a rainy day?

I say, Mr. Speaker, growing up in this Province, all of us knew that you always had to put some money aside because just for that unexpected thing that could happen. Those rainy day funds are something that we are all very much accustomed to. It is important that we prepare for that, Mr. Speaker.

I have to say and I raise it again: Was it responsible to embark upon a multi-billion dollar project when we are in such uncertain times, when we were in such turbulent times? We do not know; we have made a fifty-year commitment – and I just went into, in trying to answer some questions to the members opposite, that it is very turbulent times when you look at making a fifty-year commitment to a project that we have no idea what will be new and exciting in the energy world over the next fifty years. We have not made provision at all for new technology and the role that would play in provision of energy – not only for the people in our Province, yet we expect that we are going to be able to export this to another Province, or even to the US, when right now they do not seem to be having an energy deficiency at all, I say, Mr. Speaker.

So, was it responsible? Was this decision responsible, I say? Mr. Speaker, one thing I do know is that it is irresponsible not to plan for your future. It is irresponsible to wait ten years and then to think, well now, after all this money, now I am going to do a Sustainability Plan, I say, Mr. Speaker. That is the irresponsible response. It is irresponsible to spend without preparing for the long-term affordability plan. That is the problem (inaudible) people keep

saying: Who would you lay off or what it is you would not do?

One thing you should never do is put the expectations of someone to a point where then you realize, oh, I have you now; you are hired; now I cannot afford you, so now you have to let them go. That is a disservice, I say, Mr. Speaker, to the people that you have just hired, when these are the types of decisions that you have to make.

So, Mr. Speaker, as usual, there are a lot more questions than we have answers. I suspect many of the government members themselves have looked at this and said: How did we get where we are?

I want to talk a little bit about some announcements in January, for instance, Mr. Speaker. In January, when we first heard about the looming deficit that the previous Finance Minister had said was going to be somewhere around \$726 million, that deficit now had changed, and that now we were looking for the deficit to be somewhere around \$1.6 billion. From that point in January to Budget time, well, that all changed. There was money that was coming from HST –

MR. JOYCE: Seven million barrels of oil.

MR. BALL: Eight million barrels of oil that we had tucked away somewhere over there that we suddenly found out that we had, and there were certain other areas. All of a sudden the \$1.6 billion deficit that everybody thought that was the number, guess what? It was not there any more, thanks to the eight million barrels of oil that we found and thanks to some mistake that happened in 2006 or 2007 with HST up in Ottawa. We had more money available to us. It was not that \$1.6 billion deficit, Mr. Speaker. It was not that at all. It was not even what the previous Finance Minister had predicted; it was not even there either.

We had a bunch of different numbers, I say, Mr. Speaker. This is the reason why people across the Province who were following the project said: Could this government actually get its

numbers straight? This is the reason why, I say, Mr. Speaker, this government panicked.

They were not used to being in a situation where you had such extreme deficits. I say, Mr. Speaker, they certainly did not want to be anywhere near \$1 billion deficit. They did not want to go anywhere near that. That would have been the largest deficit in our history. With a government that was flush with cash – do you remember that, Mr. Speaker, when we were flush with cash, best times in our history, now to be talking about \$1 billion deficit; they could not go anywhere near that.

What they did, Mr. Speaker, was that they panicked. They realized it was very easy, extremely easy that when you are riding high in the polls and you have all kinds of money, you really do not have to make those decisions. You look at it and say: Okay, if we can afford it, we are going to buy it. Let's go spend it.

It is easy, easy to ride along when you have all kinds of money, and that is what happened here. If you look back over the history of the Budgets, especially in the 2007-2008 area, you would see that there were significant surpluses around that time, Mr. Speaker. This is where I believe this government missed some serious opportunities.

In the last three years of this particular mandate here, Mr. Speaker, we have had almost \$7 billion – \$7 billion – in money from oil royalties in mining. It is an awful lot of money when you think about it. The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that they have mismanaged the finances of this Province, mismanaged the finances of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, when you find yourself in this situation you have to make a decision and you have to respond. I say, Mr. Speaker, how did this government respond? How did they respond when they entered into those turbulent times? What did they do? They cut public service. They cut education. They cut dental programs. They cut health care. They cut college programs. They cut justice. They cut wildlife. They cut, they cut, and they cut. That

is what they did, Mr. Speaker. All in a matter of weeks, they just continued to cut.

MR. JOYCE: Except their senior management.

MR. BALL: Except the senior management, I say, Mr. Speaker.

What other responses did we get? Well, if they cut all of this stuff, what did they keep? What is it they kept? What is it that they kept that they felt was actually core? The Office of Public Engagement – they kept that, I say Mr. Speaker. All of those election workers in those key senior positions – did they go, I say, Mr. Speaker? No, they did not go anywhere. They are still there sitting in those offices, every single day, six figure salaries – they are still there sitting in those offices.

What else? What about those PR campaigns? Oh yes, we have to do our PR campaigns; we have to make sure that everybody in this Province knows how good we are.

I say, Mr. Speaker, a comment that I made in the Throne Speech actually and I think it is a wise comment and I think we need to pay attention to it. It says: Remember, that self-praise is no praise at all. So, Mr. Speaker, when it is a good thing, we do not need to do a PR campaign about it –

MR. JOYCE: How much did cost for Muskrat?

MR. BALL: It was over \$400,000 and we do not know to this day what Nalcor spent on that, but I say Mr. Speaker, self-praise is no praise at all. The people of this Province, they know when they see a good thing. They know when there is a good project. You do not need to tell them. You do not need to sell that to them, I say, Mr. Speaker. So I say, self-praise is no praise at all.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. BALL: Now, the member opposite raises a point about support, the support for Muskrat Falls, the development of Muskrat Falls. As I said many, many times – the members opposite,

they do not want to hear this – to develop Muskrat Falls, there was an opportunity there; but this is not the opportunity that we have seen here, forcing taxpayers and ratepayers of this Province, the only thing that makes this project work at all is that you are willing to sign, on behalf of the people of this Province, a fifty-year deal at a set rate, that is what makes it work. If they were given the option, there was no way you can finance this deal. The Member for Mount Pearl South, he knows that. There is no way anyone would look at it without that power purchase agreement in place, and I challenge him to say that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the inability to listen – this is a government that really do not listen well to people. They talk about consultations. They talk about going in and having consultations with people. There is a difference in sitting in a room and taking notes and being part of the consultation, but it is quite a different thing when you need to look at it and say: What did we take from that? Did we actually learn anything from that? I think it is very obvious when you look at the review that we have seen on a number of Budget issues, they really did not listen. They really did not listen at all.

Mr. Speaker, when you do not listen to people you have to ask yourself, where is the vision for those people? Where are the ideas, I say, Mr. Speaker, and where is the strategy? As I said earlier, we all remember the infamous infrastructure strategy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was mentioning about the lack of vision, the lack of ideas and the lack of a strategy, it just reminds me: Where is the infrastructure strategy that the AG asked for? They were years looking for this infrastructure strategy. It was announced in various election campaigns that we have to have an infrastructure strategy, but

no infrastructure strategy. They did not take time to write an infrastructure strategy. They spent a lot of time talking about it, but they did not take any time to put words to the paper.

The Premier would have us believe, when you listen to the comments and the words, that this Budget crisis is something that was created, or has not been created. It is something that has not been inherited but somehow this Budget crisis – well it what? It happened overnight.

This is a Budget crisis that we did not see in January or in December when we sanctioned Muskrat Falls. No, that was not a Budget crisis. That was flush with cash, the best time in our history. January, however, we are in a Budget crisis, \$1.6 billion deficit this year, \$1.6 billion deficit next year. We are going to get back into a surplus of around \$44 million or something the next year.

Now keep this in mind, just imagine this: December, not in a Budget crisis, January in a Budget crisis. Now all of a sudden, three years later, we think they can actually forecast that number. You could not do it in two months but we can do it in three years. We are a lot better off guessing three years out than we are actually forecasting six weeks out, I say, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is not something that was inherited, I say. This is not something that happened overnight somewhere between December, when Muskrat Falls was sanctioned, and January when the Minister of Finance suddenly realized they had this looming deficit. The bottom did not fall out of the economy, Mr. Speaker. Someone must have seen this coming.

Someone must have taken the time to go in and look at the C-NLOPB site and say, oil production is starting to fall off and there is a lot of uncertainty around the currency. We also know the global price of oil – at least a lot of people were suggesting that the global price of oil would fall. Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of indicators out there that suggest we have to be extremely careful in making those long-term financial commitments.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier would also have us believe that her government had nothing to do with the deficit, where the expenditures far, far outweigh the revenues. Even though, and we are still lucky and still fortunate that those revenues are still really high, tremendously high I would say when you go back into 2001, 2002, Mr. Speaker, a lot higher.

The timeline for the Premier's story about how we got into this mess, I say, Mr. Speaker, is similar. It is almost like a flash in time. It kind of reminds me of the flash in time, just a matter of weeks, when the Minister of Finance announced the \$1.6 billion deficit and literally overnight it was back to \$1 billion. Make no wonder people really question what the real number is.

Mr. Speaker, we had the previous Minister of Finance in December talk about a deficit number of \$726 million for last year, and then the new Minister of Finance said no, it is going to be \$1.6 billion. On and on it goes. We had a whole bunch of numbers that were out there. I can tell you now, Mr. Speaker, people of this Province were not fooled by any of this. They did not really trust any of those numbers. They were never real numbers, I say, Mr. Speaker.

That means what? That means that this government is full of surprises. They like to surprise us with numbers, and then you go out and you spin it however you want. They are pretty good at spin, I say, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that most people in this Province were a little alarmed to hear, very alarmed to hear I think, is that it was 8 million barrels of oil. I mentioned this a few minutes ago. Imagine 8 million barrels of oil that we suddenly found. It came out of nowhere. Someone down at C-NLOPB who was monitoring this said: no, we owe you 8 million barrels of oil.

AN HON. MEMBER: That was on a Post-it Note.

MR. BALL: I say to the member, it was on a Post-it Note. Here, go look for this.

As we kind of make light of that in some degree, it is very serious. You have to ask yourself, who is really watching this? How do you miss 8 million barrels of oil? Who really mentions this, Mr. Speaker? What it has done for a lot of people is it has cast a shadow of a doubt, when out of nowhere you can find 8 million barrels of oil. When you look at your annual production, Mr. Speaker, this is a significant portion of that. It is a big miss, I say, Mr. Speaker.

One of the reasons today in Question Period we are saying: Who is actually monitoring the concentrate that is coming out of Voisey's Bay that will be used for processing in other countries? It is important that we monitor what is leaving Voisey's Bay because we are going to need that in return. That it is going to be returned. That is the reason why we are asking that question today. When you miss 8 million barrels of oil, we need to make sure that whatever ore, whatever concentrate is coming out of Voisey's Bay is something we are monitoring closely, I say.

One gentleman told me over the Easter break that he had an idea. He had an idea where the extra money came from, from January to Budget Day. What he told me was that he figured it was the tooth fairy. He said it was the tooth fairy who actually delivered that money. I said, well, I am not so sure about that because this government, when it comes to teeth, they do not get along very well. I doubt it was the tooth fairy, Mr. Speaker.

Now we have seen as a result of this particular Budget cuts in dental work. We are seeing people who are struggling now to get new dentures and dental work done. Mr. Speaker, they are left stranded, many of them with appointments already made. Because of the cuts to the dental assistance program, these programs are no longer available, I say, Mr. Speaker.

What I said to the minister was that a gentleman told me that he figured the money from the January deficit to Budget time had come from the tooth fairy. I will let the minister know that so it can bring her up to speed and maybe we can get this dental program reinstated so it can

meet the expectations of the people of the Province, like we thought it would be. This was announced last year with a lot of hoopla, I say, Mr. Speaker.

MS SULLIVAN: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): A point of order, the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out that we do not have to reinstate the Dental Health Program because it is still there with the same \$6.7 million we committed last year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: What I was referring to, Mr. Speaker, for the Minister of Health and Community Services, was not the fact that the program needed to be reinstated, but that the funding for the program needed to be reinstated. What I liked and what it speaks to is a program that was announced just one year ago, one year ago, and the planning and the due diligence on that program was not sound enough even for it to get its first birthday card. We could not even give that program one birthday card. We realized if we did not do the analysis, the planning was not in place, we now had to cut it, there was no consultation done with the people in place.

As a matter of fact, when the cuts were made the people then who were involved, the people delivering the services, even then they did not know about it. It was an arbitrary cut, cut unilaterally to the people of this Province, poor planning last year at the Budget announcement. Keep in mind it was a pillar; it was one of the big announcements that you made and it did not make it through the first year, I say, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, again, it has really been the hallmark, I believe, around this. It has been cuts without consulting the very people who provide the service and the services that have been cut, leaving Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in limbo on where they came from.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister is saying that there were consultations made. I can tell you that the dental association themselves, and they were very quick to jump on this, that with these program cuts coming they did not understand and now we have to get preapproval, I say, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the Scotiabank report for a few minutes. This was the Scotiabank report from 2011 and how this government created the financial mess, that this is a government that created this financial mess itself –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BALL: Scotiabank – and it was not only Scotiabank being the first institution to point out that this government was heading in a terrible direction. There was no question there were lots of people giving warnings and were suggesting that if we do not change our path that, indeed, we would be in the financial trouble that we are into.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, anyone at all who was paying attention to what was happening, anyone, from the editorials, to the commentators, even people on this side of the House, they were the ones who were saying that if we did not change our path that there would be financial trouble looming on the horizon.

Mr. Speaker, all you would have to do really is read the AG's report. We had the AG's report for six to seven years. If you go back over the history of the AG's report, in all of those reports it was suggested, people were then being told that we had to curb spending. We had to be careful because we had to plan for the future of this Province.

Anyone at all, I say, Mr. Speaker, with an objective view, and views that this government absolutely just shrugged off as partisan or jaded, they were not listened to. They all warned government that things needed to change, and that we were spending at an unsustainable pace. Those warnings were out there.

When you spend without a plan, saying simply spend because you could that is not a way to secure the future of this Province. A lot of that happened, I say, Mr. Speaker – spending because you could.

When you look at the AG's reports, all you need to do is go back and read those reports. I am assuming that members opposite have read all of those. I know a lot of people, when you look at the aftermath or the fallout of some of the opinions, that has been expressed. It is unfortunate that we have been taken to the point where we are trying to impact polling numbers, because maybe some of those warnings from even the people themselves would have been a lot more obvious if we did not spend time actually trying to goose some of those polls, I say, Mr. Speaker.

We knew, people knew, everybody, industry watchers that were watching this knew that this pace of spending was unsustainable. We also knew that because of the volatile world oil prices there was significant turbulent times coming for this Province, I say, Mr. Speaker.

The Scotiabank report that I am referring to in 2011; they took a look at the hiring process, as I said earlier. They took a look at the hiring processes and compared us to Atlantic Canada and all the other provinces in Atlantic Canada. They had some interesting findings, and many of those I just spoke about. There is no question, when you look at that you will realize that some of the hirings have certainly not been done in a responsible way.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have seen this within government itself, when you have hired two and three and four and five deputy ministers a month. People who have helped in PC supporters, who have helped in campaigns at

election time, election workers, I say, Mr. Speaker. They were given, certainly, plum jobs at senior level appointments. Just taking and doling out taxpayer monies, I say, Mr. Speaker.

This is what I am referring to when I say the inappropriate spending, the mismanagement. This is where a long-term expenditure plan was required. The core mandate review should have been a good thing, Mr. Speaker. It should have got us back to the core spending. Spending on things that we really need, spending on things that the people of this Province, what they really value, I say, Mr. Speaker. We needed more accountability.

It was just not good enough to say that the process is transparent. It is not just good enough to simply say that the process is accountable. You had to demonstrate, you had to show, you have to clearly articulate and demonstrate that transparency. I can say, too, people in this Province, they realize that Bill 29 is certainly not a piece of legislation that demonstrates transparency; it is not a bill that demonstrates accountability for this government. Bill 29 is a regressive bill, and it is something that is not good for the people of this Province. It is a piece of legislation that I suggest and that as Liberals suggest needs to be repealed.

Mr. Speaker, there is one thing that is clear and as I mentioned earlier, if there is anything that is clear is that this is a government that lacks accountability. It lacks transparency. Bill 29 is the hallmark of this government.

The Premier and her government, in spite of the persistent warnings from the Auditor General, from Canada's chartered banks as I said, from Scotia Bank, from journalists, from commentators, from economists, and members of the Opposition, despite all those warnings, they added and they kept hiring and no analysis was done with all those hirings if indeed they were affordable for the long term.

It is very difficult because people would say to us: Well, who would you let go? It is not about letting people go; it is making the right decisions when they are hired, I say to the Member for

Mount Pearl South. You have to know that when you bring somebody in, when you hire somebody, that the position that you are hiring those people into is affordable. That is the problem. You just cannot bring people in and have them in place for four or five years and then out the door because now all of a sudden you have decided you are affordable.

I told the story in this House just before Easter about an individual who was heavily recruited to come home from Alberta, and, really, he had settled there. He was heavily recruited to come home and go to work with government, and he did. He was very disappointed to learn that he is now laid off, he has lost his job, and has his ticket and he is back to Alberta. We are seeing this; we are seeing many, many stories, Mr. Speaker, about this in the last few weeks.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that this is certainly not a criticism at all of the hardworking Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The people who work in our Province who provide some very valuable services, the public sector employees, these are people that we use, all of us use, if we need health care. When our kids go to schools and receive education. When you are sick as I said and you are in the hospital, Mr. Speaker. We have a very valuable public service that are there to provide those services. People who clear our roads and people who work in our wildlife departments, in every single department within the Province, Mr. Speaker. We have extremely valuable employees. They do a great job day in and day out working on behalf of the people of the Province.

The criticism, however, the criticism for this decision, I say, Mr. Speaker, lies squarely in the laps of the decision makers and squarely in the lap of this government, squarely in the lap of the current Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. You have to take ownership of these decisions. These were not smart decisions, Mr. Speaker, and it is the decision makers who must bear the blame.

It is the same decision makers that are taking to the social media these days, day in and day out,

trying to defend this Budget 2013, Mr. Speaker, trying to defend the cuts and the loss of services that were announced on March 26. It is the same decision makers who would rather yell out at a time when people are raising some questions. It is the same decision makers who routinely ignore the advice of many people, not only in just the last year, Mr. Speaker, during a core mandate review, but they have ignored the advice of many of the experts for many, many years now.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the forty-eight MHAs in this House, I would say there is not – I do not know if there is anyone who sits in this House, there are lots of people here who would have business experience, lots of people here who would have various types of experience, but financial experts, there is no question from time to time we have to go out and we have to go looking for financial experts. None of us here can do this alone. We need to go out and get support.

What makes anybody think, in this House, they can run an economy in the billions and billions of dollars? You just cannot ignore that advice, I say, Mr. Speaker. What we have seen near the eleventh hour was bringing in some of the experts, like Wade Locke.

Now, all you need to do is go back and listen to Wade Locke in June 2011, I say, Mr. Speaker, because he gave a presentation at the Harris Centre. It was a lengthy presentation. Wade Locke, even then back in 2011, was warning about the unsustainability spending practices of this Province. Mr. Locke then made it quite clear that this could not continue, Mr. Speaker.

The only difference in his report in June 2011, I say, is that the price of Brent crude oil, he was then forecasting that indeed it would be higher than it actually is today. What we are seeing is the price of oil falling back. Many of the experts are now suggesting that could even continue to fall back more, which is really not good news for us as a Province, I say, Mr. Speaker.

There have been many experts out there for many years now who have been sending

warnings to this government about the unsustainable spending practices. Mr. Speaker, it has been clear for many, many years that this government and the spending of this government is out of control. You have to ask yourself, if you have been talking to those people, doing consultations with those people, what happened? Why did you just spend and spend and spend? Where were the decisions? Where were those smart decisions? Mr. Speaker, clearly, they were not there.

Mr. Speaker, I can show you that the members of the Official Opposition were not fooled by this. Neither are the countless of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians fooled by this. These are the people who are calling our offices and they are sending us e-mails every single day, I say, Mr. Speaker, asking about how it is we got into this mess that we are into, this wasteful spending of money. What I have heard on more than one occasion, Mr. Speaker, is that this government wasted the best opportunity that we have had in our Province to put in a sound financial footing.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, what happened is that we have seen billions and billions and billions of dollars of our oil and mining royalties that we have received thanks to some very good deals that have been signed by, I will say again, Mr. Speaker, by Liberal governments. People refer to this as a decade of wasted opportunity, when we did have the opportunity to diversify our economy, Mr. Speaker, so that we could build a sustainable future for the next generation of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, Hibernia just did not happen. When you look back at those past projects, Hibernia, Terra Nova and White Rose, these projects just did not happen. The groundwork, the foundation for those projects started in the 1980s. It took a long time to get those projects to where they are today. It took successive governments, I say, Mr. Speaker.

They are now responsible and have generated billions of dollars to the economy in this Province, Mr. Speaker. This is the reason why that when this money became available, it was

incumbent on us as MHAs and as government here, Mr. Speaker, to make the right decisions so that you could prepare for a strong long-term financial footing for this Province. That we would not be passing on something that was extremely sustainable to the next generation, I say, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that is not the case. There were no priorities put on our spending. This government spent because they could, without a plan, I say, Mr. Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, this same government has the gall to come into this House and tell people that somehow the economy of this Province has changed overnight, that Crown prosecutors had to be laid off. Hospital workers had to go because the economy has changed.

Mr. Speaker, the economy of this Province has not changed. Everybody has known for a number of years where the economy of this Province was going. All you had to do was listen, take the advice of the experts who were watching this, I say.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, as people of this Province have had to deal with significant cuts, we have not seen the same kinds of trimming at Nalcor. We have not seen the same kinds of trimming in other areas of this Province. Bonuses were still there, Mr. Speaker, and this company still exists without public accountability.

Mr. Speaker, the day is coming when the people of this Province will have their opportunity to voice and have a say into the dissatisfaction of what is happening and the performance of this government. That is a day that is coming, Mr. Speaker. It is a day that we are all looking forward to because the people who live in our great Province are tired. They are tired of looking for answers and not finding them, I say, Mr. Speaker.

This is a time, Mr. Speaker, when people are looking for answers and they are not finding them. It is a time right now when people are concerned, and they are indeed not comfortable at all in asking questions publicly. As a matter of fact, we have seen a legal aid lawyer in

Gander and seen what has happened when people speak out and ask questions.

Mr. Speaker, this goes right back to a conversation I had just yesterday about an employee who is very concerned but really afraid to go public. Even when they talk to us as MHAs, Mr. Speaker, they are very afraid. They do not want to be connected to anything that we would say. They want to share their story with us, they are very concerned, Mr. Speaker, very concerned about what lies ahead in their future but they are afraid to speak up. This is why in Question Period, even today, we asked the question: Where is the whistle-blower legislation that was promised by this government? Why is it that they will not bring in this piece of legislation where people can be protected, Mr. Speaker?

When they have information, when they have concerns that affect them in the workplace, when they have concerns that affect their families, when they have questions that they want answered, why is it government is refusing to answer? We need whistle-blower legislation that would allow people to go out and publicly ask those questions so that they can get the answers that they are longing for, Mr. Speaker.

For people and for ministers to stand in this House today and say that they are not aware of people who have been threatened and are under a lot of stress today, Mr. Speaker, because the impact of Budget 2013, I would say it is shameful. People indeed are feeling the pressure; they are under tremendous anxiety these days not knowing what their future is.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that has been mentioned, I must say, quite a number of times is that people are tired of this common messaging. They are tired of talking points. They are tired of PR tricks and tired of PR campaigns, Mr. Speaker. They are actually tired of seeing their money spent on PR campaigns.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for that to stop. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, they see through this. They are not fooled by this. They will not forget this. This is a consequence, I say,

Mr. Speaker. When we make bad decisions, there is a consequence and there is a consequence for poor management. Mr. Speaker, there deserves to be a consequence for bad decisions. There deserves to be a consequence for poor management.

When you look at the Budget Speech and this Budget, the Budget Speech itself on March 26, about an hour long, it was really full of the similar rhetoric, the promises and the platitudes that you normally see in a Budget Speech. If you listened to it, you would think that there would be good news. If you listened to the delivery of the speech, you would expect that there would be good news for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, the only thing that this Budget actually delivered, it delivered a lot of pink slips. There were pink slips delivered to a lot of people in Newfoundland and Labrador, I say, Mr. Speaker. A lot of people received pink slips. This Budget delivered little, as I say, except for pain for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, pain for their families, and pain on the employees of this government.

People are waking up to this new reality, this new, harsh reality of the poor decisions by this government, I say, Mr. Speaker. This Budget contained a lot of words. It contained an awful lot of words, but not a lot of substance.

As disturbing as the Budget Speech was, what was left unsaid, what was not said in that Budget Speech, was even more disturbing. We started first hearing about some cuts in early March to wildlife and wildlife management, and the cuts just continued. There were a lot of things that took quite some time to come out before we really started to realize how bad those cuts were.

In days before, as I said, the Budget Speech, the people of this Province started getting their first idea, their first hints of how badly the party opposite and how bad this government has mismanaged the affairs of this Province. The cuts, as I said, were broad and the cuts were deep. The cuts affected a lot of families. They affected a lot of communities. Those cuts

affected a lot of associations, a lot of well-intended people who provide great service day in, day out to the people of this Province. They were all affected by Budget 2013.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the news of these Budget cuts was written on the faces of a lot of the front-line workers who, through no fault of their own, no fault at all, were left to clean out their desks and left to throw in their keys. Simply, their services were no longer required. Get out that day. People were told to leave that day, just within minutes. This is not a way to treat employees of our Province, the valuable employees of our Province who provided great, wonderful services for many, many years. This is not a way they deserve to be treated; however, on the faces of the friends in high places, though, this was not the same. When you look at party supporters who have helped many of those members get elected, the rewards were still there. Those jobs are not cut at all.

Mr. Speaker, the question here becomes one of credibility. It all comes down to a matter of credibility. Does the government retain credibility? Does the government retain the confidence of the people of this Province, I say, Mr. Speaker? The answer to both those questions – the answer to the question about credibility, the answer to the question of confidence, Mr. Speaker, it is no; they have lost the credibility and they have lost the confidence.

The honeymoon for this government, the honeymoon for this Administration, is over. The money that has sustained all the celebrations, all the triumphs, all this money now has been spent. The Premier and this government have lost credibility and have lost the confidence of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, this government is now bankrupt of ideas. Rather than have meaningful consultations with the people who can provide the solutions, the people who are working there day in and day out, these are the people who would have the solutions to many of the cuts that we see. Indeed what happened is that this government panicked.

Without a vision and without being able to make the right decisions, what happens, Mr. Speaker, is that you panic. You make bad decisions when you really do not listen to the advice of the people who have the answers, people who are working front line day in and day out, people who can add solutions to the challenges that we face.

Mr. Speaker, there was no planning; there was no long-term vision. Panic did set in. I am sure that many of the backbenchers across the way have realized when you look at a government and you look at someone to guide you, when you look at seafarers what they would do – and I am sure many of us if it is in the country, even if it is on a snowmobile or if it has been on the water, what you do is you look for something that guides you. For many of the seafarers it has been the North Star. You look for that North Star.

This government, I say, Mr. Speaker, have lost their economic compass right now. They do not have the ideas I say, Mr. Speaker. They do not have the meaningful ideas, the solutions as to what is required to govern and chart a new future for the people of this Province.

The economic compass is gone, Mr. Speaker. What happens then is that panic sets in and people in this Province are left to deal with cuts, loss of services, drained, I say, Mr. Speaker, of the hope and the confidence that has made us proud Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. What a different Province it is when you go back just a few short years ago. Just a few short years ago you could go anywhere and there was hope, there was confidence.

Budget 2013 has destroyed a lot of that hope and a lot of that confidence, I say, Mr. Speaker. It is just not there. The economic compass for this government is gone, Mr. Speaker. The credibility and the confidence in this government is gone.

Mr. Speaker, this government panicked. It panicked for many reasons, I say, Mr. Speaker, primarily because they realized they had no one to blame but themselves. They could no longer

blame anyone else. They just dug the hole deeper and deeper, Mr. Speaker. No one to blame, I say. They ignored the suggestions of the experts who were saying it is time now to manage the growth of this Province, to simply avoid the financial mess that was looming. It is clearly indicated in Budget 2013.

I say to the Member for Mount Pearl South, he asked, what experts? I mentioned earlier, experts like the people at Scotiabank, experts like Wade Locke back in 2011, I say to the member opposite. Clearly, the warnings were all there, I say to the member opposite.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when you look at how we dug this hole, there was no one to blame. One of the things this Administration has done for many, many years is try to blame the situation that they are in on other people; tried to blame the situation they are in on past Administrations, but in this particular case they could no longer do that. The blame rests squarely with the decision makers, I say, Mr. Speaker.

There is an old saying, for those of you who sign the cheques on the front, well then you have to take the responsibility for that. This is a government that was signing cheques on the front. This is a government that were the decision makers. They are responsible for the situation that we are currently in, responsible for the situation that we find ourselves in with Budget 2013.

So, rather than give the financial situation the long-term consideration it needed, they borrowed. Who did they borrow from, I say, Mr. Speaker? Where did they get their ideas? Who did they borrow from? Budget 2013, who do you think it was borrowed from?

Well, it was borrowed right from their federal brethren, I say, Mr. Speaker. The federal Conservatives, Mr. Speaker. Slash and burn policies of the federal Conservatives. Prime Minister Stephen Harper himself. That is the policy. That is the page they borrowed. Mr. Speaker, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve much better. They deserve better, I say. Our civil servants, our public

sector workers, they deserve better, I say, Mr. Speaker. They deserve better.

What do they deserve? They deserve an employer that operates with a carefully thought out plan and not one that is in panic mode. Budget 2013 is indeed panic mode, I say, Mr. Speaker. A carefully thought out plan and one that operates not on a panic mode, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LANE: (Inaudible) I remember what life was like.

MR. BALL: Here is the member opposite again wanting to lay blame. The member opposite from Mount Pearl South wants to lay blame again, Mr. Speaker, not wanting to accept the responsibility of their own actions. The same man who was out goosing polls, Mr. Speaker, against the Coalition for People with Disabilities, not wanting to live up to the responsibilities, trying to lay blame on the feet of somebody else again, I say, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve better. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve better. They deserve an employer that operates with a carefully thought out plan. Instead of eliminating waste at the top, I say, Mr. Speaker, what did they do? They lowered the boom on front line workers and services.

MR. JOYCE: Out that day.

MR. BALL: Out that day, Mr. Speaker. Throw in the keys, we are gone. The very people who provided essential public services, I say, Mr. Speaker. They have no say at all in how the money gets spent. They have no say at all who got hired. They did not come in and sit in a chair and put their feet up and say, I am coming to work now, you hire me. They were hired.

You would think there was a process that we went through. You would think there was planning that took place to put those people in place. This was not by their own making; they did not go into those offices and put their names on the door, Mr. Speaker, put in their phone numbers. They were hired by people. They

were hired by this government, Mr. Speaker. You would expect there was planning put in place that when they were hired and when they were put in place that their positions were affordable; but, no, that is not the case. When the panic mode set in they lowered the boom. Those people had to go, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that this Budget is a disgraceful cap to a period of mismanagement and wild spending by this government. When you look at this and reflect on the last two weeks, it is actually painful. It is painful to the members of the Liberal caucus and the Official Opposition to see that the penalty, the consequence of mismanagement, to see how this consequence is being pushed down to the frontline workers of this Province.

They are the ones, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, who took advantage of a number of those services that have been cancelled. They are the ones who are feeling the consequence of this mismanagement. The people were led to believe that we were living in the best of times, Mr. Speaker. We were told that our future was bright.

Budget 2013, March 26, cast a shadow. It cast a shadow of doubt over this Province, I say, Mr. Speaker, and it has been magnified by the very importance of a sound fiscal plan, something that this government has completely ignored. Even when you go to the 10-Year Sustainability Plan, it is a weak, weak plan on detail, Mr. Speaker.

Once you get beyond step four, which I think is on page 11, for those of you who want to go there and see this. It is a weak plan. It lacks detail. This in no way is something that we would use to guide our future and in no way will get us in the situation where we need to be on a strong financial footing, I say, Mr. Speaker.

The financial performance of this government has been a little scary. It has been very scary. It is short-sightedness, and spend because you can philosophy. That is a lot of what we have seen. The money is available, so you spend it, Mr. Speaker. You spend because you can

philosophy. This has set us back, Mr. Speaker, and the people of this Province do not want any part of that. We have to be more diligent. We have to be smarter than that.

Mr. Speaker, we need a government that we can trust. We need a government that can manage growth. You just cannot take growth for granted. Spending because you can is not the right thing to do. Collectively, as a government, all of us as MHAs, have to make smarter decisions. The government and every government should understand that. We just cannot spend because the money is available. You just cannot spend because you can.

What needs to happen is you have to plan before you spend. There was not a lot of that that went on, I say, Mr. Speaker. All you need to do is go look at the history of our Budgets and you will quite clearly see when you just look at how the spending in the following year connects to the Budget surplus in the previous year. There was a lot of that happened, I say, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we listen every day. We listen every year. We listen every day to the outcry of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are expressing their frustration and their skepticism. Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? We know and I understand how they feel. It is the frustration that has been brought on by Budget 2013. There is a large degree – there is a lot of frustration and skepticism that is out there in this Province today, Mr. Speaker.

I am sure the members opposite, they will have an opportunity. I say to the Member for Mount Pearl South, over the next few weeks he is going to have every opportunity to stand up and defend Budget 2013. If that is how he so wishes, he can stand up and defend Budget 2013, and he can defend on why it is that we have ourselves in this situation that we have been into.

Mr. Speaker, this is why people are skeptical. This is why people have lost confidence. This is why people have lost and have questioned the credibility. I go back to January and I cannot lose sight of this because in January when we first heard about the \$1.6 billion deficit for

2013-2014 and another \$1.6 billion deficit for 2014-2015, these were new numbers to us.

Quite frankly, I can tell you right now I did not believe them. I did not believe those numbers first when I heard them. Just weeks prior to that, a previous member, the Minister of Finance, was talking about a \$726 million deficit. This was based on the Budget back in April the previous year when we were expecting a \$430 million deficit.

Mr. Speaker, you had to question: How did we get there in a few short weeks? Then on the day of the Budget, March 26 – and I know this is very confusing for people who are trying to put all those numbers together. On March 26, the number was \$430 million. In actual fact if you do the forecasting, the previous Minister of Finance back in 2012 was closer than the new Minister of Finance who was looking at those numbers in January. This is why people were being confused about the Budget process. We had seen three different numbers in just a matter of weeks.

Then, on top of that, a huge decision, the biggest financial decision that has been made in the history of our Province, back in December with the sanctioning of Muskrat Falls, we are expected to have confidence. We are expected to believe that the forecasted numbers, that we can do this for not two or three months, not two or three years, but we are in the position that we can do this for fifty years, I say, Mr. Speaker. This is why people have lost confidence in the budgeting process of this government. Government's contempt, the absolute contempt, for the intelligence of the citizens goes way beyond that, I say. Why?

I say, Mr. Speaker, not only did the minister claim to have found this \$1 billion literally overnight, guess what? They have promised to make this magically disappear in 2015. We are back to surplus in 2015. What a magician that would be. Everybody saw through that. Guess what happens in 2015? That happens to be election year. It has nothing to do with going to (inaudible). It has nothing to do with going to surplus. Nowhere in the Sustainability Plan

does it talk about 2015 being election year, not at all, but we are going to back to surplus. We are going back to surplus.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to have that so-called money tree, wherever it is, that is going to bear fruit in 2015. We need to get lots of those planted. As I said, we go back to surplus ironically the same year that it is an election year. Make no wonder the people of this Province have lost confidence. Make no wonder that members of the Opposition are getting flooded with e-mails and their offices are getting flooded with calls each and every day from people who are concerned about Budget 2013.

Mr. Speaker, we have to ask some questions ourselves. Given that oil companies are operating offshore and that they are estimating they will reach the lowest point of production over the three existing wells, the wells that are out there currently operating, we are anticipating that somewhere between 2015, 2016, and into 2017 that this will be the lowest point in the production and that the production will continue to decline.

What we are also seeing, which is a growing concern for anybody that is forecasting right now, is that we were seeing the decline in the price of oil, and even some experts are saying that it could actually be very low. Now, I am not one to believe that it will be in the \$55 range at all, but there are certain people out there who are suggesting that it could be as low as that.

So I wonder if this is where we are going heading into a period of global price declining, the volatility around the Canadian dollar versus the American dollar, how do we ever expect to get back into surplus as early as 2015? I ask, Mr. Speaker, to the Finance Minister: Where is this stash of money? Where is this finally going to come from to make up both for the decline in oil production, the expected drop in the price of oil, and all of that against a currency in which we have no say at all, no say in budgeting, no say in the global price of oil, no say in production, and really no say at all into how we stack up, how the Canadian dollar stacks up

against the American dollar? Make no wonder we have a poor history of budget forecasting.

I say, Mr. Speaker, I would like to be part of that magic. Where is the magic that is going to get us back into surplus in 2015? Making such claims in the face of what we have heard in this year's Budget makes it hard to believe, makes it very difficult to believe this government and their numbers. That is why I say, Mr. Speaker, that this government has lost the credibility and has lost the confidence of the people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want to speak just for a few minutes on the missing salary estimates book that came up in the House of Assembly today and just to raise a point that these were announced today, but this was different than last year because last year we never got them at all and they were never put electronically until January. This was something that we were used to having with our budgeting process, but thankfully today we got them and we will be using them as we prepare for our Estimates, I say, Mr. Speaker.

I want to speak for a little bit about the economy and a bit about the fishery now in the next few minutes. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that this government will not get any quarrel at all when it comes to the necessity to diversify our economy. This is something we firmly believe we have to do. We need to explore ways that we can actually diversify the economy so that it can be used as a strong financial footing for the next generation of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This government will get no quarrel at all about the importance of oil and mining and those industries on how they will factor in building our economy.

As I say, Mr. Speaker, I do find it ironic that we are so far into this already, yet we really do not have an industry around gas at all. We keep referring to it as oil and gas, but it is really not. It is just oil right now. We should never lose sight of the industry that brought our forefathers and sustained generation after generation after generation. Of course, the industry that I am referring to there is the fishery.

In recent years, the fishery has been losing ground in this Province. It has been losing ground to a number of different things. One would think that one of the major initiatives, one of the major beneficiaries of our wealth that we are experiencing today, Mr. Speaker, would be our fishery. It is an opportunity, and we have to continually look for ways that we can help diversify the economy of the Province with the fishery included.

Mr. Speaker, revenues from these non-renewable resources, they will run out, and we know that. They are finite; there is a defined amount that is available. So, we need to focus on other industries, ones that are self-sustaining and that can provide the much meaningful, long-term employment for many, many years to come. Because one day the oil industry will cease, the resource will be exhausted; however, if we manage the fishing industry properly, if we develop it and continue to management is properly, it can continue to be viable and profitable for many, many years to come. This is one way – we cannot lose sight of the importance of the fishery, around rebuilding this significant industry in our Province, I say Mr. Speaker.

In Budget 2013, when you go looking, it offers very little in substance for rebuilding this industry, for rebuilding the fishing industry in our Province. The government's attitude has been one of kind of stay the course, but stay the course always means less and less for the fishery. Stay the course means status quo; status quo means standing still. As you see growth in other areas, if you are prepared for status quo, well, other industries will pass you, and that is exactly we have seen with the fishery.

As we maintain the status quo, we have seen fish plant after fish plant close up. The Premier knows this. She has seen the plant in Burin, in her own district, a plant that has closed up and really not a whole lot said about the plant in Burin.

Mr. Speaker, I know, too, because I have seen this first-hand. I bring this back to my own district, the District of Humber Valley. When

we saw a really busy, bustling community of Jackson's Arm. Jackson's Arm, if you went into that area just a few years ago, you would see that in the summertime this was a community where everybody was working. In 2010, we saw the shrimp plant was closed up. People were persistent. People did stay around, Mr. Speaker; people scratched out a living as best they could.

It was just a few weeks ago, as you know, Mr. Speaker, the second plant which is often referred to in Jackson's Arm as the crab plant, that is now closed up. The people in that community, and communities like Jackson's Arm across this Province, are feeling devastated. They are devastated. They ask the question: Who is fighting for rural and coastal communities, Mr. Speaker? Who is fighting for our fishery?

They feel right now that this government is not standing up for our fishery. Mr. Speaker, even in recent days we have seen, as we are about to begin another season for the crab fishery, the results of the dereliction of responsibility around the crab fishery is all around us, I say, Mr. Speaker. Who is indeed standing up for our rural and coastal communities, Mr. Speaker?

We will see it particularly in this crisis around our crab fishery over the next few weeks, I am sure, and we will not even know if harvesters are even prepared to go to work for what has been negotiated. I say, Mr. Speaker, this is the reason why the people in this Province are losing confidence and losing credibility in this government.

Mr. Speaker, it has been four years since this government promised to rebuild the fishery. Mr. Speaker, two years have gone, two years since they threw away its own plans to save this industry and even in this Budget, there is very little good news for the fishery industry in this Province. We all know that there is nothing, as I said, in this Budget for the people who work in the fishery of our Province, nothing to affect the challenges, nothing that will have a positive impact on the challenges of this once great industry had for our Province.

Mr. Speaker, the rural economy in itself is showing tremendous signs of stress right now. This Budget by this government in particular is really void. It really lacks the ideas, especially around rebuilding the rural economy. We watched this government as they have just whistled Dixie when funding from the Regional Economic Development Boards was actually just taken back. It was not a good day for people who were around those rural economic development boards. This decision threw back over twenty years of hard work from most of our committed volunteers in the Province. We all know, and I am sure lots of us have spent hours, many of our own hours, committed to volunteering with the rural development boards.

One story I will say and I will share today. I did walk in, in mid-March, into one of those offices. An executive director for the rural development board was sat down and he was taking file after file and just shredding paper after paper. Paper after paper was being shredded. The intelligence and all the hard work of twenty years was being shredded, and now getting ready to be sent to some recycling company or sent to be just garbage. It was twenty years of intelligence that was gone, just being shredded. On top of that, Mr. Speaker, one of the comments that was made to me that day is that not only are we just destroying the intelligence, but even the equipment in the offices is going to be given away.

The indifference that has been shown by this government was shocking. It was absolutely shocking when they did not stand up or speak up to the closure of the rural economic development boards, I say, Mr. Speaker. Nobody stood up. Nobody stood up and nobody spoke up when those boards were closed.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk a few minutes. When we look at the economy and when you look at the opportunities, one cannot ignore the significant opportunities we would have around shipbuilding industry. Marystown, as we know, has a world-class facility and a port for shipbuilding with knowledge and a tradecraft in that area. We know that is one area of this

Province where there is significant opportunity to put in a significant shipbuilding industry.

The provincial ferry system, as we know, Mr. Speaker, is in serious need to be revamped. During the last few months we have seen community after community complaining about the ferry service. Rightfully complaining about the ferry service, I say, Mr. Speaker. Yet, this government has not seized the opportunity to upgrade the ferry fleet and protect the shipbuilding industry.

It is content, however, to see our tradespeople head west to Western Canada while their demonstrated need and their trade can be used right here in this Province. If there is one economy that is growing in this Province, Mr. Speaker, it is our mobile workforce. I see this everyday on the West Coast of Newfoundland, in Central Newfoundland, and many of our rural and coastal communities, Mr. Speaker. We have a mobile workforce but it is not going to work on projects within the Province. It is going to work on projects outside of this Province, going to work in Alberta, I say, Mr. Speaker.

To add insult to injury here in all of this, Mr. Speaker, we have recently seen the closure of those Employment Assistance Services sites. Those have closed up, the services previously provided by the federal government. Then, as you know, in 2009 recently turned over to the Province, I might add, with a significant amount of cash.

Instead of trying to help those trying to reintegrate themselves into the job market, indeed, what is happening? Those offices are shutting down. Those offices will be closing up, Mr. Speaker. Instead of meeting those people with open arms and saying, how can we help you find gainful employment? What we are seeing are signs on doors and signs in windows saying the offices are closed. This is very symptomatic, I say, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: No further instructions.

MR. BALL: No further instructions, is right, I say. No further instructions. The offices are

closed, the information is shredded. The equipment will be given away. It is very painful, Mr. Speaker. This is a story that will stay with me for a long time, to see this executive director sitting there shredding paper after paper after paper. Twenty years of hard work just being shredded and thrown away.

It is hard to believe, Mr. Speaker, that this government could not stand up, that this government would not speak up, I say, to Stephen Harper and the closures of these EAS offices. Even their reaction at the time, I say, left a lot of us asking questions.

What happened was when the federal government announced it was going to close up those offices or going to cut funding, I should say, Mr. Speaker, when they announced they were going to cut the funding, what happened was the federal government had given the provincial government a year. Indeed, what happened was the provincial government said, well if you are cutting your funding next year, guess what? We are going to cut our funding this year.

Once again, this government did not stand up; this government did not speak up. As a matter of fact, what this government did is they jumped ship first, Mr. Speaker. Captains of ships would never do that. They would never jump ship first.

This provincial government were first off the mark. They were the first out the door. They helped those workers post those office closed signs, Mr. Speaker. This, again, is a painful message to those EAS workers, those 226 people who are now out the door.

Mr. Speaker, we often hear this government talk about education. Do you know what? We applaud the philosophy. We applaud the philosophy of helping education but unfortunately the actions do not match the words. Even though in this particular Budget we were pleased to see the continuation of the tuition freeze, and that was, of course, brought on by a Liberal government. This was another initiative of the Liberal government. This

government has continued on with that tuition freeze, and this is a good thing.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to education, of course, we were very disappointed to see the cuts at the College of the North Atlantic. This is a college that we hold in high regard, Mr. Speaker. This is a valuable institution in our Province. They have trained thousands and thousands of successful people around the Province over the years. So we were disappointed to see the cuts at the College of the North Atlantic, especially at a time in our history when the labour market is crying out for skilled workers; yet, for some reason they want to scale back the college programs.

We are told if we are going to have a skilled workforce we are going to need in excess of 70,000 people before 2020; yet, here we are, one of the primary training grounds for those skilled workers, what are we doing? We are cutting back, from machinist to first-year engineering courses, to office administration, to arts and business programs. There is a litany of programs slashed at different campuses across the Province. This is not to mention the cuts at ABE or the privatization of ABE, Mr. Speaker.

Anyone at all who has been involved in the economy of this Province knows that one of the major weaknesses we have in our Province – and this has been cited by many, many economists for quite some time now. One of the major problems and weaknesses we have is our low participation rate. That is to say the low number of working age adults participating in the workforce compared to other provinces. Now, Mr. Speaker, what you do not do to solve that problem is cut the very institution that helps you solve that problem; of course, that being the College of the North Atlantic.

In many cases, Mr. Speaker, people cannot find work. They simply cannot find a job because they are not educated or they do not have the right training. We often hear employers saying that there are not enough qualified people around to do the work. That is why programs like ABE are so important; it gives people a second chance. I can give you lots and lots of

very good examples of people who have used this program and the impact it has had, not only on themselves, but indeed on their families as well.

There is one story that I always tell, it is about an individual who did the ABE program. It was close, one in her community. She took the ABE program, went through there, went on to become a health care professional and is now taking a very leading role, a managerial role, I would say, Mr. Speaker, in the area where she lives. She is now setting an example, not only for many other people in the community, but for her own family as well. Her own two daughters are going on, Mr. Speaker, to educate themselves. They have now been challenged to follow in their mom's footsteps in this particular case, and are now making their own career choices for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, it gives Newfoundlanders and Labradorians a second chance. This is what happens, in particular with ABE, it gives them a second chance to finish their high school and qualify for training that they need to find good jobs, meaningful jobs to support themselves and their families. So, Mr. Speaker, there is no exaggeration to say that ABE gave many of our people a new chance for a better future.

Mr. Speaker, I want to stay just for a few minutes with education. We were absolutely shocked to hear of the amalgamation of the Province's school boards, Mr. Speaker. This is not something that people saw coming. I would say, Mr. Speaker, it seemed to be very surprising.

Even people I have talked to within the school board system themselves are quite clearly saying that they did not see this coming. They did not see the day when we would see one English school board and one French school board in this Province. This is not something that they saw coming, Mr. Speaker, because usually when this happens, people would know something about it. That is not the case in this particular case. People did not see it coming at all.

We all know that it is important to have school boards across the Province. One question that

was asked of me when it comes to school boards: If you are going to go to one, why the location? Why is it in St. John's when it is very difficult – this came from people who were actually working on the school boards themselves, when they think about how this is going to disrupt and change their own life style. Why did we not have a school board for Labrador?

I will say that this is something that I heard quite clearly up there last week. They felt that they were excluded from this whole process. They would have liked to have seen and wanted to see a school board for Labrador because the Labrador issues, as we know, are different. Their sense that they have been feeling cut off from the education system – I would expect that the members from Labrador would support this, that it is timely to put a Labrador-only school board in place. If you are going to amalgamate school boards, then at least Labrador as a stand-alone school board themselves is something that they would like to see.

Mr. Speaker, this new approach will not work at all. One of the reasons why I am saying that, Mr. Speaker, is that it is important to have this decision making close to the ground and a downtown headquarters hundreds of kilometres away simply does not work. The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is that we have gone through a process here of locally elected trustees, what role will they play now?

There are many, many questions to be asked that we will ask about the amalgamation of the school boards and the lack of planning that went into this. Elected trustee, what role, what influence will they have now in this one big school board?

The other question that we have: What about legislation around the amalgamation of school boards? When will this be done? Really, it does not make sense to believe that you can do this, that you can actually do all of this in six months, Mr. Speaker. You can actually take all of these school boards, roll them into one, amalgamate them into one board, and you can do that in six months and still be ready to put in a meaningful

way of delivering services to our schools. It is a tremendous task. I do not believe it can happen. Proper consultations should have taken place; it did not take place. I think right now what we have done with this is shameful and it is creating a mess for our education system –

MR. JOYCE: More layoffs coming.

MR. BALL: Exactly, thank you. The member reminds me that this will mean that there are more layoffs coming again, layoffs that we have not heard of yet.

Not only are the people who work in the school boards themselves, but teachers are wondering what the fallout will be. They are asking questions about that they were blatantly left out of the discussion, I say, Mr. Speaker. They feel like they have been left out of this, that there was no consultation, there was no discussion, and that they were not part of this at all.

Mr. Speaker, this is not good governance; this is a recipe for a disaster. This is not good governance at all; this is a recipe for disaster. We need to take a review of this. It needs time to see what the final impact will be.

Mr. Speaker, this is just another indication how this government is just reaching out blindly, just cutting and cutting and cutting as quickly as it can with the hope that people would forget those cuts when the next election rolls around. That is not the case, Mr. Speaker.

This government, this was a desperate attempt to find money despite the billions and billions still coming in from our offshore, I say, Mr. Speaker, more money than we have ever had I say. This was a desperate attempt to find more money. Now we see government – not only are they cutting services but they are jacking up fees as well I say, Mr. Speaker. They have increased fees.

Mr. Speaker, this government likes to say that we have not increased taxes. They like to say that we have not increased taxes at all. I would say, Mr. Speaker, what is the difference between a tax and a fee? What is the difference between

a tax and a fee? You usually tax a service. If you use a service there is a tax.

That is what we are seeing now with some of the fees that have been brought in by Budget 2013. These fees indeed, Mr. Speaker; they are a tax. Where are those taxes? Where do we see those new taxes and where are we seeing those new fees? We are even seeing those in our own hospitals, for semi-private rooms the costs have gone up. You have to pay more now. It is more money to stay in those rooms. The fee there – not the tax, but indeed it is a tax. We know that, Mr. Speaker. The fee has gone up.

What about those people who ride the ferries to work, or they go to their health appointments or even going to school – so if it is work or going to school, to appointments or just part of your lifestyle, Mr. Speaker, every time you get on that ferry the fee is now 10 per cent higher. It has gone up again, I say, Mr. Speaker. Yet this government does not want to call this a tax. If you get on the ferry to Bell Island, Mr. Speaker, the thousands and thousands of people who travel that every day, what is the welcome sign for them? It is the increase in fees for the ferry users.

What about our small business owners, Mr. Speaker, the people who operate those lounges and clubs? They have to pay. Guess what? They have to pay more as well. Their fees have gone up. Their taxes, actually, are gone up. People using our historic sites, the fees there are triple. They have gone from \$5 to \$15. A fee is a tax, I say. Cut, slice, or dice it however you want, a fee is a tax.

What a message this sends to our own residents. Thanks to the cuts in the Tourism budget, we will now see fewer tourists visiting our Province. This was a huge commitment and a huge platform for this government. I think they were planning on spending an extra \$1 million a year. What I am told now is we are now back to spending levels of 2009. We were all proud when we saw the advertising. When we saw all the advertising that was done for our Province, it made us all feel good.

I can remember on many, many occasions when we stood in this House of Assembly and we listened to Ministerial Statements about the advertising programs for the Department of Tourism. It made us all proud. They did receive a lot of awards and we always supported that. This Budget, Mr. Speaker, is \$4 million less, back to 2009 levels, and is setting the tourism industry back, I say.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, one of the things I just learned about in the last few days is that we have even let go of the interpreters who were in our public parks. They have been there for years and years. I asked the question: How long have those people been around? Time after time, the answer came back to me: As long as I can remember. This tells me it was back in the 1980s and the 1990s.

These are not recent. These are not cuts because of recent decisions. These are cuts of great services that have been in place for many, many years for people who went and asked questions to provincial parks. Those interpreters are now gone. We have seen managers at some of our very unique sites and parks across this Province that those positions are cut as well, Mr. Speaker. Make no wonder when you look at the credibility of this government, this is why the people of this Province are losing the credibility in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, it is rather telling, the mindset of this government, when at the same time they are raising fees or raising taxes they are cutting services. The people of this Province now have to pay higher fees to visit our own historic sites. Again, because of the incompetence of this government they are getting fewer services. You get higher fees, fewer services. For instance, it will cost more to visit The Rooms this year. There will be fewer staff at The Rooms, fewer exhibitions and resources. Resources have been cut because of thirteen job cuts at The Rooms, I say, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOYCE: How many?

MR. BALL: Thirteen job cuts, I say, Mr. Speaker.

Services are cut and fees have been increased, Mr. Speaker.

MR. A. PARSONS: It adds up quick.

MR. BALL: It adds up, is right.

I want to speak just for a few minutes now when we look at those services; we will go back to health care. When we look at the cuts we have seen in laser services that came really out of nowhere.

MR. A. PARSONS: (Inaudible).

MR. BALL: My colleague says he knows lots of examples about the cuts in laser services. It is one thing to cut the service, I would say, Mr. Speaker, one thing is to cut the services just like we did with our dental assistance program, but what happened here is that the loss of those services, despite many people we already had in the system, despite many people that we already had waiting to avail of this service, it was just cut. It was cut how? Did you go and speak to the people who were delivering those services? No not at all. No consultations, again.

People were led to believe this was cosmetic. Well, Mr. Speaker, these were not cosmetic. These were not cosmetic at all. You tell someone who is suffering with Lupus if this was cosmetic. No, indeed, laser surgery is a vital part of many of our health care services, Mr. Speaker.

What did not get cut, I say again, Mr. Speaker, was the public relations campaigns on projects like Muskrat Falls. It is still okay to spend money on all of that, Mr. Speaker, hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on PR campaigns but things like laser surgery, no, that has to go. We cannot afford that. We have to change that. They were all on the chopping block.

One other thing that was on the chopping block, Mr. Speaker, and we have a couple of members opposite who live closer to this, was a gym. That was the gym in Stephenville. This was an area where there could not have been any planning done when this was being considered,

none whatsoever, because with an aging population – really, when you look at it, we promote an active lifestyle.

When you look at what this gym was going to do with bringing in events, many events, Mr. Speaker, national judo and many other activities that bring economic development, I would say, to that area. When those people come in they spend money. This was not a community gym that was promoting an active lifestyle within the community. This was a gym that was being used to promote the area and to put national events there.

Mr. Speaker, what happened? It got cut. People were not consulted. People did not know anything about it. Now we have had to go back and keep that open for a short while. That needs to stay there, Mr. Speaker, because these are key pieces of infrastructure that we can use to develop our communities, I say.

Mr. Speaker, this gym needs to stay open. It is used for national events, and even international events, I understand, Mr. Speaker. It is a vital part of the infrastructure in Stephenville.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to raise an issue here now, it is one that I found absolutely shocking. It was hard to believe. I received a call again over Easter. What I was told is that the water coolers at Western Memorial Hospital in Corner Brook had been taken out at a total savings of \$30,000. Can you imagine? We sit here day in and day out and we drink water. Water coolers at the hospital in Corner Brook are gone, taken out. The savings is \$30,000. That is what I was told, Mr. Speaker. Water coolers are gone for \$30,000.

If you picture that hospital in Corner Brook, it has some of the best staff, some of the best health care professionals that you are going find anywhere on the face of this earth. If you are lying there as an in-patient and you need water, there were always water coolers that were available. Sometimes when people would visit they would go out to the water cooler and bring some back to the in-patients. It is not the case now, Mr. Speaker. The water coolers are gone.

MR. JOYCE: Pipes are 100 years old.

MR. BALL: Pipes are 100 years old, Mr. Speaker. Well, I do not think they are 100 years old. I had better be careful of what I am saying. I think it was built in the 1970s, or through the city, yes. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, these water coolers are gone. Right now, if you go in to get your water, if it is not brought into you by the family, we turn the tap on and let it run through the pipes. That is a great message to send to people who are lying in those hospital beds, Mr. Speaker.

These ill-considered cuts just outlined by – Mr. Speaker, this is a long list. These are very simple things that we should not take for granted, I say, Mr. Speaker. This is a long list of the reasons why people in this Province have lost credibility and they have lost confidence in this government.

MR. JOYCE: There are no cutbacks.

MR. BALL: There are no cutbacks. There are no cutbacks to health care front-line services. Do you remember those words? No cutbacks. Well, Mr. Speaker, these are examples that I have just given you here right now; these are concrete examples of what has been happening around our Province.

Mr. Speaker, still on the subject of cuts; some departments, as you know, have been hit harder than others. I want to speak for a few minutes about the Wildlife Division in particular. This group was hit very, very hard. At a time when we know we have a caribou herd in Labrador that is struggling, what do we do? How do we respond? We cut Wildlife.

This is a huge part, a big part of the history of our Province, especially for the people of Labrador, and even right here on the Island. Our Labrador herds are in jeopardy. Here we are, Mr. Speaker, we cut from the very department that provides the management for those caribou herds, I say.

Mr. Speaker, these are very, I think, shameful, shameful, decisions that have been made. When you think of the wildlife management and when you look at it – I know on the Great Northern Peninsula, those people are there to protect some of the endangered flora and fauna that are found nowhere else in the world on parts of the Great Northern Peninsula. These people are no longer available. What makes our Province unique, we will now prepare to put that at risk, I say, Mr. Speaker.

These are things that brought people to our Province; that contributed to the economy of this Province. We are now willing to put that at risk, Mr. Speaker. The effects of those cuts to Wildlife may not be evident right now, but in years to come, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, we will see the effects of this.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the other thing I want to talk about when you think about Wildlife, is the enforcement side of Wildlife. This is a group that has been absolutely devastated. We have seen huge, huge layoffs. As a matter of fact, many people right now are asking the questions: Can we even provide a very meaningful and safe enforcement for Wildlife? Is it even safe to be a wildlife officer any more in this Province?

We know that from Rocky Harbour to St. Anthony, Mr. Speaker, we have one wildlife officer.

MR. JOYCE: How many?

MR. BALL: Just one. Burgeo has lost its wildlife officer.

MR. A. PARSONS: Two.

MR. BALL: Two – lost its wildlife officer, it has lost its DFO officers, and it has lost an RCMP officer. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, we live in a day and age when that kind of enforcement is taken from the community of Burgeo? No cuts in services, I say, Mr. Speaker, no cuts in services at all.

Mr. Speaker, as we know, it is important for us to protect the wildlife in our Province, very

important. When you look at the lifestyle and the types of things we want to do as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, this is a big part of who we are. It is a big part of why people retire here, why people who have lived away for a number of years just long to come home because they want to take part in the unique things that we offer in wildlife. If it is from fishing on our rivers in the summer or if it is moose hunting in the fall, whatever it is, we need to protect this. We need not let this become a poacher's paradise. We need not let this happen.

If you remember back just a few short years ago, Mr. Speaker, we had such concern for our inland waters. What did we do? We could not trust the federal government to provide the enforcement and the monitoring on our inland waters. We felt that we had to manage it ourselves. What did we do? We brought in our own and we said we are going to provide our own inland enforcement. Now we do not see that is necessary any more. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you these cuts in wildlife will have a long-term impact.

What was interesting, Mr. Speaker, is what we have seen from the cuts in Justice. Recently we have seen this government almost fly into contortions trying to spin away, trying to distance themselves from the negative publicity caused by these feedbacks. What happened? We saw a Legal Aid lawyer in Central Newfoundland speak up. Now, when he spoke up, what happened? He was suspended – suspended – by the Legal Aid Commission. You cannot speak up. This is why we are asking today in this House of Assembly again that we need to see whistle-blower legislation so that people can actually feel that they then can speak up freely and that they do not run the risk of being suspended.

It is hard to deny, I say, Mr. Speaker, the impact that the cuts in Justice have had on families, all the families across the Province. Last week, we even heard of RCMP officers that, as a result of this Budget 2013, will lose their jobs. There will be less RCMP officers across the Province. As I said earlier, you can cut, dice, or slice it any

way you want, services will be impacted and it will not be for the improvement of the services for this Province.

It is hard to believe, and we have seen this today, that the operation of the courts will not be affected, the cutting of the number of sheriff's officers that we have seen in our courts, Mr. Speaker. It will happen. It is happening, Mr. Speaker. It is all happening because we did not do the proper planning; we did not do the proper consultation upfront with this.

What we did, Mr. Speaker, is that we panicked and we made those decisions in a panic. Decisions like cutting the Human Rights Commission, I say, Mr. Speaker, closure of the Family Violence Court. These are all decisions that you make in panic.

Mr. Speaker, you can spin it and dance it all you want, but all those bad decisions, they lead to bad outcomes. Those decisions could have been averted if this government truly, truly put meaningful consultations in place and absolutely listened to what people in this Province were saying. Meaningful consultations is what was required.

Mr. Speaker, the cuts to the Department of Justice when you think about it, when you look back at our history, when you look back at the history of those cuts – it is alarming when you think of the Lamer inquiry and on the heels of the Mount Cashel Orphanage that we cannot afford to be cutting to the Department of Justice. This government has not really thought through the decisions and the impacts of those cuts that we have seen in Budget 2013, I say, Mr. Speaker. They certainly did not and they certainly did not do the proper and meaningful consultations that were required.

This is indeed, Mr. Speaker, poor management. The people of this Province deserve better. These cuts to Justice in particular and the other ones that I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, are more reasons why this government has lost its credibility.

Mr. Speaker, these are all reasons why people have lost confidence and lost credibility in this government. There is a lot more especially in terms of fee increases that I could have talked about – a lot of them. I could have talked about fees affecting fishermen, fees that affect loggers. There are a lot of those out there that effect everyday Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, Mr. Speaker. This is the results of these Budget impacts I say, Mr. Speaker. This is a result of this government panicking.

Mr. Speaker, what about the new agreement with our ambulance services? Why is that delayed? What it is doing is causing confusion right now with our ambulance drivers. They need to be in a position where they can make investments into their businesses. Yet, they are in a position where they have to wait another year so we can review the ambulance services.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we all know that there are things that we can do with our ambulance services because they need to get that negotiation started. Many of those service operators are struggling. We need to ensure that those ambulance services, they get fair compensation and that this review gets completed. There is no reason in the world that we cannot get this review done and concurrent with all of this, we cannot get the proper compensation in place.

Mr. Speaker, things that I did not touch on today, as I am about to conclude my remarks, were the Newfoundland Liquor Corporation. They have cut their fees and the taxes that they pay to the various communities across the Province. Mr. Speaker, this leaves a tremendous financial impact on many of those communities. Those taxes, those fees that they are paid by the Newfoundland Liquor Corporation, they stopped paying their taxes. They stopped doing this after many of the Budgets were done.

Mr. Speaker, I have to talk just for a minute or two before I conclude today about Western Memorial Hospital and about the libraries on the West Coast. We have seen significant job losses within the libraries. Western Memorial, in actual fact, even with a new hospital, we will see

less acute care beds, I say, Mr. Speaker. The PET scanner has been excluded and taken away from that hospital. I can assure you that this is not what election 2011 was all about. They were not campaigning on less acute care beds and a PET scanner.

Mr. Speaker, I will, right now, I have used up a considerable amount of time –

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

MR. BALL: – almost three hours now. I am going to conclude my remarks for the day on this Budget 2013. I can tell you right now that this is a government that has panicked in its decisions and, right now, I think that there is a number of programs that we need to take a second look at. We need to look for that compelling argument, but indeed, what should happen is that should be part of the process, it should not be left on the associations, the groups out there, to make that argument compelling. They should be given the opportunity to come in and provide solutions to the challenges that we see, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to make a non-confidence motion for Budget 2013 and I am going to read in the motion.

It says: I, as the Member for Humber Valley, move, seconded by the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, that all the words after that be struck out of the Budget motion and be replaced with the following:

That this House condemns the government for its failure to present the fiscally responsible program which addresses the immediate economic problems of rural areas of the Province as well as the serious social needs that exist in this Province and its failure to create a climate of sustainable economic growth within the Province.

MR. SPEAKER: This House will take a very brief recess while the Chair reviews the motion to see if it is in order.

The House stands recessed for a few moments.

Recess

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker has had an opportunity to review the motion and it is found to be in order.

The Leader of the Official Opposition, speaking to the amendment.

MR. BALL: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I will speak to the amendment. It has been a long day, Mr. Speaker. Of course, what will happen now is over the course of –

MR. LANE: (Inaudible).

MR. BALL: I know the Member for Mount Pearl South is saying he wants to hear more about it. There will be a lot more that will be discussed about Budget 2013, I am sure, Mr. Speaker.

Given the lateness of the hour, right now I move that we adjourn discussion on this amendment and we will return to this tomorrow, I am sure, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the debate will now adjourn.

All those in favour of the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just before I get to the order of business, a reminder for those in the House: tomorrow, April 16, 2013, the Social Services Committee will meet here in the House of Assembly at 9:00 a.m. to review the Estimates of the Department

of Education. That is tomorrow morning here at 9:00.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Conservation, that the House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

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