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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.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today in the House on a matter of great importance, on a point of privilege. I am aware, Mr. Speaker, according to O'Brien and Bosc, page 141, that any time a member wants to raise a point of privilege before this House that he or she ought to do so at the earliest point in time. The issue that I am going to speak to today just became aware to me this morning, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the point of privilege that I want to speak to is indeed very serious. It is perhaps, in my tenure in this House, one of the most serious points of privilege that I have ever seen. I want to reference a couple of quotes to give it some context, Mr. Speaker.

In addressing a matter of privilege, in the section entitled Freedom from Obstruction, Interference, Intimidation and Molestation in Bosc and O'Brien, they state very clearly, "Members are entitled to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed. The assaulting, menacing, or insulting of any Member on the floor of the House or while he is coming or going to or from the House, or on account of his behaviour during a proceeding of Parliament, is a violation of the rights of Parliament. Any form of intimidation ... of a person for or on account of his behaviour during a proceeding in Parliament could amount to contempt.

Mr. Speaker, my comments are reflected in a point of privilege which I suggest to you, and I hope to prove to you, constitute a point of privilege and/or contempt of this Parliament.

Further, Mr. Speaker, speakers in many Houses of Commons and other provincial Legislatures and elsewhere "have consistently upheld the right of the House to the services of its Members free from intimidation, obstruction and

interference." One speaker in 1973 ruled that he had "no hesitation in reaffirming the principle that parliamentary privilege includes the right of a member to discharge his responsibilities as a member of the House free from threats or attempts at intimidation".

"If an Hon. Member is impeded or obstructed in the performance of his or her parliamentary duties through threats, intimidation, bribery attempts or other improper behaviour, such a case would fall within the limits of parliamentary privilege. Should an Hon. Member be able to say that something has happened which prevented him or her from performing functions, that he or she has been threatened, intimidated, or in any way unduly influenced, there will be a case for the Chair to consider."

Mr. Speaker, all of us recognize in this House, serving as an MHA in the provincial government, in any government, in fact, but certainly in the provincial government, has good times and bad times. We recognize that. There is at least one member opposite who can attest to that, I am sure, having served in government. We recognize that.

There are times over the course of a government when things are going well and you enjoy a lot of good political life. There are other times when there are challenges. We know that when we run for public office we expect to encounter that roller coaster ride as politicians, but in spite of that, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the people of the Province have an expectation of the behaviour of the people that they elect to sit in the chairs, in the seats in this House. Their expectation is a little higher for us than it is for many members of the public. I do believe, Mr. Speaker, that there have been many instances, not only inside this Chamber but outside the Chamber, where the public has demonstrated that they have a high expectation level for their politicians, and that there are limits.

What I am going to talk about today I believe passes the limit of expectation for the people of the Province and passes the limit of acceptability in this House. We have been very fortunate in

Newfoundland and Labrador for a long time, Mr. Speaker.

We reflect on the bombing yesterday in Boston, for example. We see lots of incidents of that all around the world, civil disobedience. We, fortunately, do not have to be exposed to that. There are events in Britain today with the death and the funeral of Margaret Thatcher and some of the non-supporters of Margaret Thatcher, Mr. Speaker. Of course, there has been the bullying and intimidation, and mass murders that we have seen down in the United States over the last number of years.

All of that, Mr. Speaker, are events for the most part that our Province, our democracy, and our governments have been somewhat oblivious to. It is a behaviour that I do not think for one minute that anybody in Newfoundland and Labrador would ever condone, or any actions in particular that would lead to that kind of behaviour, Mr. Speaker; more importantly, which is what I am talking about today, actions that might lead to some kind of illegal or immoral behaviour. I do not believe for a minute that the people of the Province who are here in this gallery or who are watching at home would for one minute condone or accept that type of behaviour.

We also have seen in Newfoundland over the last short period of time, Mr. Speaker, that the political environment has shifted. We all recognize that it has become somewhat testy, and we understand that. It has been a very tough Budget. There have been a lot of expectations placed on government. A lot of critical decisions had to be made by members on this side of the House and by the Premier of the Province as the leader of the government.

We understand that, Mr. Speaker. We also understand that the brunt of the criticism, while we all share it to one level or another, has been levelled at the Premier. The Premier, like all other members of this House, I believe, expects as a leader of the government that is going to happen from time to time.

Mr. Speaker, what we have seen over the last three or four weeks, perhaps, in particular, is a shift in the way that people are starting to express their views and even in some of the actions that we are seeing throughout the Province. For information of the House, there are currently two interlinked Web sites published on Facebook expressing in what I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, to be the most vile and contemptible language that I have ever seen personally: the desire of protestors to not only intimidate and obstruct government, but indeed to assassinate the Premier.

I want to read for the record into Hansard one of the comments that have been posted. I do this, and I suggest to people that the language is not the best, but upon advice I have been told I ought to read in for the record so that this House is fully aware. There is an individual going by the name of Adam Maher. I have no idea whether this is a real or fictitious name, but the following was posted. As I said, I warn you that the language is strong, “ur crazy shes the most useless premier we ever had i can’t believe no body...” – I am going to use letters and say ‘jfk’d’ her. I think members can figure out what it is. I prefer not to read those three words into the record, Mr. Speaker. “...i can’t believe no body jfk’d her already n sniped her out cuz the whole province is gone to shit cause of that woman”.

There are several others there, Mr. Speaker, I would like to read to illustrate. One of the most recent comments we have found was the Premier was called a “terrorist” – and the terrorist comments were linked to the events in Boston yesterday, posted today, linking the Premier as a “terrorist” to the Boston activities yesterday.

I say again, I cannot believe at all that anybody in Newfoundland and Labrador condones that type of activity or that type of language to be describing the leader of the government – in spite of whether you like the decisions this government is making or not – I cannot believe that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador would condone that, and I will never believe that. I do not believe this House ought to condone those activities either, Mr. Speaker, but

I want to move on because there are a few other things that I do want to say to you.

Some of those postings, Mr. Speakers, while I just became aware of that today, people who have advised me about it tell me that there were many other stronger ones, and I do have a list here. I will not read all of them, but many of them have been purged, Mr. Speaker. They were posted long enough to show people who were members of the group, what the group stood for, what the group represented.

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that if people have the courage to post those comments in a public forum like Facebook, with such vile and direct and obscene language, then one, as I am advised as the Justice Minister, one has no alternative but to consider those as threats and to consider that what is said in the comments ought to be taken very seriously, Mr. Speaker. As Justice Minister, I, of course, deal with the police on a regular basis, and I am advised that you do not take any of those things for granted. You assume that they are valid comments and valid threats.

Together, Mr. Speaker, I reference those particular comments. These Facebook sites – there are two linked together – are calling for a protest here at Confederation Building on Friday. Now, a protest at Confederation Building in and of itself would not seem out of the norm. We have seen lots of them over the years on any number of events.

The key here, though, Mr. Speaker, is some of the threatening comments. In particular, the comments directed at the life of the Premier in particular. The person who made those comments is also involved in both particular groups and providing leadership to both particular groups, and they are supported by other participants. Mr. Speaker, the Facebook site has a membership list, which is bringing me to the point I want to make.

There is a membership list. In order to be a part of this group, in order to support this group and to tell people of Facebook and the world that you believe the things that are posted on this

group and that you are prepared to stay a part of this group because you think the things that are being said there on this site ought to be done – and people who are part of Facebook or social media would understand. I do not need to explain all of this. That is how Facebook works. You join a group, generally, like you do in the public, Mr. Speaker, because you support the values and you support the objectives of the group and you support what the people of the group are doing.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, there are many prominent people who are members of that group. Alan Moulton, a leader with the FFAW, for example, is a part of it, one of the leaders of the FFAW. There are many others. There is also, Mr. Speaker, a member of this House of Assembly who is a member of that group. I believe that that constitutes a point of privilege in no uncertain terms.

In this Province, Mr. Speaker, we have seen a months-long orchestrated campaign now by public sector unions in our Province to try and encourage government to take a certain path, a certain direction with respect to the financial priorities of the government, the future of the Province and the budgetary decisions in particular, and to try and knock us off course. We accept that. That is part of what happens in political life. It is part of trying to influence and develop social policy.

To see the kind of rhetoric that we are seeing on these Web sites, Mr. Speaker, over the last number of days, threats to the life of the Premier, threats to burn down the Premier's home. By the very nature of the comments, Mr. Speaker, the Premier of the Province, who I submit to you, is like most other people here. She happens to be a mother with children, and she happens to be a grandmother, a grandmother who has regularly grandchildren in her home.

I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that the group and the members of that group of which there is a member sitting in this House today, who is endorsing and supporting that – threats to her life and threats to her home, implicit in that are threats to her family, to her children and her

grandchildren. Mr. Speaker, that, in my view, is reprehensible and totally, totally unacceptable. Not just for the members of this House, Mr. Speaker, but I believe for the members of the general public who are watching at home and who pay attention to politics. I do not believe for one minute that people in Newfoundland and Labrador support or condone that kind of activity.

Every day, Mr. Speaker, we face a barrage of questions and debate back and forth by members opposite because it is their goal to defeat this government. That is the way democracy works. We accept that, Mr. Speaker, for what it is. We accept the lobbyists and those who try to advocate and influence social policy, Mr. Speaker. That is part of the process of democracy.

What is happening today with a member of this House supporting and participating in that kind of activity is beyond the pale, Mr. Speaker. I submit to you, as I would to members of this House and members listening, what kind of message is that sending to the people of the Province, to our children in the Province when we talk about bullying and harassment and intimidation? It was only a short while ago we had anti-bullying day in schools, Mr. Speaker, for our children.

To think that we are here today talking about a point of privilege because a member of this House is part of a group whose members are advocating that we kill the Premier. I cannot believe the day would ever come while I was sitting in this House that we would be talking about that.

Mr. Speaker, the member that I am referencing, who is a supporter of that group, is the NDP Member for St. John's Centre. Mr. Speaker, I ask that you rule that there is indeed a case of prima facie breach of privilege and I ask that the House be directed to take action under the following motion:

WHEREAS two interlinked Web sites published on Facebook with the explicit support, public support and participation of the New Democratic

Party Member of the House of Assembly for St. John's Centre have included grievous threats to intimate, obstruct and assassinate the Premier of our Province;

BE IT RESOLVED that the House directs that the Speaker commission an investigation of these threats and take appropriate action; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Member of the House of Assembly for St. John's Centre be suspended from her position as a member in light of her public support for and participation in these activities.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party, to the point of privilege.

MS MICHAEL: To the point of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, I am quite disturbed by what the House Leader has presented in terms of the content. I, too, do not condone the kind of language, the kind of actions that the House Leader is speaking of; however, this is the first time that I have heard of what he has put forward in terms of the Member for St. John's Centre, so I am requesting a short recess so that we can talk about this, Mr. Speaker, before coming back to the House to address the issue.

I am presuming that is in order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: To respond to the Leader of the Third Party's question, I have heard your comment with respect to the point of privilege raised and I will hear comments from other members of the House who may wish to make comment before I make a comment myself.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader, to the point of privilege.

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

I would just like to say at this juncture that I think a recess may be needed to review this, but at that point I do have comments I would like to

make to this very serious issue that has been brought up. I do believe a recess – I have no issue with a recess at this time to review it because, obviously, it is a very serious matter.

MR. SPEAKER: Are there further comments to the point of privilege raised?

There being none, the House will take a brief recess for the Speaker to consider whether or not there is a prima facie case of privilege being breached.

With respect to the request for a recess to consider the issue and come back and present further comments, I will reserve any judgement with respect to that until I have had a chance to review it myself to determine whether it is a prima facie case. If there is a prima facie case, then there is a method for the House to deal with it and at that time anybody else who may want to make representation at that time will be given the opportunity.

The Speaker will consider first if there is a prima facie case of privilege, and until such time as I have done that, this House stands recessed.

Recess

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I have had an opportunity to review the statements presented by members with respect to the point of privilege raised by the hon. Government House Leader and I want to share with the House my ruling.

As members of this House, we are granted certain privileges and these include the right not to be molested or intimidated in carrying out our parliamentary duties. We also have the right to say things within this Chamber which may be subject to House discipline which may be, by virtue of our privilege, exempt from the normal civil and criminal remedies of the rest of society. With these privileges comes a great responsibility.

As the Speaker, I find myself once again in a position of having to remind members of the

care which they must take when engaged with social media. Twitter and Facebook are wonderful, modern tools allowing us to maintain a connection with our constituents, our friends, and our colleagues as never before. With the use, comes this: a responsibility to use them wisely. That responsibility includes holding yourselves to a higher standard than would be accepted and acceptable for the general public.

I find the comments on Facebook referred to by the Government House Leader to be offensive and intimidating. They certainly require that we examine ourselves as to whether or not this is the kind of discourse that we wish to become involved with.

I have taken the time to examine the Facebook pages in question and have found that the Member for St. John's Centre appears on the list of members of this Facebook, and was invited to join that Facebook group on April 11, 2013. There is no way, however, of determining how this participation was initiated and accepted. There is no evidence that the member made actual comments on this site that would directly connect her to the offensive statements.

In this regard, as stated by Maingot, *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, page 227, "...the Member is entitled to receive the benefit of the doubt." I believe that the benefit of the doubt here extends to any findings of a breach of privilege of the House of Assembly or its members. It cannot be clearly and unequivocally stated that the Member for St. John's Centre was herself carrying out an implied or actual threat; therefore, there is no prima facie case of breach of privilege.

Despite this, such comments, though, diminish the work that we do in this House. An affiliation with this type of discourse by any member of this House is contemptuous of what we do, regardless of the role as a member of the Official Opposition or the Third Party or government.

As stated in O'Brien and Bosc on page 97, "Telecommunications, including... the Internet, should therefore not be used to transmit otherwise defamatory material." I want to

broaden that to include the need to avoid the transmission of threatening material and participation in activities that might be seen to be threatening.

Consequently, I find that there has been a contempt against this House. I ask that the member apologize for any disrepute that she may have brought upon this House of Assembly by participating in a social media site which clearly targets a Member of the House of Assembly.

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I feel that I –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker has asked the member to apologize. Apologies in this House are to be without qualification and simply put.

I call upon the Member for St. John's Centre.

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will not apologize for something that I have not done. I am sorry; I cannot apologize to the House.

I would also like the opportunity to speak –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker has made a ruling. The Speaker has asked the member to apologize. I ask for the second time, if the member would apologize to the House?

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I wholly do not condone violence in any way, shape, or form. I cannot apologize for something –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker is going to ask for the third and final time for the Member for St. John's Centre to apologize to the House.

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Out of great respect for this House, I cannot apologize.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the Sergeant-at-Arms if he would escort the Member for St. John's Centre out of the Assembly.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have members' statements from the Member for the District of Lewisporte, the Member for the District of Humber Valley, the Member for the District of St. Barbe, the Member for the District of Kilbride, the Member for the District of Terra Nova, and the Member for the District of Port au Port.

The hon. the Member for the District of Lewisporte.

MR. VERGE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the tremendous work done by volunteer firefighters throughout my district. Today, I especially mention the firefighters from Lewisporte who recently held their firemen's appreciation dinner.

Lewisporte Fire Department was formed in 1949, and currently operates under the very capable leadership of Chief Barry Budden. They have a full complement of thirty members and they have no recruiting problems.

At this year's celebration, Keith Budden was awarded the firefighter of the year award, while Jim Ryan and Barry Budden both received their thirty-year service pins. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Ryan family have given ninety-nine years of service to our fire department, while the Budden family have given ninety-two years of service. The contribution made by these two families is admirable, and I want to especially thank them today for the investment they have made into the care and protection of our citizens.

Members of the House of Assembly, would you please join with me in recognizing and showing our appreciation to the many men and women who volunteer their time to fire departments throughout this Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Humber Valley.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to commend Mr. Clarence White, a teacher at Elwood Regional High in Deer Lake, on receiving the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association Special Recognition Award.

Mr. Speaker, the NLTA Special Recognition Award is an annual award presented to an NLTA member who, while fulfilling their role as a teacher, has made significant contributions to cultural, social, and to the community life within our Province.

Among his volunteer activities, Mr. White started an outreach program titled Todd's Place in recognition of a young man from Deer Lake who was tragically killed in an industrial accident. This program is for local men who have had issues with alcohol and substance abuse.

Mr. Speaker, this outreach program has become a life-changer for many in the Deer Lake area. Those Clarence helped are proof that with support and commitment, there is a life outside of drugs and alcohol.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Clarence White on receiving this prestigious award, and I ask all members in this House to join me in congratulating Clarence for being recognized with this esteemed honour.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, today I pay tribute to a man who contributed unconditionally to our society, the late Howard Joseph Lavers. His tragic death on February 21 while on patrol left a void in his family, his community, his region, and his profession that will remain for a very long time.

A Wildlife officer since 1974, Howard Lavers made quite an impression. You could tell he took great pride in protecting our fish and wildlife by the way he wore his uniform and conducted himself. You could see that he was a man of great integrity by the way he gave evidence in court; never avoiding tough questions yet never varnishing the truth.

The measure of this man was the fact that his mourners far exceeded the capacity of his church and completely filled a large school gymnasium. In addition to those near and dear to him were hundreds of officers from as far away as New Brunswick, Quebec, and Ontario.

Howard will be greatly missed by his family, by the Peace Officer family, and by the people of the District of St. Barbe.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in paying a tribute to the late Howard Lavers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for the District of Kilbride.

MR. DINN: Mr. Speaker, I stand in this hon. House today to recognize the accomplishments of the St. Kevin's Junior High School Girls Cross Country Running Team that won the regional championships at Placentia in early October. They also won the provincial title held in Stephenville at the end of October. The girls captured four of the top ten spots and were by far the fastest team at the provincials.

Briana Pender was the faster runner for the Goulds team coming third overall, but first among competitors; and the second fastest was Emma Power, followed by Breena Power of St. Kevin's who came in third. Other members of the St. Kevin's team were: Grace Bennett, Hannah Lewis, Brianna Dowden, Angela Greene, Stephanie Aylward, and Kristyn Lee.

Students of St. Kevin's attended an assembly in the team's honour the Monday following their teams return from Stephenville.

I ask all Members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating this fine team from St. Kevin's Junior High.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. S. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, today I recognize David Saunders Jr. of Glovertown, an advocate for the arts and his role in preserving our heritage.

Mr. Saunders has recorded local history, teaches and performs traditional music, organizes cultural heritage fairs, and runs an international artist in residency program in Terra Nova National Park.

Dave is passionate about theatre, music, and the visual arts. He has received the highest honour for his work with Parks Canada: the CEO's Award of Excellence.

In his spare time, Dave is involved with the Glovertown Museum, Glovertown Lions Club, local Crime Stoppers, Wooden Boat Museum of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Heritage Foundation for Terra Nova National Park. He also volunteers his talents for numerous fundraisers in the region. Dave is a musician, singer, songwriter, actor, photographer, emcee, and sculptor. Mr. Speaker, his last sculptural creation is the nine-foot tall Buzz Lightyear

standing in the cafeteria at the Janeway Hospital; I am sure many of you have seen it.

Dave received some unexpected attention when a short video of him, as Clayton from Clayton and I knows it, was posted on YouTube a short time ago. Mr. Speaker, I checked it out this morning and it has over 100,000 views, and I am told a sequel may be in the making.

I ask all hon. members to join with me in recognition of this multitalented individual, Mr. David Saunders of Glovertown.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CORNETT: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Stephenville Lions Club on their sixtieth anniversary.

Over the years, the lions and lionesses of the club have given and continue to give of their time, talents, and resources in order to make our community a better place and support those in need, and they are to be commended for this.

The Stephenville Lions Club continues to raise funds for important community programs and services, such as the Bay St. George Sick Children's Foundation, the Children's Coat Campaign, and the Community Market and the Community Garden.

The club, Mr. Speaker, has a long and proud history of making a positive difference in the community and their efforts have truly benefited the residents in Stephenville and the surrounding area.

The lions and lionesses have a lot to celebrate and should be proud of their history with community involvement and selfless service.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members of this House to join with me in congratulating the Stephenville Lions Club on their diamond

anniversary and wishing them another sixty years of great success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Ministerial Statements.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: Mr. Speaker, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador recognize that climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing jurisdictions around the world and that action is required. Northern regions are most at risk and impacts are already affecting the culture and economy of many of our northern communities. This is why our government has entered into a partnership with the Nunatsiavut Government to help combat climate change in Northern Labrador.

The Sustainable Communities Initiative will help ensure that Inuit communities have the information and support needed to adapt to the already occurring and unavoidable impacts of climate change, while also improving resilience. Northern areas are experiencing the most significant impacts of climate change, including reduced ice conditions, unstable and thawing permafrost, and changes in wildlife and vegetation. Mr. Speaker, this initiative will pay particular attention to understand how climate change is affecting their infrastructure and focus on community sustainability planning.

Mr. Speaker, in Charting Our Course: Climate Change Action Plan 2011, our government committed to working with Northern Labrador communities on issues pertaining to climate change adaptation. Through the Sustainable Communities Initiative, we are fulfilling this commitment and working to promote best practices in community development in the north. Appropriate planning and building

practices support long-term sustainability will help minimize the impacts of climate change on our northern region into the future.

As a coastal province, Mr. Speaker, there is no question that Newfoundland and Labrador is exposed to potential impacts of climate change such as sea-level rise, coastal erosion, stronger storms and flooding. Our government is taking proactive action to help minimize the effects of climate change which will be seen in communities across the Province, including our northern communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see that this government has entered into an agreement or a partnership with the Nunatsiavut Government on climate change. Mr. Speaker, I realize this is an uphill battle because the north is the first indicator of climate abuse. The indicators are in weather changes, the impacts on sea levels and ice conditions. These impacts, Mr. Speaker, travel down to affect animals and vegetation.

Mr. Speaker, I can remember as a teenager in high school skipping school to go seal hunting commercially. We spent our time out on the sea ice until mid June. Mr. Speaker, nowadays we are out in a boat by mid May, and it is that much later in the fall.

Polar bears in Nunatsiavut are increasing. Why? Because they are travelling east, Mr. Speaker. The downside is after Labrador there is nowhere else to go, so there is a concern.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that climate change affects us all. In a recent *Downhome* magazine the front page says Newfoundland is

sinking. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to make it clear with all hon. members, as long as Newfoundland is connected to Labrador she will never sink.

Thank you.

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement.

I wonder how the minister plans to achieve this after government's deep and brutal cuts to the Department of Environment and Conservation. I commend him on the effort of trying to reach an agreement with the Nunatsiavut Government on climate change, but again, with the gutting of Environment and Conservation that is happening, let me tell him what is happening.

There is roughly a 25 per cent cut in the departmental budget, which includes some of the things he has covered in this initiative; cuts to biodiversity monitoring and work. Also, he is dealing with a 50 per cent cut to REEP which deals directly with climate change and the consumption of fuels, Mr. Speaker. So until we see some real action as regards to the programming he already has under it, it makes one wonder exactly how he is going to be able to undertake the work that he has promised to undertake in this particular program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today in this hon. House to highlight a number of key accomplishments we have made to strengthen the transportation network

throughout our Province and to reaffirm our steadfast commitment to continue to upgrade our roads and highways.

Our government invested more than \$165 million in road, bridge and highway construction last year with an additional \$60 million in federal support for a total investment of \$225 million. Budget 2013 provides \$169 million with an additional \$77 million through infrastructure agreements with the Government of Canada for a total investment of \$249 million for road, bridge and highway construction in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, our government has made tremendous progress on the construction of the Trans-Labrador Highway, with a total investment of \$450 million to date. We will complete the last full season of paving on Phase I and start widening and paving sections of Phase II and III. We look forward to celebrating the completion of Phase I next year.

Significant road construction projects recently completed include the Kenmount Road Overpass and the Torbay Bypass which have improved the transportation network on the Northeast Avalon considerably. Construction of a four-lane divided highway from the Massey Drive Interchange to the Corner Brook Industrial Access Road helps enhance the flow of traffic through the region.

Mr. Speaker, we will see major Trans-Canada Highway rehabilitation projects undertaken this year, including work near Stephenville and Gander. The Conception Bay South Bypass will be completed this year and construction will continue on the Team Gushue Highway.

Bridge work continues to be a priority. Our government is replacing the bridge at Little Barachois Brook and Robinson's River Bridge on the west coast and E.S. Spencer Bridge over the Terra Nova River. Construction will also soon begin on the Sir Robert Bond Bridge and the Placentia Lift Bridge.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, these responsible decisions we make today encourage economic growth, encourage job creation and stronger communities. We will continue to work hard to rebuild our Province and to improve the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement.

If you listen to the minister only, you would think he was the one who invented pavement, roads and bridges all across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, as if there was nothing done ever before. I will say to the minister, I usually say there has been a lot of work done on the roads in Newfoundland and Labrador. There is absolutely no doubt about that, and I commend the minister for some of the work that has been done.

What I find, Mr. Speaker, so odd is that every year there is a \$50 million or \$40 million carryover, which is announced, then re-announced, and then re-announced. By the time you get to the actual amount per year, it is a lot less than what the minister is announcing today.

Mr. Speaker, even with the Trans-Labrador Highway, I am glad they are going to follow up on a great Liberal project that we started. I am glad they got the funding from great Liberal projects like Voisey's Bay and Terra Nova. I am just glad we helped to pave the way, and I am glad I was one of the members who voted for bringing the money to Newfoundland and Labrador for these great projects.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I thank the hon. minister for the advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, this year we are also going to see another survey done as regards to the worst roads in Atlantic Canada. I would like to remind this government that we have a long road to go before we see a final plan, a strategic plan for the reconstruction and the rebuilding of some of the roads in this Province.

I saw the Robert Bond Bridge. It should never have waited that long until we saw a government investment in it. If he took the time to actually look underneath the Robert Bond Bridge, Mr. Speaker, he would probably be looking at the chunks of concrete that are coming off the bottom of it. It is dangerous now as it is.

This government also has to remember that it has the responsibility to look after some of the roadwork and the bridge work that is badly needed going through some municipalities in this Province. We are looking forward to hearing some more input by the government in the form of money towards roads and bridges going through the various municipalities in this Province as well.

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.

Yesterday the Premier said that Hansard can come back to haunt you. She then admitted to waste and extravagance in her government by saying, "one thing we are not going to do is

continue to have waste, extravagance, and poor spending in this government”, which was your government, I say, Premier.

So I ask the Premier: What waste and extravagance in your government were you talking about?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when we took on core mandate analysis over a year ago, we recognized that successive governments had been doing things in the same way for a very long time and they were probably not serving the interests of the people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that we were spending over \$9,000 per person per year in an ABE program in the College of the North Atlantic when it could be delivered by the private colleges cheaper, when it could be provided by not-for-profits cheaper with higher success rates. Even beyond that, we needed to dig deeper to find why in this Province it costs so much when the most expensive program in the rest of Atlantic Canada was only \$2,300 per person per year, Mr. Speaker, we knew that action was required.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the media this morning the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs said that people speaking out about cuts to cultural programs were merely finding a cause to complain. Now we understand that if you are a justice official the argument is compelling, if you are a student or teacher it is noise. If you are someone from the cultural industry, well it is merely complaining.

I ask the Premier: Do you agree with what your minister said this morning, and really, what makes a compelling argument?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a compelling argument is not to do things in the same old way, in a way that does not serve the best interests of the people of this Province. When people come forward and say we really ought to continue to do things this way because it serves the people of Newfoundland and Labrador better and demonstrates in very concrete arguments why that is so, this government is more than prepared to listen, Mr. Speaker.

One thing that marks this government is our response to the people of the Province when they have something to say. We have demonstrated that injustice. If somebody can come forward and demonstrate to the people of the Province why \$14 million, for example, that is earmarked for people trying to reattach themselves to the workforce should be spent in the way that it has in the past, we will consider that as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier did not answer the question about if she agreed with her minister's comments this morning that they were just merely complaining. I will assume by not answering she actually supports that.

The Premier has mismanaged this process from the beginning by creating different standards I say, Mr. Speaker, for compelling arguments and not being clear on where people could express

their concerns. On top of that, she has refused to meet with a number of community groups. Community groups like the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities and there are many, many others.

I ask the Premier, based on your answer: How can people with those compelling arguments, where do they meet you when you have been refusing to have meetings?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition stood in the House here yesterday, and he stands again today, complaining about the cuts we have made, for example, to the ABE program. I have not had a request to meet with anybody who has put forward compelling reasons, or any kind of reasons, why the ABE program should be maintained in the way that it is.

I invited the Leader of the Opposition yesterday that perhaps he might want to put forward a compelling reason, a compelling argument, as to why we should continue that spending. He disavowed any knowledge of the process. He says he does not have any information, any expertise, around this issue. So how can you offer an opinion, one way or the other, about whether or not these cuts were required?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: It seems to me the Premier does not have the information either. She has not met with those groups. So how could you expect to have the information when the Premier herself has refused to meet with those people?

Premier, I take it today that you are willing to meet with this group. Well, do you want to set a date maybe and we could talk about that later?

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2013 made deep cuts to law enforcements in the Province. We are now hearing that even RCMP are looking for officers to leave the Province.

I ask the Premier: Will you admit that by cutting funding to the RCMP, you have further compromised the enforcement in our Province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what we are hearing from the Leader of the Opposition is that he does not support effective spending of the money that belongs to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador so that they can get the best service available, so we can move from a program that is being delivered and only gives a 30 per cent success rate when we have evidence that much higher rates of success are found in the private sector and in not-for-profits.

Mr. Speaker, will the Leader of the Opposition tell us what programs he would cut to get us to a half billion dollar deficit, which is still pretty significant, I say to the Leader of the Opposition? What programs would he forego, Mr. Speaker? What cuts would he give to the people of the Province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier, again, did not answer the question. I would love to have that discussion because I can guarantee you now that if I were the Premier

of this Province, we would not be into the situation we are into right now. We would be planning much better the finances this Province. We would not be waiting ten years to put a Sustainability Plan in place.

Will the Premier please answer the question? Will you admit that by cutting funding to the RCMP, you have further compromised the law enforcement in this Province? Please answer the question.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to inform the Leader of the Opposition that 145 new positions have been added to the Province in the last number of years in terms of the RCMP –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: – more policing than we have had ever before, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to remind the Leader of the Opposition, some members of his own caucus had the run of this place for fourteen years. When we came in 2003, we had deficit Budgets six years out of seven, and we were facing bankruptcy. We have already seen, and the people of the Province have already seen, Mr. Speaker, their handiwork when they are on this side of the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the Premier is always looking for someone to blame. She cannot take responsibility. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, leadership is about taking responsibility for your actions, something that this Premier has failed to do.

Mr. Speaker, just last month, the Premier announced \$1 million for a joint task force between the RCMP and the RNC to fight against illegal drugs and child exploitation. She is now allowing RCMP positions to leave the Province.

I ask the Premier: How do you justify this irrational and conflicting behaviour?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said in my previous answer: 145 new positions to the RCMP since 2004. That is the work of this government, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Mr. Speaker, just imagine a task force between the RNC and the RCMP – this Province's two police forces, of which we are very proud – to come together to fight child exploitation and the drug usage in this Province and the criminal activities surrounding it, Mr. Speaker, that is growing as a result of industrialization. To be against that, Mr. Speaker, I think is absolutely scandalous.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: I say to the Premier, Mr. Speaker, we are not against that. We are against RCMP officers leaving this Province.

So I ask the Premier one more time: Do you support RCMP officers being asked to leave this Province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The member opposite has heard us answer this question on many occasions. We have made significant investments in policing in this Province over the last ten years. The Premier just mentioned the number of 145 front-line police officers. In this particular Budget there has been no reduction to front-line police officers.

I remind the member that he might want to check his information, because I do have accurate information, there have been no police officers in this Province asked to transfer out of the Province. They are non-rank officers that have been in discussions, and they are not budgetary-related items.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In Budget 2013, government gutted the Wildlife Division, leaving just twenty-two officers to police the entire Province. The head of the Wildlife Federation, Mr. Speaker, says these cuts were made without any consultation to their organization. Mr. Speaker, we have even learned that the government did not consult with their own advisory commission on wildlife issues.

I ask the minister: Since you did not consult with key wildlife organizations or your own advisory committees, what compelling evidence are your harmful cuts based on?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite, first of all, he is incorrect. We did consult with those who provide advice to us on inland fisheries and the leadership of that organization. We

consulted widely. We looked at a number of significant options.

I would also remind the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, that the inland fisheries are the responsibility of the federal government. Perhaps when they are finished getting their former House Leader elected they will ask her to make an impact in Ottawa to see if they can get the federal government to live up to their responsibility to fully fund the inland fisheries.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In Budget 2013 government committed \$382,000 to finish the three-year Labrador Caribou Initiative. We have heard of cuts, Mr. Speaker, to staff who were actually tasked with the work.

I ask the minister: How are you supposed to finish this very important initiative when you have cut the very people who were there to do the work?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: Mr. Speaker, in response to the question from the member opposite, I would have to say that we have invested significantly in wildlife protection in this Province. As a matter of fact, when we took government there were great gaps in our understanding of what was going on, the numbers and so on and so forth.

As a matter of fact, over the last ten years that we have been in government we have boosted the Wildlife Division to the tune of \$2.5 million a year, as well as put in place a Caribou Strategy for \$15 million-odd. Mr. Speaker, that is \$34 million over the last number of years to get us to a place right now where we can make good

decisions as to how we manage these herds as we go forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I was shocked to learn in Education Estimates today that this government has no formal plan to collapse the school boards, like they had no plan in 2004. They are just doing it on a wing and a prayer.

How can the minister have no strategy to educate our children when this government has strategies for everything else under the sun?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, this question is as frustrating now as it was in Estimates this morning, trying to get through to them. Just let me give you a couple of figures, Mr. Speaker. I have said in this House that our student population has decreased by 14,000 students, 17 per cent. The number of schools in the Province has decreased by 12 per cent. School board operations, Mr. Speaker, have increased by 33 per cent.

Is the man suggesting that we take money, put it into the administration of boards at that 33 per cent, and we take it away from teachers and students? Is that what he is suggesting? That is what I am hearing him say, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, this morning has caused so much confusion in Statistics Canada because the minister thought we were in second place in dropouts. In fact, Statistics

Canada thinks we are in sixth place. So he might want to straighten that up with the feds. Not only is the minister flying by the seat of his pants on this issue, he admits he has no transition plan to guide the process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BENNETT: I ask the minister to please extend the term of the current school boards for one year until he gets his act together.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, we are going to be putting a transition team in place very soon.

Mr. Speaker, I truly do believe how deep this member is digging. He is trying to find flaws. I do not believe that this man has faith in our teachers and our school system. Shameful, it is. Shameful, it is, Mr. Speaker. He does not have faith in our students, our teachers, and our entire school system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, this government has cut \$200,000 funding to the West Coast Training Centre in Stephenville as of April, 2013. This centre is home to many fitness and recreation programs, is used by residents of all ages, and has been available to the Bay St. George region for forty years.

I ask the minister: Is the West Coast Training Centre not as important as other recreational facilities in this Province that you continue to fund?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, we certainly acknowledge the support of our government that supports healthy active living and investments that we have made, not only in health care but in sports and recreation in this Province.

In the case of the Stephenville training centre, there are ongoing discussions with the community, a time period where we are going to take a look at how we can continue to operate this facility. Mr. Speaker, the discussions have been positive with the community, but at the same time we have to recognize that through this process it is a municipality's responsibility to operate recreational facilities. We do not operate them as a Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, the residents should ask: Why are you supporting and funding other recreational facilities in this Province and not Stephenville? Why are they being singled out?

Mr. Speaker, the West Coast Training Centre was given a three-month reprieve to allow time for a new owner to be put in place. With over 300 people at a protest, I guess it was a compelling argument.

I ask the minister: Now that the minister admits that the decision was done in haste, will the centre be given a one-year extension to allow them to develop a sustainable operational plan?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, it is obvious the member does not have all of his facts or information because this was not done in haste. There have been consultations throughout the community and discussions with members of the

community for a number of years on this particular issue, Mr. Speaker.

In this particular case, in listening to the people of the region and supporting the council, the extension has been granted for three months at which time we will be calling for an RFP to see which user groups, what value it is to the community, which user groups want to step up and take over the recreation centre.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I say to the minister, if it was done in haste why was Aden White told on a Tuesday to take out 600 judo mats by Thursday? Why was the Newfoundland tae kwon do, which was supposed to be scheduled from the sixth to the eighth, cancelled because the decision was made to cut?

I ask the minister: If you are going to treat Stephenville like other recreational facilities, will you at least give them the privilege of the one-year extension that they are asking for to find a suitable operator for this facility, which the Minister for Stephenville East never had the guts to show up to the meeting out in Stephenville?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting the member is pointing the finger about private businesses operating in government-owned facilities. Mr. Speaker, the decisions that we have made in supporting the recreation for the region is to allow them the opportunity and time to find a suitable operator to work with the user groups so we can maintain that facility. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, private interests, private businesses, we do not operate those in recreational facilities in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

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

I could not believe my ears yesterday when the Premier said what she is not going to do is continue to have waste, extravagance, and poor spending.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: That it was her government's poor spending that did not serve the students of ABE and that it was her government's poor spending that does not provide cancer drugs to people because their government does not have the money. The Premier is admitting that she has not been fiscally prudent or responsible.

Mr. Speaker, I ask then: Why is the Premier now trying to pit one vulnerable group against another vulnerable group?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I remind the Leader of the NDP that when she first came to this House and sat over there as Leader of the Third Party she called on a daily basis for a review of our health care system, because she felt there could be a more effective spending, and a more effective administration of our health care system. We have done that kind of review, Mr. Speaker, and we have done it right across government.

We have found that sometimes departments, without examining programs, without properly auditing programs, old ways of delivery have

gone on perhaps too long, Mr. Speaker. Once we did that, we found efficiencies. We can apply the money much better now across the board.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Leader of the Third Party.

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

I invited the Premier once before, I will do it again, to bring the full report of that core mandate review so we can see the methodology that was used and how they saved the money.

Mr. Speaker, this government has squandered the people's money and now the Premier and some of her ministers have begun referring to needing to have the money to buy new cancer drugs as a reason for the brutal cuts they have inflicted on the public service and the people of the Province. The government has laid off at least four employees in the Provincial Health and Wellness Program. The juxtaposition of those two things, cancer drugs and no money for prevention, having adequate people in the positions does not make sense.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Can she not see the relationship between preventative health care and incidence of disease?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, neither the Leader of the Opposition nor the Leader of the NDP has offered any kind of argument against the positions that we have put forward.

Mr. Speaker, does she believe that we should continue to have over a hundred people in the Whitbourne Youth Centre looking after nine youth? That is the question, Mr. Speaker. If we are spending that kind of money in Whitbourne on ineffective governance of that facility, and if we are paying three times more for ABE programs with a much less success rate than anywhere else in the country, Mr. Speaker, is that what she is advocating here in this House today?

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I invite the Premier to read Hansard later on and discover that my question was actually about preventative health care.

Yesterday, the Premier noted that she required a compelling argument why taxpayers should pay \$9,400 per year providing ABE in the College of the North Atlantic. With a recent whopping \$1 billion inaccuracy in deficit forecasting, it is clear that this government cannot be trusted with any numbers it throws around.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier if she will provide a detailed breakdown of the cost that leads her to state that \$9,400 is the true cost.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Mr. Speaker, never mind the compelling argument, any argument at all from the Leader of the NDP as to why we should not do these things would be welcome.

Mr. Speaker, I am used to the Leader of the NDP demanding information in this House of Assembly, like she did on the Muskrat Falls debate. When we provided the information, Mr. Speaker, two days later she was out in front of the microphones saying we gave her too much

information; she did not have time to synthesize it, Mr. Speaker. So, it does not matter what side of the coin you are on with the Leader of the NDP, she is going to find a way to find fault with it.

Mr. Speaker, we were forecasting a \$1.6 billion deficit in this year's Budget. I have told this House time and time again that we would not have a \$1.6 billion deficit.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

MS MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier and members of her government are receiving the same letters as the NDP caucus is receiving from single mothers and people living with mental disabilities who describe how important the public ABE program supports are to them. There is no private program that will replace this specialized mental health program.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Why is she attacking vulnerable people in the Province who, without government support, will remain on income assistance?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have almost 1,000 people in the CNA program. We have 1,000 people who received the ABE program through other delivery sources in this Province at a much higher success rate. We have all of Atlantic Canada to compare the ABE program to. Surely the same challenges exist in Nova Scotia, in New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, yet they are able to deliver their program at a maximum cost of \$2,300, as low as \$1,200 per person, per head, and the Leader of the NDP is going to stand up here and argue in the House of

Assembly that we should have our ABE program delivered only in the sites of the College of the North Atlantic, not in extra sites we could do with these savings for our (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's Budget promotes the further depopulation of rural Newfoundland and Labrador, up to 700 per cent fee increases for forestry and fishery licences, hikes to ferry rates, job losses, and cuts to tourism marketing, employment services, health care and education.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Rural Development: Why is there no economic plan to create rural sustainability and curb the flow of people from small communities?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Innovation, Business and Rural Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, there has never been a government in Newfoundland and Labrador's history that has invested the time and money in rural Newfoundland and Labrador this government is doing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, again, in this Budget, we just revamped our programs to make sure they meet the needs of all small and medium enterprises in Newfoundland and Labrador, \$47 million. Again, we are investing in the fishery and certainly investing in other

resources, the forestry. We continue to do it up to \$100 million. Then you look at the tax incentives for business all over Newfoundland and Labrador, up to almost \$200 million.

Again, transportation and infrastructure are key components in all parts of our Province. We have invested in high-speed and broadband. This hon. member did not even vote for it in the last Budget, if I recollect. Again, this year \$6.3 million will go into rural Newfoundland and Labrador for high-speed and broadband. They continue to build rural Newfoundland and Labrador and drive that success we are having, and we will continue it, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, youth are essential to shape the future of Newfoundland and Labrador, but Budget 2013 will send them packing. A minister's committee is supposed to provide annual progress reports on the implementation of the once-touted Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy. We have already seen cuts to the forty-one initiatives, with several initiatives yet to materialize.

Nearly six months overdue from its third-year evaluation, I ask: When will the minister of Youth Engagement make annual reports public, and will he continue to invest in the strategy or abandon it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Innovation, Business and Rural Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, we have another switch from the hon. member. He wanted to get rid of it. He said the Office of Public Engagement is a waste of time. We do not believe that. We believe in working with the youth volunteers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Youth engagement is part of OPE. It is important. We believe it is important. We are going to continue to work with the youth of this Province.

What we are doing in this Province is we are giving youth a choice. We are giving them a choice like never before through our post-secondary institutions, through jobs that are available to them, high-paying jobs for Newfoundland and Labrador, for youth to stay in this Province, to live and work in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, and raise a family. They are staying in Newfoundland and Labrador by the policies of this government and this Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

It was open season last week on the Wildlife Division as this department took a severe hit in this last Budget. Close to fifteen positions in Wildlife disappeared with the stroke of a pen, not including the previously vacant positions. It leaves just one officer on the Northern Peninsula to perform any kind of enforcement duties.

Can the minister please tell this House and the outfitters of the Northern Peninsula how he expects enforcement to be carried out with just one wildlife officer?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Justice.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Justice.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: I say to the Opposition House Leader, Mr. Speaker, no worries about answering questions on this side of the House. We just take our time getting to our feet.

To the member's question, I say, first of all, the member has his information wrong. The numbers that he is quoting for reductions in the Justice budget in this Province are inaccurate.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite, it is unfortunate that he is raising an issue in the House about a very private human resource matter. There are more employees assigned to the inland fishery and enforcement division on the Northern Peninsula than he is referencing. There are some personal human resources issues that I am not prepared to debate here on the floor of the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: It seems strange that the minister at the same time can get up and say that it is a federal responsibility and still we do not have support for our own people. Mr. Speaker, cuts to Environment and Conservation go on with cuts to the environment programming. Parks and education staff gone with three of note: Burnt Cape, two positions; Witless Bay Ecological Reserve, the manager is gone; Cape St. Mary's Ecological Reserve, the management position is gone.

Can the minister please tell this House why he cut so much educational programming out of the Department of Environment and Conservation?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: Mr. Speaker, when you do a core mandate exercise, you are going to make sure that you are going to balance out what the duties and responsibilities are to be carried out in that department. You are going to look at the budget that you have and the capacity.

I can assure the member opposite that the capacity that we have in Environment and Conservation, we have well-trained, well-skilled individuals who are prepared to do the work that is put before them. Unlike the member opposite, I have faith in these people carrying out the core mandate that we set before them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

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

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 the 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;

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 decisions to students and reinstate the Adult Basic Education programming at the College of the North Atlantic.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is the second day in a row that I have had an opportunity to stand and enter one of these petitions. It is signed by mostly students; however, I can tell you that the instructors at a lot of these colleges have a lot to say, but they are not allowed to say it. They are not allowed to get out their points on the education that they are providing and what they would like to have to say about this.

I think that is unfortunate because we have heard a lot in this House about compelling arguments. Well, some of the people who are providing this education and the administrators are being muzzled and they are not being allowed to give their input on how we can have a better process in this Province for the delivery of Adult Basic Education. Nobody has an issue with finding efficiencies, but we do have an issue when people are not allowed to say what needs to be said, the experts in the field.

This is entered on behalf of the students. Now, some of these students disagree with the facts that are being given by the various members of government when they talk about the 31 per cent success rate. The fact is that the 31 per cent success rate is misleading. It is absolutely misleading because it does not account for those

people who came in and got the courses they need so that they go on and have jobs. It did not take into account the people who came in, got the courses, and did not get the diplomas, so they do not form part of the percentage, but they went on to other post-secondary education.

Let's actually get the truth out there. Let's get the facts out there. This is just one part; I am going to continue on when I get an opportunity because we are going to get into the money here too because all these facts and figures that are put out are misleading. We are hearing from instructors across the Province. I would like to bring their names forward, but they are afraid for their jobs. They are afraid they are going to be part of this chopping block. Until we get whistle-blower legislation, they are not going to see it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This wording may sound a little bit familiar.

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 the 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;

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

reverse this damaging decision to students and reinstate Adult Basic Education program at the College of the North Atlantic.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Member for Mount Pearl North yelling something about thousands of signatures. I expect there will be lots of signatures in the House of Assembly on this before it is all over. I have had near daily contact from individuals all across Newfoundland and Labrador since government unfortunately decided to compromise Adult Basic Education in this Province and to privatize it and hand it out to their friends who run those institutions. I think it is really unfortunate.

MR. KENT: (Inaudible).

MR. KIRBY: The Member for Mount Pearl North is over there heckling, yelling, and talking about facts. Well, I will tell him a few facts. Maybe he can just inform us here a little bit, because we have been told by the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills through *The Telegram* newspaper that somehow the graduation rate or what she calls the annual graduation rate at private institutions is approximately 42 per cent and the College of the North Atlantic is approximately 31 per cent.

It is probably the first time I have ever seen this across all the provinces in Canada where you have a minister responsible for a public institution who gets up and actually slags her own institution, discredits it, and claims that it more or less is not doing as good a job as institutions that she plans to privatize and hand out this funding to in the private sector.

I would challenge the minister to table the information that led to this, where she got this whole question of 42 per cent versus 31 per cent. I get e-mails from instructors at College of the North Atlantic day after day. I am going to see a bunch of them down in Marystown on the weekend, I say to the Member for Mount Pearl North –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: – who is yelling across the way there. I will see a bunch of those people and students in Marystown on the weekend when we meet to discuss these cuts and other cuts at College of the North Atlantic.

Another thing, the Premier has repeated this line in the House of Assembly yesterday about the \$9,400.

Mr. Speaker, I know my time is up. I will have lots of opportunity. There will be lots more petitions, I say to the Member for Mount Pearl North, on this before it is all over.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

WHEREAS Paddon Home is suitable 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 assessment identifying 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 long-term care.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is my second opportunity to speak to this petition. Yesterday, I did not mention that the Paddon Home is actually not in my district. It is in Lake Melville, but this facility is utilized by all areas in Labrador.

The reason I said that, Mr. Speaker, is so I can tell about the many people who are deserving of long-term care that are not in Labrador. They are outside of Labrador, and the reason for that is because there is not enough room at the existing care facility. I think I could venture to say, Mr. Speaker, that with the investment that is coming, there will still not be enough room in the long-term care facility currently in Goose Bay.

The Paddon Home, Mr. Speaker, has had some work done on it. It needs a sprinkler system; the lights have not been turned off. The heat is not off. This building is vacant. It is ready to go, or it could be ready very quickly, Mr. Speaker, and there are people waiting to get in there.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring attention to a couple of individuals from my district. Uncle Ted Andersen, one of the founding fathers of the Combined Councils, he is residing in the South Coast of Labrador, and this gentleman has family in Goose Bay. We have an individual who is outside of Labrador, from the community of Postville, who would dearly like to get closer to his family.

These are the kinds of conditions that we treat our seniors to? I think, Mr. Speaker, that it is not acceptable. I think our seniors in Labrador are just as important as they are anywhere else. I will certainly be continuing to advocate on behalf of the group that are trying to get the Paddon Home open. I think it is the right thing to do.

Thank you.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the Regional Economic Development – RED boards – diversify, grow, and strengthen economies throughout the Province by providing training opportunities, marketing advice, proposal writing, leveraging funds, collaboration, and other means; and

WHEREAS the federal government's decision to cut the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency is resulting in the elimination of funding to the RED boards and their termination in May 2013; and

WHEREAS 75 per cent of the operational funding for RED boards, roughly \$3.6 million is provided by ACOA, with the additional 25 per cent from the provincial government; and

WHEREAS the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development has millions in their suite of programming, some of which has poor uptake; and

WHEREAS just 1.5 per cent of the Business Attraction Fund of the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development was used in 2011, \$366,800 of a \$25 million budget;

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge the government to commit to bridge funding in its 2013 Budget, which may come from the Business Attraction Fund to help preserve the RED boards in Newfoundland and Labrador who provide support to municipalities, communities, organizations and businesses.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I present this petition here. It is signed by members in the Town of Burgeo. They, like many other areas across the Province, are greatly concerned with the loss of having that on the ground regional economic

development entity there because they certainly did quite a significant amount of work.

If we look at all the things that have happened, there is going to be a daycare centre opened in my district, work done by people in the Regional Economic Development board in partnership with the community, in partnership with the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services to make child care available in the community. This is something that would not be done without having that entity and all the partnerships in place. Losing that is going to be a great loss to the region.

Mr. Speaker, Martin Luther King Jr. said, "We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope." We must really look at the decision makers and really hope that they are going to realize the value of our rural communities, and across the country, across the Province and all the people in it, and look at the RED boards as being a key role in moving that forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Given the hour of the day, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, 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.

Tomorrow being Wednesday, Private Members' Day, the House will open at 2:00 p.m.

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