



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLVII

SECOND SESSION

Number 6

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

Wednesday

17 April 2013

The House met at 2:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have members' statements from the Member for the District of Bonavista North, the Member for the District of St. John's West, the Member for the District of Grand Falls-Windsor – Green Bay South, the Member for the District of Torngat Mountains, the Member for the District of Exploits, and the Member for the District of Humber West.

The hon. the Member for the District of Bonavista North.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to stand here today to speak about a native son of Bonavista North – a young man who has a very bright future ahead of him and has many achievements under his belt already.

Alexander James Maxwell Howse, son of Joan Barbour Howse and the late Maxwell Howse of Wesleyville, was recognized to have a natural proclivity for mathematics when he was recognized for obtaining the highest score in all of Newfoundland and Labrador on the Pythagoras math competition as a fifth grade student.

When he graduated high school, he was awarded the Governor General's medal for highest academic standing in his school, and he spoke with great clarity as his class's valedictorian.

Alex is currently completing his master's degree at Memorial University and has received the Governor General's silver academic award for obtaining the highest academic standing 2011 when he was conferred his baccalaureate degree in science with honours.

Alex is not finished yet. He is planning a doctorate-level program of studies at Waterloo, Ontario.

Please join me in wishing Alex every possible wish for good fortune as he continues his education. Our hope would be that he returns to share his talents with others in our Province. Wesleyville's son – Newfoundland and Labrador's pride.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate St. Matthew's Elementary School for a fantastic effort on its African Well Project.

Mr. Speaker, St. Matthew's began raising money two years ago to build a well and sanitation system in Africa so that other children could have clean drinking water. The school later formalized a partnership whereby Rotary St. John's would match the funds raised and National Rotary committed to double that amount.

St. Matthew's was paired with Chisamba Junior Primary School in Malawi and, Mr. Speaker, this project not only raised money for a very worthy cause, it also raised awareness among the children of the importance of clean drinking water.

Last month I had the pleasure of attending an assembly at St. Matthew's where they officially presented their contribution of \$5,300 to Rotary. It was an exciting event with students and staff wearing blue to show their commitment to clean water for all.

Mr. Speaker, St. Matthew's efforts, when matched by the local and National Rotary Clubs, resulted in over \$20,000 being donated for their African Well Project. I ask all members to join

me in congratulating St. Matthew's Elementary and Rotary on a job well done.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor – Green Bay South.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUNTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, hon. colleagues, I rise before this House today to congratulate the Exploits Cataracts Peewee A and Bantam A teams for bringing home the gold medals from the Robert French Invitational Tournament in Kelligrews in March.

It is always great to congratulate the youth of the district when they work and play hard and take such pride in all that they do. There is no doubt, volunteering plays a large part in keeping the excitement in the recreational sports experience. Parents and coaches, job well done!

Mr. Speaker, the team and supporters will get together today at Joe Byrne Stadium in Grand Falls- Windsor and they will be hosting a special hockey game to raise money for Luke Fifield, one of their players, who became sick while playing in this tournament.

Luke is still at the Janeway receiving treatment for his illness. I have the privilege of being a buddy and a next-door neighbour to twelve-year-old Luke.

Honourable members, please join with me to congratulate the Exploits Cataracts Bantam A and Peewee A teams for bringing home the gold and keeping Luke in our thoughts and prayers.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate Mr. Richard Rich, a Councillor in the Inuit community of Rigolet, on winning the Wayne Earle Community Service Award at the Combined Councils of Labrador Annual General Meeting.

The Wayne Earle Award is given annually to mayor and councillors, past or present, who have demonstrated a long-term commitment to municipal council and to their community.

Richard Rich joined the Rigolet Council in 1973 and has dedicated forty years to his community as Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillor, as well as serving on many organizations and boards in Labrador. He was also very active as a member of the Labrador Inuit Association while achieving their Land Claims Agreement.

Mr. Rich's keen interest in the fishery led to involvement in the Torngat Fisheries Co-operative, serving as their President for several terms. He has also served on the Labrador School Board, the OKalaKatiget Society, and the Heritage Foundation.

Mr. Speaker, Richard has represented his community and region with determination, devotion and conviction, and is most deserving of this prestigious award.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Richard Rich of Rigolet on receiving the Wayne Earle Community Service Award.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Exploits.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FORSEY: Mr. Speaker, January 18, the community of Bishop's Falls, our Province, and country lost a community leader, devote family man, and war hero.

Frank “Jiggs” Borland was born in Pennsylvania in 1925, moved early to Toronto, he lied about his age to join the Canadian Army, and at age sixteen went overseas to fight in the war where he served as a main gunner, radio operator, and secondary driver. Jiggs was involved in the liberation of many concentration camps as well as the Liberation of Dieppe.

Mr. Speaker, in the early 1950s Jiggs moved to Bishop’s Falls where he settled down and operated a farm just outside the town. He was a member of the Rural Development Association, the Agriculture Board, a long-time Lions member and Deputy Governor, and was instrumental in the construction of the Lion Max Simms Memorial Camp.

In 2005, Jiggs received a letter from French President Jacques Chirac stating that he had been chosen to receive France’s highest medal, the Legion of Honor.

Mr. Speaker, I know that Jiggs would not mind the members of this House applauding his accomplishments and his life. Remember, if you love your freedom, thank a veteran.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Humber West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, I stand in this hon. House to congratulate yet again a wonderful celebration of winter life in Corner Brook.

The event I speak of is the Corner Brook Winter Carnival which, for ten days this past February, celebrated its forty-second anniversary with over 100 individual, group and community events and is the largest carnival east of Montreal.

I extend congratulations to Ms Dawn King, this year’s Chairperson, and her committees for the hard work and dedication in making this year’s

carnival a success. Winter Carnival has been and continues to be a time for families and friends to get out and share in the carnival and community spirit.

This fun filled community event brought people of all ages and walks of life together to celebrate winter fellowship with one another in our community. For many years, the people of Corner Brook and surrounding areas have been donning their warmest winter gear and coming out to enjoy the many fun filled events and food tasting activities.

I would ask all hon. members of this House to congratulate the Corner Brook Winter Carnival Committee and wish the Corner Brook Winter Carnival organizers many, many more years of success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Ministerial Statements.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am very pleased to be able to stand and inform this hon. House that the provincial government plans to assist Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Limited with a \$90 million loan this year.

Corner Brook Pulp and Paper is a key employer and a strong contributor to the economy of this Province. The mill is important not only to the West Coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, but the entire Province. Government has clearly stated that we will provide support to this company when negotiations for a new contract are concluded for all eight unions at the mill.

Budget 2013 sets aside \$90 million in the form of a loan to provide support to Corner Brook

Pulp and Paper to help the company address challenges that are facing the industry.

Mr. Speaker, this financial assistance to the paper mill in Corner Brook, a major employer in the region, is in the best interests of the people of Corner Brook, and indeed, the entire area. The loan will enable the company to become a low-cost producer. Our investment will strengthen the company, which has been a long-standing, good corporate citizen in Newfoundland and Labrador. It will also help ensure the long-term security of our integrated sawmill operations which are the backbone of the sawmilling sector.

The provincial government, Mr. Speaker, has invested \$58 million in Corner Brook Pulp and Paper from 2004 to 2012 in various projects. This amount does not include the Power Purchase Agreement sales of \$65 million which provides a source of revenue for the paper mill.

Mr. Speaker, Corner Brook Pulp and Paper employs an estimated 610 full-time and casual workers in the mill, forestry operations, and at the power plant in Deer Lake. It is the only paper producer in Newfoundland and Labrador, and one of the largest private employers in Western Newfoundland.

Mr. Speaker, this is a responsible decision for continuing to build a vibrant economy in Newfoundland and Labrador. This is in the best interest of the people of this Province, and the Province itself.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

We are pleased today to find out the announcement for the \$90 million, and it is

indeed going to, or will be part of a program for Corner Brook Pulp and Paper. We are encouraged, as I said, that this is going to support a struggling forestry industry across the Province. As we know, Corner Brook Pulp and Paper is the anchor of that forestry industry. As the minister said, 610 direct jobs, part-time and temporary, but there are many more jobs and many other economic benefits that come from a viable pulp and paper mill in Corner Brook.

We will have some questions and cautions about how the loan will be designed, in terms of security and the remedy about repayments and those options. We already know that employees and retirees have made significant concessions over the last year. We certainly hope, like all members of this House, I believe, that this will lead to a long-term viable, sustainable forestry industry for all people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

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

I thank the minister for – well, it was last minute, but we did get the announcement ahead of time, so I thank him for that.

Obviously, this is news, important news for the Province. I was very glad this morning when we did get the answer finally to what the \$90 million was for, but I really wonder why we had to go through this arduous, secretive process. Why did we have to go through Estimates this morning? When this was so important, why did government build up the wall of secrecy that had everybody going around questioning?

They have done it today, and it is good that we finally have the information, but why did they not do it right up front in the beginning so that we would not have had all the questions we had and everybody wondering? I am glad with this

information. We obviously will have questions as it moves forward and we obviously want our pulp and paper industry to stay alive in this Province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this hon. House to recognize April 20 to April 27 as National Immunization Awareness Week in Newfoundland and Labrador.

National Immunization Awareness Week is an initiative of Immunize Canada. This organization works to control and eradicate vaccine-preventable diseases by increasing awareness of the benefits and risks of immunization for all ages. One hundred years ago, infectious diseases were the leading cause of death worldwide. In Canada, they now cause less than 5 per cent of all deaths – thanks to successful immunization programs across the country.

Mr. Speaker, immunization has long been recognized as the most cost-effective public health measure that has saved lives. Many diseases are safely and effectively controlled by immunization, thereby reducing the burden of illness in our communities. Immunization is an important public health measure for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. In this Province, the majority of immunizations are provided through the public health clinics by our dedicated public health nurses and on behalf of the provincial government, I commend them for their efforts.

The first smallpox vaccine in North America was administered in Trinity in the 1700s. Immunization has been part of the public health programs in Newfoundland and Labrador since the early 1900s. In 2009, our Province reported the highest uptake in Canada for the pandemic influenza vaccine, and the numbers of reported cases were significantly reduced within weeks of the vaccine being introduced.

Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador now boasts immunization coverage rates that are meeting or greater than the national targets of over 90 per cent for all childhood and school-based programs. I am also pleased to note that 90 per cent of our Grade 6 girls in the Province have received the HPV vaccine to prevent cervical cancer. This is the highest immunization coverage rate for this vaccine in Canada.

Parents, health care professionals, and anyone at increased risk are encouraged to contact their local public health office or their health provider to ensure they have received all the vaccines for which they are eligible. There are many myths related to vaccines, for accurate information the public are encouraged to seek information on the Department of Health and Community Services' Web site.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

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

It is a tremendous feat of science, that vaccinations have helped eradicate what were once deadly epidemics like smallpox. While epidemics like smallpox have been eradicated, we have seen modern ones like H1N1, SARS and the bird flu devastate populations. Indeed, today we have China battling a new strain of

bird flu. Scientists are continuously going to be challenged by new and mutated epidemics.

It is important that we educate and advocate the use of vaccines, though there are philosophical questions around mandating use. We saw Central Health last year attempt to mandate the flu shot amongst staff. Of course they withdrew the policy and rightly so, as mandating vaccines raise questions around free will.

Education and advocacy is the key. With National Immunization Awareness Week next week, it is an important opportunity to learn more about the benefits and risks of immunization.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

I am happy to acknowledge this week commemorating agencies and groups to control and eradicate vaccine preventable disease. I applaud all those who are involved in these programs across the country for their hard work. We know how important it is to have these immunization programs available to people.

As we anticipate the further reduction in cases of HPV, because of the vaccine, we must not forget the sexually transmitted diseases that cannot be prevented by a vaccine, at least not yet. For these diseases, Planned Parenthood plays an important role in prevention, particularly in the case of chlamydia. Planned Parenthood Newfoundland and Labrador treats over 50 per cent of the chlamydia cases in our Province and the disease is a growing problem; yet, this government would not even help them provide condoms, which is an effective way of preventing STDs.

I applaud the staff, the dedicated public health nurses and the staff of the public health nurses. I

also applaud the work of Costa Kasimos and his fantastic team at Planned Parenthood who work so hard to provide these vital services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador with little or next to no support from this government. Bravo to them for their important work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government has seriously cut public education in this recent Budget. While government denies front line services to students will be impacted, a leaked memo from the school board administrators warns students will receive serious substandard services come September because of 160 fewer teachers.

I ask the Premier: How can you justify saving money by compromising the education of our children?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite and the people of this Province, we have not compromised. We have invested, Mr. Speaker, in education in this Province like no other government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I have not read the letter, but I have to tell you, I was really bothered by the memo that came out this morning.

We have administrators in all of our schools, and when we get a statement saying they have also warned that school security is at risk. Mr.

Speaker, if we have an administrator in our school, with the allocations that we have provided, there is no principal, no school with less than – we have two-and-a-half units in particular schools, and two admin units, Mr. Speaker. If they cannot provide security for their children, I suggest they (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I say to the minister, he should not have had to read about that in a memo or a leaked document. What should have happened is before this Budget ever was released there should have been consultations. It did not happen. I believe the minister knows that.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the plan to amalgamate the school boards was not well conceived. There are many who have been strongly opposed, especially since there have been no consultations. As a matter of fact, seven out of nine MHAs who have been contacted by members of this group did not even know that these school board amalgamations were coming. Trustees from Nova Central School are now adding their names to the list expressing serious concerns about this rash decision.

I ask the Premier: Will you just end this madness, end this story, and in the best interest of students extend the term of the current school boards until we can get a solution and a plan to move forward?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, in terms of the allocations, before we released the Budget I met with Ms Cole and I asked her: If we were going to find our savings, where did she expect that we

would find them? She said that she thought we were going to cut classroom sizes, Mr. Speaker. She thought we were going to attack the cap. We have keep caps in place, the best student-teacher ratio in this country, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: To the second question, I would ask the member, with a 17 per cent reduction in students, with a 12 per cent reduction in the number of schools, with a 33 per cent increase in cost and expenditures to the school board, would he suggest that we invest in that again and we cut class caps? Is that what he is suggesting? Have him stand up and say it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, what I would suggest the minister do is speak to the people who are in the system and speak to the people who would have solutions to the various challenges you just addressed, Mr. Speaker.

I would ask you: Seven out of the nine MHAs with this government did not know this was happening, Mr. Speaker; will the Premier do the hon. thing, I say, and direct the Education Minister to set up a committee similar to the justice review committee and revisit this misguided Budget cut and lessen the negative impact on our children and this education system?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, within the next day or two we are going to announce a transition team. He referenced a letter from Central Nova. We are so pleased to have Central Nova and the rest of the school districts represented to serve on that transition team. We look forward to the

boards that remain in place until we transition onto the new one that we receive their input. Our dedication is to the students of this Province, has been, and will always remain so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I think the school board is actually Nova Central in this particular case, but what they were looking for was input into this, I say, Mr. Speaker.

According to the Schools Act, this government can abolish school districts through either legislative changes or an Order-in-Council. Now, our suggestion is to set up a review committee so we can actually put a legitimate plan in place.

I ask the Premier: If these boards are indeed going to be abolished, will she commit at least to bring this to the Legislature so people can have input into the changes you are bringing forward?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, again I go back to the statistics: 17 per cent reduction in students, 12 per cent reduction in schools, and 33 per cent increase in budgets as required by the school boards. We are going to put in place a transition team that will be made up of representatives from the existing school boards. That is how I would suggest all trustees provide their input to the transition team so that we end up with a quality education system that we have and we will continue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I ask the Premier: This is a very serious problem facing students and families in Newfoundland and Labrador; can we not at least have a full debate in this Legislature on the changes coming to the school boards?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, if there is something we have valued over the years it is the input from the trustees. Many of them serve for one sole purpose: the improvement and the betterment of the students in our Province.

I do not want to repeat the numbers again, but our investment has been in the front-line services to teachers and students, Mr. Speaker. When we transition to this new board, with the input from those trustees that will make up this transition team, our education system will remain quality in this Province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. Yesterday the minister rose to condemn a member of this House for being added to a Facebook site. While no one in this House agrees with the disgusting comments against the Premier that appeared on the site, it is shocking that the minister made a claim of guilt by association.

I ask the minister: As our Justice Minister, how can you advocate for a policy of guilt by association which is fundamentally against the principles of natural law and justice?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker

The member opposite would be well aware, I assume by now, as the Opposition House Leader, that the rules of the House are dictated from the federal government parliamentary procedure manual and our own manuals. My role, as the House Leader, is to represent government in this House. If I feel, on behalf of government, that there is a break in the rules or someone not following the rules or a question of privilege, I make the case in this House, Mr. Speaker, and the case is made to you and you have the ultimate decision as to whether the case was made effectively or if, in fact, it was not a case of privilege, as the case was made yesterday.

Members opposite all have an opportunity to have input in that. Members opposite have an opportunity to raise the same kinds of issues, as they have done many times in the past. It is part of parliamentary procedure, Mr. Speaker. I did not in any way step outside of the natural rule of law. I followed the rule –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, during his speech in the House yesterday, the Minister of Justice referred to his role as the head of the Justice department on two occasions. It is appalling that the minister would portray a policy of guilt by association and call for punishment of anybody without evidence of wrongdoing.

I ask the minister: As the head of our justice system, how could you use such poor judgement and condemn anyone without evidence of wrongdoing?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is very unfortunate that the member has chosen this kind of attack on Parliament here to try to suggest that the rules of Parliament ought not to be followed. I will say very clearly for this House that if I misrepresented myself in my capacity as Government House Leader yesterday and if Hansard shows that I indicated here that I was acting as the Minister of Justice, I will gladly withdraw those remarks and apologize because I in no way intended to suggest to this House that I was speaking as the Minister of Justice. I was speaking in my capacity as a leader of the government in this House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, yesterday there was yet another delay in court proceedings; that is two days in a row. Although the minister shirked his responsibilities on Monday by suggesting he did not schedule sheriff's officers, it is obvious that this is a continuing issue. When these operational issues affect the administration of justice, the minister is responsible.

So I ask the minister: Will you please stand in your place and address this problem, instead of blaming the High Sheriff?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would be pleased to stand in my place, as I am every day when I am asked a question and respond to what is put forth.

I did respond several days ago to indicate that it is the High Sheriff who is responsible for the scheduling, and I stand by that remark. I will say, however, to the member, I appreciate his concern and we have had officials from my

department engaged with the Office of the High Sheriff to look at the scheduling. Unfortunately, there were a couple of scheduling glitches, and the resources that we committed back into the system, including the on-call list and the filling of five vacant positions, had not transpired before those delays in the court process had occurred.

I can say to the member that the green light has been given and those actions have been taken care of. I am advised today that everything is on schedule, and I am advised by the High Sheriff that he does not anticipate any further problems.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, in 2008 this government's Minister of Justice said: Delayed court proceedings lead to stress upon the victims of crime in the justice system. In the same release, the minister stated: Justice delayed is justice denied – is that government's words.

So I ask the minister: When is that government going to stop adding stress and denying justice to the victims of crime?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, it is through the leadership of this Premier and this government that we have added millions, and millions, and millions of dollars to the justice system in Newfoundland and Labrador, because we recognize some of the challenges with the system when this government took office in 2003, and in subsequent years up to present day.

We recognized the challenges that existed. We have invested in more than 145 front-line police officer positions in the last provincial Budget and a million dollars to focus on a high provincial priority, which is organized crime, and youth in the Province, Mr. Speaker –

organized crime in small communities throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have invested in the sheriff's office, we have invested in Legal Aid, we have invested in all aspects of the justice system, Mr. Speaker, and I have every confidence that those who are working within the system both appreciate the investments we have made and are doing a fine job on behalf of the people of the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, this year's crab fishery is at a standstill because of another dispute over price. Earlier this week it was reported that protestors destroyed 30,000 pounds of crab.

I ask the Minister of Fisheries: What is his position on this dispute?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, there is a formal panel in place to address collective bargaining issues associated with setting prices for crab and other species in this Province. The panel has met. The price has been delivered. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, at this point, the union and their leadership are not satisfied with the price. As a result of that, a process continues to try to find a resolution.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of our government, we certainly do not condone it. As minister, I would encourage the leadership of the FFAW that telling lies on TV, or issues such as flip-flopping on important issues in the fishery midstream here, Mr. Speaker, without providing some details and condoning acts of throwing away crab, these are not the routes to find a resolution. I certainly encourage them (inaudible) –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, each year the fishing industry faces some sort of a dispute despite both parties going through the price-fixing process.

Since this current mechanism clearly is not working, will the minister commit to find a workable solution so we do not have to face these disputes every year?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, the price-setting panel, not the price fixing. The price-setting panel is agreed to by both parties. The FFAW, on behalf of its members, engage in a collective bargaining act to find a price. I am not sure if the member is suggesting that we do away with collective bargaining.

I will concur with the member that there is a high amount of frustration. A lot of fishermen, their pots are on their boats, Mr. Speaker, they are ready to go to work and they are eager to get out there. I can only encourage them to find a resolution to this impasse.

The last eight or ten years, it has become an annual norm in the fishery. I am sure the public and I am quite sure the stakeholders in the fishery, Mr. Speaker, are tired of it. If we can find a better solution, I am willing to support it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, the minister says he does not condone these actions of taking and destroying 30,000 pounds of crab, yet I have been advised that the minister met with these

protesters just the very next day and agreed to their demands.

I ask the minister: Is it true that he caved in to these protesters and rewarded their unlawful actions?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would have to say, I do not know where the member got his information. I do not recall meeting with any protesters.

The only two meetings I have had, Mr. Speaker, as the minister responsible for fisheries in the Province, I have met with the leadership of the FFAW and I have met with the representative from the ASP. We discussed, Mr. Speaker, how we can find a resolution to this so I could hear both sides and hear what is happening.

I can assure the member opposite I fully spoke to the leader of the FFAW and indicated that the action down in Hickman's Harbour was just not acceptable. It is not good for the industry and it certainly does not send a good message anywhere in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, once again gas sniffing in Natuashish has made headlines. This is an ongoing problem that this government has failed to address. Resource people are overwhelmed and overworked. They do not have adequate resources to help solve the problem. Government recently signed MOUs on child care with the Innu Nation, but it is evident this is not good enough.

I ask the Premier: What actions are you taking to stop gas sniffing in Natuashish, and have budget cuts impacted these resources available to social workers?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is an issue as the minister you would like to stand up and be able to outline a solution that we know will work, but this is a very complicated issue that has been ongoing in Natuashish. The Department of Child, Youth and Family Services is more than willing and has been working with the Department of Health and Community Services, with the regional health authority, with Health Canada, and with the local band.

We have had additional resources in the area, including a zone manager, a member of our executive of the department meeting with the band council. We have actively recruited a new social worker for the area, and we have other social workers assigned to the area until the new worker gets there. Mr. Speaker, the hiring freeze implemented by government does not apply to the positions we are actively recruiting for Natuashish.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Tornгат Mountains for a quick question, please.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this gas sniffing is now affecting five and six-year-olds.

I ask the Premier: Are you now prepared to tackle this issue head on and provide the necessary resources, whatever is needed, to help end gas sniffing in Natuashish?

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

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services takes every referral of potential child abuse or children in

need of protection very seriously. Mr. Speaker, we have the resources on the ground. We are either working with the families to help support them keep their children safe, or in circumstances where the children cannot be kept safe by the parents, we are in a position to remove the children.

Mr. Speaker, it is our priority to ensure the safety of these children and to work with the families that are experiencing these difficulties.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

After weeks of secrecy, we discovered in Estimates this morning that the secret \$90 million was actually allocated for a loan to the Kruger pulp and paper mill in Corner Brook, which has of course been confirmed by the Minister of Natural Resources in his statement today.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: What are the terms of this loan?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am certainly happy to receive this question from the Leader of the NDP.

We have been involved in trying to shore up the forestry industry in this Province, and particularly the pulp and paper industry, since we came to government in 2003, in spite of a worldwide crisis, Mr. Speaker. Corner Pulp and Paper is currently engaged in negotiations with two of its unions before it can move on with a

go-forward plan, a sustainability plan, Mr. Speaker.

If I were to come out today with the full detail of what we have been able to negotiate with Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, I suspect the Leader of the NDP will be stood in her place accusing me of putting undue pressure on unions to conform. The company needs to conclude its work. When it does, we will make available to the public the details of these arrangements.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

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

I will be looking forward to learning what type of loan is going to be offered and what the details of the type of loan it is that they will be offering, Mr. Speaker.

The provincial government has invested, since 2004 –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: - \$123 million in Corner Brook Pulp and Paper and they are now committing to a \$90 million loan. I am not objecting to that, Mr. Speaker.

What I would like to know from the Premier is: What is the collateral that Corner Brook Pulp and Paper is offering for that financial support?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, she says she is committed. The Leader of the NDP says she is committed to Corner Brook. She says she is committed to

Corner Brook Pulp and Paper. She says she is committed to the forestry industry in Newfoundland and Labrador, of which Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, by the way, is a critical piece. The integrated sawmilling industry will collapse. For all intents and purposes, what is left of the forestry industry in Newfoundland and Labrador will collapse without the presence of Corner Brook Pulp and Paper.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time the unions and the company have a right to come to a negotiated agreement, what the terms of their engagement is going to be and what price labour is going to be provided to the government. We cannot put undue pressure on either party, nor will we, Mr. Speaker, until the details that need to be released (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

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

I guess we will have to keep digging on that one too, to find out what the collateral is that they will be offering.

Mr. Speaker, I have seen an internal memo from Corner Brook Pulp and Paper congratulating staff for beating their previous production record in March of this year by 18.5 tons a day, reaching a brand new record of 459.5 tons in one day. The company's general manager called it a great achievement, and I agree; we have the best workers in the world here in this Province.

So I ask the Premier: With this excellent workforce achieving these results, will she explain what exactly the \$90 million is being offered to Kruger for?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the NDP was offered a caution this morning in Estimates about being too hasty in revealing the terms and conditions of this agreement.

One of the critical pieces that we have talked about, publicly, in this House and elsewhere, is that Corner Brook Pulp and Paper and their unions need to successfully conclude their arrangements before government will reveal the terms that we have offered to Corner Brook Pulp and Paper. We do that not to put unfair pressure on either party, Mr. Speaker.

When those arrangements are concluded, we will have a news conference, we will have briefings for the Opposition parties, Mr. Speaker, and we will celebrate the terms of this agreement, if successful, that will sustain the forestry (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

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

We are told that ABE is so expensive it has to be privatized. In 2006 the current Minister of Advanced Skills and Education announced the expansion of ABE at College of the North Atlantic sites saying that the move was a significant contribution and reflects government's commitment to adult education. She also said that the programs were absolutely essential to ensure all communities are vibrant and productive and an important part of our social and economic agenda.

I ask the Minister of Advanced Skills and Education: Why has she suddenly put a price tag on lifting people out of poverty in this Province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I would like to let the Leader of the Third Party know that the department is called Advanced Education and Skills. She said is wrong a few times; I think she should call it by the appropriate name.

Mr. Speaker, Adult Basic Education is an important program in this Province and will continue to be an important program. There are approximately 2,000 people in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador who are doing Adult Basic Education; 1,200 happen to be doing it outside the College of the North Atlantic. It is also important to note, Mr. Speaker, that it is offered in communities other than communities that have College of the North Atlantic campus.

We will continue this program into the future, Mr. Speaker. The students and the adult learners of this Province who need access to Adult Basic Education will absolutely have access to that program.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, the Family Violence Intervention Court was a vital program supported by judges, prosecutors, defence attorneys, social workers, Child, Youth and Family Services, victims and offenders. It was fulfilling its core mandate, yet government shut it down without warning, leaving families vulnerable and panicked about what to do next.

This year, a thorough internal evaluation of the court was completed. Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Will he table the results of that evaluation?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The government never, ever said anything different than that there was value in the Family Violence Intervention Court. We have never, ever disputed that for one minute. What I have said in this House is that was a pilot project considered as part of the overall budget of the Department of Justice, as part of the core activities that we do. It was determined that particular court would not be brought forward into the next budget year. It is as simple as that.

There would have been all kinds of assessment activities carried out as part of that review process, as we did with many other items, Mr. Speaker. We recognize the value of the Family Violence Intervention Court. We recognize the value of paying attention to all kinds of types of bullying and those kinds of activities, but we certainly will not take any advice from the member opposite (inaudible) –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that we will be able to see the results of that evaluation.

Mr. Speaker, the 2009 Auditor General's report noted delays of up to nineteen months for complaint resolutions before the Newfoundland and Labrador's Human Rights Commission. Yet, in the past two years, this government cut the Commission's budget by 50 per cent. The Commission plays a vital role protecting our fundamental and basic human rights and the rights of the most vulnerable people in our society.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Will he table the core mandate review of the Human Rights Commission?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, for the record, in my last answer, I never confirmed that there was an evaluation conducted in my department on Family Violence Intervention, as the member read into the record. I said there would have been an assessment of any number of activities completed, as we did with all of our budget activity exercises.

With respect to the particular question on the board right now, Mr. Speaker, I think if you go back and you look at the Estimates, you will find that it is government who picked up the pieces from previous Administrations and invested heavily in the Human Rights Commission, because we value the work they do and we recognize the importance of having supports there for individuals who feel that their rights have been violated. We will continue to provide that high-quality service with strong, top-notch individuals working at the commission.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, public libraries are vital to literacy and life-long learning in our communities, yet government has decided to slash funding for public libraries in Newfoundland and Labrador by over \$1 million. We understand from the Library Association that there are now only nine librarians left to manage almost 100 libraries in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Will the Minister of Education tell us who he consulted before he decided to cut public funding for libraries in this Province to the bone?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, beware of the man who gives misleading information. I am hoping one of these days he will ask me a question on the services for special education, which he clearly misinterpreted.

Mr. Speaker, we, as a government, went and had discussions with the Libraries Board. Mr. Speaker, we made a conscious effort that we were going to keep all – Mr. Speaker, I emphasize, all of our public libraries open. That means staff in those libraries are there; plus, Mr. Speaker, nine professional librarians to serve ninety-six libraries, a ratio of nearly one to nine.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Education and the Minister of Justice met with a delegation from College of the North Atlantic in Burin and assured them that they would ask Cabinet to review the program cuts down there.

When will the Cabinet ministers from the Burin Peninsula be fulfilling their promise to ask Cabinet to overturn the cuts to the College of the North Atlantic in Burin?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are at a point in time in Newfoundland and Labrador where over the next ten years we expect 70,000 job openings. Mr. Speaker, as we move forward and we look at the labour gaps we have to make sure that the College of the North Atlantic is positioned to offer the programs that will meet the labour market gaps of Newfoundland and Labrador and assist the people.

Mr. Speaker, there are –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I am sorry; the time for Question Period has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to section 8 and section 10 of the Public Tender Act, I hereby table the report of the Public Tender Act exceptions for November and December of 2012; January, February, March of 2013. These are as presented by the Chief Operating Officer of the Government Purchasing Agency.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. BENNETT: 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 with declining enrollment, 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 the 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 service to the 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 to this community.

Mr. Speaker, recently government made, what I would consider and did consider, a progressive step in allowing smaller operators, smaller companies to provide Internet service. This went over so well that the small operator was totally overloaded with work. They have a backlog of work. They are unable to get to this part of the Province any time soon. In fact, they perform well enough that their services are required in many other areas.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the residents of Bird Cove who have been left behind – Bird Cove is a small incorporated municipality. They are

paying their own share; they are carrying their own weight. They are looking after themselves as all small communities are struggling to do, yet they have no high-speed Internet service for their small businesses, for their children, for their residents. Mr. Speaker, this petition is on behalf of the residents of Bird Cove.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador anticipate 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 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 have been serving thousands of people for years, building expertise and rapport; and

WHEREAS loading the workload of 226 employees onto 139 Advanced Education employees will be an overwhelming expectation; and

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

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, I am happy to enter this petition again today, and I do it in the time frame of compelling arguments we have been talking about a lot here. The problem is this group has not been allowed to make a compelling argument because every time they have asked the door has been shut. They asked the minister for a meeting. They invited her to sit down. That has not happened yet.

How can you make a compelling argument in this Province when the people you are trying to speak to do not listen? I know the other member over there. I know he is aware of this. I know he wants to deal with this, but the minister needs to open the door and listen to these people make the compelling argument.

We have 226 people who were put out of work, and I do not believe that is counted in the Budget cuts that came down. This is something outside of that. We talk about a labour shortage. These people want to contribute to getting that labour shortage dealt with, but they are being put onto the labour market themselves.

Again, what I would say, I go back to the primary element of this, is communication is key. We saw it happen in the justice system. It can happen. People will listen. Change can happen. It is time for the other ministers to do the same thing and listen to these people. We all know it is out there. The protests have been made. The protests have been going on and it is going to continue.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS the Task Force on Adverse Events recommended an amendment to the Regional Health Authorities Act to provide legal protection for employees reporting occurrences or adverse events; and

WHEREAS whistle-blower legislation is in place elsewhere in Canada and the provincial government promised similar legislation in the 2007 election but has not kept that promise;

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

And as in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I have been proud to rise in this House, a number of times over the past year, to present this petition time and time and time again urging the government to listen to the people of the Province, to enact whistle-blower legislation. We know that last year the former Minister of Justice said they in fact were reviewing legislation in different jurisdictions and they have been doing that for years. It is now time, particularly now in the shadow of Bill 29.

Public service workers have come to us and said they have been threatened with their jobs if they even so much as press like on a Facebook posting that says anything negative about the Budget or the government. They have been threatened with their jobs. A number of workers have come to us saying this.

There is an extenuating climate of chill and of fear all across the public service. If ever we needed whistle-blower protection in our public service it is now, now more than ever; particularly in the shadow of the passage of the regressive legislation of Bill 29.

I believe the people of the Province deserve to have this promise fulfilled; this promise that was so clearly articulated by this government in 2007. We are now in 2013. We are six years out. They have watched and looked at other jurisdictions enough. The time is now.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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 humbly sheweth:

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

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador anticipate 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 agencies are grassroots hubs in communities providing services like skills development, resume development, interview skills, facilitating attachment to the labour market and 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, 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, this petition is signed by constituents of mine in Roddickton, and Englee, and Bide Arm. They are greatly concerned for the fact of looking at the vast geography of Newfoundland and Labrador and looking at where in the Department of Advanced Education and Skills Career Work Centres across Newfoundland and Labrador are currently situated.

There is only one on the Great Northern Peninsula, and that would be in St. Anthony, covering vast kilometers. People in my district would have to travel an hour-and-a-half to two hours to get to a centre in St. Anthony. If we look at Labrador, there is only one centre in Happy Valley-Goose Bay to service that whole geographic area of the Big Land. On the South Coast of the Province, it is greatly exposed.

Compared to looking at where the CERC centres were, across Newfoundland and Labrador, they were geographically positioned to help people so that they could get services close to home and that they could then provide that level of expertise to the Department of Advanced Education and Skills, streamlining the process and making it easier.

I worked, in my previous role, with the CERC centres – we called them – there were five on the Great Northern Peninsula, and it was a means to really help people and bridge them out and get back into the workforce.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Private Members' Day

MR. SPEAKER: This being Wednesday, Private Members' Day, now I call on the Member for Port de Grave to introduce the motion in his name on the Order Paper.

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The motion reads:

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House commends the government for returning half a billion dollars a year to Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians by reducing personal income taxes and supports the government in its decision not to increase personal income tax rates to address the Province's fiscal challenge.

MR. SPEAKER: That has been moved and seconded by?

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Moved by the hon. Member for Port de Grave, seconded by the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am very pleased today to stand here and debate this private member's resolution. I want to thank my hon. colleague from Cape St. Francis being the seconder of this motion.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, it is kind of appropriate that it is myself and the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis. We both, Mr. Speaker, come from municipal backgrounds. Municipal backgrounds where taxes to the individuals in our communities was very important.

We both prided ourselves on the fact that we wanted to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that we kept the tax rates low for our residents and we had a concern for them. For those years that we spent on municipal council and being the taxman, we became very cognizant.

Over the last number of weeks and even number of months, Mr. Speaker, we have talked in this House – and there has been a lot of discussion about the Budget and the bad news. I wanted to talk about some of the good things that we have done as a government over the last number of years, and things that we kept in this Budget, Mr. Speaker, to make it easier on individuals and families in this place.

Mr. Speaker, as always, we wanted to keep in mind – when, in my particular community, keeping taxes low was important. We believed that keeping taxes would number one, attract new people, new residents; two, Mr. Speaker, we believed that it would also attract new business. Also, Mr. Speaker, in my former community, I had 40 per cent of residents who

were on fixed incomes. Keeping taxes low and being reasonable, Mr. Speaker, was very important to the people of my community.

Mr. Speaker, I can go further than that. Not only was it important to the people in my community, it was important to the people in my district. I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, it is important to every resident of Newfoundland and Labrador that in their municipalities they keep their taxes low and reasonable. They all want to do the same thing, Mr. Speaker; they want to attract new people and they want to attract new business.

Mr. Speaker, we are an aging population; we are growing older. We have more residents on fixed incomes. Mr. Speaker, that is probably where I want to start today. I have a personal story and it is odd. Most people who you run across say do not raise my taxes, do not give higher taxes, all this stuff, Mr. Speaker. I have a father-in-law and my father-in-law is one of these people who are very proud to pay taxes. He believes in taxes.

I am sure if we raised the taxes in his hometown, he would pay no matter what it was because he believes it is a need because of the basic services that it provides. Also, Mr. Speaker, he is a retiree; he is a veteran. Mr. Speaker, he is on a fixed income, so they have limited resources. These people want to make sure that their resources go as far as possible.

Mr. Speaker, when I started looking into this, I said: What are we doing for people who are on fixed incomes? Most of the people who are on fixed incomes, I would suggest to you, are probably seniors in this Province. What are we providing these people? What has this government done in the last eight to ten years to provide some of these people some relief?

Well, Mr. Speaker, this government has returned to the people of this Province millions of dollars. Millions of dollars they have returned to the people of this Province, and the dollars they have returned go into their basic needs. It goes into their heat bill, their light bill, being able to

put food on the table, and in some cases providing shelter for them. That is important.

In some cases, Mr. Speaker, those few dollars they save by the savings we have provided them in government through tax reductions go into help with education funds for their grandchildren or their other family members. Maybe in some cases that I am aware of it goes for larger purchases: a washer and dryer or maybe a new vehicle. Whatever it is, it goes towards creating a better life for our individual citizens of this Province.

Mr. Speaker, as members and MHAs, we all talk to people every day. Every day we stand in this House and we talk to people day in, day out, week in, week out, and month in, month out. Many of these conversations are with older individuals because the older individuals hang out at the Tim Hortons and they hang out the McDonald's.

If you go in for a coffee, you either know them because you have been a lifelong resident of your community or because you have been associated. They have been a former teacher, they have been a former person on the minor hockey association, or whatever it may be. So you go in and you talk to them. Many of them, Mr. Speaker, say: Boy, what are you doing for us?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I just want to go through some of the things that we do for seniors and some of our older individuals. The one I have to go back to because it is my own personal story is my father-in-law, once again, and it was the fee reductions for a driver's licence. He was amazed. He was amazed that if he went out and he came to see Glenn, and Glenn went in on the computer, that he would save \$65. So fee reductions, not only in driver's licences but in hunting licenses; we have many of our elderly people who love to hunt and fish in this Province, and we give fee reductions in those areas. Wood – another gentleman came in last week and he was so proud he got his wood permit and he got it for a reduced price.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about different programs. One of the programs I want to talk about today is a program that was introduced in 1999, Mr. Speaker. It was introduced in 1999 and it is known as the Low Income Seniors' Benefit. This is a refundable tax credit for low-income seniors sixty-five years of age by December 31.

What does this do, Mr. Speaker? Well, it was introduced in 1999, but in 2005 this government indexed it. This increases the benefit to our seniors in the Province. This increased the benefit to our seniors. These cheques come out every October. Whether they are single or whether they are a couple with a net income up to \$28,231, Mr. Speaker, they can receive a maximum tax benefit of \$971.

We have all seen the recent commercials from Anthony Insurance, where the Anthony Insurance people get in and they talk about retirees, Mr. Speaker. I recall a gentleman in general, who said \$1,200 goes a long, long way. Well, in this one Low Income Seniors' Benefit, if a net income is less than or up to \$28,231 they can get a maximum benefit of \$971. The amount, of course, gets phased out a little as your net income increases from \$28,231 to \$36,559. Mr. Speaker, a low-income family up to \$36,559 can receive this benefit.

In 2003, Mr. Speaker, that was a savings of \$7.5 million. This year it is estimated to be \$38.5 million. This, in part, is due to the enhancements and the tax indexation of this program. This year alone over 45,000 seniors can benefit from this one program. Mr. Speaker, that is something we do every year for seniors.

Another program, Mr. Speaker, we talk about the age amount and non-renewable tax credit. This age amount tax credit is a non-refundable tax credit. It reduces their tax payable.

In 2010, Mr. Speaker, the previous Minister of Finance announced for individuals sixty-five years and up, he increased the tax payable credit from \$3,681 to \$5,000. With this increase, and increased threshold, Mr. Speaker, we also increased the eligibility from \$51,940 to

\$60,733. This does two things, Mr. Speaker, it ceases the tax credit for the resident or the individual, or the couple, and it also increases the number of people eligible to receive this benefit.

This year alone, Mr. Speaker, we expect over 73,000 seniors sixty-five and above could benefit from the age amount, non-refundable tax credit. Again, we are doing something proactive to assist our low-income seniors and people on low incomes.

Mr. Speaker, this one goes unnoticed. It goes unnoticed sometimes by all of us because I have had people come up to me and say: Where did that residential energy rebate go? Where did that go? I never, ever got that. Where do you apply for that, or what do you do with that? Well, Mr. Speaker, what most people do not know, it is right on your bill. It goes right on your bill. It is an 8 per cent rebate right off your provincial portion of the HST.

Mr. Speaker, I will use my example. I heat my home with oil, and my average bill in a month in the wintertime is about \$600. The average bill is \$600 when I refill my tank. Mr. Speaker, because of that 8 per cent rebate, that is a \$48 savings on a tank of oil. That \$600 turns into \$552.

Mr. Speaker, I remember going to my grandmother's house. They did not have the big tank; they used to have the little tank. I am sure when you go into the outports you will still see them today. You will see the little tanks on the side of the house. I want to take it down to some of those people as well. Mr. Speaker, if it costs \$300 to fill up that 100 gallon tank, for example, that is a \$24 savings. In other words, you pay \$276.

Mr. Speaker, this Residential Energy Rebate Program puts hundreds of dollars each winter into people's bank account. Not only seniors but every resident who burns oil, electricity or wood, it puts it back in their bank account. I think that is significant as well, Mr. Speaker.

This program, Mr. Speaker, cost us \$42.3 million this year. The home heating rebate helps seniors and helps low-income people. This home heating rebate is very popular. In our riding, Mr. Speaker, just about everyday – I am sure in just about everybody's riding, in their constituency offices everywhere, just about everyday someone comes in and says: Do you have that home oil heating rebate? This is adjusted; it is adjusted family income for people with less than \$40,000.

Mr. Speaker, in the taxation year 2011, we gave a \$250 rebate for people in the Province and other parts of Labrador. On Coastal Labrador, that is a \$500 rebate. Significant, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, putting money back – going back to the Anthony Insurance piece, putting money back into people's pockets.

Mr. Speaker, we have many families out there, hardworking families making it but they are still on low income. We have a low-income tax deduction that was introduced in 2005. This is a provincial personal income tax reduction for low-income individuals and families.

This year, in 2013, Mr. Speaker, this program eliminates provincial income tax for individuals with a net income of up to \$17,288, or families who have a net income of up to \$28,228. They do not pay tax at all. They do not pay any income tax. They are exempt. They are done. I think that is significant. There are also partial reductions in that program, Mr. Speaker, for individuals up to \$21,057 and to families up to \$34,591.

Mr. Speaker, I see my time is quickly abating, but I will get to some of this after. Again, in 2011, Mr. Speaker, in this taxation year alone, we believe this program will reach 33,500 residents of Newfoundland and Labrador; 33,500 residents.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLEJOHN: An individual with \$16,000, Mr. Speaker, will save \$510, and a family with a net income of \$26,000 will save \$696.

Mr. Speaker, as we go along I will get another chance to speak to this at the end and talk about some other programs for families et cetera, some of the things we do for our business community. Mr. Speaker, every dollar counts, and this government has been very proactive in making sure through income tax reductions that we put money back in the pockets of all the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Nobody wants tax increases, Mr. Speaker, and I believe this has been a responsible investment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): I recognize the hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, any time I am given an opportunity such as this to respond to a private member's resolution or any sort of government bill – obviously, we discuss it beforehand in caucus and line up our speakers and so on. I like to do a little research because sometimes I can find a meaningful quote that might work.

After looking at this PMR, I thought I would look for a quote. Well, I looked in a number of places. I looked to a Cicero address. I looked at the Gettysburg address. I looked at JFK: What can your family do for you? I looked at Churchill. After reading and considering all kinds of other quotes, I came up with one from *Alice in Wonderland*. Alice came to a fork in the road and said: Which road shall I take? Where do you want to go, responded the Cheshire cat? I do not know, Alice said. Then the cat says: It does not matter which road you take.

Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what this government is doing. It does not matter which road they take because they do not know where they want to go. This private member's resolution is absolutely absurd. It is completely nonsensical; it makes no sense whatsoever. It would only make sense to be giving back money if we actually had money to give back. Clearly,

we do not have money to give back because we are looking at a major deficit.

On the one hand, government members are getting bent out of shape almost like pretzels patting themselves on the back for giving back people their own money, when, in fact, they are spending more of their own money than they are taking in. That is the absurdity, the insanity, of living in a time of plenty and running a deficit.

This government is running a deficit. As a matter of fact, we may know eventually the size of the deficit, but we will not know any time soon. It is sort of like the shell game that government played over the last few months with what the deficit would be with the Minister of Finance saying well, we are looking at \$1.6 billion and another \$1.6 billion next year, and we are going to have \$4 billion. He is throwing around billions like we would throw around \$20 bills only a few years ago.

Then all of a sudden we come to the Budget process and the government found all kinds of extra money. In looking at where they found the extra money – where did you find the extra money? We found some oil. We found a whole bunch of oil we did not realize we had.

Mr. Speaker, that is like Jed Clampett taking a shot at a rabbit and hitting an oil well and coming up with more oil. It is difficult to know if the Minister of Natural Resources knew he was going to be Minister of Finance so he sat on a whole bunch of oil so he could look a little bit better later on, or maybe they just found the oil. We are talking about a lot of oil and a lot of money.

Another area where they found money that they did not know that they had was in the new HST reconciliation. HST was introduced many years ago and it has only ever been estimated. They knew or ought to have known there was a reconciliation coming and the feds would be writing a cheque for a lot more money. There was more money.

The problem with saying that you do not have money when you do have money is that later on

people do not believe you when you really do not have money, like somebody crying wolf. That is really what has happened here.

On the one hand, we have the government saying we have no money, massive deficit. They have said that not just for one year, but they said it last year. As a matter of fact, the former Auditor General was saying it for quite some years. In fact, in 2011, the former Auditor General, John Noseworthy, was lambasting government for unsustainable spending, then he ceased to become the Auditor General.

I came across a news story from *The Huffington Post*. I thought it was a misprint first because it says former Auditor General wants to run for Tories, and I thought it should be run from the Tories. That is certainly what he needed to have been doing. He did run for them and obviously the Leader of the Third Party made sure that he did not get into this House, and congratulations to her.

Then, the former Auditor General was commissioned by government to take a look at AES. He is known as a straight shooter. His political instincts may be a bit weak on which party he ought to have been running for, but he did a review of AES and he came out with such a mess that the minister had to sit on it for months at a time when we were going into Budget consultations. So, Mr. Speaker, imagine the absurdity of a minister commissioning a report and paying somebody \$150,000 or so to do a report, having the report showing all kinds of waste, duplication, bad spending, and then that is not used in the Budget.

This is consistent of what this government has been doing for a number of years now. The budgeting process is not at all connected to a reality. It is not connected at all to reality any more than *Alice in Wonderland*. This is like an *Alice in Wonderland* type of budget.

If you look at some of the areas where the government is so badly off track with their perception of reality – just yesterday morning in Estimates, the Minister of Education took great pride in saying that we are second in dropout

rates. He said since we came into power, this government came into power ten years ago, we are second in dropout rates.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I took the trouble to go and check with Statistics Canada immediately afterwards and the Statistics Canada report at the end of 2012 says that for twenty-year period, leading up to the end of 2012, in fact, we did go from the worst, not to the best, no, now we are the sixth worst, not the second best, sixth worst in the country. We are still worse than the Canadian average, yet the Minister of Education thinks that we are in second place. We are not in second place unless, of course, he has decided that Statistics Canada is not right, the federal government agency that checks all of our statistics is not right.

In fact, the reduction from being tenth to sixth came over a twenty-year period, which would include up to the end of 2012, nine years of this government and eleven years of Grimes, Tobin and Wells; the improvement in our dropout rate has been over a twenty-year period and it is nowhere near as good as the minister says that it was.

That should not come as any surprise to us because education which forms the second highest component of this Budget is severely under attack. The Minister of Education, in the Budget, and the Minister of Finance claims that we need for education, and clearly we do. Last year, this government budgeted \$866 million for education and used \$815 million. This government spent \$51 million less on education last year than they said they were going to spend.

This year, they are going back up from the \$815 million actual to \$840 million actual, so they are increasing the budgeted amount \$25 million over the actual from last year and they claim that is a 3 per cent reduction. How can it be a 3 per cent reduction when it goes up? I suppose it is in not, and in getting the 3 per cent reduction we are going to get rid of all but one of the English school boards in the Province. That is coming with a significant amount of trauma. According to the minister, he believes we will save \$12.8

million of the overall Budget; \$12.8 million of the overall Budget is only 25 per cent of the amount they amount they under spent last year.

Mr. Speaker, the only reason I can see that the government would want to get rid of the school boards is they did not like the political pressure. They did not like the noise, as they call it, of people pushing back and having local input in which schools stay open.

There is no plan for the schools. There is a number; there is no plan. There still is not any transition team in place. Transition is something you should plan before you do something; it is not something you plan as you go along and it certainly is not something that you do at the end of the day when everything is done. Then it is not a transition, it is what we saw in Justice: it is a fix-up job. It is a way to fix something you made a mistake in.

To continue with education, the representations that we are being provided by the Department of Education on how much we are improving are certainly not borne out by other areas. This is a production of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, and it says in the year 2000, and this is a combined reading score for fifteen-year-old students in this Province, according to the Programme for International Student Assessment, on a scale of more or less 500, they scored 517 in 2000. In 2003, when this government took office, they had increased to 521. From a starting point of 521, they then declined to 514 and then 506. So our score has declined.

When being challenged on it, the minister said that, while the critic does not know what he is talking about, this is not statistically significant. However, if you read, in the table it says, "Statistically significant compared to PISA 2000." Then, Mr. Speaker, this would not be so aggravating if on the actual cover of the document, which I am happy to table, it says, "Council of Ministers of Education, Canada". I would assume, or I would have to believe, that the minister should be at least somewhat acquainted with a document from Statistics Canada which is published in conjunction with

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, and the council of education ministers would know that our education scores have been declining.

This particular private member's resolution says the government should congratulate itself because we gave back to people half a billion dollars of their own money. I suppose some of that money must have been the money they found in the oil that they did not know they had, probably something in the HST that – over the life of the HST, this is an accumulated amount based on the estimate of the first HST, which was only paid based on an estimate not actually accounted for. Now that it is accounted for we are getting the back pay, which is no credit to this government whatsoever.

Government is priding itself on not raising taxes. I guess that is a very good thing not to raise taxes; but, on the other hand, if your spending is so out of control, there is no point of not raising taxes if you are going to run a deficit. Because if you are going to run a deficit, a deficit says we do not have the wherewithal, we do have either the intellect, we do not have the courage or we do not have the foresight to be able to balance our books, but: Oh, by the way, we are going to run a deficit anyway. We are going to inflict this on the people who come after us. We are going to inflict this on the children.

It is absolutely unacceptable that this government has mismanaged the best opportunity that we have ever had in this Province to get ahead financially. The absolute mismanagement is abysmal.

If we look across different areas and different aspects of the Auditor General's report, and if you look at what is happening in the government in general, it is as if there is nobody minding the shop. Whoever is supposed to be running the show is asleep at the wheel and we just wandering off. Money is going all over the place and we are running deficits. At the same time, we have a private member's resolution whereby we congratulate ourselves on not raising taxes.

Mr. Speaker, in the period from 2003 to 2009, which was the first six years of this government, in mathematics we declined from sixth place in Canada to eighth place in Canada. When this government took over we were in sixth place. They declined it to eighth place in Canada. The scores declined from 517 to 503. That is simply unacceptable.

It is completely unacceptable in the face of the fact that this government claims to have put in place a math strategy. That math strategy has been severely criticized by the associate professor of mathematics at Memorial University who says that our mathematics program in this Province is literally a tragedy. When you go behind it, it is not that we have not conceived of something which is really good, but it is not being applied.

Young people are showing up at Memorial University who presumably would be our best high school graduates, and they are so deficient in mathematics, thanks to this government, that they have to have all sorts of remedial mathematics. They do not have the repetition –

MR. K. PARSONS: We are all stunned.

MR. BENNETT: The Member for Cape St. Francis is saying that we are all stunned enough – actually, we are not all stunned, because some of us over here can see that government has put on a big charade.

If you look at how well government has managed the economy, if you look to the announcement today for \$90 million for the forestry sector through Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, I applaud that; however, it cannot be taken in absence of the fact that when this government took office we had three paper mills. We had reached a peak with three paper mills that were fully functioning. Now we have one paper mill. We have one paper mill that we have to subsidize to the extent of a \$90 million loan to keep it going.

It is bad enough that we lost the Stephenville pulp and paper mill when the former Premier said it would not go on his watch, but even

worse than that is the aggravating manner in which we lost the Grand Falls pulp and paper mill. Not only did we lose the productive capacity and all of the work, we expropriated an environmental disaster, likely in the hundreds of millions of dollars that the people of this Province will have to clean up because of the hasty, ill-considered actions of this government.

Imagine, going and expropriating a hundred-year-old paper mill and not checking out the environmental – and why would you expropriate it at all? We expropriated it to get the forestry and to get the energy. Well, the energy was not going anywhere. The trees were not going anywhere. Mr. Speaker, we already owned the rights to that, or we had complete access to it. We could have controlled that. That was just done for show, Mr. Speaker, and the results are painfully obvious, and they are very bad.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

It is a privilege to get up here today, and it is always a privilege to get up and represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to applaud the Member for Port de Grave for bringing in this private member's motion today. It is an important motion because it shows the direction in which our government is going. I do commend our government for what we are doing. We are putting money back in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians by reducing taxes. That has been a goal of this government since 2003.

Mr. Speaker, our government has made a decision, we made a large decision. We made a decision not to increase taxes. Not to do what other people would want us to do, increase

taxes. Just increase the taxes and that is where you will find your money. That is not the way to do it. That is not the way to address what we have to address with the financial situation we find ourselves in, the challenges that we find ourselves in.

Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, you look at things and you may say, listen, the easiest way to do this is this because we will look good at the end of the day. Listen here, Mr. Speaker, that is not the decisions that this government makes. We do not care about looking good; it is all about doing the right thing. Our Premier and our Cabinet and the people in our caucus want to do what is best for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, budgets are a time when we have to look at what is in the best interest of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Mr. Speaker, sometimes when we look at it we have to look at society as a whole. We have to look at we are serving every inch of this Island and every inch of Labrador. We are serving the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we have to look out and make the best decisions possible for those people. Sometimes decisions are not easy. Sometimes they are hard decisions, but you have to stand and make the right decisions.

Mr. Speaker, since 2003, in the last ten years our government has worked very hard. We had a road that we wanted to follow. We wanted a road that we could serve our people of the Province and everyone in our Province the best that we could. We wanted to reduce our debt. We wanted to reduce the debt that we had and we wanted to reduce the taxes people are paying in this Province. Over the last ten years we did so.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to budget times, there are a lot of decisions to be made. I applaud the Minister of Finance because it is hard decisions to make. There are a lot of difficult decisions that have to be made.

Mr. Speaker, there is no one on this side of the House, and I am sure there is no one on that side of the House, who wants to see anybody lose a

job. I know I do not. I do not want to see one person lose a job but we have to make decisions. There are decisions that have to be made by government to make sure we supply services to the people of the Province that are effective and efficient at the best possible cost that we can give them. That is being responsible.

Like I said, it is an easy thing to do to just say: Okay, listen, drive up the taxes. No one gets mad with you or anything at all. Just drive up the taxes, but it is not the right thing to do. The right thing to do is to look at our departments and make sure that we are doing things effective and efficiently.

That is the problem we have here in the Province. We are too nice sometimes as people, that we look at everything and say: look, this is the easy way to do things, go ahead and do it. Mr. Speaker, the right thing to do is to be responsible; responsible to us here today and responsible to the children of the future.

Mr. Speaker, I have neighbours and friends, and people I have known to help me along my way, who lost their jobs recently. I approach them and I talk to them. They are good friends of mine. It is not easy. I tell you, it is not easy. We are all in the boat – I do not say there is anybody in this House who has not been affected by that. Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? I tell them if there is something I can do for them, I will, like I do with every constituent of mine who calls me. If I can help them in any way – and I am sure my colleagues here and the colleagues across the way are the same way - we are there to help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

This is not an easy time for people. What it is, Mr. Speaker, it is a time that we have to do things. I spoke to a young lady yesterday and she told me that she is going out. She was laid off recently and she told me she has about five –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: – different interviews that she has lined up to do now. I said that is excellent. I was really pleased and I told her I hope and I even pray that she gets something.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of decisions made that are not the most popular decisions. I look at what is happening with our Premier and some of the things that are happening with her. I do not like it – I really do not like it. Popular decisions are good decisions to make if you want to stay on top, but they are not always the right decisions. The right decisions that we are making today is to keep our taxes low to put a half a billion dollars in the hands of the people of the Province. The right decisions that we are making today are the decisions that this Premier and this government are doing.

Mr. Speaker, increasing taxes is not the thing to do. Our government has worked way too hard to start right now and say listen, we have a couple of hard years coming in front of us, let us jack up the taxes, let us drive up the deficit and we will work back at it again. That is not the way it is going to be with this government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when I look back at 2003 – and I listened to the man from *Alice in Wonderland*, the man from Wonderland over there that time speaking. Do you know something? He spoke for fifteen minutes and he never gave one thing that his party would do to help out with this Province, the problems we are having financially. He talked about everything else, but he never talked about any solutions. Not one solution did he talk about.

In 2003, Mr. Speaker, we had a problem. Twenty-five cents for every \$1 we were taking in was going to servicing our debt. Since 2003, we have reduced that. Right now, it is 10.9 cents. That is what we are paying from twenty-five cents. That is huge. Mr. Speaker, that is not good enough. Do you know why? We are still paying approximately \$800 million a year to service our debt.

Mr. Speaker, every time we save money in this area, this is money we can put into education, it

is money we can put into our health care, it is money we can put into our social spending. Mr. Speaker, if anybody gets a chance – and I would recommend anybody out there to take our Sustainability Plan that we have and look at the next ten years, we want to get down a lot lower. We want to be the average in Canada in the next few years. He is talking about the road over there. That is the road this government is taking, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, our government and our Premier, like I said, has taken a path. We have looked at everything; we have gone down the road. We have decided that the best thing for our future is to keep our debt as low as we can and not burden our people with taxes.

Mr. Speaker, reducing taxes helps everyone. It helps our seniors; it helps our families. Today, more and more people are spending their money. Times are not as doom and gloom as we hear every day in this House, doom and gloom. No, times are not bad. Sure, I wish I had a wand and I could make it perfect for everyone, but we cannot. Times are pretty good.

Mr. Speaker, times have changed. People need more money these days to put in their hands and that is why it is important to reduce taxes. I can remember growing up we grew potatoes, turnip, cabbage, and carrots. The Member for Kilbride is still at it. We grew that, and probably three or four times a week we ate fish. I wish I could still eat fish three or four times a week. It is hard to get and it is pretty expensive, but do you know what? Today the cost is higher. The cost to run a family is higher, and our lives have changed; the rush, rush, rush part of your life. It is important that our families get every cent that we can give them back to put into their families; it is important that we do that.

Just look at our economy. The more that people spend in the economy, the better it is for everybody. It creates jobs. If you look today – and I mentioned a little while ago about that person – there are jobs being created in the public sector all over the place. It is a great thing. Yes, our economy is booming. It is booming. There is lots of work out there and

there are people going to work every day and there are people finding jobs every day.

People are spending money, Mr. Speaker. People are spending money. I have a friend of mine who is a sales rep at Avalon Ford. I think he sold a couple of members here rigs. He tells me that car sales are wicked; they are gone through the roof. People are spending money on furniture. There are box stores going up everywhere, and all over the Province there are people spending money.

Our economy in this Province is doing great. It is doing perfect, and it is doing fantastic. The doom and gloom and the negativity, we are not showing it, but our people are doing great. Granted, I do agree that there are some people who are falling through the cracks, and that is what happens when you have an economy that is booming that some people do fall through the cracks; but we are here for them, and we will be there for them too, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, since 2003 – I listened to the Member for St. Barbe over there – our government has done a lot. We have done a lot. By 2007, like I said, we had the largest tax reduction ever in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is when we got the \$500 million put back in the pockets (inaudible). We have reduced our deficit since 2003 from \$11.9 billion to \$8.6 billion.

Again, like I said, that is twenty-five cents that we were paying out, now we have 10.9. So we have fifteen cents more put into our spending for our social programs, for our roads, for our schools and whatnot.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all the members – I listen to them every day over there saying you are not fiscally responsible. I would ask the Member for St. Barbe: What roads in his district did he not want paved? I will ask the hon. Member for Bay of Islands: What roads in his district did he not want paved? What fire truck did he not want? The hon. member who has gone off into greener pastures, or she thinks so, had two schools built in her district. I would like to know, did they not want those schools?

Mr. Speaker, we spent money wisely. We spent money very wisely. Our government in 2003 had \$78 million for construction and replacement of old facilities, like construction and acquisition of buildings and roads. From 2003 we spent \$78 million. This year we are spending \$509 million on construction of new buildings, roads, and equipment for our Province. That is huge.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. K. PARSONS: Five hundred and nine million dollars.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Spending on maintenance and health care facilities for this government: in 2003 we spent \$11 million; this year we are spending \$117 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, look at what we did for municipalities in this Province. I am a municipal leader and understand the needs of municipalities in the Province. In 2003, we spent \$37 million on municipal infrastructure. This year we are going to spend \$102 million.

The Member for St. Barbe said: Oh, they did not do anything; they are blowing their money away. I would say you talk to the towns in this Province that are getting money to help them out with their infrastructure to see what we are spending our money on. It is clear.

Mr. Speaker, probably the proudest thing I am of this Province, of this government, and what I see our government really doing is our investment in education. I do not deny that years ago the money was not there to spend on education like it is today and like it is after being the last number of years. In the last number of years, we built nine new schools – nine new schools – and I have one in my district, the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis. It got a beautiful school there at Holy Trinity Elementary. It is state of the art.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke to a teacher and she was teaching for thirty years. She said: Kevin, I have never seen anything like it in my thirty years, the materials and the equipment we have in our schools today for our children – free books, you name it, we are doing it – to make them achieve their goals. The opportunities are there. Opportunities have never been there like they are today. The opportunities for our young people are unbelievable.

I could not believe it when I listened to the Member for St. Barbe talking about our university students. I had the opportunity when I was at the hospital with my mom there a little while ago. We were going around and she was looking at all the young doctors who are there. I pointed out two; one was from Torbay and the other one was from Bauline, and how proud I was that they were from my area of the Province.

Mr. Speaker, we are producing more doctors and we have more doctors in this health care than ever before – ever before. We are being taken care of. Mr. Speaker, that is because we are doing a good job with our education.

Mr. Speaker, I look at post-secondary education, and again, the investments that we are making there is unbelievable. When I look at post-secondary education, I looked at a thing there yesterday and it showed the Canadian average. Our post-secondary education is half of what the national average is – half. Mr. Speaker, we are the lowest in all of Canada, and that is the investments we are making.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about some of the initiatives that this government has done. The Member for Port de Grave mentioned a couple of them so I am going to go past them, but I did want to mention about the firefighters and how important it is – I have three volunteer fire departments in my district. The tax credit that we gave to them, I know at the end of the max it is about \$231. Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? Whatever it is, it shows that this government appreciates what these people do. I appreciate what they do on a daily basis.

Mr. Speaker, I have a lot more here to say, but I would like to just stop by saying that I am so proud of this government and I am proud of the road we are taking. I think we are taking the path that is going to be great for our future. There is a few bumps along the road, but guess what? We will get over them bumps and our Province will be a whole lot better place because of the Budget stuff that we have brought in this year and the decisions we have made. The decisions we have made not to drive the deficit up, the decisions we have made not to increase people's taxes.

We could be like New Brunswick or Manitoba that just recently brought in Budgets with increases in taxes. I think it would be the wrong thing to do and I think we have done the right thing. I applaud the Minister of Finance, I applaud the Premier, and I applaud this government for doing the right thing.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I recognize the hon. the Member for the Bay of Islands.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand today just to have a few words on this Budget, Mr. Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. JOYCE: I hear already that they are over heckling because they just do not want to hear the truth about this Budget.

The Member for Cape St. Francis, for some reason, always wants to point me out and tries to put me on the spot and say: What roads wouldn't you want paved in your district? What roads wouldn't you want done out around your area? I tell you one thing I would not do is re-announce the same roads for three and four years trying to

pretend that every year the money goes up, carry over every year from Transportation and Works, \$40 million and another \$40 million next year. That is one thing I would not do is give the perception that there is \$100 million worth of work done, but it is the same roads that were announced three years prior carried over for three years. That is what I would not do, I say to the Member for Cape St. Francis.

He asked some questions: What would you do different? First of all, Muskrat Falls. How much money has been transferred over to Nalcor from this government? How much? That is a question, Mr. Speaker, none of us will ever know. Because of Bill 29, we cannot get into Nalcor. That is one question we cannot answer. So when you want to know what we would do different, let us get into Nalcor so we can see all the books here. We will never get in there – Bill 29, we will never be allowed to get in there, Mr. Speaker.

Look at Hebron, when we first started out to get shares into Hebron, equity positions. What is it, \$65 million? Now we are up to \$765 million that we have to put in for equity, instead of getting it through royalties. That is just a few ways that we would do it.

I will give you a good example. I am the only member in this House, Mr. Speaker, and I was proud when we signed the deal for Voisey's Bay, when the Premier stands up and says it is the best mining deal that was ever signed in Newfoundland and Labrador, I am proud to say that I voted for it and I am proud to say that I was a part of it, Mr. Speaker. So when you want to ask me, I have proof, just look at the Voisey's Bay deal, Mr. Speaker, that is what I say.

This resolution, Mr. Speaker, makes the assumption that the fiscal challenges were inevitable. They were inevitable; they had to happen. All the problems that happened, they just had to happen, Mr. Speaker. Let us look at some of the financial mess that this Province is into. Mr. Speaker, when we look back at some of the warning signs, the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, her good friend John Noseworthy, when he was the Auditor General,

here is what he said, August 16, 2011, “The past eight years I’ve been criticizing the PC government, issuing scathing reports and talking about the unsustainability of expenditures and concerns about the debt”.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is what the Auditor General said in here. Unsustainable spending for a number of years is what the Auditor General said here. After ten years, Mr. Speaker, we find now the government is going to turn around and say, oh, we are going to do a 10-Year Sustainability Plan after going for ten years, spending like drunken sailors, and now all of a sudden going to say, oh, we are going to have a Sustainability Plan now. We are a real responsible government, Mr. Speaker; we are going to do a Sustainability Plan.

Don’t you think it is ten years late? Don’t you think the people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve better? Don’t you think that if you are a responsible government with money coming out of every part, every sector in this Province, especially with the price of oil and the increase, that you would do a plan and say okay, we need to make a Sustainability Plan for the future?

That is what a responsible government would do. That is what this government should have done. Now that they are in the financial mess because of lack of leadership over the years, now they are saying we have to make a Sustainability Plan. It should have been done ten years ago, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, back in 2006 – and I will not go through them all; I will just go through some – there was a big splash, this government. We are talking about taxes on people. That is what we are talking about here today, the big splash and all the fees. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? Since that big splash, guess what, Mr. Speaker? Just about every item that was decreased then is increased.

MR. S. COLLINS: What about the seniors?

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Terra Nova is talking about the seniors. Are you talking about the seniors who have no long-term

care beds out there? Are those the ones you are talking about? Is that the ones who are talking about the Member for Humber East is finally going to try to get the wing open –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: Are those the seniors you are talking about, the Member for Terra Nova? If you want to talk about the seniors, you –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the member to direct his comments to the Chair.

The Member for the Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, can you ask the Member for Terra Nova, if he wants to talk about the seniors, ask him to go out and talk about the people who are waiting for the long-term care beds that were promised back in 2010 by this government. Now, with the minister himself, the Minister of Natural Resources, the Member for Humber East said out in the media publicly – you want to talk about seniors, I say to the Member for Terra Nova, Mr. Speaker.

We made a mistake when we did the long-term care. We made a mistake. I said it, you said it publicly, I have it here on record, I can show it to you – I can show it. That is what you said. Mr. Speaker, if you want to talk about seniors, I am ready to talk about seniors.

Look at the hospital rooms – gone up. Historic sites, seniors now have to pay to get into our parks. The seniors have to pay this year. Certificate for teachers, ferries – how many seniors ride the ferries here in this Province now have to pay a 10 per cent increase? How many seniors from Bell Island who come across for a doctor’s appointment now have to pay an increase to get back and forth? If you want to talk about seniors, let us talk about it.

When they used to do their online, Mr. Speaker, and get a 10 per cent discount. Guess what? Seniors now do not get it. If you want to talk about seniors, I have no problem talking about

seniors, Mr. Speaker. I really feel that seniors, at times, are being neglected. A lot of these hidden fees are being passed on to the seniors.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to shock the members opposite and I am going to shock the people. I am going to agree with a statement the Premier made. I am going to agree with a statement that the Premier of this Province made. Mr. Speaker, here is what the Premier said in this House, “One thing we are not going to do is continue to have waste, extravagance, and poor spending in this government.”

AN HON. MEMBER: When did she say that?

MR. JOYCE: Ten years later she said, it was either this week or last week in the House of Assembly, they are not going to go ahead and have “...waste, extravagance, and poor spending in this government.” Now, that is what the Premier of this Province said in the last couple of days in this House of Assembly.

Let’s just go over some of that spending, Mr. Speaker. Guess what? Who was the Minister of Natural Resources when they wasted \$30 million in Parsons Pond?

AN HON. MEMBER: Who?

MR. JOYCE: The Premier of this Province.

Mr. Speaker, how about the \$11 million for the pellet plant which has not created one job and has not sent one pellet overseas? Who was the minister? It was the Premier at this time. That is \$41 million.

Let’s talk about the office in Ottawa, the so-called office in Ottawa. For two-and-a-half to three years they had someone at the next office to go pick up the newspapers to drop it off. There was not enough room for the newspapers in the mailbox at the office in Ottawa, for five years. That is part of it.

Let’s talk about the expropriation of the Abitibi mill, \$200 million. Who was the minister? It was the current Premier. So when she makes those statements I have to agree with her, but too

bad it took her ten years to realize that, Mr. Speaker.

Let’s talk about the \$12 million for the Rural Secretariat – gone. What did they do? Nothing; \$12 million.

Let’s talk about the big Department of Business, the \$30 million wasted and not one project. I remember the Member for Gander when he was in the Department of Business. If it was not for taxpayers’ money, it would almost be funny. When the minister at the time got in the media and said: We have some files that are very, very hot. Thirty million dollars later, Mr. Speaker, not one project out of the Department of Business. Now it is scrapped. So if you want to keep talking, that is \$283 million just right there.

Let’s talk about some of the senior management hired, how much the senior management has gone up. We just saw a new ADM for Education. There were 1,200 to 1,800 people kicked out and a new ADM of Education, when the Minister of Finance himself said: There would be no more jobs hired unless I give the okay. So I guess the minister gave the okay for that because he was hired.

Just to let you know, now I am not attacking this person’s qualifications, I do not know this person’s qualifications, but I can tell you one thing. Before he was hired as ADM, he was laid off at the Eastern School Board as part of the layoffs with the superstructure with the school boards. Coincidentally, then he gets hired as ADM of Education. I do not know the person’s qualifications. I would not know the person if I walked over him, but when you see 1,200 to 1,800 people laid off in this Province and then you see another person get a six-figure salary, you have to ask the question.

Look at Ross Reid –

AN HON. MEMBER: Who?

MR. JOYCE: Ross Reid. What is he, growth and something, population growth?

Look at Don Downer, our good friends out there with the sustainable land development for the last three or four years. If you ever want to talk about a great make-work project that this government created, let's look at the sustainable land development which has no liabilities, that has no legal obligation for any municipalities. In 2010, I think he claimed \$39,000 plus expenses.

AN HON. MEMBER: What?

MR. JOYCE: Thirty-nine, and he is still going. I asked the other day when it was going to keep going, we do not know. It is just unbelievable.

If you want to talk about waste, Mr. Speaker, we will not get into John Noseworthy whatsoever. We will not get into John Noseworthy.

Mr. Speaker, I have to talk a bit quicker because I have a lot to say. Let's talk about this \$1.6 billion deficit, supposedly, we are going to have. Let's just talk about it for a second. The Premier was out there, I think it was in Corner Brook at the time, and said: We will not have the \$1.6 billion, I can guarantee you that.

Do you know why they can guarantee that? There was \$8 billion of oil that either the Minister of Finance at the time could not locate, was incompetent to know it was in the department. You can pick a choice, you knew it was there or you are incompetent and did not know. When the new Minister of Finance came in he said he did an audit down at the C-NLOPB and they found oil. Now you can pick your choice of what it was.

If the Minister of Finance did that and did his due diligence, I congratulate you. I congratulate you because it saved this Province a lot of money. The former minister, Mr. Speaker, you can pick your choice. Did you know it was there or did you not know it was there? You were the minister, and 8 million barrels of oil, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the Member for Bay of Islands, once again, direct his comments to the Chair.

The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, you can ask him if he knew or he did not know. Obviously, it was one of the two, either you knew or you did not know. If you did not know about 8 million barrels of oil, you can see why we are in such a financial mess now, Mr. Speaker. That is all I have to say on that one, Mr. Speaker.

I am going to speak for a few minutes on the school boards, Mr. Speaker. I know the Member for Humber West. I would love for the Member for Humber West to stand up now, I will even give up my time, and say to his people at the school board, the administrators, say to his buddies out in Corner Brook: I support scrapping the school board in Corner Brook. Stand up and say: I would like to see the school board scrapped.

MR. GRANTER: (Inaudible).

MR. JOYCE: I say to the Member for Humber West, because I know, Mr. Speaker, I know the Member for Humber West –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: I know the Member for Humber West did not stand up when it came to the hospital. I gave him five or six opportunities to stand up. Guess what? What was said at that private, privileged meeting with the city council, he privy to at the hospital, came through. The hospital was downgraded. It was right sized.

Here we are now, Mr. Speaker, with the school boards. It was right sized. Mr. Speaker, the Member for Humber West has lots of opportunity to go out there in Corner Brook and talk about it, I can guarantee you that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have the letter from Central Nova about how they did not know about the school boards being cut. Mr. Speaker, in the letter they sent – and each member here will have a chance to stand up on their own to speak about it. They said they contacted seven of the nine members, Mr. Speaker.

The Member for Baie Verte – Springdale, was he one of the nine who said, just a few days prior: No, there is going to be no consolidation of school boards? Was it the Member for Bonavista North? Because seven of them told the school board: No, there is going to be no consolidation. How much input did they have in all of this? That is just two.

How about the Member for Exploits? I wonder now, was he contacted and did he say: No, there is not going to be any consolidation, school boards are not going to be put into one. They are not going to be doing that because I am part of this government. I would know. They would tell me what they are doing. They would come out and they would consult with me, Mr. Speaker. They would definitely know.

How about the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, did she get a phone call? Did she tell the school board?

Do not worry, the Member for Terra Nova, he is there, too. Did you get a call? Did you tell the school board no? You are a parliamentary assistant.

We have three ministers there. The Isles of Notre Dame, did he tell them? The Member for Gander, did he tell the school board, Mr. Speaker?

How about the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor – Buchans? She was another one that was contacted. Did she tell them, no, there will be no consolidation of school boards?

Guess what, Mr. Speaker? That is what I am saying about the members opposite. When you stand up and do this, they did not know what was happening in the government until the

Budget was announced. This is the sad part about this government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I want to talk a little bit about the personal income tax regime in our Province and why we chose, in this Budget, not to raise personal income taxes. I also want to talk a little bit about what we have done in relation to taxes. I am not going to repeat the comments that have been made by my colleagues.

Since social media seems to be a topic du jour, I just happened to see a tweet from Don Mills CRA in Nova Scotia, “At the end of this fiscal year personal taxes for Nova Scotians will have increased 25% in 4 years with a decreasing population.” What we are seeing in our Province is the opposite of that, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest to you that it is a good thing. I am going to go through in a second how that has resulted in money going back into the people of our Province.

Mr. Speaker, I specifically want to talk too about the NDP tax and spend agenda which seems to be the – or spend and tax I guess, as you spend all your money and then you tax people to get it back agenda, which seems to be common across the country. We see there were taxes raised yesterday in Manitoba. I just read your quote from an NDP government in relation to an NDP government in Nova Scotia.

The position is clear; the Leader of the NDP has stated publicly that she believes in raising taxes. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, a report commissioned by the Newfoundland Federation of Labour also agrees with the same.

There is no question that the NDP position in this Province is raise taxes.

What is interesting is that they want to raise taxes on the very union members who support them. I am going to show you today that taxing the rich in this Province is really somewhat of a suggestion. It is a suggestion that simply cannot work; there are not enough rich. It depends how you define that term.

We have heard the Premier in the past state, and this is accurate, that 18 per cent of the people pay 70 per cent of the taxes in this Province. Who are these people who are paying all the taxes, Mr. Speaker? I had some work done on it and I want to break it down.

We have, out of our population, approximately 414,000 tax filers in the Province. Mr. Speaker, some people have to file tax returns even though they might not make any money; other people have to file tax returns and they are entitled to get money back. Out of those 414,000 tax filers, they are broken down; there could be two, three in a family, a husband and wife.

What is fascinating, Mr. Speaker, is that almost 80 per cent of the tax filers report less than 40 per cent in taxable income. That could be two people, Mr. Speaker, making \$35,000 each in a family; they are doing fine. They are 80 per cent of the tax filers.

You would say they are not making enough money to pay taxes. That is not what has happened. What has happened is we have, as a result of the personal income tax reductions we have brought in, reduced the impact on them, Mr. Speaker. What has happened is approximately 4 per cent of the tax filers or 18,000 people have taxable income greater than \$100,000, and they pay 30 per cent of the total taxes in the Province.

I just want to repeat that again: Approximately 4 per cent of the tax filers make more than \$100,000 – that is 18,000 people – and they pay 30 per cent of the total taxes in the Province. We only have, Mr. Speaker, 1.6 per cent of our tax filers are making more than \$150,000, or

6,500 people – 1.6 per cent of tax filers make more than \$150,000, or 6,500 people. There are 25,000 people, approximately, in this Province, tax filers, who make more than \$100,000 and they are paying 30 per cent of the taxes. So we have the lower income earners, under \$40,000, not paying a lot of the taxes, and one of the reasons, Mr. Speaker, is because of the tax decreases. What we have seen between 2000 and 2013, due to our personal income tax reductions, our income ranges have seen savings of 25 per cent to 30 per cent and the average tax rates have decreased by 2 per cent to 5 per cent.

Now, I am going to give you a couple of concrete examples how we are trying to put money in the pockets of the people of this Province, hard-working people who are raising families and have children involved in various activities, and people who are just trying to make a go of it. As a result of the personal income tax reductions, individuals with incomes less than \$15,000 now pay no provincial personal income tax, and that is approximately \$700 a year they save. When you are making less than that, and it is unfortunate, but \$700 is a lot of money.

In 2013, a single individual with taxable income of \$50,000 will save over \$1,600, or 30 per cent, compared to the amount of taxes they would have paid in 2006. So again, we are seeing savings of \$500, \$600 and \$700. So, what we are doing, Mr. Speaker, the tax reductions are benefiting the lower income earners. It is not benefiting the rich – again, whoever the rich may be.

The suggestion here has been by the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour in their report, and the NDP, is that we should look at adding a fourth tax bracket and tax the rich. Well, let me just give you an example of how much money we would make if we brought in a fourth bracket and we raised taxes 1 per cent on people making more than \$100,000, those same people who are paying 30 per cent of total taxes to date. We would make \$12.1 million. So what we have then is we have people who make \$200,000, Mr. Speaker, we would make \$5.3 million.

Now, that is what 1 per cent tax gets you. So essentially the NDP's suggestion, their spend-and-tax agenda, would result in taxing the middle-income earners. That is where we do not want to go because these are the people who are paying significant amounts of taxes, provincially and federally, to date. What we want for them, the people who are paying the taxes, who are the hard-working families, we want them to have the opportunity to put money back into their pocket so that they can spend the money on their children, on whatever way they deem appropriate.

What our personal income reductions have done, they have benefitted the lower income earners. The higher income earners are taxed, Mr. Speaker, to the point where you are at the limit. Who are the rich? It is more than \$100,000? Lots of tradespeople out there, Mr. Speaker, are making more than \$100,000 these years. The 4,000 people working on the oil rigs are making that kind of money.

I forget the exact number, but within the public service, Mr. Speaker, we have more than 9 per cent who are making more than \$90,000. What we have is a situation where there are people who are making what would seem to be an inordinate amount of money to some who are now making that money today.

The \$100,000 a year is no longer the purview of the lawyers, doctors, and chartered accountants. It is a situation where the tradespeople are doing very well. Tradespeople at Hebron, Mr. Speaker, are making \$35 an hour, the rates on Muskrat Falls, and all of the people flying back and forth to Alberta.

These are the people who are paying the taxes today. What the NDP's tax the rich essentially translates into – that policy translates into tax the middle-income earner because that is where the majority of the people in our Province fall within the brackets, Mr. Speaker.

Again, we have all of the numbers here. To put it in perspective, the 11,000 tax filers who make between \$100,000 and \$140,000 pay \$128 million in taxes. It is only natural, when we get

down to the lower ranges, but let's just look at the 35,000 people who make between \$40,000 and \$49,000. They are paying \$101 million. As you go up, Mr. Speaker, you are seeing that the numbers increase.

What we have is that the number of people who are in that \$40,000 to \$90,000 range is the majority of people. So, if you are going to raise taxes to the point that it has an impact – because I have already indicated, to add 1 per cent on people who make more than \$100,000 will raise you \$12 million. To raise 1 per cent on people who make more than \$200,000 will make you \$5.3 million. That is not the kind of money you need when your expenses are like they are today in terms of our expenses and expenditures. What would happen, we would be forced to, by adopting the NDP policy, tax the middle-income earners. Again, Mr. Speaker, they are the people we are trying to protect, along with the lower-income earners.

What is interesting, as the NDP hold themselves out as being the people who support the union members, they are saying tax our own supporters. Tax the union members. Now, that is exactly what their policy is, Mr. Speaker. We have seen it recently in two NDP governments across this country, spend and tax. Spend, spend, spend, and then tax people to get it back. That is why this government in this Province has not adopted that position. We want our people who work hard to have their money to spend.

Again, I will just go back to the fact of the lower-income earners. Those who make less than \$15,000 pay no provincial income tax, Mr. Speaker – no provincial income tax. That is an extra \$700 in their pockets. Everyone has achieved savings, but because of the profiler of the tax filer in this Province, the savings have been incorporated more, I would suggest, toward the middle-income earners and the lower-income earners. That is just the way it breaks down.

Mr. Speaker, what we have also heard, and I will have lots of time to talk about this as we move through, was in terms of how the money was spent. Well, let's look at the fact that between approximately 2001 and 2012, the health care

budget increased in this Province from \$1.2 billion to \$2.9 billion. I think it might actually be \$3 billion now in 2013.

The education budget grew from \$700 million to \$1.3 billion, while maintaining the lowest tuition costs in the country. That is what we are trying to do, Mr. Speaker, is protect those who need protection. Our students are certainly a group that we have chosen as a government to focus on; yet, look at the money we have spent in education. Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador's budget has almost tripled. I think it has almost tripled.

We have decreased taxes of various forms by \$500 million. Again, this is money that goes back into the pockets of the people of this Province. My colleagues have referred to some of those reductions, and those reductions are very good. They benefit people on a daily basis, Mr. Speaker.

What we find in our society and this is just the way our society works, is that people generally have no problem paying taxes, at least in terms of income tax. People understand that you have to pay. If you are making money you have to pay in order that we have taxes to ensure that we can provide those quality health care and quality education. That is something you will not hear a lot of complaint about, but it is also important that we maintain that competitive tax environment.

At the Board of Trade the other day, Mr. Speaker, there was discussion by the Chair of the Board of Trade of the skilled workers that we need. Well, my understanding, and again, this is more anecdotal than anything, but a lot of our people who work in Alberta still pay taxes in our Province. They maintain residences in our Province because obviously there is a tax regime. If there is a benefit to living in another province or having a residence in another province, then people will take advantage of that.

What we have tried to do as a government, is to ensure people have the maximum amount of money that we can provide to them. Mr.

Speaker, again, what I have outlined here today, some of the people who benefit and the fallacy that is behind tax the rich, the reality is we do not have enough of the rich, whatever you may consider them to be.

Let's consider \$150,000 being the rich, 1 per cent is \$7.2 million. That is it. That is the number of people we have here. The majority of our people – now, do not get me wrong, we are doing very well. We have the second highest weekly earnings, apparently, right now in the country. We have the most people working we have ever had working in our Province. We have raised our minimum wage.

When you take all that into account, Mr. Speaker, it is much better to approach the tax system as we have – and we have not raised HST, which would affect everyone, as we have seen in other provinces. So, I would suggest that our approach to taxation is certainly a lot better for the people of this Province than the tax, tax, tax suggestions of the NDP.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

It is an honour for me to stand in my place here and speak to this private member's motion.

I encourage the Minister of Finance to table the NDP document he is referring to. I am not familiar with what he is talking about, but as we saw yesterday here on the floor of the House of Assembly, it is not unusual for ministers of the Crown to stand and talk as if they live in some sort of fantasy world.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Minister of Finance, on a point of order.

MR. KENNEDY: Mr. Speaker, I have no problem tabling an interview from Lorraine Michael on CBC *On The Go* dated March 26, 2003, whereas she says: "I am quite disturbed over the fact that the government is not looking at a revenue stream both in terms of new sources as well as how to better get revenue from the sources that we do use and taxes are one of the sources... And I do think that the government needs to..." look at that.

I have no problem tabling that document, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

The hon. the Member for St. John's North, to continue.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Back to the reality, I wanted to talk a little bit about the sources of revenue that government has and how we go about doing what Belinda Stronach, I think she was a member of the Reform Party then, which I think is what we have representing the people across the way there, based on what I saw here yesterday. I believe Belinda Stronach was talking about baking a bigger pie. Now I think she described it very poorly but I will try to get around to what she was really trying to get at when she was representing the Reform Party as her colleagues are true to, to this day.

Government has limited sources of revenue. What we really need to have is more industry, more jobs, more people working, fewer people on Income Support, and more people contributing to our collective wealth. Do not all yell at the same time over there.

As I said, our sources of income are limited. So it is important to try and expand the tax base, to expand our revenues through economic

development. Unfortunately, this government, the Progressive Conservative Government has continually, unfortunately, botched economic development in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We hear the Premier talking about spin, spin, spin. We just saw some from one of her Cabinet ministers that time. We hear her Cabinet members talking about spin, spin, spin. We hear that, and we hear about her backbenchers being told to talk about spin, spin, spin. Of course, there is a good reason why this government is constantly on spin cycle, I say, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: There is a good reason why this crowd is constantly on spin cycle, and that is because their entire economic plan is a wash. It is a wash, Mr. Speaker. That is all we hear, spin, spin, spin and that is because their economic agenda is a complete washout. That is what it is.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: After yesterday it is pretty clear that they will have to put it in all-wheel drive now and get the really, really solid tires on, because they are completely off the road as a result of their waste and fiscal mismanagement and complete economic washout.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I would ask members for their co-operation.

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: Time and again, day after day, the Premier and her Cabinet in this Province have fumbled the ball and missed every opportunity to diversify the Newfoundland and Labrador economy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask members for their co-operation once again.

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, there is Muskrat Falls which was sold to us as a way to sell our energy to the United States. Of course, potential energy markets are drying up or have dried up already to the south of us because they are becoming more and more self-reliant. The more and more the United States is self-reliant, in terms of energy, the less reliant they will be on Muskrat Falls, and to say nothing of the massive economy crippling, crushing cost overruns that we are going to see from this bill of goods that was rammed through this hon. House of Assembly just before Christmas.

There are many more opportunities, Mr. Speaker, and I hope I have enough time to talk about how this crowd has botched one opportunity after another to have greater economic diversification. Rather than building opportunity and sustaining opportunities for our forest industries in this Province, they have stood by and watched mills close in Stephenville and in Grand Falls-Windsor. Instead of diversifying the economy in Central Newfoundland and on the West Coast, they chose to send our workers out to help diversify the economies in Central Canada and Western Canada. That is what has been done. That is your record. That is the record of this government.

Then there is the fishery – the fishery which sustained this Province for hundreds of years. The last minister and the current one, I say, have

committed themselves to managing decline in our historic fishing industries.

These years, the PC government has sat by – the Progressive Conservatives have sat by and watched fish plants close one by one by one: Hant's Harbour, Salvage, Jackson's Arm, Little Bay Islands, Port Union, Black Tickle, St. Lewis, Marystown and Burin. Where is the Premier with her bulldozer today, with her backhoe to block the removal of equipment from the plant in Burin? She is nowhere to be found, missing in action, thousands and thousands, and tens of thousands of jobs gone in the fishery as a result of mismanagement of this government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: Then on top of that, I say to the Minister of Fisheries, the shipping out a raw product that we have seen, that he has been complicit in, to shipping off raw product to China allowing OCI to ship that yellowtail flounder, 75 per cent of the quota to China, creating jobs in China, supplying workers to Central Canada and Western Canada – that is their record.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, on a point of order.

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is citing about creating jobs in China, but he is failing to cite the fact that we are protecting and creating over 200 jobs in Fortune as a result of the decision to maximize the value of our fish harvest, particularly yellowtail in the Fortune area.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Then there is shipbuilding – I will go to shipbuilding – an industry in Newfoundland and Labrador where boat builders and industrial workers have engaged in shipbuilding and boat building in this Province for hundreds of years. We should have a better chance to build ships in Newfoundland and Labrador and boats in Newfoundland and Labrador for hundreds of years to come –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: – but instead, the PC government continues to drop and fumble the ball on that as well.

A couple of years ago, Mr. Speaker, I remind the crowd opposite because they have very short memories, they spend an awful lot of time on social media; they should study their own history. A couple of years ago when bids were due for the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy the Premier of Nova Scotia had the guts to stand up, he had the gumption to stand up for his Province and to get work for shipyard workers in the Province of Nova Scotia. He had guts to do that.

Here in Newfoundland and Labrador our Premier stood down, she stood down, that is what she did and nothing was done to help attract a multi-year, \$25 billion shipbuilding strategy to build Canadian naval vessels in the Province. Nothing was done and very little has been done since.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: Instead of stepping up, our leaders have stood down. They have been standing down and standing back, and that is a fact.

In fact, last year the Premier celebrated, I will go so far as say she celebrated the fact, and that may not even be a strong enough term to use, but she celebrated when Newfoundland and Labrador, when businesses, when workers in this Province lost out on the opportunity to benefit from the promised fabrication of the third Hebron module in this Province. She celebrated the fact that that was done. I think that is shocking and shameful.

These are just a few examples –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. KIRBY: I will get to that if I have time. If you stop interrupting me, I will tell you what plan we have.

I just want to say these are just a few examples of how they have botched and fumbled economic diversification in this Province.

They talk about a business attraction strategy. They set money aside, and they do nothing about it. The few times that they have actually acted, they have gone out and done it to the detriment of local entrepreneurs like when they gave a multi-million dollar handout to a mainland company rather than a locally based e-learning company here in this Province, here in this city. It is absolutely shameful what they did.

They talk about building a billion-dollar ocean technology industry and they sit on their hands and expect all of that to happen by itself, and it is not going to happen by itself. This is a failed economic record that this government has and this is why more and more people are turning away from the PC Party, I tell you.

People tell me all the time, whether it is on Facebook or Twitter, people call me on the phone, I talk to people when I go out, everywhere I go, to the grocery store, people say: I used to support the PC Party. I used to vote for the PC Party. I cannot vote for them any more. They have completely failed. They do not have a shred of credibility left, I say Mr. Speaker, unfortunately.

The minister got up with some suggestion –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: – that something somebody said ten years ago represents our platform. Well, I will tell you, one thing that he did not talk about, by the way, was the regressive fees for businesses and individuals that are in this Budget this year that has been hidden and not discussed –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Once again, I ask members for their co-operation.

The Member for St. John's North.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let's talk about the highway access fee, \$500 for small businesses wanting to set up near a highway; \$500, that is an awful lot of money for a small business and a new entrepreneur. That is stuffed away in the Budget. Then yesterday we learned about the 911 tax, the cellphone tax. No one talked about that; we did not hear about that in the last election campaign. The Premier said nothing about her 911 tax. Now everybody is going to –

MR. LANE: (Inaudible).

MR. KIRBY: I guess it is going to be about \$8 million, I say to the Member for Mount Pearl South, another \$8 million levy on people in this Province. The minister stands there and talks about how they are saving people money; I see them costing people an awful lot of money.

We had a private member's motion here last spring, the first time we had an opportunity to have a private member's motion. I will remind the members opposite, the Member for St. John's East moved a motion to help out small businesses in this Province; we want to help out

small businesses to help them grow. We have recognition of the fact that they create the majority of the jobs in this Province. One of the key concerns of the roughly 2,000 small businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador is the amount of tax that they have to pay and the amount of tax that they have to pay when they are starting out; and yes, they are going to have to pay more taxes when they are starting out now because of your \$500 highway tax that you are putting on.

We wanted to reduce small business taxes. We have said that time and time again. We want to help them grow. We had in our platform, and we put forward at the nearest opportunity that we had when we came into this House of Assembly last spring, was to reduce the small business tax by 25 per cent, from 4 per cent to 3 per cent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: That is what we planned to do: \$4 million back into the pockets of small businesses and entrepreneurs in this Province. That is what we wanted to do because we have the seventh-highest small business tax in Canada. There is no question about that. Within the last year, Nova Scotia has actually dropped theirs.

The Minister of Finance is over there talking about increased taxes. He did not talk about the fact that our taxes here on the Island and in Labrador are higher than they are in Nova Scotia for small business. It is not helping small business. There was no recognition of the role that small businesses play in the economy at all. In fact, some of them now are going to have a foil thrown at them.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make sure people are clear here. We had a platform in the last election, by the way, that was costed. There were a lot of numbers. Remember the \$100 million for seniors? We will never see that. That will never be acted on. I will never live long enough. I will never sit in this House of Assembly long enough to see that acted on. There were a lot of numbers. It is not going to happen. There were a lot of numbers in that

platform; there was nothing resembling a budget whatsoever.

One of the things we wanted to do, and it was fully costed in the platform, I remind you – and I did not hear anybody criticizing it then. If people do not like it now, it is fine. We wanted to raise the basic personal exemption for individuals paying taxes, raise the basic personal exemption from the \$7,989 now to \$9,000. It would make us more competitive in the country and put more money back into the pockets of people who need it –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: – those who are living below the poverty line, make sure those people are not paying the same amount of tax that they are now because they are overburdened by it.

Encourage people to go out there and get a job. Why are you taxing them out of the workforce? Basically, that is what is happening, with all of the expenses people have. We have an incredible burden when it comes to child care. There is absolutely no way people can actually get into the workforce in some situations with this current tax structure that you have.

I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker, but I know I am out of time. I will be glad to get up as we get into the Budget debate and continue to educate the Minister of Finance about what our policy positions actually are.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I recognize the Member for Mount Pearl South.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that was a very interesting speech by the Member for St. John's North. I am not sure which fairytale book he

was reading last night to get a lot of his information from, but he obviously did a lot of reading.

Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a pleasure for me to stand up here today in this hon. House to speak to this private member's motion. I think it is a great motion. I listened to the Member for St. John's North with all the doom and gloom, and, of course, we keep hearing doom and gloom from that side all the time.

I want to point out some of the good things that are happening here in this Province. I want to speak about some of the great performance indicators. We talk about the economy. The Member for St. John's North has talked about the economy. The economy in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, has never been stronger. We have more people working in this Province than ever before in our history – ever before.

Mr. Speaker, the average wage of people working in this Province is second in the country. There are more new home starts in this Province than ever in our history. There are more new vehicle purchases in this Province than ever in our history. There is more disposable income in this Province than ever in our history. Mr. Speaker, we have created thousands of jobs. We are going to be creating thousands of more jobs in the years to come.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: Thousands of jobs because of investments, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, we are bringing Newfoundlanders home. We have heard that in the past, but now it is happening. We are stemming that tide. Our population is not decreasing any more. It has not even stabilized. It is now starting to increase because we are bringing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians home to work here in Newfoundland and Labrador, in this great economy that we have created as a government, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. John's North knows this oh so well. We brought the Member for St. John's North home only a few years ago. We brought him and his family home from Ontario. Mr. Speaker, the economy is go great in Newfoundland and Labrador that he got two jobs. That is how good the economy is.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: Now, Mr. Speaker, how did we do it? We have done this through sound fiscal management. We have done this by investing in economic development, investing in infrastructure, investing in projects, oil and gas, Muskrat Falls.

We look over at the Third Party, Mr. Speaker. What kind of an economy would we have if we had to listen to the things that they have been proposing? I mean, they are clearly against Muskrat Falls; they voted against it in the House of Assembly. They are against that. All the jobs that Muskrat Falls will bring, they are against that obviously by default. All the mining activity, which is going to occur as a result of Muskrat Falls and all the jobs, Mr. Speaker – all the good-paying union jobs I might add, they voted against all that.

They are against development on the West Coast. They have come out and they are clearly against that. Another huge opportunity for the people of the West Coast, they are against that. They said that they would tear up all the oil contracts, Mr. Speaker. That is what they would do.

The millions and millions of dollars coming into our coffers that we can spend on all these vital social programs that they keep talking about, whether it be housing as the Member for St. John's Centre is always talking about, whether it be broadband and Internet and so on that the Member for The Straits – White Bay North is always talking about, whether it be for municipalities like the Member for St. John's East is always talking about, whether it be for education as the Member for St. John's North is always talking about. We are bringing in this

money because of these contracts because of these investments.

They would not have them. They are proposing to tear up oil contracts. Mr. Speaker, I have said in this House before, I will say it again, if the NDP, the Third Party, if they had their way, there would be nothing left from the oil industry. There would be no semblance of the oil industry; they would all leave. Donovans Business Park would be empty; the office buildings in downtown St. John's would be empty.

There would be nobody left behind from the oil companies except for the lawyers who are left behind to sue this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, to sue us for what we are worth, which would not be a whole lot under their plan. That is what would happen, Mr. Speaker.

I think it is important that we continue to emphasize that. It is important that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians know what they stand for because that is what they stand for. People refer to them now as the no development party for good reason, Mr. Speaker, because they are against all the development. Obviously, if we do not have development, we do not have jobs; we do not have a strong economy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at what this private member's motion is all about, it is talking about taxation. I think it is important to talk about this because, Mr. Speaker, as a Province, as a government, we have a responsibility to all members of our society. We have a responsibility to everybody. We have a responsibility for health, which we take very seriously. It was one of the key points in our Budget. In Budget 2013, it was our commitment and our investment in health care. That is important to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We believe in education, Mr. Speaker. It is another key principle in Budget 2013, which is why we maintain caps on classrooms in schools; why we maintain such a great student-teacher ratio, I think the best in the country; why we

have continued to freeze tuition fees at Memorial University and CNA, which are the lowest tuition fees in the country; why we have the best student aid package in the country, because we believe in and we invest education, which is a priority of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

One of the other things that we recognize – and we have invested in municipalities, which was another thing we heard loud and clear. We have invested in families. We have responded to what people asked.

One of the other things we heard loud and clear through the Budget consultation process is, what about the working man? What about the working family who are starting off in life, Mr. Speaker, and they may have student loans to repay? They are starting off. They need to get a house and a car and so on. They have children and so on they need to support and raise. What about those people? Those people need a break as well.

I have heard it many times, I am sure we all have. People say that the working people pay for everything. I think that is quite a fair statement, actually, when you look at the percentages. The average person who is working everyday is the people who are paying for all the services that the NDP are asking for all the time. That is who is paying for it all, but we have to recognize them.

Do we have to look after seniors in our communities? Absolutely! Do we have to look after people on low and fixed incomes? Absolutely! Do we need to provide social programs for people in our communities? Absolutely, we do. Do we need to invest in business, small business, medium-sized business, large business? Do we need to make those investments? Absolutely, but we also need to be cognizant of the average person, the average Joe who gets up every morning, gets dressed and goes to work, and works hard for a living. We need to make sure that we keep them in mind as well. We do that through ensuring that they are not going to be overburdened by taxation.

We made a conscious effort, Mr. Speaker, to do that. We have maintained that, unlike the NDP, the Third Party in particular, who have called for hiking taxes. We are going to pay for more social programs. We are not going to get it from business because we are anti-business. We do not want it that way. We are going to make the working Joe pay for it all. That is what they are going to do. That is what they stand for.

I will appeal to every Newfoundlander and Labradorian who has to get up every morning, roll up their sleeves, Mr. Speaker, go to work to support their family, to support their lifestyle. We are making this move for you. The NDP do not support you, we certainly do. We recognize the contribution that you make to Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, I am hearing all kinds of heckles from across the way. Of course, they claim not to heckle. Anyway, we all know the difference of that. I guess the camera is not on them right now so they can do it. That is fine. They can heckle away. I do not mind, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that we have done a lot of other great things. Let's talk about paying down the debt, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about that. Let's talk about paying down the debt. We have, as a government, paid down \$4 billion on debt, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LANE: As a result of that, we have freed up hundreds of millions of dollars that we can reinvest in social programs by making the responsible decision to pay down on debt, as opposed to what we would hear across the way: Let's stick it in a sock. Let's put it in the sock drawer. Let's pay hundreds of millions of dollars in interest to the banks. Let the banks get rich. Let's blow it all –

AN HON. MEMBER: They don't understand finances.

MR. LANE: I do not think they understand financing at all, I really do not, but we do. We have paid down on the debt, Mr. Speaker.

We have also paid down the pension plan. The reality of it is, and we all know that a discussion has to occur if we want to sustain our pension plan. In the last, I think, four to five years this government has invested – I want to say \$4 billion with a 'B' give or take. Approximately \$4 billion, with a 'B', we have invested into the pension plan for our employees. That is what we have done, Mr. Speaker.

We have paid off debt. We have invested in the pension plan. We have invested in industry and diversification, particularly in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Look at the South Coast; ask the people of the South Coast who are thriving because of the aquaculture industry.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: Ask them if we spent unwisely, Mr. Speaker. Ask them what they think.

Ask the people involved in the tourism industry, Mr. Speaker. A thriving tourism industry that we have, much of it in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, ask them what they think. Ask all the communities now that we have hooked up to broadband and Internet and so on, and cellphone service. Ask them, right? Ask them what they think. Ask them if they think that is a waste.

Ask the people who are utilizing our health care system. Ask the students at Memorial University with the lowest tuition fees. Ask the students who are availing of student aid. Ask the small business owners. I just attended an event there last week, Mr. Speaker, where we invested in entrepreneurship with the Minister of Innovation, Business and Rural Development, with the fund that we put in there to invest in small business, to invest in entrepreneurs.

Mr. Speaker, it is very easy to sit on the other side of the House of Assembly, to simply sit

there and criticize everything. Criticize everything, accountable for nothing, Mr. Speaker. It is very easy to do. It is a lot different to be on this side of the House and to govern and make decisions, strategic decisions, and sometimes very difficult decisions, Mr. Speaker, but you do it in the best interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is why we do it. That is why we take the criticisms, Mr. Speaker. It is not always popular, but we have to be guided by our principles. This government is guided by our principles.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: This Premier is guided by her principles, and I will stand beside this Premier and this government any day to defend all the great things that we have done and continue to do in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Port de Grave.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say we have had an interesting afternoon, to say the least, and some vibrant debate from both sides of the House. Mr. Speaker, I want to say that over the last number of months and weeks I have watched with great admiration the work that our Cabinet have done, the Premier, and the Minister of. Any time that you have to go out and you have to do what they have done over the last number of months and bring in a difficult Budget, that is never easy. The strain that was shown on their faces and every member of Cabinet as they went through this – nobody wants this.

The Member for Cape St. Francis said the other day: Nobody wants to see anybody lose their job. Difficult decisions had to be made, Mr. Speaker, and our Cabinet, our Premier, and our

Minister of Finance sat down and they made those decisions. I think also, Mr. Speaker, what we found out today is some rationale why we did not increase taxes and we decided to keep money in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I want to thank the members who participated in the debate today. I want to thank the Member for St. Barbe. I want to thank the Member for Cape St. Francis, the Member for Bay of Islands, the Minister of Finance himself, the Member for St. John's North, and finally the Member for Mount Pearl South.

Just a couple of comments, Mr. Speaker, before I sit down and end debate today and a couple of corrections to make. Again, sometimes I wonder about the Member for St. Barbe. He says all kinds of things, and I still cannot follow him. That being said, we have done what we believe is in the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. The decisions this government has made to sustain and reduce taxes and keep taxes low is for the betterment of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador because they have money in their pockets to spend.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLEJOHN: To the Member for Bay of Islands, I did do a check and we did not, I repeat, we did not withhold – the seniors' tax relief for our driver's licences and fees are still in place. They were exempted. It is still a 35 per cent reduction. I just want to –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. LITTLEJOHN: I am listening.

Again, it was a 35 per cent reduction for seniors.

AN HON. MEMBER: Ferries too?

MR. LITTLEJOHN: I will get that answer for him in the next week or so. Anyway, as we go along I just wanted to make that correction.

Then I have to come to the hon. Member for St. John's North. First of all, I was wondering if he was chopping wood or if he needed a hammer or an axe because he was banging away over there pretty feverishly. He talked about spin cycles and a wash and spin and economic agendas. I will give the Member for St. John's North credit for one thing if he thinks we are doing a good spin job, he has done a wonderful job of spinning in the last little while. I will certainly say that for him.

Again, he talked about what we did not do for small business in this Province. Once again, we have done much for small business in this Province. The Minister of Finance is passing me things and I am looking through my notes here. We reduced the small business tax from 5 per cent to 4 per cent. We also increased the threshold for small businesses from \$300,000 to \$500,000 during our term. We have supported 4,800 new small businesses by those initiatives, so we are doing something for small business.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Recently, the Minister for Innovation, Business and Rural Development got up and he talked about the new suite of programs: \$47 million for small business in this Province. The suite of programs that they have and the revisions they have made to make it easier access for small business to get to that money; \$47 million available for the development of small business in this Province. I believe that really means we are doing something for small business.

We have not talked today about the retail sales tax on insurance premiums. We have not talked about the retail sales tax on used vehicles and the exemptions there. We have done lots in this Province to keep money in the people's pockets.

Again, I want to go back to a couple of comments by the Minister of Finance to close here today. The Minister of Finance today talked about making sure that we have kept money in the middle- to low-income earners. It is our prerogative and our belief that if we can keep money in the pockets of Newfoundlanders

and Labradorians who are in the middle- to low-income earners brackets, that will benefit all of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The more disposable income they have, that is good for business. That is good for everybody in the Province. Not only our large businesses but our small businesses, our corner stores; all those things come to benefit.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to have initiated this motion today. I want to thank the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis for seconding the motion. I want to thank the hon. members once again for the debate and I look forward to the vote in a few minutes.

Thank you so much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): The House has heard the motion.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, just a reminder for members: tomorrow, April 18, 2013, the Resource Committee will meet here in the House of Assembly at 9:00 a.m. to review the Estimates of the Department of Environment and Conservation.

MR. SPEAKER: In accordance with Standing Order 9, this House now stands adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, at 1:30 p.m.