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Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

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The House met at 2:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we start today's proceedings, I want to acknowledge some special guests we have in our gallery. Today we have members from the Canadian Cancer Society, Newfoundland and Labrador Division: Mr. Matthew Piercy, Executive Director; Ms Kristin Hanlon, the Manager of Finance and Operations; as well as some other representatives from the organization.

Welcome to our gallery.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: We are also very pleased to have with us today Mr. Jeremy Mueller. I think Jeremy might have been in this House a little while back. He is sitting here today, though, as the World Champion from Seoul, South Korea, in the Special Olympic Games.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: It is not every day we have a World Champion in the House. Welcome.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today, we will have members' statements from the Member for the District of Burgeo – La Poile; the Member for the District of Cape St. Francis; the Member for the District of Port de Grave; the Member for the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune; the Member for the District of Baie Verte – Springdale; and the Member for the District of St. John's Centre.

The Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I rise today to recognize Mrs. Joyce Samms of Port aux Basques who was recently awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Mrs. Samms was born in Yorkshire, England in 1923. She served in the Women's Royal Naval Service in England during World War II. She was a courier during the Battle of Britain, riding a motorcycle to transport documents from the admiralty to various news organizations. She came to Newfoundland as a war bride in 1952 with her late husband, Frederick Samms.

Mrs. Samms has devoted her life to the Royal Canadian Legion. During her time with Branch 11 and the Ladies' Auxiliary, she has served as President, Secretary, Poppy Chair, Honours and Award Chair, and Membership Chair. She was the first woman to be elected as District Commander and the first woman to serve as Provincial President.

Mrs. Samms has also received the Meritorious Service Medal, the Palm Leaf, the Minister of Veterans Affairs Commendation, and the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join with me in extending congratulations to Joyce Samms upon receipt of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. The medal could not have gone to a more deserving individual.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for the District of Cape St. Francis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, what a privilege to stand here today and welcome back to this hon. House a World Champion.

Just a short while ago we were here congratulating Jeremy Mueller for being awarded the Male Athlete of the Year for Special Olympics Canada. We wished him good

luck at the World Special Olympic Games in Seoul, South Korea, where 112 countries competed. Jeremy was the only person from this Province on a team of 112.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Jeremy competed in the 200-metre dash where he placed fifth, in the relay race where he won a silver medal, but it was the 400-metre race where he brought home gold as a World Champion.

Mr. Speaker, Jeremy is hard-working young man. Whether it is at work at Tim Horton's or at sport, he shows great commitment and dedication. Jeremy's accomplishments are among the greatest achievements this Province has ever seen in sport.

I ask all hon. members to join with me in congratulating World Champion Jeremy Mueller on his accomplishments. I know that you are as proud of him, as I am.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for the District of Port de Grave.

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Mr. Speaker, I stand today in this House to congratulate All Hallows Elementary School who have been selected to receive a Helping Hand Award from the Let Them Be Kids program.

The announcement was made on Valentine's Day which elicited widespread excitement throughout the school community. The gymnasium was packed with 420 students, their parents, school supporters, and invited guests. They danced and cheered at the announcement.

Last fall, the school playground was condemned as unsafe for play. A group of parent-teacher volunteers started to refurbish and look for ways to upgrade the existing playground. With the assistance of the Let Them Be Kids program award, every dollar the committee raises, the Let Them Be Kids program will match dollar for dollar. The fundraising campaign received a kick-start with a contribution of \$20,000 from

the school council and a contribution from the provincial government.

Students will play an important role in the design of the park by voting on the structures and amenities that they would like to see in their new park. The whole school community is now working toward Build Day, June 8.

I ask all members to join me today in congratulating All Hallows Elementary, its students, staff, and parent volunteers for their foresight and hard work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to deliver accolades to some special volunteers in the Town of Harbour Breton. At the annual Lions Club banquet in February, the Lions named two people as Citizens of the Year for 2012. This high community honour was awarded to Mr. Anthony Casey and Ms Millie Skinner.

Mr. Casey was nominated by the Town of Harbour Breton for his dedication to the Volunteer Fire Department, which he joined in 1993 and became fire chief in 2010. He has been instrumental in lobbying for improved equipment and training, and has become a Certified Fire Inspector, and a Certified Instructor by Fire and Emergency Services.

Ms Millie Skinner was nominated by the St. Bartholomew's ACW, and by the Harbour Breton Hospital Auxiliary. Although she is not an official member of either organization, she dedicates hours and hours to both groups, and is an active volunteer for fundraisers such as cold plates. She also helps with the King Academy's Breakfast program, and visits patients at the cottage hospital twice a month.

I ask all members of this hon. House to join me in thanking these citizens for their outstanding community service and volunteerism.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. POLLARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed a pleasure to rise in this hon. House today to congratulate Valmont Academy Vikings Boys Basketball Team for capturing gold.

In the six team provincial tournament, Valmont crushed Lakewood Academy in the quarterfinals and posted a convincing victory over Bayside Academy in the semi finals. In the championship game, with lightning speed and razor sharp passing, Valmont out-hustled Swift Current Academy to seize the title.

Members of the gold medal team include Kyle Burt, Daniel Thomas, Cody Caines, Jonathan Janes, Daniel R. Thomas, Adam Wright, Drake Noble, Andrew Brown, Brandon Burt, and Coaches Ryan Kelly, Adam Mathews, and Ian Campbell.

Mr. Speaker, the staff and coaches of Valmont Academy are to be applauded for such outstanding support and dedication they give to extracurricular activities, which builds not only on school spirit but also community spirit, resulting in better student achievement.

Please join me in conveying sincere congratulations to Coaches Ryan Kelly, Adam Mathews, and Ian Campbell and the Valmont Academy Boys Basketball team for capturing the Provincial A School Sports Newfoundland and Labrador Championships.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am so very happy to honour Bev Moore-Davis and her team for so courageously organizing Miles 4 Smiles, a most profoundly powerful event designed to raise awareness of child abuse.

The walk happened this past Sunday morning at Bowring Park. Many of the organizers and speakers were women who had been sexually abused as children, who are so determined to make this world a safer place for all children.

One of those women, Kora Leigh Russell, shared a letter that she wrote to her future child. She read it to the few hundred people gathered. From that letter she wrote: I write this long before you will enter this world my future child.

“Because my childhood was denied the innocence it should have had, I will do everything in my power to make sure yours is as innocent and carefree as humanly possible...And when it's time to go to sleep, the only possible thing to scare you, will be the imaginary monsters under your bed.” To hear more of her letter, it is available on their Web site Miles 4 Smiles.

During this Violence Awareness Week I want to thank these women for their courage and strength and ask that we all commend them for their commitment to make this world a safer place for all children. Once again, I ask my colleagues to join me and say bravo to Miles 4 Smiles.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to announce the chair and trustee members of the school board transition committee which will oversee the establishment of one provincial English-language school board, to be in place in September 2013. This committee will further our commitment to build resources in the classroom and deliver services more effectively to students.

Lorne Wheeler, a former educator, school administrator, and Deputy Minister of Education, has been appointed chair of the transition committee.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Wheeler has had more than thirty-five years of experience as a teacher, a principal, a former President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, and has held a number of senior executive roles within the Department of Education, including as Deputy Minister. He brings a wealth of knowledge and experience, and a wide range of educational perspectives to this role and I thank him for taking on this assignment.

Mr. Speaker, members of the transition committee also include the chairs and one additional trustee from each of the four current English-language school boards. The committee members are: Mr. Goronwy Price and Guy Elliott, Labrador School Board; Don Brown and Nada Borden, Western School District; John George and Kim Cheeks, Nova Central School Board; and, Milton Peach and George Sheppard, Eastern School Board.

Mr. Speaker, each of these volunteer school board representatives has agreed to assist in the transitioning process to ensure the delivery of educational programs and services to students, teachers and staff will flow smoothly in September. I would ask current board trustees, or others who have ideas as to how to assist in this effort, to make representation to the transition committee.

I am further pleased to note, Mr. Speaker, that the position of CEO for the provincial English-language school board will be advertised this week.

We have much work to do in preparation for September 2013, Mr. Speaker, and I want to sincerely thank the individuals who have agreed to take on this task.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for the District of St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. This is one of the most political committees appointed by one of the most misguided Ministers of Education in the most unpopular and misguided government we have known since Confederation.

Mr. Speaker, the only thing this committee ensures is that the minister has loaded this up with enough Tory hacks to get whatever response he wants. This is purely a rubber stamp for the minister. If what he was doing to education was not a tragedy, the appointment of this committee would be a farce.

Thank you, Sir.

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

MR. KIRBY: Thanks to the minister for an advance copy of his statement. The decision to move to a single, consolidated English school board for all of Newfoundland and Labrador has been rightly denounced by the Western School District Board of Trustees, the Nova Central District Board of Trustees, a number of Labrador and Eastern District trustees, several retired school district CEOs, and many others.

In recent days, government's decision has been variously called a hasty decision, tokenism, and a sham. This decision flies in the face of all

contemporary notions of democratic local school governance. It is wrong-headed and it should not be permitted to proceed.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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 to inform this hon. House that April 27 is National Daffodil Day. In our lifetime, one in three people in our Province will be diagnosed with cancer. The Canadian Cancer Society created Daffodil Day to let them know they are not alone.

On Daffodil Day, the Canadian Cancer Society asks that individuals wear a daffodil pin as a show of support for those living with cancer. Daffodil Day is a day to take a moment to reflect on the individuals we know who are on a cancer journey and to remember those who have died.

Mr. Speaker, our government continues to work to enhance cancer care in the Province and to improve quality in our health care system through investments in equipment and services for prevention, early diagnoses, and treatment of cancer. Including Budget 2013 funding, the provincial government has invested over \$155 million in cancer treatment and prevention since 2004.

Our government continues to demonstrate high levels of support for women and men who access cancer care and treatment. The recent Budget included an allocation to the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program to allow for the funding of twelve new drug therapies, eight of which will assist in the treatment of various forms of cancer; funding to allow for new cancer drug therapies for the

Cancer Care and Hematology Program at Eastern Health; the continued expansion of the Provincial Breast Cancer Screening Program to allow women aged forty to forty-nine to participate in screening; and funding for the continuation of the highly successful Newfoundland and Labrador Colon Cancer Screening Program.

Mr. Speaker, our investments in cancer treatment and prevention are helping to improve the lives of cancer patients and their families throughout the Province. During April, which is Cancer Awareness Month, and especially on Daffodil Day, I encourage residents of the Province to do something special for someone living with cancer or to contribute in some way to the fight against this disease.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. I am very happy to have my daffodil on today to show my support as well. Indeed, virtually all of us are affected by cancer, either directly or through the struggle of family members and friends who are diagnosed.

Our Province continues to have higher cancer incidence and death rates than most other provinces according to the Canadian Cancer Society. Both genetics and lifestyle factor into this incidence. The minister has alluded to some treatments and preventative measures this government has invested in, which is commendable, but I would be remiss if I did not address this government's refusal to fund smoking cessation therapies.

Their own agency, the Alliance for the Control of Tobacco, is advocating for this therapy to help people quit. The NLMA is calling on government to cover such therapies for low-income residents. We are a society that

acknowledges that addiction is a disease, yet we refuse to fund a therapy that has been shown to reduce smoking rates considerably.

In 2012, four to five times more people died of lung cancer than prostate or breast cancer. Considering the higher prevalence of lung cancer and that smoking causes 85 per cent of lung cancers, it would be a socially and economically prudent investment for government to fund smoking cessation. We take in almost \$150 million in tobacco tax per year; funding this therapy would cost a fraction of it.

While we did have the coverage of eight more cancer drugs, I have to point out this government's refusal to fund ondansetron and Neupogen for children with cancer. We have pediatric oncologists begging for coverage so kids can have the same treatment, including chemo, regardless of their income level.

Mr. Speaker, it is great to see representatives of the Canadian Cancer Society here today. Let us keep working together to fight this disease.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We all know that we are all affected by cancer, either ourselves, personally, or by someone we love. Daffodil Day is very much also about acknowledging volunteers and all those who work in the area of cancer, whether it be policymakers, medical staff, volunteers, and especially volunteers and staff of the Canadian Cancer Society.

I, myself, Mr. Speaker, when I had my first mastectomy, it was my left breast. The next day after my surgery as I lay in my hospital bed bandaged up, my partner sat at the head of my bed, the nurse came in and he said: Have you seen yet? I said no, Sir, I cannot look yet. He

said, no, no, no, it is very important for you to look physiologically. I said I am prepared physiologically, however, I am squeamish. He removed the bandages and left me in the bed laying there. My partner, Peg, looked down and said: My God, Gerry, I can see your heart beating. I looked down and I said that is because it is now closer to the surface.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of us, whether those in our families, those who are working in the area of cancer, to continue to live with our hearts so closer to the surface as we continue to support one another in this area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We understand that people who were laid off in March by this government cannot get their record of employment. This government is denying overtime to staff who are responsible for preparing those necessary forms.

I ask the Premier: Is this the respect and the professionalism that was talked about on Budget Day for those employees?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is a backlog in terms of getting the records of employment out. I inquired today, once it came to my attention, Mr. Speaker. There are currently 170 that have not been prepared to date. They will be done by the end of the week.

As for requests for overtime, no one came to my level and requested overtime, because I can assure the member opposite that it would have been granted. This is a situation where we understand the vulnerable situation people find themselves in and we are doing our best to help them through it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over two years ago government paid out \$72 million to one of two energy companies that had their assets expropriated during the botched Abitibi expropriation. At the time, they said that negotiations with the other company, Fortis, was ongoing.

I ask the Premier: Since it has been over two years since you settled with one company, four years since the botched Abitibi expropriation, why is it taking so long to settle with Fortis?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, when expropriation took place representatives of the government contacted the parties that were involved, the third parties, other than Abitibi, and indicated what the government was doing. The Enel Partnership was taken care of – a previous Minister of Natural Resources announced that – and negotiations with the remaining hydro partnership, Fortis, should conclude very soon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, before their hydro assets were expropriated by the Premier, Fortis had recently invested \$65 million to add additional capacity to their hydro project in Central Newfoundland.

Since it cost \$72 million to settle with Enel, and Fortis had recently upgraded their asset, how much is it going to cost to settle with Fortis?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador will negotiate the acquisition of any asset in a manner that will be in the best interests of the people of the Province. Those negotiations have gone forward, and when the negotiations are complete I will be very happy to stand in this House and advise members opposite, and through them and through this House, the people of the Province, what the terms of that transaction were in full detail.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, parents and educators continue to be outraged by the budget cuts to our education system. Today, NLTA sent a letter to the minister. They are suggesting that about 40 per cent of the teaching units being cut in this budget will be coming from a needs-based part of the teacher allocation model.

I ask the Premier: Do you fully understand the impact your decisions are having on front-line education and our children?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to clear one thing up right off the bat, for some people who may not read and carefully understand what is being said. This is not special education services, Mr. Speaker. This is an allocation that did not exist before 2005, and 60 per cent of those allocations remain intact, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask the member opposite again. Is he suggesting we continue on the road that we are doing and that we take from our front-line services where we clearly said we were not going to, Mr. Speaker? Special education services and classroom caps remain intact.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, if the member wants to see our investment in education, he should have come with me this morning to the site at St. Teresa's to see a near \$23 million construction underway – and thirty-nine of those projects underway in this Province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: The minister keeps evading the question. My question was about the needs allocation and the 40 per cent cut. You continue not to acknowledge that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, yet another school trustee has come forward to tell government that the plan to merge the school boards is a bad move. George Tiller of Nova Central says the best education for our students cannot be achieved with one board administered in St. John's.

I ask the Premier: Since the transition team cannot solve this problem, how are you going to address this significant issue?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, in light of the stats, a 17 per cent reduction in students, 12 per

cent reduction in the number of schools, 33 per cent in operating costs at boards, is he suggesting that we continue to fund that and we take it from students and teachers? We are not there, Mr. Speaker.

I am going to speak specifically to Gander. In Gander, that corporate piece will not be there. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, the trustees, the people of Gander and the people of the Province, in a site like Gander that strong educational presence is there. That is what is going to be the focus of that office now and staffed appropriately, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What the minister did not say is where it will not be. It will not be in Burin, it will not be in Grand Falls-Windsor, it will not be in Lab West, it will not be in Spaniard's Bay, and it will not be in Lower Cove. They are closing up; the minister did not say that.

Mr. Speaker, the transition team to dismantle school boards is expected to start work. At the end of this process, we will have an appointed board.

I ask the Premier: How can you justify removing democratically elected school boards and replacing them with a politically appointed one that will serve government and not the people?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, the member misses the point. This is a transition committee. Transition means that it is a temporary committee until we move to the board, Mr. Speaker. At the end of this process, Mr. Speaker, there will be an elected board. We will allow this transition committee to do their work.

I would suggest to the member opposite if he has trustees who are writing him, ask them now to put their suggestions to the transition committee. All of us are about having the best education system that we can in this Province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would suggest to the minister, if you are really concerned about having the best education system, why not go to those trustees. Why are you saying they should come to you?

If you were concerned about the best education system, go to them. Have a consultation process that is open so that people can be fully engaged. You refused to do that before you made this decision, I say, Mr. Speaker. Why not get them to come to you?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, a very important point – the boards that are presently in place are going to exist until the end of August. Two representatives from their boards are on the transition team. That is the opportunity for them to put input to it.

Mr. Speaker, the member is asking that I continue duplication of service, where we can find efficiencies and to invest them where they need to be, that being in the education of our students.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, all of the school boards that the minister is about to trash have multi-year plans from 2011 to 2014.

I ask: In the middle of this self-inflicted chaos, what will happen to these multi-year plans?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I do not know where to go with this question. Mr. Speaker, the team and the people that are in place that are committed to the education of this Province, their work will continue. Everywhere from school councils to committees that are in place, Mr. Speaker, this will continue. The transition board will work their process through. Through full engagement, we see an improved education system in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, 2014 is next year, not this year; so these are plans that these boards had in place for 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014, including his district.

I ask: What will become of those plans that they made with respect to student-teacher ratios, buildings, and all their other resources? What will become of the plans they have invested in and that they have approved, and that he approved?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is just quite evident how the man has never listened. He mentioned in that comment student-teacher ratio. The best of all the provinces in Canada –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: The best of all the provinces in Canada, a cap that is continuing, the continuation of special education services – I swear to God these people want us to take the

money away from the students so that we can continue the operation and duplication of the services, Mr. Speaker, that exists within the board and can be done more efficiently through this restructuring process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, the minister is fond of saying how we have the best student-teacher ratio in Canada, but what about the school board ratio of all provinces in Canada?

I ask the minister: Could he tell the people of this Province how many provinces in Canada will go down to one school board and how their students are doing?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am sure many of the arguments that are being said now were said in 2004. We went through a transition process. We, in our Province, do things because we want to do them a certain way and we are going to do that.

I would ask the member, if he has some valuable contribution to make to this, the transition team will willingly hear from him. I look forward to his input, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, residents of Nunatsiavut who are presently attending Adult Basic Education courses in their communities are also victims of budget cuts from this government.

I ask the minister: Can you guarantee the residents of Nunatsiavut that they will have

access to Adult Basic Education programming in their communities in the future?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, as we have said with Adult Basic Education in Newfoundland and Labrador, our intention is that Adult Basic Education will be offered throughout the Province. It will just be offered in a different format than what it is being offered at this time, in particular when we speak about the College of the North Atlantic.

Mr. Speaker, the students who are enrolled in Adult Basic Education this year will have access to Adult Basic Education next year, or if they are new students who want to come into that program. At any sites where we have Adult Basic Education this year, we will continue to have Adult Basic Education next year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: I am glad to hear a reference to College of the North Atlantic because we also are hearing that the automotive mechanic program offered at the College of the North Atlantic in Happy Valley-Goose Bay will be cut from the curriculum. Students who wish to access this program have been told they are being put on a waiting list to attend another CNA campus.

I ask the minister: Can you confirm that this is true? If so, what assurances can you provide that those students will have fair and equal access to the program?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the College of the North Atlantic provides skills development to students in Newfoundland and Labrador so we can match people who want to attach to the labour market. There are times when that means certain programs may be delivered in a site where we do not have sufficient enrolment to continue to offer it, therefore new and other programs may come into those sites.

Mr. Speaker, already today the College of the North Atlantic issued a release where there are new programs going into various campuses across this Province. Any of the programs that are not going to be delivered next year that are being delivered this year, that they announced, Mr. Speaker, have had historically less than 50 per cent enrolment for at least four years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the Adult Dental Plan covers \$750 per year for dentures. A full set of dentures costs \$1,500.

I ask the minister: Will you make the per person cap responsive to individual situations so that you are not leaving people in such undignified situations as having to choose their top or bottom teeth?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have, as I outlined this morning in Estimates, one of the most robust dental health programs in the country, bar none. We have an adult dental program that is the envy of the country. We invested \$6.7 million in that program last year, Mr. Speaker, and we are investing \$6.7 million in that program again this year. Our intent is to see that as many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who need that program have access to that program; but,

Mr. Speaker, we need to be fiscally responsible and we intend to be.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: I guess the lack of an answer there, Mr. Speaker, answers my question quite clearly. The fact is you are going to cover it in two years. It is undignified and it is not necessary.

This morning's Health Estimates also made it abundantly clear that the minister has no idea how the paid family caregiver program will work. However, later she said the plan is almost finalized.

I ask the minister: Which is it? How close are you to finalizing this program that you promised almost two years ago?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we did have a bit of toing and froing this morning, I must admit, at Estimates. When I said to him – and I was very, very serious about – we welcome any advice that you have. We welcome any suggestions that you have. His response to me was: I will just ask the questions. Because, Mr. Speaker, they have no solution over there. They have no way forward over there.

Mr. Speaker, he offered up that in Australia there is a program. Well, Mr. Speaker, in Australia there is a program that pays \$70 a week. Work that out on an hourly average. Is that what you are proposing, we do a program like that?

In Nova Scotia, he offers up a program there, a \$400 tax relief, Mr. Speaker. Is that what he is proposing, we do \$400 a month? I do not know.

We have asked him for his suggestions. He has none, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, if the minister wants some advice –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. A. PARSONS: - my advice to her is before you actually make the promise, why don't you have the plan in place? I can tell by the clapping they do not want to hear it. Make a promise, why don't you have the plan in place?

The Minister of Health said in Estimates this morning that the rationale for the annual budget of \$8.2 million for the family caregiver program was that they had to choose some number to include in the Budget to move the planning forward.

I ask the minister: Is \$8.2 million a completely arbitrary number or can you define how the money will be spent?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite continues to want us to roll out a program here in the House of Assembly. Mr. Speaker, when we roll out the program, it will be to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

When we have all of the details in place, we will move forward and launch that program. I told him yesterday, I told him this morning, and I am going to tell him this afternoon that will be this year, Mr. Speaker. We have committed the \$6.1 million to doing that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

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

Yesterday in response to a question, the Premier directed me to the front page of *The Telegram* to see how well Newfoundland and Labrador is doing. What I saw was a story featuring a St. John's city councillor talking about how well off the St. John's region is.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: What does she say to people in rural Newfoundland and Labrador who see their children forced to ride buses for hours over highways to attend school, and to people forced to commute thousands of kilometres to find work?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the greatest number of my colleagues in this House of Assembly represents districts in rural parts of our Province. I was born and raised and lived most of my adult life and raised my family in rural Newfoundland, Mr. Speaker. I am not going to take any lessons from somebody who lived in the heart of St. John's and the heart of Toronto for most of her life on the reality of rural living.

Mr. Speaker, we have areas of this Province that are challenged; there is no doubt about it. I can point to no greater example than the Connaigre Peninsula, Mr. Speaker, and Fortune Bay and Bay d'Espoir where we go through difficult times, where people are severely challenged. The government walks the walk with them, and we work together to find solutions that work for the people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

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

If I were the Premier, Mr. Speaker, I would be ashamed to acknowledge that somebody –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: – from St. John’s better understands rural Newfoundland and Labrador than she does.

Mr. Speaker, I and other members of our caucus continue to receive questions from people about the way in which decisions were made regarding the cuts and layoffs in departments and government agencies because of Budget 2013. People are finding it hard to understand how permanent positions such as environmental scientists and wildlife officers could all of a sudden become redundant.

Mr. Speaker, I once again am asking the Premier if she will table in this House the details of the core mandate review that was done to aid the decision making that has led to the massive cuts and layoffs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the cuts that were done, explanations have been given. It has been a process that took long over a year. Much of it, Mr. Speaker, is very straightforward. As I pointed out, we have nine youth in the Whitbourne Youth Centre. We had over 100 staff looking after nine young people.

The average for the past five years has been sixteen a day for just one year; otherwise, we have been less than ten a day for four years with over 100 people, Mr. Speaker, caring for those people. That is not the fault of the people, Mr. Speaker, but something needed to be done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

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

If this review exists on paper, I do not see why it is so hard for the Premier to produce it.

People are still reeling from the massive layoffs government has inflicted on the Province. During Finance Estimates last week, the Minister of Finance told us that twenty-five jobs have been lost in his department either through layoffs or positions eliminated. He noted he has that general information for all departments.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister if he would be able to table the figures for all the departments in this House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: What I would say to the member opposite is if she would stop pontificating and do some reading, then she would perhaps find the information right under her nose.

A news release was sent out on March 26, Mr. Speaker, which outlines all of the cuts per department. It outlines how it breaks down in terms of vacant positions eliminated, layoffs. It outlines it by department, Mr. Speaker. What you have here is a situation where it goes to the department, equals the number of 485, the

vacant positions. I would say to her: Read the document for yourself.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party.

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If my memory serves me correctly, the minister has indicated that since we received the salary information last week there have been more cuts and more changes. We want to the up-to-date figures. So, I would like to have the up-to-date figures, Mr. Speaker.

The Finance Minister also indicated in Estimates that he does not have the actual details from each department of what the job losses actually look like in terms of the specifics of the positions which no longer exist, and I understand that. That information may be found, he said, only in the department itself.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Will she direct each of her ministers to provide a detailed department by department outline of the positions lost through layoffs and unfilled vacancies?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENNEDY: Again, Mr. Speaker, if she stopped preaching and asked questions, she might find some answers.

What we have is a situation where each minister comes before Estimates, that minister can be asked questions, as to the layoffs; I am assuming that those questions have been asked.

Mr. Speaker, each department has a list of the number of people who have been laid off, the positions eliminated, and they can provide that information. As I indicated last week, it is a

matter of asking the questions. You might not get the answers you want, but you will get the honest answers, not like what comes from over there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Year two of government's Sustainability Plan calls for a review of health and education systems. If these reviews are anything like the core mandate reviews, then we are in trouble. Carefully developed human resources plans done in consultation with all participants might stop the last minute knee-jerk decision making we are currently seeing.

I ask the Premier, Mr. Speaker: Will she commit to developing sensible human resources plans in consultation with all stakeholders as a framework for decision making?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there has been no knee-jerk reactions by government. It has been a long, well thought out, and well executed piece of work. That has negative consequences when you have to lay people off and impacts on peoples' lives in a way that is worrisome for them until they transition through. We understand all of that, and we are doing all that we can to accommodate them through this process.

The difference two years makes, Mr. Speaker, because in our last term when the Leader of the NDP stood on her feet, particularly around

health care, she called for a review of the health care system on a daily basis. Well, we are very glad to accommodate you, because that is what is going to happen, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, St. Anthony is the strategic location for Coast Guard services, complemented with a multi-million dollar facility and staff to ensure the safety of our fishers. On the public airwaves, former federal Intergovernmental Minister and Newfoundland and Labrador's regional Cabinet representative said he stopped Coast Guard from going to St. Anthony.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs meet immediately with his federal counterparts to investigate potential political interference and demand that the feds put citizens' safety first?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Speaker, this government is very much aware of the significance of the federal presence in this Province. We are constantly in contact with our federal counterparts to make sure they live up to their commitments to keep the federal presence in the Province that we currently have.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the hon. gentleman's specific question, if there is something there that specifically we can act on

in terms of interrelationships with our federal counterparts, we will certainly do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is no wonder this portfolio is being collapsed.

Mr. Speaker, in 1991, St. Anthony to the Port au Choix region lost the northern tax deduction. Since then, my district population dropped 37 per cent. Attracting lawyers and plumbers has been difficult, and two litres of milk retails for up to \$5.19. In January, I wrote the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, copying all federal counterparts. The minister responded saying: Write the federal Finance Minister.

I ask the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs: When will he do his job and engage the federal counterparts to reignite the talks to reinstate this tax deduction?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker,

Mr. Speaker, one has to suffer quite a bit sometimes to do the job that is required of us in public service, but the kind of disrespect that is again being shown by the NDP through duly elected people and representatives of the people here in this Province, Mr. Speaker, is unacceptable; absolutely unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, one wonders these days if we are not operating in the twilight zone. It certainly feels that way, as far as the Opposition parties are concerned.

Mr. Speaker, in Question Period yesterday we had any number of questions regarding federal

responsibility being directed at the government. In the meantime, we have a federal representative asking questions and commenting on provincial affairs. Mr. Speaker, I wish they could get their respective roles right.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the Budget, consumers and motorists in the Province paid out close to \$171 million in gasoline taxes this past year. The Finance Department Estimates this year said that the department will collect about \$176 million in gasoline taxes for 2013-2014 year.

Can the minister please tell this House, why we are looking at a drop in road maintenance and improvement considering that we have an increase in gas taxes?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. member for his question. It is a matter that we had good discussion on last night in Estimates. I will remind him, I advised him last night in Estimates, we invest heavily in our roads and infrastructure in Newfoundland and Labrador. This year, Mr. Speaker, we are investing over \$170 million of Newfoundland and Labrador taxpayers' money in our infrastructure right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, not only are we doing that, but with that funding, which is equivalent to the gas tax monies he is referring to, we are also leveraging in excess of \$70 million from the federal government that are

partnering with us in improving the infrastructure in our Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Since 1997 government has collected close to \$2.4 billion in gasoline taxes. It is a few years, and a little bit of money. Consumers and taxpayers have not seen that same degree of investment of provincial road money into roads over that same time period.

Why doesn't government begin multi-year planning for the construction of roads, the same as in Nova Scotia, that they do for construction? It is transparent to taxpayers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate the hon. member takes such a simplistic view on the way that government has to operate.

MR. KENNEDY: (Inaudible) is simple, that is why.

MR. DAVIS: We have intensive demands in our Province, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, throughout the Island portion and throughout Labrador, and we continue to make significant investments.

He has failed to identify, as well, that gas tax funding coming to Newfoundland and Labrador is filtered through our municipalities throughout the entire Province, Mr. Speaker, so they can invest in their own infrastructure in local communities throughout our Province, not only

in urban Newfoundland and Labrador but in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

MR. KIRBY: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's North, on a point of order.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We all appreciate the cut and thrust of Question Period, but while the Member for St. John's East was having a question responded to by the minister a moment ago, the Minister of Finance yelled out he is simple. That is obviously unparliamentary language and not called for here in the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy House Leader, to the point of order.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, to the point of order.

There was nothing heard on this side. I am not sure, I will certainly leave it to your discretion on what you heard, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Speaker will review the tapes of the proceeding and advise the House at a later time.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I am pleased today to table the Report of the Auditor General, the 2012 Update on Prior Year's Report, and his Recommendations.

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MR. MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In accordance with the Transparency and Accountability Act, it is my pleasure to table the 2012 Annual Report for the Chicken Farmers of Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. SPEAKER: Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for Which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to work with the Newfoundland Federation of Indians and the Government of Canada to provide a fair and equal review of all applications.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very simple request by residents of this Province, citizens of Canada, who are members who claim membership in a certain group of individuals being a native band. The request has been made by the chief of the band. The request has not been complied with by the Government of Canada.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is well positioned to make a simple request to the federal government to move this file forward to provide equity and balance so that the people who have already been approved, the ones who wish to be approved, are treated in the same manner as those who have already been approved. It is a simple request, Mr. Speaker. It does not cost the government anything to do it, and it would be appropriate for the government to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

residents of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS just 1.5 per cent of the Business Attraction Fund of the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development was used in the 2011-2012 year, \$366,800 of a \$25 million budget.

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition was signed by residents from Freshwater, Placentia, and Dunville. They feel that regional economic development is very important in their region, that their board was doing good work. It is very important, with all the development that is

happening in a region, to build that partnership, to work with the municipalities.

If you look at the budgetary items in the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development, they actually increased their overall budget. We were talking a small sum of money when it comes to what they actually did in terms of leveraging funds into the region.

I say my own district, the RED Board itself, through its own office, leveraged over \$13 million. That is a \$10 million surplus over what the overall operational cost was. That is a significant loss to any region, especially a rural area.

There are some RED Boards that are going to be able to stay. They are working through, but without a proper transition plan and cutting funding in such haste, we are seeing a real impact as to what this means to rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, but I remind you there is only about one minute and twenty seconds so you might want to be very quick.

MR. A. PARSONS: I will be very quick.

I have a petition here, Mr. Speaker, that I am not going to go through it verbatim. It is regarding Employment Assistance services. I will say: 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.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak about this important issue. We know that this is an important issue. I know that the minister actually took the time today to meet with

individuals involved in this. From what I can gather, the decision is going to stay final and we are not going touch this here, which is unfortunate because I do believe there is a compelling argument there for us to at least rethink what the decision is here.

The John Noseworthy report had some serious things to say about Employment Assistance Services and I know that the AES employees out there are crying when you call them on the phone because they have not been given instructions on what they have to do yet.

Again, I will get an opportunity to speak more, but given it is Private Members' Day I will take my seat.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

MR. SPEAKER: This being Private Member's Day, I call upon the Member for St. Johns' East, if he would address the motion on the Order Paper in his name.

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am looking forward to this one. It is a good motion and I think that it has been called upon several times in history.

WHEREAS the well-being of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador depends on their ability to use reliable transportation links – whether by road, air or water – to access employment, government services, and business, as well as to foster cultural and social benefits; and

WHEREAS after ten years in power government has failed to properly develop and maintain vital highway and ferry services in many parts of the Province; and

WHEREAS this government has failed to follow its own ferry strategy; and

WHEREAS the people of Newfoundland and Labrador continue to suffer from an unacceptably large inventory of unpaved gravel roads, aging bridges, culverts and highways; and

WHEREAS this neglect has resulted in the Canadian Automobile Association listing five of eleven worst roads in Atlantic Canada as being found in our Province;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this House of Assembly call upon government to develop an advanced transportation strategy for road and ferry users.

This motion is also seconded by the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

Mr. Speaker, I am quite pleased to get up and speak to this motion today, considering the amount of money over the last several years that has been dished out by government and at the same time has been collected on behalf of the taxpayer; the taxpayer deserves to see worth for money when it comes to the monies that they are investing.

Over the last couple of years, of course, we have heard of various failures or challenges that the government has put up with, has faced, in recent years, particularly when it comes to ferries and ferry replacements. We know that a lot of promises have been made when it comes to ferries and ferry replacement, so I will touch on that for a little bit first when it comes to the importance of the ferry issue.

When we are talking about the federal service, when we are talking about Marine Atlantic, Mr. Speaker, and the lifeline that that provides to the Island portion of the Province, we know ourselves that whenever we have a problem with the Marine Atlantic ferry system government no doubt, consumers no doubt, taxpayers no doubt, pick up the hue and the cry, particularly during tourism season and how much of an impact a bad ferry or a ferry that might be down could end up costing the Province.

It is interesting to note, too, the overall economic impact that having a ferry go down

mechanically or otherwise can cause the provincial economy at the same time.

We had promises over the years for invoking a ferry replacement strategy, a number of years ago. We know that our ferries are getting a little bit older. At the same time, I think that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have been calling for a long time now for a more strategic investment in the ferry system to ensure reliability of the same.

What could we do with building new boats here in the Province, Mr. Speaker? The one thing that I think that we have talked about over the last little while is the possibility that it can be used, for example, for the cornerstone of the shipbuilding industry in this Province. We know that the shipbuilding industry, of course, has had its challenges over the last several years, particularly when it comes to other countries, in competition with those countries, and keeping your own shipbuilding industry alive.

We have our yards here in the Province, variously sized different yards here in the Province, that could end up dealing with the building of these boats. So we know we have the ability then. If we have the product that is needed, we can use that as a cornerstone to train our welders and train our shipbuilders into doing other shipbuilding, for example, or even working in offshore yards and that sort of thing, or even working in our offshore oil industries.

There is a benefit to having the ferries built here and having a strategy behind ferry construction here in the Province. We know that government is making a pursuit now, for example, to purchase ferries possibly from other areas of the world. We think it is time to have a second look here and get back to the idea of having ferries constructed here for that particular reason.

We need to have a look at that basically on the basis of the possibility that we can develop a workforce, but also for the pursuit of making our economies a little bit better. The more reliable we have our ferry system, the better the chance of economic development we have in the areas that are also using those ferries too. We can

look at the dependability, for example, years ago that the Island of Fogo had, and we know exactly what a good ferry means to them, particularly when it comes to the crab co-op up there now.

We know there are opportunities out there and we know the ferry system, rather than having its problems, if it was turned into something that was workable and we have that strategy to back it up, we know there are areas of the Province that can have a better chance at economic development. This is also a program, not only for the Province as a whole, but it is a rural building initiative at the same time.

You look at the age of some of the boats that are out there now, Mr. Speaker. Some people will say that the cost of maintenance for these boats has gone almost off the board. We saw the case with the *Nonia* now that is gone, and I think that the *Nonia* was purchased in 1997. It is young by the standard of some of the boats that we have in the provincial ferry fleet now.

Listen to some of the ages of some of the boats here now: the *Sound of Islay* is about forty-seven years old; the *Captain Earl Winsor* is about forty-four years; the *Sir Robert Bond* is hitting forty; the *Beaumont Hamel* is thirty years old now, and it is hard to believe that one; and the *Winchester*, of course, is forty-seven years old. Then we have the government-leased ferries that are out there: the *Apollo* is about forty-five years; and the *Northern Seal* is fifty years, Mr. Speaker – fifty years old.

I have to come back to the age of the ferries again, because it was the Auditor General who spoke in 2000, as far back as 2000. The Auditor General said at that particular time, that the ferry boats in this Province only had a rough twenty-five years life expectancy. We are well past that now and it is time to deal with it.

When it comes to a road strategy, I guess one of the areas we can look at, of course, with the money that we are collecting – and we can go ahead and talk about the facts of population versus Nova Scotia, but I will talk about Nova Scotia for a minute and what they have done. A

five-year plan for the construction of roads; what they did, they published their future road construction projects on a Web site and it is transparent. It is there for everybody to see.

Anybody who is living in a particular community now can go and visit that Web site and look up their particular highway. It could be the 103, for example. They can go in and look up Highway 103 and they can see exactly when road maintenance is going to be done on that particular stretch of highway, or when pavement is going to happen, or when a new road is even going to be constructed. They have the foresight here to go ahead and develop a five-year plan.

Now, a five-year plan may not be workable to our government but it could be a seven-year plan, for example, based on population. We do know that gasoline taxes to pay for that have been rising every year since 1997. I think with the exception of one year, back in 2003 was the only year that it showed a decline by about \$500,000 less than what was actually predicted in that Budget year.

We know we have an increasing source of revenue that we can afford the roads. Again, in some years we have seen some good investment in roads. In other years, for example, we have seen a drop off. Road maintenance in this Province last year was \$60.1 million. This year it is down to \$59 million. We are short a million dollars there in that particular road maintenance. Whether that is going to be a realization that maybe maintenance is getting better, we do not know. The simple fact is that road maintenance has dropped between budgets over the last couple of years.

We also have a simple fact too, that if government comes out with a transparent plan for road construction and when road construction is going to happen, we can remove the whole politicization of roads. That has been talked about before, that if you were a government member you had a better chance of getting your road paved. If you were not a government member you were probably going to have to wait for ten or twelve years. There is

another benefit of having a concrete road plan in place.

I know the minister is concerned with it. He has been dealing with the big problem, as well as his staff here. I know he expressed the desire last night to have that plan put in place. I am hoping his department will be going forward and looking at that and developing a comprehensive road construction strategy, as he said last night. Hopefully, he will go ahead and support this motion, as well as other members of the House.

We all know, of course, the economic opportunities that good roads can present. A good road in is also a good road in, for example, for the tourists. Tourists are going to take a road that is being badly handled, or a truck driver is not going to take a road that he is going to have to risk his vehicle and his life assets over. He is just not going to do it. In some places you have this chance again for economic opportunity to happen. With a new road going in, it leads to opportunity as well. Again, I say the emphasis on tourism cannot be missed in this particular case.

We have the simple example with statistics, for example, on the West Coast. The impact of tourism over there is about \$200 million in the run of a year to the Province. I think we hit a billion dollar mark last year. We can do a little bit better when it comes to visitors hitting rural areas. We have the potential here, at the same time, for small businesses to flourish in rural Newfoundland. We have the opportunity to get product in and out of Newfoundland.

When it comes to how bad our roads are, Mr. Speaker, we have no finer example than what happened last year with the Canadian Automobile Association when they had a little contest on. Out of the top eleven roads that were the worst in Canada, we had amongst them five different roads that were in need of work, and severely in some case. We had Route 360 to Harbour Breton. We had Milltown road as well down there connected to the 360. We had 500 West-Central. We had Elliston, Route 238, and we had Route 434 into Conche.

Some of these roads, Mr. Speaker, are in abysmal shape. I know of, for example, the road in Elliston. There are potholes everywhere, pretty much small rocks, not just pebbles but small rocks on the road. It may get graded but it needs pavement, and it does. It is a lifeline cutting across the Bonavista Peninsula.

Let's look at the economic opportunity again, Mr. Speaker. I would be remiss if I did not talk about one opportunity that I heard about in Labrador last week when I was up there talking to the Combined Councils of Labrador. This one came about, I guess, as a result of probably the potential loss of an economic opportunity to the Town of Cartwright.

Cartwright is a nice little town on Coastal Labrador. It has a deepwater port and was recognized by one particular company that wanted to ship in product from Europe, particularly when it came to the opportunity and participation of the Muskrat Falls Project. I think government has to recognize here that this Dutch company was actually looking at shipping in product, bringing it into an ice-free port which happened to be Cartwright, deepwater.

The one thing it lacked was a good road system to bring the freight that was coming into Cartwright into Happy Valley-Goose Bay. It was an eighty-five kilometre stretch. With the potential of what could be happening in the Arctic in the future, particularly when it comes to government's own pursuit of Arctic opportunities that they talked about, here was a chance to take the Town of Cartwright and put it on the map when it came to central development on Coastal Labrador.

There are a number of opportunities that are out there, and there are a number of reasons why we should have a road strategy. Mr. Speaker, roads and ferry systems, it is good, hard infrastructure that government puts down. When government puts that sort of thing in place, government tends to gain a lot of support. Maybe that is symbolic of what has been happening in recent months.

Mr. Speaker, it is going to be a pleasure to get input from the government on this particular

motion, as well as the other Opposition party, the Official Opposition, and hear their views on putting a strategy in place. We will take all these views and weigh them against what we propose, and we will see what happens.

I am pleased to open up debate on this particular motion today. It is going to be a pleasure again to hear their views.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

It is an honour to rise and speak to this motion today. It is always a pleasure to rise. It is something that as a rural MHA is something near and dear to my heart, the road system, because of course I use it every week. Unlike some of the other members who go on tours every now and again and travel over the highway, I do it on a weekly basis. So I am very familiar with it.

I cannot support this motion. Mr. Speaker, it has nothing to do with partisanship or political colour, it all has to come down to facts. That is something I would like to deal with here today is facts. I think what we see in this motion is clearly rooted in non-factual political rhetoric. I would like to address some of that. I am going to take the next fifteen minutes or so to go over some facts.

Mr. Speaker, over the past ten years we have spent more than \$1.6 billion to build and improve major highways and roads in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. COLLINS: Including construction of bridges and expand core infrastructure, \$1.6 billion. Our Sustainability Plan for the coming

years builds on the work that has been done up to this point, and we will continue to make strategic investments.

I am extremely pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, we have a busy year ahead of us in 2013-2014 with \$866 million in infrastructure projects planned.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. S. COLLINS: Eight hundred and sixty-six million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, that certainly will not be in my district alone. It will not be in any member's district alone. That is in every single district. Forty-eight districts are going to avail of that, as they have since 2003 since this government has taken over.

I want to take a few moments to focus on our investments in all regions of the Province in key areas such as roads, bridges, air, and marine services. Investments we make in infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, have a power to drive regional growth and diversification. Unlike the Leader of the Third Party who would like to diversify the economy through homecare exclusively, we obviously take a wider view of things. This, as I had said, certainly diversifies and helps grow regional economies.

This has resulted in unprecedented levels of investment in road and bridge infrastructure throughout our Province. So, I would like to touch down specifically on some roadwork that has been done since 2003. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, before we can criticize where we are, it is important to recognize where we have come from. I know the members opposite do not like to look back and see where we were a number of years back, but again, it is very relevant because you have to take inventory of what you had when this government took over and compare where we are to where we were. It is very important to do.

In 2003, Mr. Speaker, the government of the day said that we were proud to allocate \$23 million

for a provincial roads program – \$23 million. They touted it, actually; they were very proud of it. Now, recognizing, of course, that has to be used for almost 10,000 kilometers of road. So if you spread that \$23 million over, it is a skim, figuratively and literally, I would say, Mr. Speaker.

I graduated high school back in 1996 and I worked at Terra Nova National Park for the four summers following high school, so I got to interact with tourists on a daily basis. It was then you get a perspective from people – you are not talking to people in your backyard, but you are talking to people from outside the Province with a different perspective.

It was at that point that I can remember driving to work, Mr. Speaker, and the best roads in the Province – well, I can speak certainly from Central, East – were in Terra Nova National Park. The federal road was by far the best. There was roadwork every summer, it seemed. Terra Nova road was always getting upgraded; the provincial road, not so much. It was actually an embarrassment.

I can remember hearing from tourists from different countries, from different provinces, everybody said: You have such a beautiful product to offer here in Newfoundland and Labrador, but your roads are terrible. You expect us to drive over them, obviously, to get to these beautiful parks, these gems that we have here in the Province, but the roads were absolutely horrible. I heard that on a daily basis.

I fast-forward to now. I can remember, distinctly, I was at a gas station in Goobies gassing up last summer and I was speaking to a couple. I saw the motorhome had an Alberta licence plate, so I was chatting to the person. They were not residents of Newfoundland, but they drove down to visit – St. John's, actually, was their end destination. So I asked them how their travels were going, all that kind of thing, and the one thing they commented on is your highways are fantastic.

Of course, they got off the ferry in Port aux Basques and here it was in Goobies I was talking

to them, so they drove quite a few kilometers. That was the one comment – besides the beauty and those top-of-the-tree type messages that they had talked about, the one thing they really specified on was the conditions of our road network. They were able to comment on that because they just drove across the entire country, say, British Columbia – they left Alberta and drove right across the entire country and the thing that they noticed was our roads. I think that speaks volumes.

While it is fine to make commentary here, we have to look at this in a broader picture. I heard the Member for St. John's East referring to roads in Nova Scotia. I would kindly invite him to go on vacation in Nova Scotia; I was there just a few short months ago. The roads are horrible, horrible, and then to come back here and say we should be doing what Nova Scotia is doing. I would ask the member: What is that, taking the pavement up on the highways here? Because I can guarantee you, they are in no comparisons to the highways here what we have in Newfoundland and Labrador.

This year we are investing, Mr. Speaker, a further \$169 million, with the addition of \$77 million through infrastructure agreements with the Government of Canada, again fostering that relationship and it pays dividends, a total investment of \$249 million this year for road, bridge, highway construction in Newfoundland and Labrador.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. S. COLLINS: A total investment of \$249 million, which is a quarter of a billion dollars.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. COLLINS: I went over some examples of this that many of the people would be aware of here. Our government has made tremendous progress in the construction of the Trans-Labrador Highway with a total investment of \$450 million to date, almost half a billion dollars.

It was so refreshing to hear the member who used to sit here representing the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, it was so reassuring to hear that member just a short time ago while campaigning federally, she was commenting on the work that has been done on the Trans-Labrador Highway. She recognizes it. She is hearing it at the doors. When she goes door to door, she is hearing it. What a commitment by this government to Labrador, a commitment that was never there in past Administrations I can assure you. The people of Labrador certainly see that and they acknowledge it.

In Western Newfoundland, construction of a four-lane divided highway from Massey Drive Interchange to the Corner Brook Industrial Access Road, and of course, that is helping enhance the flow of traffic through that region. Then we see major Trans-Canada Highway rehabilitation projects undertaken including work near Stephenville and Gander.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest if the Member for St. John's East does not see the work himself – because again we have to recognize the NDP is 80 per cent urban; they are not rural focused. They have one member, their token member, from rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I am extremely happy that he is there because he can weigh in on a lot of the discussion within their caucus, but obviously, it is not enough.

I would encourage if the Member for St. John's East is unsure about what our investments have been or the construction and the condition of our roads, that he would turn around and ask the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

I would like to ask the Member for The Straits – White Bay North: What do think was spent in your district over the past decade? So I got to looking. I know the member is very fond of Google, but I said I cannot trust Google for these numbers, so I went to the department and I asked the question. I said: What was spent in The Straits – White Bay North since 2003? Any ideas? Over \$20 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. S. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, this is the member who seconded this motion, who is going to get up in a moment and criticize this government – \$20 million. Now, I would say that was obviously due to a very strong member they had there for a number of years, obviously, and I would hope to see that strength continue. I would say the former member was a strong member. He sat on the Opposition but, again, a very strong member. I would encourage the current member instead of looking for headlines daily to perhaps focus on his district and try to secure more funding there. It is very important.

Let us have a look now, Mr. Speaker, at Budget 2013, some specific examples of what is being done and how the money is being spent because, again, it is very important. This touches on every member in the House of Assembly: \$59 million for provincial road construction projects; \$43 million to complete the last full season of paving on Phase I and commence widening and paving sections of Phase II and Phase III on the Trans-Labrador Highway, as I said earlier; \$26.5 million to support several major Trans-Canada Highway rehabilitation projects, as I said, near Stephenville and Gander; \$20.6 million for the first year of construction of the Placentia Lift Bridge, which I know the Member for Placentia – St. Mary's obviously is very proud of and so he should be; and over \$10 million to finish the CBS Bypass, continue construction of Team Gushue Highway, and complete land acquisitions, and the member from St. John's would be well aware of those.

So while I am talking about rural Newfoundland, and certainly I like to tout those things being a member from rural Newfoundland and Labrador, the members across the way should be very well aware of these types of things going on with the CBS Highway. I am pretty sure one of the members there drives over it every day. Team Gushue Highway, they see and drive over that every day.

There is \$12.3 million to begin construction of the replacement of Sir Robert Bond Bridge –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. S. COLLINS: – which the Member for Exploits has worked hard on for a number of years, and certainly that is coming to fruition. So congratulations on that.

There is over \$11 million in heavy equipment, highway depot, and salt storage shed construction, very important for the type of climate we have here and for passenger safety. Our government is receiving a further \$77.6 million this year to support many of these road and bridge construction projects: Little Barachois Bridge; and E.S. Spencer Bridge, which is in my backyard and has certainly lived its life. It is about ready to be repaired and is actually in the process now. They have everything done up with the shadow bridge next to it, so certainly that is something we are looking forward. Every single person who drives through my district drives on that bridge. As many of these things we talk about, they affect everybody, not certainly just the districts themselves.

Robinson's River Bridge is another one. These are all through infrastructure agreements in place with the Government of Canada. Again, I would like to say about the co-operation we have and how that pays dividends.

Something else that is particularly near and dear to my heart, Mr. Speaker, is the ferry strategy and ferry vessels in particular: \$76 million for the ferry vessel replacement refit work and improvements to the marine terminals and wharves. It is something that is so important to me. As a member who has an island that is accessed solely by vessel, that is certainly very important. I know there are a number of members on this side, and I can speak for these folks over here, that is something very important. Those people out there on the islands, they deserve the service, and that is something we are providing.

Since 2004, this government has invested more than \$185 million in marine vessels, \$185 million. The first two new ferry vessels built in this Province in twenty years, Mr. Speaker, and the first of the two of our comprehensive vessel replacement plan entered service in 2011. It was

a proud day. I can guarantee you it was a proud day when the *Grace Sparkes* and *Hazel McIsaac* first entered service.

As the Member for Terra Nova and having the island of St. Brendan's there, I can remember being down on the wharf with the then Minister of Transportation and Works, who is now Minister of Environment. It was just like – I do not even know, it moved me almost spiritually it was that wonderful. I can guarantee you there were a lot of smiles and applause that day.

We are talking about an island that had been neglected for years upon years upon years, and they had finally gotten what they deserved. It was an extremely happy day. I know I can speak for the member as well who received the other ferry. It was a great day, not only for that island but for Newfoundland and Labrador. To know they were built right here in our shipyards, again, fantastic.

Each vessel represents an investment of \$27.5 million, and they invest in the future of rural communities in this Province. That is a total investment of \$55 million in new vessels constructed to date. Like I said, there is much more to come. Our vessel replacement plan is progressing. A new acquisition, the MV *Norcon Oceanus* through a contract with a service provider, is scheduled to enter service on the South Coast of Newfoundland in the coming weeks.

Moving forward, our government recently called an RFP for the third new forty-two-metre vessel, much like the *Grace Sparkes* and the *Hazel McIsaac*. As well, we have called for the construction of a replacement vessel for the *Earl W. Winsor* which operates on the Fogo Island – Change Island run. That is what we have done to date in advancing the ferry strategy.

When members say not much has been done, I would like to refer back to facts as opposed to rhetoric because I can provide facts. If they would like to question any of my numbers I would welcome them to because this is all factual, all from the department.

We have renewed our commitment to new vessels and we are reaching out to find new and innovative ways to provide the service to people so they can depend on it. Challenges exist, Mr. Speaker. There is no doubt, challenges exist, but we are facing those head on, unlike the former Administration.

I always have to talk about what they did when I talk about what we did. We know what we did. We have built two new vessels. What did the former Administration do? I do not know if anybody remembers the *Nonia*. The *Nonia* is almost of legendary proportion and how that was just a ridiculous purchase. I think they purchased it for \$1.2 million. It took another approximately \$10 million to get it into service in six years. That was their plan, this is our plan. Let's compare apples to apples. I would do it any day and I can probably stand on our record when it comes to that.

I am going to take the last minute just to talk about some of the investments in ferries. We will spend \$81 million this year on ferry services to provide a safe, reliable, sustainable ferry service in twenty-two areas in the Province, utilizing seventeen vessels in the fleet. We will spend \$76 million to advance our vessel replacement program. Investments will include ferry vessel replace, retrofit work, and improvements to marine terminal and wharfs.

A contract will be awarded for the construction of a new vessel for Fogo Island and Change Islands, as I had said. A contract will be awarded for a new swing vessel to support the overall fleet, which again is very important. Obviously, all these things cannot be done overnight. These are huge projects, but we are certainly moving forward on a lot of them.

Design work will begin for the new vessel to service the South Coast communities on the Island. A request for proposals will be issued for the development of a fifteen-year comprehensive passenger, vehicle, and freight ferry service for both the Strait of Belle Isle and the North Coast of Labrador – again, investment into Labrador.

I am not from Labrador, I do not have many connections to Labrador, but I stand very proud on the investments that we put into Labrador. It is a place that gives so much, not only economically but culturally, to our Province as a whole. They certainly deserve that respect and we are giving it to them.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that being said, I could go on for quite a bit more, but I see my time has gone so I will take my seat. I look forward to other comments.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): I recognize the Member for Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will stand here today to speak on this private member's motion, and also have the opportunity to have a few words on the private member's motion.

Mr. Speaker, I will be the first to admit, maintaining roads and bridges and ferries in Newfoundland and Labrador is very complicated for any government. Because of the number of roads, and because of our geography, and because of our weather, it is a difficult decision.

I said to the minister last night – first of all, before I go any further in this private member's motion, I just want to acknowledge all the government workers who work maintaining our roads, our bridges, and our ferries across the Province because they do a good job, Mr. Speaker. They do a good job and they supply a good service, and they keep our roads safe. So, before I go on, I just want to recognize their work. Many times they go over and above to ensure that our roads are safe so that we can travel the roads in a safe manner with some comfort.

Mr. Speaker, as a rural member from out in the Corner Brook way, in the Bay of Islands, I know the demands on all rural members about roads

and maintenance, and pavement. I know the demand is heavy, and I know a lot of times when we are in Opposition or in government there are many calls to your office to try to get extra things done for your roads, and repairs in some way.

Mr. Speaker, I was going to stand here today and put on the gratitude of all the workers and a lot of people – I would be the first to admit, there has been a lot of money spent on roads. There has been some money spent on roads on many occasions by this government, I do not deny that. I would never deny that. Are they up to the standards that we should expect to maintain? No, I do not think so.

The Member for Terra Nova, I did not want to get into partisan politics today but I have to correct some factual statements that were inaccurate, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at 1993, I was working for the then Premier at the time. When you look at 1993, the member said there was \$23 million spent on roads in 1993.

AN HON. MEMBER: 2003.

MR. JOYCE: Sorry. In 2003 there was \$23 million, this year there is \$59 million, but there is a little fact that he forgets to pass on. Back in 2003 it was \$50,000 a kilometre. Today it is \$350,000 a kilometre. That is the kinds of things that I did not want to get into today but you just cannot let this go unchecked because people might say, well, he said it and no one contradicted him, so –

MR. S. COLLINS: (Inaudible).

MR. JOYCE: The Member for Terra Nova, I did not say a word when you were standing. Just because you are wrong here, that does not mean you have to go over and just babble on. Sit down and you just take it. That is all. I did not say a word to you.

I gave him the courtesy, Mr. Speaker, of saying it, even though the information was factually incorrect what he was saying, because back in

2003 there was more pavement done than with the \$23 million than the \$59 million. I did not want to get into that today, but I just cannot let this factually incorrect information be put forth because people might think it is true. So, Mr. Speaker, that is something we have to recognize.

I know the Member for Terra Nova is still over there. I just ask for the same respect that I gave him. That is all I ask for, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when the \$5 billion infrastructure fund was put out, there is no doubt, there is no one here, and I know it is not me, accusing that the money was not spent. There is no one saying that. There is no one saying or anybody saying there is any money that was misappropriated out of that \$5 billion. I want to get that straight.

I am not making any accusations here that the government is hiding anything, but what the Auditor General said, and I have asked for on many occasions, was the plan that the government had for the \$5 billion. For whatever reason, it was never released. Do you know why, Mr. Speaker? In my opinion, I do not think there was ever plan. I think the money was there and you just take it helter-skelter and spend as you see fit.

Now, \$5 billion is a lot of money to be spent on infrastructure – I admit that – but we need to have some kind of systematic plan so that we would know what is being done, what is in the most severe condition, and we can take it on bit by bit so that we can get the highest priority, wherever it is at.

Mr. Speaker, I have to go back here. I know the Member for Terra Nova wrote back in 2003. I have to say this, Mr. Speaker, and if the Member for Baie Verte were here at the time, he would recognize this. I remember the former Premier Roger Grimes and we were in our caucus room, Mr. Speaker, and we were discussing money for roads.

MR. S. COLLINS: (Inaudible).

MR. JOYCE: Can you please ask the Member for Terra Nova – if you have something to say, just stand up. You are acting like a child. You are actually acting like a child. Let me speak. If you have something to say – I gave you the courtesy.

Mr. Speaker, Roger Grimes at the time – and I remember the Member for Baie Verte, Paul Shelley, came to us he said: Guys, the road to La Scie is absolutely terrible. It is absolutely terrible. Can you help me out? I remember it plain. I remember Roger Grimes – again, some people who were saying: Boys, it is election time. He said: Boys, it is unsafe. We have to put a million dollars on that road. I remember that.

That is the kind of thing that we need to do is develop some kind of structure, some kind of plan that we get the highest priority, whatever it is at, wherever it is at. That is what we need to do, Mr. Speaker, is develop something so that we can go back and check and see when the roads are done and see the condition that they are in. That is how we are going to improve safety and that is how we are going to improve the confidence of the people in Newfoundland and Labrador about our politicians, myself included, that the money is spent properly, it is spent in a proper manner, and it is not spent in a political and a non-partisan way. That is what we need to do, Mr. Speaker. With that, I will be the first to say yes, we need it done.

Mr. Speaker, the Trans-Labrador Highway – again, I admit there has been a lot of money announced for the Trans-Labrador Highway; there has been a lot of money spent on the Trans-Labrador Highway. If you go back to the Auditor General's report, if you go back again and you ask him for the plan for the Trans-Labrador Highway back in 2011, he said there was no plan for it. Now, I admit there is a lot of money that has been committed to it –

AN HON. MEMBER: That was before the announcement.

MR. JOYCE: I hear the member saying before the announcement, but you have to realize that is

probably the third, fourth or fifth time the announcement was made. That is what I am saying; it is the third or fourth time.

I go back to the hospital in Corner Brook; it was announced three or four times. The Trans-Labrador Highway – it was announced this phase, that phase. So this is what we need to do, the Auditor General – members opposite, again, it is not me saying this; it is the Auditor General. Go back and look at the Auditor General's report. It is not me; it is the Auditor General who is saying there is no concrete plan.

I am not denying that there was not money spent. I am not denying that the road is much better. I am not denying that.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. JOYCE: I have driven most of it. I went up as far as Cartwright, a bit beyond Cartwright.

I say to the Member from Labrador West, just relax. Just because you got called out up in Labrador and you are a bit nervous, there is no need to be nervous ever since. You can relax here now. I will not call you out like you have been called out in Labrador and you buckled under. That is all I say to the member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: I just find that when you bring up the facts, Mr. Speaker, about these issues, the Auditor General, they get all sensitive. At any time you say that things are not perfect, you get criticized. Even when you do give some accolades, you are still criticized because you have to say everything is perfect, but everything is not perfect – everything is just not.

There has been a lot of work done; I will be the first to admit. I always said it. I brought it up to the minister about twenty-four hour snow clearing in some areas of the Province. I think we should have some way that there is call in for everybody in this Province for twenty-four hour – we do not need the employees on if there is no

snow, only if we know there is snow coming. The people in the Bay of Islands who do not have twenty-four hour snow clearing deserve the snow clearing just as much as the people leaving the Trans-Canada Highway and going to Botwood.

The Trans-Canada Highway to Botwood has twenty-four hour snow clearing. People who come off the boat, the 400 or 500 people in the boat leaving Port aux Basques going out to Stephenville do not have twenty-four hour snow clearing. Our access from Port aux Basques to the rest of the Island does not have twenty-four hour snow clearing.

That is the kind of things that we need to discuss. Mr. Speaker, if you look at the bridges, if you want to just look at some of the bridges. The Auditor General's report, once again, Mr. Speaker, I am not trying to push the panic button. I am not trying to say oh well, everything here is unsafe, all the bridges are unsafe. They are not.

If you look at the Auditor General's report, we need a plan for the inspection of the bridges. Because when you read the Auditor General's report and you look at it, "...a significant number of bridges along the Highway route that had not had official inspections conducted in accordance with the Departmental policy." – only one.

"1 in 29 bridges did not have an official inspection for more than four years; the remaining 28 bridges did not have an official inspection performed within the two year requirement – the most recent inspections were conducted in 2009, with the previous inspections conducted three years earlier in 2006".

I am not pushing the panic button; I am just highlighting some of the concerns. I totally understand the financial pressures of government to try to satisfy all the needs. We sat with the minister last night – and I have to give the Minister of Transportation and Works credit; he was very upfront and honest last night. He stayed until we asked every question – well past the three hours. That is the way we should

work together. The minister and his staff answered every question that we put for them last night, stay as long as we like, and I commend the minister for that.

Vessel replacement – that is another thing here. If the vessel program in Newfoundland and Labrador is so good, why are we having so many concerns? One of the best things I heard last night from the Estimates that we had with the minister is that there is a new ADM for vessels in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador – marine. This person has started more of a consultation process with a lot of the towns, communication – and that is good to hear. I congratulated the person last night; we met him. Because there for a while, Mr. Speaker, we had some issues with people getting their ferry taken away on Friday, not knowing about it, and now there is communication.

Mr. Speaker, in 2003, guess what? It was promised to have a ferry replacement done in eight years, built here in Newfoundland and Labrador – the PC Blue Book I have here, Mr. Speaker. With the PC Blue Book we are going to have a ferry replacement strategy, built here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Since that, Mr. Speaker, twelve years ago, eleven years ago, guess what? We have two built. Now the rest is going outside of the Province – only two.

I am definitely not saying that we should delay it if we cannot get it built in Newfoundland and Labrador, but I think we should go with every option we can to try to get them. Because of a disagreement down in Marystown that we cannot get it done, we are going outside of the Province. Remember, the commitment was made to have the ferries built and replaced in eight years. That is not me saying that. That is what half the people across the room were elected on.

What we need to do if we cannot get it done, instead of coming up and criticizing me for being part of the government who never did anything with the ferries, let's explain to the people why we did not do it and set a plan out to get it done. Everybody understands the financial

realities of a government; everybody understands that.

Mr. Speaker, in closing on this, I said on several occasions that what we need is a plan for road repairs, road bridges, maintenance, and snow clearing. We need a plan and we need to follow through.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to make an amendment to this private member's motion, seconded by the Member for Burgeo – La Poile. I will read the amendment:

“Replace the period following the word “users” at the end of the resolution paragraph and substitute a comma (,) and the following words: “which transportation strategy would consider including the following:

- (i) a rotating three year road development and maintenance strategy based on need and economic development considerations open to comments and input from municipalities and individuals;
- (ii) a publicly accessible comprehensive geographic information system (GIS) database of all provincial roads in the province reflecting their state of repair and snow clearing;
- (iii) revamping of the tendering process to allow construction to start as early in the year as possible;
- (iv) establishment of a Road Engineering Research Program.”

Mr. Speaker, I put that motion in as a motion to try to strengthen our commitments here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador so that people will be more open and accountable to all the people in Newfoundland and Labrador and that we have something that we can show that the people can go on. Mr. Speaker, I present that as a motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I have an amendment proposed by the Member for the Bay of Islands. The House will now take a brief recess to consider whether the amendment is in order.

Recess

CHAIR: Order, please!

We have considered the amendment as put forward by the Member for Bay of Islands, and the amendment is in order.

I recognize the hon. the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador and the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs.

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me pleasure to be able to stand here today and speak to this motion that is put forward. I am certainly not going to support the motion because when I read the motion, it is good for a vegetarian but there is no meat to the motion for sure. As for the amendment to the motion, I certainly cannot support the amendment because he used the word “strategy” and I have not seen any strategy yet that worked that the Liberals put forward.

I am looking forward over the next fourteen and a half minutes, first of all, to addressing some of the stuff that I heard from the Member for St. John's East, and also from the Member for Bay of Islands. I am going to take the Member for Bay of Islands on a little history ride back to 1997 throughout the next fourteen minutes to remind you of what the government of that day, in 1997, when we get into the Trans-Labrador Highway, and we will talk about the ferries then and what they did with the money they had.

First, we have to talk about the Member for St. John's East. I hope if I am wrong he will get up and correct me, but I heard the Member for St. John's East talk about when you were in Labrador. I specifically remember when you were in Labrador because it certainly was not an enjoyable visit for me, but we have gotten over that. Hopefully, I will not get accosted again here today.

You talked about Cartwright, and the eighty-five kilometres of road going into Cartwright. Then, if I understood correctly, the Member for St. John's East talked about what a great economic opportunity it was to have, with the deep water in Cartwright, a ferry service go into Cartwright and then transport stuff to Happy Valley-Goose Bay. I hope I heard you correctly with the deep water in Cartwright, and then we would have the ship go into Cartwright and then transport things to Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

Now, I strongly recommend that the Member for St. John's East give himself a little geography lesson, because in order to get into Cartwright you are going to have to go to Happy Valley-Goose Bay, because it goes to Happy Valley-Goose Bay first. That does not make sense to me.

When it comes to the eighty-five kilometres, this government, when you talk about roads, we believe in building, and we believe in building it so that it makes sense. So, before you can pave eighty-five kilometres and build a road going into Cartwright, you need to finish building the Trans-Labrador Highway.

Now, the Member for St. Barbe is over there, and I am not going to waste my time, as the Member for Bay of Islands did, announcing that the member is over there. I see his lips moving and I do not imagine there is a lot coming out of it, but we will leave that alone. The Member for St. Barbe is over there and he should concentrate on his area, because then probably if he was working with government and co-operating a little more, we could move some economic development over that way.

I am going to get into the history of 1997, but I want to talk a little bit first about stuff that is happening in Labrador. Then, as I am discussing that, I will go back to 1997 when a deal was made with the federal government in the ferries.

For the Member for St. Barbe over there, it was a Liberal government that took \$100 million. I will go back to the comparisons the Bay of Islands member was making and we will talk

about the \$100 million that the government of 1997 took. They said we are just going to borrow that to balance a budget, because they needed to win an election then. That \$100 million never seemed to appear again, and I can guarantee you that \$100 million never, ever did see the surface of the Trans-Labrador Highway, which it was meant for, and to keep the ferries running. So that is \$100 million.

I heard the Member for Bay of Islands talk about in 2003, how it cost \$59,000 per kilometre for pavement back in 2003 and how today, a decade later in 2013 it costs \$350,000 a kilometre. Now, imagine in 1997 how many kilometres you would have paved through the Trans-Labrador Highway had your money not been used to balance a budget and used for what it was meant to be for.

I am not going to waste my time on that, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk about some of the good things this government has done for Labrador, not what the previous governments did not do for Labrador. I want to talk about the \$4 billion that this government, since 2004, has invested in Labrador alone. This government is about taking care of all of the Province.

We heard the Member for Terra Nova talk about some of the investments that were made on the Great Northern Peninsula. This government is all about taking care of all of the Province. We take care of the whole Province.

So let's talk about the \$4 billion that has been invested in Labrador since 2004. Let's talk about the Trans-Labrador Highway when there was \$450 million invested from 2004 to today in the Trans-Labrador Highway. When we got the Trans-Labrador Highway ready in 2007 for some pavement that is when we started on Phase I. Often you hear about: well, this needs to be done for the Trans-Labrador Highway. Why is Cartwright not done yet? What about Red Bay? What about between Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Red Bay? What about coming up from Blanc-Sablon to Cartwright and Cartwright Junction?

This government, from day one when we started to build the Trans-Labrador Highway, we said it would be done in phases. I am very proud to say that in 2014 Phase I will be completed. In 2014 that should be all completed. This year alone, in 2013, there is another \$39 million being invested into Phase I of the Trans-Labrador Highway. We all heard on January 13, in a partnership with the federal government, \$85 million more is going to be invested.

All of that said and done, one of the things that I have to give good credit to this government for is that we do not go out and just say we are going to put a tender out and then we are going to move forward. We realize the short seasons that we have in Labrador. We realize that there is a smaller window than there is on the Island portion of our Province.

What we do is we put out more than one tender at a time. For example, this year we have two tenders that were just awarded: one from St. Barbe to the Cartwright Junction, or from Red Bay, I should say, going up to the Cartwright Junction; and another one which will be on the other end of that from the Happy Valley-Goose Bay end going towards Cartwright, which will do widening and culverts on the highway. The other one is, as I mentioned, the \$39 million that is going to be spent to complete the widening and the paving on the Phase I of the Trans-Labrador Highway.

I can guarantee you I drive the road – a couple of years ago I used to drive it once a week. This past summer I used to drive it every day. When I was in Labrador, I would drive every day the Trans-Labrador Highway for about ninety-five kilometres. It was a pleasure to get in your vehicle and to be able to drive on a paved highway.

I remember back in the late 1980s, early 1990s when you could only drive twenty-two kilometres. Today, I heard the member and I asked him as he was speaking – the Member for Bay of Islands, you talk about a geography. He was going on and on about the Trans-Labrador Highway. I asked him: Did you drive the highway? His answer was: Yes, well I drove as

far as Cartwright. I strongly recommend that member get in his vehicle and drive the other 1,000 or 1,100 kilometres of the highway and learn what Labrador is all about.

That is just the Trans-Labrador Highway. You talk about accessibility, I remember when you were living in Labrador you wondered – well, you could not drive out of the highway, are you going to be able to fly out? If you could drive so far, then you had to take a ferry.

I just want to give you an example for the accessibility of airlines now in Labrador, that this government in co-operation with private industry and the federal government, some of the accessibility that we have made possible. There are three airlines there right now in – I am going to talk about Wabush first. You have three airlines there. You have Air Canada, you have Pascan, and you have Provincial Airlines.

From the Wabush Airport alone, we have thirty flights a day coming out of Wabush Airport back and forth. One airline, Provincial Airlines, which I do not mind saying, services all of the Island and destinations in Quebec, as well as all of Labrador from the North Coast to Western Labrador.

Pascan takes you to Quebec, Labrador, and New Brunswick. Air Canada takes you through Labrador and into parts of Quebec. We are no longer limited – and the word that I do not like to use; Labrador is no longer isolated. It is all because of parts of the transportation system that this government has made accessible to the people of Labrador.

Churchill Falls, you can drive out of there on paved road, may I say, to Western Labrador or you still have accessibility to get to Goose Bay, and there you have three flights a week coming out of Churchill Falls. Churchill Falls, remember now, is a private town, but we still have accessibility three times a week back and forth to get you in or out of Churchill Falls, plus you now can drive. In Churchill Falls, you can leave and drive west and you can go right to the end of Canada, or you can drive east and you

also have accessibility to the Island portion of the Province from there.

In Goose Bay, we have Air Labrador, we have Air Canada, and we have Provincial Airlines. There is an average of forty flights per day coming out of Goose Bay. When you think about it, that is over seventy flights a day that you have access to in Labrador. I do not think that is too bad when it comes to accessibility. We are certainly moving forward with that.

Then you get into the ferry system, and we hear a lot about the ferry system – and I compliment the Minister of Transportation and Works for the announcement that he made a little while ago about the two new ferries that will be coming on stream in 2016. We have been waiting a long time for these ferries. When the ferries come on stream, when they are there, they are going to be ferries that are designed and built for the access that we need on the Labrador Straits and certainly on the North Coast of Labrador. Never on the North Coast of Labrador yet have that had a roll-on/roll-off service; in 2016, they will have that.

I look now and I just checked a little bit to see how accessible are we to get from the Northern Peninsula into Labrador and then how accessible is the ferry service on the North Coast of Labrador. From Blanc-Sablon to Corner Brook during the winter months – and that is only recently that we have a year-round service coming out of Labrador – you have two trips per week, and then you have two more trips per week that return from Corner Brook to Blanc-Sablon. So, four days of the week you can access by ferry to and from Labrador; ninety-three trips from Blanc-Sablon to St. Barbe; from St. Barbe to Blanc-Sablon, ninety-two trips. If my math is right, that is 185 trips on The Straits, coming across from the wonderful District of St. Barbe. I do not hear the member over there saying thank you, but I am sure he would like to.

Then, on the North Coast, the North Coast gives you access from Goose Bay, Rigolet, Makkovik, Postville, Hopedale, Natuashish, and Nain. It leaves on Monday, arrives back in Goose Bay on Thursday, and it departs again on a Friday.

The accessibility is there. We have the accessibility when it comes to the ferries. We have the accessibility when it comes to airlines. Certainly, when you think about it, again, I have to say \$450 million to date that we have spent on the Trans-Labrador Highway. This government certainly recognizes the people in Labrador. This government knows how important it is to have accessibility in Labrador and we will continue to invest in Labrador as long as we can.

I spoke briefly earlier about the tender calls in Labrador for the Trans-Labrador Highway. What you are getting now is you are starting to see – one thing that I would like to mention; I only have a short while left – when we give our tenders now, normally a tender is done on a one-year basis. For the Trans-Labrador Highway, what we have been doing is going with a two-year tender. That widens the season for the construction season on the highway so that when they shut down for one year, as soon as the road is accessible they have their tender for the following year. The two-year tender is working and working very well for the Trans-Labrador Highway. It is expediting the development and the construction of the highway.

I can guarantee you, as the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs, and as an MHA for a district in Labrador, I am very proud of what this government has done for Labrador and I am sure that we will continue to do it.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I recognize the hon. the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I commend the Member for St. John's East for putting forward this private member's motion, as advanced transportation networks are certainly key. I want to also thank the Member for the

Bay of Islands for putting forward ideas as to what could be included in this type of strategy.

Mr. Speaker, transportation really is the cornerstone. It is the lifeblood of all economic opportunities and other activities that come with it. There are issues when it comes to access to markets, when it comes to transporting goods and services, and also the movement of people. The challenges are certainly huge when it comes to this but so are the opportunities, and no one is going to discredit that. We certainly though, Mr. Speaker, have chronic ferry problems, a large inventory of gravel roads, and aging and poor infrastructure.

In response to the Member for Terra Nova, I certainly do live in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I am very proud to call it my home. I am part of the commuter economy, like so many other people. I travel on a weekly basis, 962 kilometres to my home in Green Island Cove. You add that twice, that is nearly 2,000 kilometres covering a vast stretch of the highway.

There are so many people in my district who are part of the commuter economy. They are travelling over roads. It could be a gravel road, whether it is to transport to work or to get services, and to conduct business as well. It is quite a concern looking at where we are in the conditions of some of our roads and the conditions of the ferries. We really need to look at them.

I want to say, just focusing a little bit first on my own district, as members opposite like to say, how much money was spent there. Well, several years ago the government rebuilt and realigned Conche Road, Route 434. It was all prepared for a topcoat of asphalt, but it never materialized. After expanding and spending basically \$6 million of taxpayers' money to improve this road, the return on investment really was for naught because the road now is getting worn back to the bedrock. A lot of the cost to pave this highway right now – Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transportation and Works has noted that it will cost basically \$4 million to pave this highway. It is a significant amount of money.

The community itself has an economy with a fish plant that is operating. It is at the heart of the French Shore. It has accommodations, it has a café. It is a very unique community. Last year, five kilometres of paving happened on this road, but it did not happen on the gravel road.

As a member opposite said, do you know what they did? They ripped up the asphalt. I guess somebody made a comment about what they are doing in Nova Scotia. Well, this government is doing the exact same thing. They ripped up the pavement going through the community, which is a provincial responsibility, five kilometres, and repaved versus adding to the gravel road and paving that section, bringing down the 17.4 kilometres to about 12.4 kilometres. It seems like that would make a whole lot more sense.

I understand, if these remote roads cannot be done all at once, even though it would be cheaper to do things all at one, a multi-year plan certainly is needed in this situation so that we are not seeing taxpayers' dollars mismanaged. This road, where government spent \$6 million, was ranked the seventh worst road in Atlantic Canada by the Canadian Automobile Association. It is quite significant to spend that much money, let it go down into a poor and dire situation, and see it ranked as the seventh worst road. I am telling you, this is where we are seeing the return on our investment.

Route 438, Croque to St. Julien's, François, is a former woods road, a resource road, where gravel was thrown over this highway, over trees, the logs and stumps, basically. Now they are visible still in places due to poor maintenance and erosion. What are we saying about this?

Route 432 had a twenty-kilometre rough road sign for years, and last year it was paved in patches, spreading out a few kilometres to cover the potholes. It was a wise decision to have that road capped in patches. I commend the minister for doing this because it is certainly important to provide a better experience. The road still needs to be resurfaced in other areas because this investment will not last. There is no plan and there is no commitment. This motion really

speaks to putting forward a plan, putting forward an open and transparent plan, a commitment.

Mr. Speaker, Muskrat Falls, the converting stations and infrastructure, is going to flow through my district in Pines Cove and Shoal Cove East. The pressures of heavy equipment and additional use via increased passenger traffic from the ferry across the Strait of Belle Isle is adding to an already eroding road, Route 430, from St. Barbe to Pines Cove, and that expands to other areas. This primary road certainly needs attention, but there is no indication of when work will really commence.

There are 30,000 tourists going through L'Anse aux Meadows, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Going through Gros Morne National Park, there are areas of this road along that highway where there is a real washboard effect, 80,000 passengers. We cannot just pass off and say this is a federal road. You need to work with the federal counterparts. We need to work out and carve out that plan, a multi-year plan. There are 80,000 passengers from May to October who travel across The Straits, and looking at that we are using a forty-year-old-plus vessel to cross The Straits.

This past weekend I went to Labrador and I crossed on the aging *Apollo*. When we look at driving over a paved highway going to Red Bay, it has not received any upgrades since the 1980s. It is thirty years where we have a road that is riddled in potholes. We are trying to then promote the opportunities that are there. It is quite significant, Mr. Speaker. We cannot call the rest of the highway going up through really fit.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: It is not really looking at a highway, despite what the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador is saying. It has incredible rock cuts, snowbanks where you have up to fifteen, twenty feet. It is just not up to any standard that you would want to promote as a great circle route.

The Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador can say drive the rest of the highway, the other 1,000 kilometres or whatnot, but that is not really going to be looking at all the further economic opportunities. My eighty-year-old grandmother drove that highway last summer. She went all the way to Lab City, went to Wabush and areas. Driving over that gravel road to start on the side from Red Bay onward is something that needs addressing. It is really being worn down.

AMEC produced a transportation study in 2009 looking at the economic opportunities through this event. There is no apparent plan really, Mr. Speaker, by the minister to address the issue. Why not make a public five-year or multi-year plan?

The New Democratic Party in Nova Scotia has made this available to the public. It is open, it is transparent. Efficiencies are really created. There is a focus on getting the work actually done and implementing the plan, versus lobbying by all politicians of all political stripes. It is time to take the politics out of the roadwork. People expect more from their government.

I keep getting thrown back at me that there was \$20 million worth of work done in my district. That is incredibly fabulous. Looking forward to where the issues are, I wrote the former Minister of Transportation and Works key areas where my district has real concerns with particular roads. I did the same thing with the current minister.

I have written multiple times about issues on roads and I am told that the demands I am asking for is \$23 million, more than the roadwork that has been done over the last ten years. So there still certainly seems to be a real mismatch in terms of getting the work done to advance economic opportunities. This exists not only in my district, but all across the Province.

In 2009, I attended a transportation forum when it talked about the opportunities – this happened in St. Barbe at the Straits Arena. We brought together people to really discuss and identify the opportunities correlating to the opening of the

Trans-Labrador Highway in December, 2009. The event was hosted by the Nordic Economic Development Board and the Red Ochre Regional Board. It was also partnered with the three RED Boards in Labrador that were impacted by this opening – and sadly, these RED Boards are going to be closing.

We really need to see that it is the role of government to invest in infrastructure in both rural and urban regions. The infrastructure is certainly more than a bit of pavement. Canada may be a very rich country, and Newfoundland and Labrador may be a have Province, but we have a lot of catching up to do. If we are to prosper in the future, we must invest heavily in our current transportation shortfalls, and that is why we look at calling for a strategy to spend our money and invest it in the best possible way. If there is no plan, we do not know if we are getting best value.

Mr. Speaker, the former Speaker of the House, PC MHA Roger Fitzgerald, wrote *Challenges Facing Rural Communities: A Newfoundland and Labrador Perspective*, and it is quite an interesting read. It stated, “In Newfoundland and Labrador, as in some other areas, transportation is a key infrastructure challenge. Sir John A. Macdonald recognized that constructing a rail line from west of the Rockies to eastern Canada was an investment in Canada’s viability and sustainability as a nation. It was enormously expensive, but far cheaper than the alternative of letting the idea of Canada disintegrate into a collection of remote, disconnected states.”

Transportation really opens up opportunities, especially for our rural regions, and it is difficult to really compare the opening of the Trans-Labrador Highway to the completion of a rail line that connects all Canada, but certainly we all feel that impact, and more trade can now occur, whether it be in agriculture, whether it be fish products, timber, mining exports, value-added or small-scale manufacturing.

Mr. Speaker, Quebec is completing Route 438, the North Shore Highway, and this will mean over the short ferry ride, Montreal will be

accessible in thirteen hours. This will change the landscape of how goods and services are shipped. Government is not really considering a fixed link, although they should be. It is boondoggling a ferry plan. The forty-plus year old *Apollo* is now on the water for another year, and we may be seeing it for another three years.

It was announced in Budget 2012 that they were going to tender and there was going to be this long-term plan for a ferry replacement on the Strait of Belle Isle. What do we see in Budget 2013? The same re-announcement and we see the same problems. Without a plan and without a plan put in place, a real strategy moving forward, we have no idea what direction this government is going. It has a failed ferry strategy.

We saw that in 2012 the announcements were there for the South Coast ferries, for the replacement of the *Earl Winsor* on Fogo Island. What is the status of all of these announcements? Where are they? Are they still in the pre-design stage like the Corner Brook hospital? We have to see things move forward.

There is no plan for a cost-effective, year-round ferry connecting the Great Northern Peninsula. It is going to Corner Brook, when we could be having ferry service transport on the Great Northern Peninsula lowering the cost of what these services are. Where is the consultative process for quality service?

Over 95 per cent of the natural environmental resources are located in rural spaces, Mr. Speaker. Many of our major industries, agriculture, fishing, forestry, mining and energy, they all rely on rural communities. We really need to look at our rural populations and where they are moving, but in that context, we still need to look after our rural economies. It is evident that our transportation networks are failing us, especially in our rural regions.

We cannot continue with such neglect. Looking at our rural infrastructure needs, they are continuously being eroded. Infrastructure is essential to economic diversification and diversification is integral to sustainability. A

rural region is best positioned for survival if it has many oars in the water at once. This is something that Speaker Fitzgerald had said. It is a very logical argument.

We really need to look at how our rural economies are built around our natural resources and our one-industry towns. We really do need to look at the Arctic opportunities, the port development, and the infrastructure gaps that we have when it comes to road and ferry service, and we are certainly seeing that.

Mr. Speaker, to build stronger economies and communities in Newfoundland and Labrador, greater focus must be put on our rural regions, despite an ever-increasing urbanized world. Newfoundland and Labrador, we will all suffer if we ignore the current infrastructure challenge. It is not getting better. It is getting worse.

I certainly stand strongly supporting this motion to call for a strategy to be implemented to advance our transportation networks. I certainly appreciate that. I stand firmly that we need that. We cannot go forward without having a strategy in place, just spending money here and there. The Auditor General made reference to this – and I realize my time has expired.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I appreciate you acknowledging me this afternoon and giving me an opportunity to speak to this private member's resolution that was laid down by the Member for St. John's East this afternoon. I have to tell you, there has been so much coming out of the other side, so much coming out of the NDP over there and their two

speakers who have spoken to this, this afternoon, I do not know how I am going to try to address it all. We should never let the facts get in the way of a story, because that is what they like to do over there, Mr. Speaker. They do not want to hear facts.

The Member for The Straits just rose in his place here. He spoke for fifteen minutes and he went on and on and on with the about, and what about, and what about, and what about. We heard it over and over and over, Mr. Speaker. What the Member for The Straits – White Bay just did here in the House of Assembly is a really good example of a circumstance that we refer to on a regular basis here in the House of Assembly. It is about more, more, more; spend, spend, spend; and tax, tax, tax. That is what it is about over there, Mr. Speaker.

It does not matter about having to manage a budget. It does not matter about having to manage the affairs of a Province. It does not matter about trying to keep the lowest taxes in Atlantic Canada. It does not matter about keeping the lowest tuition rates in the country. It does not matter about trying to provide services, facilities, and to address the needs of people throughout the Province. It is about spend, spend, spend and tax, tax, tax.

He refers to plans, Mr. Speaker, about a transportation plan. It is a really good matter that he wants to talk to. I would suggest to the member opposite that he have a look in our Blue Book, in our campaign Blue Book in 2011, because we address a transportation plan in the 2011 Blue Book and we make a commitment.

We have made many commitments. We have made commitments like on the Trans-Labrador Highway, which he has addressed over here. He has talked about how terrible it is on the Trans-Labrador Highway. Mr. Speaker, we have to put in perspective how big the Trans-Labrador Highway is. Before 2009, there was no Trans-Labrador Highway. There were sections of roads and highways in Labrador, but they were not linked. You could not connect one side of Labrador to the other.

When this party came into government in 2004, a commitment was made. Since that time, since 2004 – and I say to the Member for The Straits – White Bay, just listen up now because here come the facts, listen up – \$450 million invested on the Trans-Labrador Highway in Labrador for the people of Labrador – \$450 million, I say to the member opposite. That is a significant investment. The highway and the people of Labrador are now linked.

Now, I have to say, I appreciate his reference to the condition of the highway. I am going to tell you, Labrador is one tough climate. I would say that the people in Labrador, I commend anybody who lives in Labrador, the people who reside in Labrador, and live and raise their families in Labrador, because it is a tough place to live. They are very proud of their home and they are very proud of Labrador. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of Labrador and I am very proud of the people of Labrador as well. They deserve for us to continue to make these investments in Labrador.

My colleague, the Minister of Service NL, referenced earlier about ferries. We are making significant investment in ferry service for the people of Labrador, a service they have never had before. So I ask the Member for The Straits – White Bay North, I ask the Member for St. John's East, is that not a good investment? Is that not a good place to invest our money and put money?

It will replace the *Apollo*, I say to the Member for The Straits – White Bay North. Maybe he was not listening. Maybe he does not understand what it is we are directing and working towards. Maybe he has not read the details or listened to the facts, because the facts are really important, I say to the Member for The Straits – White Bay North.

What we are working towards is an RFP for a long-term service for the people of Labrador, for the Coast of Labrador. It is an amazing place, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to the opportunity to spend more time in Labrador. I have been down there several times since I came into this portfolio because there is important

work to be done down there. I have gone down there and I have met different groups.

I was down with the Combined Councils and had a lengthy presentation, meeting, and question and answer period with the people of Combined Councils. I wanted to spend more time with some of the people after the meeting, but at the time I was running about an hour and a half behind schedule. I had other people to meet with and other groups that I wanted to meet with and have an opportunity to talk to about their concerns and the direction they would like to see us go in as a government

I enjoyed that and I enjoyed going to Labrador, and I look forward to going there again. I encourage the member over there to keep going down there as well, and the Member for St. John's East to spend some time down there. There are a lot of good things happening in Labrador and \$450 million invested in the Trans-Labrador Highway speaks volumes to it, and the investments we are going to make in a long-term ferry service, a fifteen-year ferry service.

Now, a lot of people think about ferries –

MR. BENNETT: (Inaudible).

MR. DAVIS: I hear the Member for St. Barbe over there. He has come alive over there, Mr. Speaker. I say to him, I am going to get to his district and talk about some of the investments made in his district. I am going to talk about some of those. We will talk about those this afternoon if I get time. He has been very fortunate in his district as well.

For the Member for The Straits – White Bay North to sit here and say I need, I need, I need, I want, I want, I want, is an insult to the investments that have been made in his district, \$20 million on roads and investments from Transportation and Works in his district in the last ten years. Twenty million dollars, Mr. Speaker, is no small amount of money.

AN HON. MEMBER: Whose district?

MR. DAVIS: The Straits – White Bay North, \$20 million. What does he do, Mr. Speaker? He comes in here and he says: It is not good enough. That is what he says. He can do that, because do you know what he wants, Mr. Speaker? He wants us to spend, spend, spend, and he wants us to tax, tax, tax.

Mr. Speaker, in the last ten years we have invested \$1.6 billion in highways and bridges throughout our Province?

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. DAVIS: It is \$1.6 billion in highways and bridges. Bridges quite often get lost in the highway network. We have 807 bridges in this Province, Mr. Speaker. Bridges are complicated structures. We have a new software system now put in place for tracking our bridges, tracking the condition, the age and the uses of our bridges so that we can keep good management on our bridges.

Here is an interesting piece of information for you, Mr. Speaker, since 2004, we have replaced 267 of those structures. We have replaced or repaired 267 of those structures. Two hundred million dollars we have invested in bridges since 2004 and we have a lot more to go, Mr. Speaker. We have a lot more to go and we are going to continue to make those investments.

If you listen to the members opposite, they say we have not done any of that. We have not made investments in infrastructure. We have not paved any roads. We have not built any new roads, Mr. Speaker, not according to them. According to them over there we have not done anything. We have not done any of it.

Like the Torbay Bypass Road, as an example, you ask the Member for Cape St. Francis. The Torbay Bypass Road just magically appeared. That is all it did. It magically appeared and it was free. That is what happened. They showed up and it was free.

If you talk to the Member for Cape St. Francis, he will tell you about the time when he was driving a fish truck when he was a young fellow.

You hear some good stories in the House of Assembly and you learn a lot from each other. Where did he drive it? He drove it down in St. Anthony, down in The Straits – White Bay. Do you know how he described it to me, what the road was like back in those days? It was not that long ago because he is not that old yet, it was ‘bumpity’, ‘bumpity’, ‘bumpity’, ‘bumpity’ all the way down the coast.

It is not like that today, Mr. Speaker. Could it use improvements? No doubt, Mr. Speaker, the road could use improvements, but so can so many other roads throughout our Province.

He addressed the Trans-Labrador Highway that needed work done. No doubt, it needs investments. We will spend \$69 million this year to finish paving Phase I. That is a stretch of road, Mr. Speaker, all the way from Labrador West, Labrador City, Wabush, all the way over to Happy Valley-Goose Bay. It will be substantially completed this year because of investments from this government and in partnership with the Government of Canada. That is what is going to happen.

We have two tenders, as my hon. colleague referenced, for Phase II and Phase III. To make those improvements so we can prepare to hard surface and pave Phase II and Phase III. It will not be enough to finish it, let’s not kid ourselves now because the highway in Labrador is massive. It is absolutely enormous. There is a good reason why they call it the Big Land. It is an enormous piece of geography. We are going to have a highway and we are committed to a highway that is going to bring you from one end to another.

Let’s bring things back to the Eastern and Northeast Avalon area. Let’s talk about the Team Gushue Highway for a minute. Some of my colleagues from Mount Pearl –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: - like to talk about the Team Gushue Highway. I know the hon. Deputy House Leader likes to talk about the Team Gushue Highway, because the Team Gushue

Highway is going to connect right through the centre of the greater St. John's area, from the Outer Ring Road all the way over to Pitts Memorial Drive to the Robert E. Howlett Memorial Highway. It will connect people who are headed towards the Southern Shore and down towards the Trepassey area, down on the Southern Shore all the way over. It will connect from there all the way over to, right across town, 7.1 kilometres.

Mr Speaker, a piece of roadwork and a piece of infrastructure that has been planned for years and years and years. I would say thirty to thirty-five years that piece of road has been in the planning stages, and now it is coming to fruition. With our government here we are making those investments to bring that to fruition to see it come through.

The CBS Bypass Road, I will mention, Mr. Speaker. The CBS Bypass Road and the Team Gushue Highway, over \$10 million this year we are going to spend on that. I say to the Member for Harbour Main, I say to the Member for Conception Bay South – they get regular calls and inquiries on the Conception Bay South Bypass Road. You talk about the basis of economic growth and development, you talk about the basis of the sustainability of people in a region, because that is what the Member for The Straits – White Bay and the Member for St. John's East like to talk about, and very important points about transportation being important, good quality transportation networks being the basis of growth and development.

If you ask the Member for Harbour Main and Conception Bay South one of the things they deal with on a regular basis, as I do in my District of Topsail, is the significant growth that is happening in those areas. As growth happens you need to have those road networks there to facilitate the growth of the population. This year, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that the Conception Bay South Bypass Road will be substantially completed, if we have a good construction season.

I say to the Member for Conception Bay South, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation,

we might be up there holding a ribbon before the year is out. Hopefully we will see that we will have that opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, part of the transportation network in the Province is ferries. Ferries, I tell you, are big business. Ferry services in Newfoundland and Labrador, I can tell you, occupy a tremendous amount of my time and so it should. It deserves my attention, as do the other aspects of my department. Ferry service annual operational budget is over \$80 million to operate the ferries. We have seventeen vessels that provide services to twenty-two remote areas in the Province and it is a very important service to people in remote areas.

We have a lot of challenges when it comes to ferries, but a lot of them, I say to the House of Assembly here today, Mr. Speaker, are related to ice and weather. If you take the people on the South Coast of Labrador, for example, I know the people in Black Tickle have a very challenging and difficult circumstance, especially in the shoulder seasons. I do not know if the hon. members understand this across the House, but in shoulder seasons especially – because in the wintertime they have perfected transportation in many, many ways in their own communities. In the summertime, we have a ferry service that goes to Black Tickle. In the shoulder seasons, when the ice is melting and the ice is no longer safe, it presents a challenge.

We provide a subsidy, a 50 per cent subsidy, for Black Tickle on the cost of their air service to fly them out of their community. It is a policy we follow to move them to the closest airstrip. We understand the costs are very high. We understand that, and we do provide that subsidy. In most areas of the Province, the ferry runs all year long until we strike ice or we have other wind events and weather events that cause us difficulties.

We are renewing our fleet. We have two new forty-two metre vessels operating here in the Province as part of our provincial fleet. We have a tender out right now for two new vessels: a new forty-two metre vessel, which our plan is to use a new swing vessel; and a new eighty-

metre vessel to replace the aging *Captain Earl Winsor*, which provides services to the people of Change Islands and Fogo Island. It is going to take a couple of years to build them. They are big pieces of infrastructure. They take a long time to build.

Mr. Speaker, I am wrapping up. I see my time is running out. I just wanted to talk about the people in my department for a few moments, if I may, because we have a significant workforce in our department. Especially in the wintertime, they face some adverse and very challenging circumstances when they try to keep our highways open. We have 307 plows and over 500 pieces of equipment. Over 100 of our plows, by the way, are new in the last four years and they are operated by our hardworking employees. I would like to say hats off to them today for the hard they do in keeping our highways open.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I recognize the Member for St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to fill in some of the blanks that the government members have obviously left out, some of the areas that they have not paved, and for some of them in some of their own member's districts. We know that their own members cannot complain too much about getting pavement because we saw what happened to a former minister when he wanted some pavement in the La Scie area; he was drummed out of Cabinet very quickly and then run out of the party and he is no longer on the other side. So when you push too hard on the other side for your own district, then you might well suffer that fate.

Now, the commentary on the Northern Peninsula highway, how bad it was and how great it is today, well you have to remember that Parks Canada covers it all past Cow Head; that is the first seventy kilometres. When you go from

there on to the Labrador ferry, a former federal Liberal government made this a part of Canada's National Highway System. So this government gets a 50 per cent reimbursement from the federal government for all of the work that they do. All that paving from the northern end of Gros Morne National Park through to the ferry is subsidized by the feds, as is the Trans-Labrador Highway.

This government is very – yes, they fixed up some bridges, no doubt about that, but after ten years you would expect to fix up some bridges. Yes, they did a little bit of paving and they have had lots of money to do so, but I will point out to them just a couple of roads they might want to consider.

One is the one that goes to Harbour Breton. I think the member there would not dare raise her hand and look for some paving because she might be drummed out as well. Another is one that goes to the Cape Shore. That one is in pretty despicable condition for a government that has had lot and lots and lots of money. It seems to be no representation for those roads. Then there is the road that goes through Port au Choix, right to the end. That is a provincial highway and they want the town to take it over, but why should a small town take over a provincial highway?

Mr. Speaker, I am going to permit the mover from St. John's East to conclude.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member for St. John's East, to bring closure to the debate.

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

I would like to, first of all, thank all of our employees as well, as others have. One of the reasons why we bring forth the talk about a strategy is to ensure not only the well-being, economically, of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, but as well, when we are talking about ferries, particularly, and transportation for highways, we are talking about the safety of our

employees. To ensure that we have good working equipment out there only ensures their safety. I want to thank them as well on behalf of our party for the work that they do every day.

I know it is not easy sometimes when they are talking about the equipment sometimes that they are working with. Six of our ferry boats right now out there are getting close on fifty years old. Forty-five and over, I think, six of our vessels are. That is strong messaging as regards to us needing a strategy for replacement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: I want to thank those as well who had input as regards to this particular motion: the Member for Terra Nova, the Member for Bay of Islands, the Member for Labrador West, my compatriot the Member for The Straits – White Bay North, the Member for Topsail, and the Member for St. Barbe for his couple of short comments.

I want to come back to the Member for Terra Nova because he was the first to mention about what some might call a five-year plan when it comes to the initial announcement for the re-announcement of the announcement of bridges that were happening. The CBS Bypass is no less of an example. I think since 2008 we have been hearing about announcements concerning the CBS Bypass and its initial finishing.

I want to thank him for his comments, and to remind him that at the same time as he was saying that he had ferry service on his end of the Province in his District of Terra Nova, there were others over the past couple of months who had to do without. People down in Rencontre East I am thinking about at this particular time, and I do not know how many e-mails I got on that. Indeed there were people who had to do without, so much so that the taxpayer had to pay for it in the end anyway by the supplying of helicopter service.

Everybody remembers the horrific story about somebody having to take a helicopter ride. It

cost the taxpayer for that God only knows how many dollars if you break it down. Overall helicopter service this time around in this Budget cost the taxpayer an extra \$750,000 a year over and above what was budgeted for normal conditions of ice usage and everything. I think it hit about \$1 million in usage altogether this year.

To the Member for the Bay of Islands, I want to thank him for reminding government at the same time that while they are exerting a lot of energy when it comes to roads, it comes at a cost and those costs have gone up. It is time for government to be imaginative when it comes to the use of some of the products for example that we are using in the Province. Government would acknowledge that it was this party that was talking about the recycling of tires and putting it into roads so that roads can be made durable, be made longer lasting, and at the same time save on the cost of asphalt to the people of this Province.

Right now what we are doing with tires is taking them and shipping them off to Quebec at an added cost. Besides paying \$3 a tire, it is also costing us \$6 million a year for shipping out these tires off to Quebec, when we can actually be recycling these things into roads. There are ways for government to stretch a dollar and, indeed, to increase road paving projects within the Province. I want to thank him as well for his comments when he came talking about bridges and no plan for roads, and at the same time, for making those amendments that included things we have already been talking about in this House.

To the Member for Labrador West, I say to the Chair, I want to thank him for his comments and an appreciation of flight availability. Roads yes; flights yes. Yes, Labrador is growing. It is advancing at a super rate, and all the more reason to see more strategic investment into roads in the region, particularly so that we can help some of the small towns along Coastal Labrador to help also catch up with that economic opportunity that is out there.

Like I said, there was one community we talked about, because it happened to be ice free, had an opportunity to participate in the Muskrat Falls Project, and it may have been too late. That is why I wanted to bring that up to the minister as regards to the economic importance of having a road. Coastal Labrador is a great example of that.

The Member for The Straits – White Bay North talked about five year plans and the federal commitment to roads. The feds should have a commitment to roads, but can you imagine if the federal government itself all of a sudden, every year, saw a plan come out by the provincial government here and knew in advance exactly what the ask was going to be from the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador when it comes to –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: - getting federal participation in a program. If the feds knew well ahead, the feds could probably plan ahead themselves in actually advancing the cause of Newfoundland and Labrador at the same time.

This works both ways, Mr. Speaker. We can see where the federal government can actually avail itself of a plan for this too, at the same time, if they came out with a comprehensive strategy. It is something that we can sell to the federal government, so we can go to them and ask them for more participation when it comes to the construction of roads.

It is not just about the provincial money, as the hon. Member for Topsail has been reiterating. The federal portion last year that was given was about \$60 million. Maybe next time with a comprehensive strategy they will make it \$70 million. Who knows?

At the same time as that, I want to come back to the Member for The Straits – White Bay North who gave us a very strong reminder of what it means to have a road. He said prosperity involves strong investments in transportation

studies, which is true; talking about the simple economics again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The noise level in the Chamber is making it very difficult for me to hear the Member for St. John's East. I would ask all members for your co-operation.

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

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

When I come back to the fact of what the Member for The Straits – White Bay North was saying, that prosperity involves stronger investments in transportation strategies, he also mentioned the possibility of a fixed link. Here we are talking about taxpayers' money again going towards a fifteen-year proposal. We know we are probably going to be talking about a fifteen-year investment in boat transportation, which is very costly, when we should be talking about something futuristic to help consumers with their cost in Labrador; at the same time, the simple fact of extending the Highway 138 and talking about a fixed link coming over to Newfoundland and Labrador.

That proposal was put out many years ago. I think Burf Ploughman was the one who pushed that all along. I think Tom Kierans engineered something like that already and proved the feasibility of it. We should have a little bit of futuristic thinking too when it comes to road development in this Province, perhaps we would not be so dependent on the ferry boat at the same time, and probably making the Island portion of Newfoundland a little bit less isolated at the same time.

The Member for Topsail also brought up about the facts when it came to his department. I want to remind the Minister of Transportation and Works about something that has come forth in the Auditor General's report, the monitoring report for April 5 of this year. A couple of

things to make note of that he has been finding. He has been checking up on the Department of Transportation and Works.

He says, the number one recommendation, “The Department should ensure that: a comprehensive vessel replacement plan is developed and in effect”. It is the first thing that he was looking out for – has only been partially implemented.

I can appreciate that he has a long way to go when it comes to the ferry strategy, but in the 2012 Budget when they went out and announced that six vessels were going to be constructed in the next couple of years, he, himself, has been saying that it takes two years roughly to construct a vessel. We are one year past the 2012 announcement. We should be seeing new vessels launched next year. What are they saying on the other side? We are going to have new boats in 2016. That is three years down the road, not one year down the road as it should be.

The third recommendation that he made, the department should ensure that a “...cost-benefit analysis, funding needs, Government priorities and risks for all vessel replacement be identified and included in vessel replacement planning.” Only partially implemented; I think that speaks for itself.

The number twelve recommendation, “The Department should ensure that all position descriptions for the Marine Transportation Services Branch are developed and updated, where applicable”. As well, it is only partially implemented. There is a little bit of work to do. They have a lot of problems here that were fully implemented or resolved but when it comes to the transportation strategy, these three I think are central and key.

Mr. Speaker, the time is winding down but I want to remind some of the members out there of past commitments on behalf of their party, as well as their government, because back in 2001 there were strong commitments that were made. I will open it up and I will refer to members who have been in the House for a long time exactly what happened in 2001.

Back in 2001, on November 20, the Tories of the day put out this following release: Opposition Works, Services and Transportation critic, the Member of the day for Cape St. Francis, today gave notice in the House of Assembly of the following private member’s resolution. A bunch of WHEREASes talking about the normal life expectancy of a ferry vessel of about twenty-five years, as reported by the Auditor General in a 2000 report. Significant upgrades they are talking about in this: AND WHEREAS many in this Province who rely on ferries are often deprived of acceptable ferry service. Now this is back in 2001. Do not tell me that it is acceptable today.

I will come back to the final resolution they had in their private member’s resolution of the day. “THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House call upon the provincial government to implement a vessel replacement policy of constructing new ferries at shipyards in Newfoundland and Labrador instead of purchasing vessels from outside the province.”

That was in 2001 when they were in Opposition. At the same time as that, one of the things they insisted upon in their Tory Blue Book: insist that Canada provide efficient modern ferry services at cost comparable to travel on the Trans-Canada Highway. My point in question, this is only the same thing that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are looking for from their own government but they have not delivered yet. We are still dealing with the problems.

“Our vessel replacement policy will be guided by net economic benefits to the Province rather than acquisition cost. Using this principle, we will be able to replace some or all of the provincial ferry fleet with new vessels built in the Province. Vessels built in our own yards would be up-to-date, and operate safely without needing major repairs or replacement for 30 years.”

We have not even touched on the economic benefits of having a trained workforce that could be going on and building more boats at the same time. That was a commitment that was made in the Tory Blue Book for the 2003 election.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: We are running so far behind.

Mr. Speaker, as well in the Blue Book, “Expand infrastructure and other essential economic development tools, including roads and bridges, ferry services, ports, high-speed Internet access, and water and sewer capability.” I already touched on Arctic initiatives. I do not have to now. I think the Minister of IBRD is listening to what I am saying.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, from one of our own members of the House – and I see time is running down – from October 18, 2004, “At our September 2004 meeting, concerns were raised that 12 months of inactivity has passed since the September 2003 tender call for a 28-car replacement ferry to allow for the retirement of the 37-year” – at that particular time – “aged Hamilton Sound.”

It goes on to say in this particular note about the economic spinoffs with the investment in new ferries, economic investment, and shipyard spinoff. He talks about sustaining and creating jobs, “Construction will generate jobs and sustain/generate industry and employment in over 40 ferry connected rural towns.” A vote of confidence for rural areas, he carries on; commitment entrenched in the Blue Book; the pleas for new ferries; and the Auditor General’s report he quotes. He talks about the attractive interest costs and there can be no better time, Mr. Speaker, than to start on ferries right now while interest rates are low. I have to agree with him. He said it a long time ago and it still stands today.

Mr. Speaker, I have to agree with the hon. Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island who was head of the ferry committee back then on October 18, 2004.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MURPHY: It would be reprehensible right now for government not to believe there would be a positive thing to doing this strategy.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude debate by saying go ahead and call for the vote on this one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind all members we will be conducting two separate votes. The first vote is on the amendment as put forward by the Member for Bay of Islands.

Shall the amendment carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: The amendment is defeated.

Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: The resolution is defeated.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

MR. SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Call in the members.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Is the House ready for the question?

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, please rise.

CLERK: Mr. Ball, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Edmunds, Ms Michael, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Mitchelmore, Ms Rogers, Mr. Osborne.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, please rise.

CLERK: Mr. Hutchings, Ms Shea, Mr. Davis, Ms Sullivan, Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Jackman, Mr. Hedderson, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Littlejohn, Mr. McGrath, Mr. French, Mr. Felix Collins, Mr. Sandy Collins, Mr. Kent, Mr. Lane, Mr. Hunter, Mr. Dinn, Mr. Brazil, Ms Perry, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Little, Mr. Cross, Mr. Pollard, Mr. Peach, Mr. Crummell, Mr. Forsey, Mr. Russell.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

CLERK: Mr. Speaker, the ayes eleven, the nays twenty-seven.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The motion has been defeated.

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