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Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will have members' statements from the Member for the District of St. John's South; the Member for the District of Burgeo – La Poile; the Member for the District of Cape St. Francis; the Member for the District of Bellevue; the Member for the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune; and the Member for the District of St. John's Centre.

The hon. the Member for the District of Burgeo – La Poile.

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

I rise today to recognize Mr. Robert Allen of Port aux Basques, who was recently awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Mr. Allen is a native of Port aux Basque where he still resides with his wife, Hope. He was employed with Canadian National Railway Marine Atlantic Inc. for forty-five years where he worked as a cable splicer.

He was a member of the Marine Atlantic Safety Committee for eleven years. In February 1977, he assisted in the rescue of two bird hunters who got stranded one kilometre from the shoreline when their engine broke down. In his service as a volunteer firefighter, Bob fought fires, rescued people trapped in vehicles, assisted with body removal and identification, and administered comfort to survivors.

In 2012, Mr. Allen was recognized for fifty years of service with the Channel-Port aux Basques Volunteer Fire Department. He received the federal Fire Service Exemplary Service and the Newfoundland Long Service medals. Even though he is retired from active firefighting, Mr. Allen still helps out around the fire hall and undoubtedly would still take emergency calls if he could.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join with me in extending congratulations to Mr. Robert Allen upon receipt of a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It is my pleasure to stand in this House today to congratulate Ronnie Cadigan of Logy Bay for his induction into the Newfoundland and Labrador Hockey Hall of Fame.

Ronnie Cadigan is a gentleman on and off the ice. It was my pleasure to have played against Ronnie for years, one of the best players ever to play the game in this Province. In every league he played in he dominated. While playing with Outer Cove in the Avalon East Senior Hockey League, he won seven league-scoring titles, five MVPs, ten Most Gentlemanly Effective player awards, three MVPs in the playoffs, eleven first-place awards, and seven league championships.

He is probably best known for scoring the winning goal in overtime in 1979 with the Shamrocks in the Newfoundland Senior Hockey League, beating the Gander Flyers in the Herder Final. I can still remember the late George McLaren calling the winning goal on the VOXM play by play. All fans and players who watched Ronnie Cadigan play the game realized what a true gentleman he is in every sense of the word.

I ask all members to join with me in congratulating Ron Cadigan, a very respected and well-deserving recipient, and a great example of what our Hockey Hall of Fame should stand for.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it was my pleasure again this year to have volunteered at the 6th Annual Hot Soup Cool Jazz fundraiser. The purpose of this event was to spotlight the housing and support needs of youth at risk, and those experiencing poverty in the St. John's region. Poverty and homelessness affect a large number of people in our community, including youth.

The proceeds raised from this community event are in support of Choices for Youth, the Jimmy Pratt Memorial Outreach Centre and Soup Kitchen, the Newfoundland Division of the Canadian Mental Health Association, and Wreckhouse Jazz & Blues.

The volunteers at this event include musicians, community service providers, business people, celebrities, everyday people, and those directly affected by the issues. I would like to recognize and commend the organizers and volunteers of this event for a very worthwhile and successful cause.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Bellevue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PEACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the Mayor of Arnold's Cove, Mr. Tom Osbourne.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. PEACH: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, it was Osbourne, not borne.

Tom was born in St. Jacques, Fortune Bay, and his family moved to Arnold's Cove in 1968 as part of the provincial government's resettlement program. He was first elected to municipal council in 1977, and has served thirty-two years as a council member, thirty of which he has served as mayor. He is one of the two initial

founding members of the Arnold's Cove area Chamber of Commerce in 1997, and still remains an executive member of the board of directors. He served on school council for five years, and was a leader of Scouts Canada for four years.

On April 24, 2013, I was joined by my colleague, the Member for Mount Pearl North, and their honours, the Lieutenant Governor Frank Fagan and his wife, Patricia, for Volunteer Appreciation Night. On that night, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Award was presented to Tom by His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members of the House to join me in congratulating Tom in receiving such an award, and for thirty-six years of volunteer service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the outstanding achievements of athlete Devin Benoit. Only eighteen years old, he is quickly becoming recognized as one of the best weightlifters in the country.

At the 2013 Canadian Powerlifting Championship held recently in Richmond, BC, Devin set three national records: for a 610 pound bench squat, a 365 pound bench press, and a 550 pound dead lift. He also brought home the national title of Top Sub-Junior Lifter with 418 Wilks points.

Mr. Benoit attributes much of his success to hard work, dedication, and a personal commitment to reaching his goals; along with great support from his coach Paul MacDonald, his parents, his community and his sponsors.

We are all extremely proud of Devin and wish him continued success in his future endeavours.

I ask all members of this hon. House to join me in applauding Devin Benoit for earning these national accomplishments.

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.

Yesterday I had the honour of welcoming over 100 amazing service providers and community leaders from across Canada, to the Canadian University Queer Services Conference. They are folks actively engaged in queer and trans solidarity work on campuses and in their communities.

This year's theme is Intersections and Reflection: Queering Collective Action. Activists, scholars and community leaders are exploring issues of oppression, and ways that we can all work together to make a more just and equal society. Last night's panel was great. They celebrated the anti-homophobia programs in our own school system from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

Dr. Kirk Andersen, Dean of Education at MUN and colleague Dr. Sarah Pickett, Sue Rose President of EGALE Foundation, and Dr. Bernie Ottenheimer from our own Safe and Caring Schools program in our very own Department of Education highlighted the groundbreaking work being done right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. They are still really concerned that the most bullied and vilified students in our system are trans youth. There is still work to do, Mr. Speaker.

The conference goes on until Sunday, May 5, and it is open to the public.

I would like my colleagues to join me in saying bravo to MUNSU, the Grad Student's Union, LGBTQ MUN, Canadian Federation of Students Newfoundland and Labrador, and MUN

Women's Resource Centre for organizing this great event. Bravo!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in the hon. House today to update hon. members on the continued work our government is doing to ensure that broadband infrastructure is reaching rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

On March 5, I announced successful applicants under Phase Two of the Rural Broadband Initiative and identified a partnership with EION Inc. Today, I am pleased to provide an update and identify twenty-four communities which will receive fixed wireless broadband access. The communities are St. Teresa, Barachois Brook, Sheaves Cove, Lunch Point, Sandy Lake, Bear Cove (Rocky Harbour), Castor River South, Castor River North, Shoal Cove West, Bird Cove, Little Springdale, Red Cliff, Little Burnt Bay, Loon Bay, Highway 340 adjacent to Loon Bay, Deadman's Bay, Route 201 near Bellevue, Bellevue, Mills Siding, O'Donnells, Branch, Freshwater- Bell Island, Winterland, Point au Gaul, and Allan's Island.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Work has started on this initiative and will be completed by March 2014.

Mr. Speaker, our plan has led to more than 500 communities in Newfoundland and Labrador having broadband access, and by 2014 89 per cent of the Island and 95 per cent of Labrador will be covered. We are being innovative using a variety of technologies, such as fibre, wireless, and satellite, and continue to explore new

opportunities to invest and strengthen our Province's innovation infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, in Budget 2013, this government committed to an additional \$6.3 million for rural broadband coverage. This investment will further our efforts to improve the Province's telecommunications environment, and we are working with industry to identify opportunities for additional development.

Our government's investment in broadband infrastructure is now over \$35 million since 2003 and has, to date, leveraged more than \$116 million from other sources –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: – for a total investment of \$151 million. The result of our efforts, along with those of our strategic partners, has been the establishment of a high-speed Internet system throughout Newfoundland and Labrador – one that we continue to build on.

Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to advancing rural broadband coverage and improving the Province's telecommunication environment because we recognize that it is critical to industry success and is a central component to the Province's innovation infrastructure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for an advance copy.

I want to tell him he does not need send to a press release to the *Northern Pen* because I have already called the editor with the good news and the Mayor of Bird Cove with the good news. I think this is a good day for these communities and the minister has certainly delivered in this case. I am not one who is going to quibble when the job gets done and the job gets done well. I

simply say thank you, Minister, for getting this job done.

I will be back in a few days looking for something else. If I had a complaint today, I would say the only complaint I have is why did the minister have to wait until the former Member for Windsor West is in the gallery for me to have to get up and thank him?

Thank you, Minister.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Access to high-speed Internet, the information highway, is as essential as other vital transportation and telecommunications infrastructure. Wireless companies can provide services to more rural and remote communities at a lower cost.

It is unfortunate that the original RBI restricted these companies, but I am pleased to see this update. It shows progress, but this government must step up and get the job done for the remaining 190 communities, as well as deal with chronic capacity issues that are stagnating education and economic opportunities in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Fire and Emergency Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation and more specifically its

Chairman and CEO, Mr. Len Simms, who is being honoured today in Ottawa with the 2013 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Award.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Sponsored by CMHC and presented by the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association at its annual congress, the award recognizes outstanding leadership and contributions to affordable housing.

Since joining Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation in 2005, Len Simms has proven his unique ability to connect with the community and support projects that provide affordable housing options for those in greatest need while working to alleviate homelessness.

Mr. Speaker, under his leadership, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing has modernized and improved 75 per cent of its current social housing dwellings throughout the Province. Mr. Simms also advocates for, and facilitated increased funding for, numerous other housing programs such as the Rent Supplement Program, which now provides over 1,700 subsidized rental housing units in the private sector.

With help from Mr. Simms, funding for the Supportive Living Program quadrupled from \$1.2 million to \$4.8 million to create housing supports for persons with complex needs. He has also advocated for a \$750,000 investment in the Train for Trades Program being administered by Choices for Youth, which provides opportunities for youth to gain skills and confidence to pursue careers in the trades and other educational and career opportunities, to name just a few of Mr. Simms many achievements.

Mr. Speaker, whether he is visiting with tenants, meeting with non-profit or private sector affordable housing developers, flipping pancakes at homelessness fundraisers, or sleeping under the stars with youth homelessness advocates, Mr. Simms does

actually keep his finger on the pulse of social housing needs throughout our Province.

It is clear that he has a deep personal commitment to helping ensure those vulnerable have a safe and affordable place to call home. Through his guidance and through his leadership Newfoundland and Labrador Housing has and will continue to break new ground and increase affordable housing options for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members of this House to join me in congratulating Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation CEO Mr. Len Simms on receiving the 2013 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Award.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy. When we see Mr. Simms getting the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Award and we hear the government praising up Mr. Simms, sometimes you take it lightly, but when your fellow peers present you with an award it is the greatest honour. I always said it. When your peers recognize what you have done, when you are a leader across Canada, it definitely shows the work that he has done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Many times we are here in the political realm and we talk politics, but there are times for us to recognize individuals because once your peers recognize you on a national stage we should all be proud of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

There is absolutely no doubt I know Mr. Simms works diligently. He works so hard for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. There is no doubt in the political game there are always

questions we are going to ask, but today is the day for Mr. Simms.

I congratulate Mr. Simms because I know, personally, when you contact him on housing, no matter how small or how big, he would always try to help you. You may not get the right answer, but you will always get the answer.

I know on the national level last year when he came up with the new initiatives for people with disabilities, I applauded that and I still applaud that today. I am sure initiatives like that are why Mr. Simms was the recipient of this award.

Personally, and from the Opposition, thank you Mr. Simms, because if you are recognized nationally that means you are promoting Newfoundland and Labrador.

We will have lots of time to debate Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, but today is the day for Mr. Simms.

Congratulations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Congratulations to Mr. Len Simms and his fantastic team at Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. During this Province-wide housing crisis, it is good to hear a bit of good news about social housing and our public servants who are working so hard against such growing odds.

In spite of the work being done by the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, the rental vacancy rate in this Province continues to stay around 1 per cent and rents continue to skyrocket, affecting many working families, young couples, students and seniors.

More and more people are spending more than 50 per cent of their income on shelter alone. Many are precariously housed and live in fear of the next rent increase, or even an eviction letter from a landlord who plans to double the rent in response to the intense housing demand in our cities and resource towns. The people are still awaiting their home ownership assistance program this government promised, and yet is not delivering on.

Bravo, Mr. Simms, for your innovative work and dedication to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We thank you on their behalf, but shame on this government for abandoning the people of this Province who are caught in this housing crisis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The members would have realized that the last Ministerial Statement was from the Minister Responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. Now we are going to have the statement from the real Minister of Fire and Emergency Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I was going to say, and I know that all members should never challenge the Speaker, but I wanted to inform you that you do not have the power to execute a shuffle, at times.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: [Laughter].

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, any fire chief or emergency management professional will tell you that prevention and training are two of the most important tools available to help keep the residents of our Province safe and protected. That is why I am once again pleased to highlight the provincial government's upcoming Fire and Emergency Services Training School taking place in Grand Falls-Windsor, May 25 to May 31.

Fire and Emergency Services Newfoundland and Labrador has been coordinating these large-scale regional training schools now for five years, leading the training efforts among communities, staff, and volunteers, and ensuring these important individuals have access to high-quality, effective training. These initiatives include more than forty courses options in both fire protection and emergency management, including pump operations, exercise design, and basic emergency management. This upcoming training school in Grand Falls-Windsor offers a great opportunity for local emergency responders and town officials to learn the best possible ways to manage an emergency situation.

Mr. Speaker, our government is pleased to partner yet again with the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor and the local fire department to bring this school to the Central Region for what promises to be another great event. Routinely, the Central Region boasts the highest attendance rates and we are hopeful as many organizations as possible take part in the diverse opportunities offered.

Training school is offered at no cost to officials and volunteers in our communities and is open to members of municipal councils, fire departments, public works, maintenance personnel, emergency response organizations, and non-governmental organizations. I encourage interested individuals to visit the Fire and Emergency Services Newfoundland and Labrador Web site to register. The registration deadline is fast approaching and applications should be received no later than May 10.

Mr. Speaker, once again the provincial government is pleased to make up to \$30,000 available through a 50-50 cost-share arrangement for municipalities to assist with the travel and accommodations expenses incurred in sending individuals to training school.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy. I can say this government must have gotten me on a good day because, Mr. Speaker, this is a great service being offered to a lot of the managers in fire protection services across Newfoundland and Labrador. I have known people who went through and did this program. They appreciated and benefited a lot from the program itself.

On many occasions, Mr. Speaker, I speak at firemen's balls, and I always say one of the best things we can do for firefighters in their towns is to have prevention in the homes throughout the towns. With this fire prevention, it shows how people can prevent emergencies and prevent tragedies in their own towns, even before they occur. If they do occur, it makes them well prepared and much more responsible in response if there is an emergency.

This is a good thing for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. This makes our towns much safer. I congratulate the minister and the government, once again, for offering support to municipalities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador for these services. If our families are protected much better because of programs like this, we as legislators are doing our job.

I hope everybody has a great event. I hope people learn from it. On one closing note, I will just let the minister know there is a training centre in Gillams in the Bay of Islands which can host this for next year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Coming on the heels just last week of Volunteer Week, we have to thank these men and women firefighters who are there who give so much of their time and commitment to the various communities that are out there. In some cases, these people are gainfully employed as well, so we also have to thank the businesses that are out there that are supporting these people who are helping to support the communities as well. I would like to make note to thank those businesses as well for giving the time off for people to attend this particular course that is offered through municipalities.

At the same time as that, Mr. Speaker, sometimes the cost of these courses can be a little bit high when it comes particularly to travel costs. I know government is making that effort to pay for at least half of that. I commend them for that. Perhaps for some smaller communities where we have smaller regional firefighters that are having problems with retention, maybe this is a little bit of a barrier to getting some of these people in there towards working at this course, picking up this course, and adding it as part of their resumé.

I would encourage government to work with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, and to possibly deal with these added costs for some municipalities. Even though government is meeting them 50-50, sometimes that 50 per cent can be very hard for small communities.

Thank you to the minister for that, and thank you to the volunteer firefighters out there for their commitment.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Question Period.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, government released their proposed changes to the Atlantic Accord to accommodate an occupational health and safety regime in our offshore. Notably absent from this legislation is anything to do with Recommendation 29 from the Wells inquiry calling for an independent offshore safety regulator.

I ask the Premier: When are we going to see movement on what Justice Wells called his most important recommendation?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, an important piece of legislation coming before this House. I think second reading will begin early next week. It is a piece of legislation that further entrenches and protects the safety and health of workers in our offshore.

This important piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, fulfills twenty-eight of the twenty-nine recommendations of the Wells inquiry. I ask the Opposition Leader to direct his questions to the federal government, to ask his MPs to direct their questions to the federal government.

This government is squarely onside in support of an independent regulator, Mr. Speaker. We remain steadfast in our view that should happen. We constantly advocate for the federal government to take the same view. They have not as yet agreed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was pleased to ask that question from the previous Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs at the federal level. His question to me was

what is the Province saying? I said to him well, the Province is saying that they endorse this.

The Premier says to establish the independent safety regulator, the federal government has to concur, as she just said, and the Atlantic Accord would have to be amended. We were just at the table, we had the federal government at the table, and we had the Province at the table. We were all there.

Since the Atlantic Accord had to be amended to put the independent safety regulator in place: Why was that not part of the conversation at this particular negotiation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation that we introduced on March 25 and that is going to be debated next week – legislation that is going to be passed in the Parliament of Canada, this legislation out of Nova Scotia - is going to bring about an amendment to the Atlantic Accord, which will provide a single, comprehensive occupational health and safety scheme for the people of this Province, tailored to the offshore.

This process started fourteen years ago, Mr. Speaker. It has been worked on by the different levels of government, by the different C-NLOPBs, the Nova Scotia board as well, and this is now ready to go.

The recommendation coming out of the Well's inquiry for the independent regulator, which the Premier indicated our government supports wholeheartedly, this is not part of that process. This will be part of a new process. As the Leader of the Opposition just said, jurisdiction in offshore requires the consent of both governments. The federal government is not prepared to go there. We are and we have indicated that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the officials at the department said, as the minister just repeated, that this process has been ongoing now for some fourteen years.

Since they were at the negotiating table – the federal government I mean – what is the outstanding issue from the federal government? Would you please let the people of Newfoundland and Labrador know what the outstanding issue, why we cannot get an independent offshore safety regulator for the people working offshore?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that is a question the Leader of the Opposition needs to put to the federal government.

MR. BALL: We did (inaudible).

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Well then, you should demand an answer to your question.

This government accepts the recommendation of the Well's inquiry. Once that report was done, that inquiry was done, the recommendations were brought forward, they were endorsed by the Federation of Labour, by other labour groups, this government also at that time endorsed that recommendation, Recommendation 29.

We made our view known to the federal government. We continue to make our view known to the federal government. They do not agree. They accept that this model is the right one for Newfoundland and Labrador. It is a model that people are moving to all over the

world, Mr. Speaker. Any other explanation needs to come from them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Well, the federal Auditor General did not audit the provincial activities around search and rescue in our Province. As a matter of fact, he did not audit some of the federal departments that are actually involved in search and rescue in Newfoundland and Labrador, that being organizations like the RCMP. All those entities play a significant role in search and rescue.

I ask the Premier: With all the components not being audited by the federal AG, will you now take it upon yourself to call a provincial inquiry into all aspects of search and rescue in our Province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we made very clear in this House yesterday what this government's view is. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is responsible, solely responsible, for land search and rescue here in the Province. The federal government's response, when it is requested, is a humanitarian response. They do not have responsibility for that, Mr. Speaker.

We still feel, though, when asked, that they should respond, and we continue to press that issue with the federal government. In terms of search and rescue in our offshore, Mr. Speaker, that is the sole responsibility of the federal government. They have been told by the Auditor General that there is a lack of capacity that needs to be addressed. We want them to act.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, what I am talking about is issues that the federal AG, the federal Auditor General, did not audit. These are provincial by nature and also the RMCP. When you look at a search and rescue admission, it includes a lot of people in certain aspects, some of our own provincial assets. That is what we are calling for here.

Mr. Speaker, passing the responsibility off to the federal government to fix the search and rescue system does not address all of the shortfalls in this Province. One of your own MHAs was on a media outlet on Open Line this morning saying that this is totally a federal issue. Well, that is not the case.

I ask the Premier: Why are you not accepting your responsibilities in this very important issue, instead, deflecting it to the federal government?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a question of deflection. This is a question of demanding from the federal government that they step up to their responsibilities. The federal government has responsibility for all of the people in Canada, including the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, including the people who earn their living on the sea, Mr. Speaker.

Their Auditor General – and in his report he calls upon the federal government to review the rest of the systems and to act accordingly to ensure that this service meets all of the requirements that it ought to for the people of this country, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the time for study is past. We need action now. In the areas that the Auditor General did not complete he recommends that

they complete and take the appropriate action; so do we.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When I talk about deflecting responsibilities or the audit to the federal government, well, that is exactly what the Premier just did.

We have responsibilities within our own Province. Mr. Speaker under section 3.1 of the Public Inquiries Act, the Premier, this government, has the authority to establish a public inquiry into a matter of public concern. We have done this in the past. I cannot think of an issue that is more important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador than search and rescue.

I ask the Premier again: Why are you not using your own authority under the Public Inquiries Act and call an inquiry into search and rescue in this Province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I said in this House yesterday that I absolutely refuse to play politics and use rhetoric and spin around this important issue. The federal government has sole responsibility for search and rescue in our offshore. Their Auditor General has noted deficiencies that need to be addressed. Confidence by our people needs to be restored – the confidence of our people needs to be restored. They need to know that they are safe when they are at sea.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition continues to do what is best for him, politically. Over here, we are going to do what is best for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, only five months ago this government set up a costly public engagement office to ensure departments could launch public consultations. Recently, the Premier chastised the Prime Minister for not consulting on changes to EI; however, with no consultation, this government decided to collapse our school boards.

I ask the Premier: Is your government committed to consulting or not; and if so, why weren't educators, trustees, and parents consulted before school boards were shut down?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I repeat again: a 14,000 student reduction in students in the Province, 17 per cent; 12 per cent less schools; school board operations gone up by some 30 per cent, the cost of school board operations. Mr. Speaker, it is prudent of us to examine that.

Mr. Speaker, our investment has been in front-line services, that being students and teachers. The best student-teacher ratio of all provinces in Canada, Mr. Speaker – we are moving ahead. If the member suggests that we maintain the school boards and then take services away from students, let him get up and say that. There is a transition committee in place. I would ask the member opposite and others who have suggested to voice (inaudible) –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member for St. Barbe.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, in Estimates last evening, another education cut was revealed. The minister admitted to delays in four areas of curriculum.

I ask the minister: How many children are affected by this cut?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, last night in Estimates, we were here for about an hour-and-a-half, and I do believe that we finally got through to the member about what professional development is all about. I do not think he understood up to that point, Mr. Speaker.

We continue with the implementation of a language arts program, we are continuing with the implementation of the programs around math, and as new programs come in, Mr. Speaker, we in-service. The tune for support services is something like \$4 million that we will put into the professional development of teachers.

I see you are about to rise, Mr. Speaker. I hope he has the second part, because I can answer (inaudible).

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, finally the minister was able to explain what he meant by curriculum, so one more question in that respect.

One of the solemn promises from this Minister of Education is that front-line delivery of educational services would not be touched.

I ask the minister: Is this a broken promise, or does he not consider curriculum to be a front-line service of his department?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, investment in front-line services; no change to class caps; the best student-teacher ratio of all provinces in Canada; no changes to special education services; no changes to the supports for students with special needs. Mr. Speaker, that is investment in front-line services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, the people of Nunatsiavut had requested representation on the school board transition committee to ensure that Aboriginal interests are well represented. By looking at the transition board announced last week, the minister has obviously ignored their request.

I ask the minister: Why did you refuse the residents of Nunatsiavut an opportunity of full representation on your transition committee?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: I was still thinking about in-service, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the transition team has been developed. We did receive representation from the Nunatsiavut Government. We have two representatives who are on that transition team from Labrador. What we will do, Mr. Speaker, is seek input and then put it into that transition committee. Then they will make decisions as they move forward, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, representatives are clearly not representatives of the Aboriginal community.

Mr. Speaker, the Nunatsiavut Government presently provides significant resources and financial assistance to the Labrador School Board to ensure that school curriculum has a strong Aboriginal perspective.

I ask the minister: What guarantee can you give the students of Nunatsiavut that their Aboriginal curriculum will be maintained under a new school board structure?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite that what the Nunatsiavut Government has in place will remain. In fact, I can provide the member with a letter that I responded to the Nunatsiavut Government with this morning indicating exactly the response to what the member offered.

Mr. Speaker, the programs that are in place and the resources that are in place will be protected under this new arrangement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has put aside over \$50,000 for her manager of social media because she does not understand her Facebook account. This week, we heard that circuit courts in rural Newfoundland and Labrador were shut down to save \$50,000. These savings will be on the backs of the people using the justice system.

I ask the Premier: Can you please tell us what your priorities are, social media or access to justice?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the commitment that this government has to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to justice is well-known. We have made significant investments in front-line policing, more than 145 officers over the last six years, Mr. Speaker. We have made significant investment to the prison system, and we have made investment to the courts.

The member opposite fully knows, Mr. Speaker, that the full responsibility for determining where courts are offered throughout this Province does not rest with the government. It is an independent decision made by the chief judge in the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I would say that the minister knows full well that the chief judge gets his budget from the Department of Justice and the Minister of Justice.

In 2006, this government committed to a comprehensive review of public prosecution in our Province. At the time, the minister said that this independent review will be done immediately and that retired Justice William Marshall was named to conduct the review. Seven years later it is not done.

I ask the minister: Why haven't you completed this long promised review? Since it was never done, what compelling evidence did you have to justify the cuts in Budget 2013?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, the decision on circuit courts – I am absolutely flabbergasted that a member would stand in this House and challenge the independence of the chief judge of this Province. I cannot believe that a member

believes on the floor of this House that this House and this government ought to be telling judges in this Province what to do.

I say to the member opposite, it is absolutely shameful as a trained lawyer to stand in here and to suggest that any minister or any member of this government would interfere with the decisions of the chief judge of this Province. Shame on them, I say.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Yesterday, the Premier said all sides of the House ought to be united calling as one voice to the federal government to take action on search and rescue. Yet, a little more than a year ago when I made the very same suggestion to the Premier in this House, she heaped scorn on the idea, suggesting my request was nothing but pure politics.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Now that she has pulled this about-face, what tangible actions does she want all parties to take together with her?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to be baited into the rhetoric and spin. This is a tremendously important issue to the people of this Province. There are people working on the ocean today who are not sure that if they get in trouble there is enough capacity to deal with it effectively and bring them safely home.

Mr. Speaker, what we need to do in this House and as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is to speak with one voice to the federal government to say deficiencies have been identified. We require immediate action. We want a detailed action plan with a time frame so confidence can be restored.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the Premier was asking to do that together. I am saying tell us how to do that together with her, because we could do it together but she is not giving us a way to do it.

Mr. Speaker, right now both the provincial and federal governments are scrambling to make it look like they are doing something on search and rescue in the wake of the federal Auditor General's report, when many of the issues he has brought up were already known to us in this country and here in this House.

I ask the Premier, to table the letter her minister sent to Ottawa today to see what they are asking Ottawa for.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I clearly stated in this House yesterday and reiterated again in my answer to her first question what it is we are looking for. Mr. Speaker, the last thing the Leader of the NDP should be asking me is what we are looking for in this Province.

We are looking for state-of-the-art search and rescue, Mr. Speaker, in standards that have been clearly identified by the Auditor General. We

are asking the federal government for a meeting, minister to minister, so we can discuss the Auditor General's recommendations. We are asking for immediate action with a detailed time frame so that when we know that all of the action required has been done, Mr. Speaker, and that review is constantly in place. We are happy to table the letter requesting that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

I thank the Premier for her answer and I thank her for her offer to table the letter, because that is the kind of thing that we want her to be asking. I am glad to know she is doing it. I am glad to get a straight answer to my question.

Mr. Speaker, upcoming amendments to the Atlantic Accord will bring much-needed improvements to occupational health and safety for offshore workers, but this action is ignoring the real need, the creation of an independent offshore safety authority.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Why Commissioner Wells' recommendation for this independent authority seems to have had no impact on her, in spite of the fact she keeps telling us she supported it?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, immediately on the receipt of the Wells inquiry recommendations, this government endorsed Recommendation 29 – immediately. Our position has not changed. We have advocated at every opportunity, that the federal government take the same response.

Mr. Speaker, we have confidence in the C-NLOPB. We absolutely do. In fact, most regimes that are responsible for regulatory oversight are moving towards the model that is in place here in this Province now, but that was not the recommendation of Chief Justice Wells, nor is it supported by the Federation of Labour and people who work in the offshore. Therefore, we are working with them, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I would like to say to the Premier that I followed carefully the hearings of the Commissioner, and if my memory serves me correctly, and I know it does, the Federation of Labour is on record asking for the independent safety authority during this process that they were involved in, Mr. Speaker. That is public; they did that. It is on record that they asked for it.

Mr. Speaker, the consultations resulting in the amendments to the Atlantic Accord began long before the crash of Cougar Flight 491 or the consequent Wells inquiry.

I ask the Premier: Why has she continued to tell us she was pushing for this agency when it is clear the Harper government was not going to consider setting up an independent agency, and they were sitting at the table working on this compromised legislation that we will discuss next week?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot offer up a better example than just what happened here this time, of how the Leader of the NDP does not listen to anybody or anything. She is on her own agenda, focused, and cannot hear or see anything else.

I said that the Federation of Labour agreed with an independent regulator, so you did not have to do that preamble to correct me. You were not listening, and that is not a new phenomenon, Mr. Speaker. Offshore health and safety is one of the most critical priorities of the people of this Province. We support the Wells inquiry recommendations, all twenty-nine of them.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to work with the C-NLOPB to ensure that they do everything they can without an independent regulator to ensure the people of the Province that the highest standards of safety are followed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, government's own White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education underscored the need to increase high school completion rates in Innu, Inuit and coastal Labrador communities. We all know this can only be addressed through consultation with those who are directly involved and affected.

Who did this government consult before deciding to cut College of the North Atlantic Adult Basic Education programs in the communities of North West River, Rigolet, Hopedale and Nain?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our track record on investing in post-secondary education is certainly open for discussion, and I am very proud to stand and talk about it. We have made significant investments in this Province over the last ten years to help individuals leave high school and further their education, and for those who have not obtained a high school diploma during the regular process to invest in Adult Basic Education.

In the current process, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to invest in Adult Basic Education because the opportunities on the horizon for people in this Province are unprecedented. Today, individuals who have a high school education behind them have the world in front of them. They can do literally anything they want right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. The process that we are going through today in this Province is making sure that the investments we are making in Adult Basic Education, and other programs in this Province, is aligned with that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, back in 2007, well before government decided to cut Employment Assistance Services in Labrador, the PC government announced the Northern Strategic Plan for Labrador with much fanfare. This plan for Labrador committed to increasing career, employment, and labour market services staffing in Labrador to help train, attract, and retain a labour force sufficient to meet Labrador's needs.

Can the minister tell us how this government has increased career employment and labour market services in Labrador since that strategy was released in 2007?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I understand the member was not in the House in the last couple of sessions, and it is fair enough, so he would not necessarily be aware of some of the tremendous investments that we have made in Labrador to support education. I can remind him of one in particular, some \$33 million through Nalcor for the Aboriginal Training Partnership, Mr. Speaker, which provides an opportunity for people in Labrador to avail of training support, and to gain the skills and the experiences they need to avail of the tremendous opportunities available in Labrador and on the Island part of the Province because of the investment this government has made in the economy.

We have also, Mr. Speaker, invested significantly in the College of the North Atlantic in Labrador for the same reason. This government, for the first time in many governments, recognizes the opportunities available to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we are supporting them in that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On Monday, the Premier led a discussion on the importance of gender-based analysis with her Atlantic colleagues. She even issued a news release stating, the effective use of gender-based analysis in decision making within our government in order to help improve the social and economic status of women. She cut 1,200 direct jobs in this Budget. The majority of front-line workers in the public service are women.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Did she do a gender-based analysis? How many of the layoffs are women?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the Member for St. John's Centre we had a very good discussion on gender-based analysis at our CAP meeting in Nova Scotia. We also had a very good discussion about cyber bullying and the people who associate with that, that I would love to share with her at sometime.

Mr. Speaker, gender-based analysis is extremely important. It is important to understand how life impacts on women, and that is different from the way it impacts on men. The work that we began here in this government resulted of a gender-based analysis of what happened on the Hibernia project, when less than 4 per cent of the labour force was made up of women, less than 1 per cent in trades and technology. The economic engine that was driving this Province and all of the great actions that have come from this government resulted from that gender-based analysis.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre, a quick question without preamble please.

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, obviously the –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

A quick question without preamble, please.

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Did she do a gender-based analysis of the effects on women and children in the closing of the Family Violence Intervention Court?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier, for a quick response.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will be happy to talk to her about it another time. Gender-based analysis is a good thing most of the time, Mr. Speaker. It was a gender-based analysis that brought her own leader home from Toronto to work in the Women in Resource Development Committee. I happened to be on the interview panel.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: A point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party, for a point of order.

MS MICHAEL: Yes, Mr. Speaker, please.

The Premier, in making her personal comments, has made statements with regard to my return to Newfoundland in 1999 that are not true, that are inaccurate, and I ask her to withdraw those statements. I should be the only one making statements about what brought me back to Newfoundland in 1999.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order, just a difference of opinion between two hon. members.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Fire and Emergency Services.

MR. O'BRIEN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the letter that I wrote to the hon. Peter MacKay dated May 1, 2013, as the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. SPEAKER: Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for St. Barbe.

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS the reported number of applicants now registered as members is 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 has requested, but has not yet received, an extension to the agreement to process the remaining applications; and

WHEREAS to date there is no decision on how to deal with 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 our applications.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is an issue of fairness, an issue where –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

MR. BENNETT: – 100,000 people of this Province, 20 per cent of the population, claims that they have filed appropriate applications to demonstrate that they are in fact eligible to be considered as members of a landless band, the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, it would be a simple matter, a very simple matter, for this government, either through Intergovernmental Affairs, through Aboriginal Affairs, or through the Premier herself simply to reach out and contact the chief and the federal government and say we understand that 100,000 people or 20 per cent of the population of our Province is affected and have a claim on benefits from the federal government. What can we do? Why is it held up? Is there anything we can do to facilitate the process?

Mr. Speaker, I think the question –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BENNETT: – for the people who are being ignored by this government and who have been ignored by this government for a long period of time will want to ask this government in 2015 is: You are now coming here looking for support. You are now looking for our votes. There are 100,000 of us. You turned your back on us. You gave us the back of your hand when we were looking for assistance to be properly adjudicated in our applications. Why should we support you now? It is 20 per cent of the population of the Province, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member for St. John's North.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: – to reverse this damaging decision to students and reinstate the Adult Basic Education programming at the College of the North Atlantic.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard this petition a number of times now. This is the issue of Adult Basic Education programming and the cut at College of the North Atlantic. The subsequent plan to privatize that program comes up time and again here in the House of Assembly.

I was quite pleased last week to have a conversation with a student, an Adult Basic Education student, in North West River. I know that student has also been in contact with the Member for Torngat Mountains about this issue. People there are very concerned about the impact of these cuts and whether or not coastal Labrador communities, communities in Labrador, will continue to have this program delivered in their communities and near their communities.

There are people on this petition from the communities of North West River, Sheshatshiu, and Goose Bay – a good number from Sheshatshiu. There was an interesting letter, or almost a brief, really, submitted to the Premier back on April 25 talking about these cuts – sent to the Premier by Adult Basic Education instructors. They talked about how they believed these cuts will result in drastic changes to the Province's college system and will have serious financial and social costs to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, should they be permitted to proceed.

I am not sure where the Premier is with her deliberations on this with the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, but there is certainly a goodly number of individuals across the Province who have an interest in seeing this reversed. There has probably been close to 2,000 signatures so far been presented on this particular petition, between the ones that I have presented her myself and the Members for Torngat Mountains and Burgeo – La Poile.

So, I ask members opposite to consider having this overturned.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remember the member his time for speaking has expired.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to conduct a needs assessment to identify the needs of long-term care in Labrador, and to reopen the Paddon Seniors Home, in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, to provide all levels of health care.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is a petition that I have tabled in this House of Assembly on a number of occasions. I sat and I listened to the Budget address by the Member for Lake Melville – I think it was yesterday – and he talked about the Muskrat Falls Project and the increase in population that will come to Happy Valley-Goose Bay. The last time I checked, of the twenty-eight to thirty acute care beds at the hospital, seventeen were taken up by patients wanting to get into long-term care.

So I guess the question, Mr. Speaker, is if you add another 3,000 to 3,500 people to the workforce in Lake Melville that will increase the population by at least one-third, putting all that much more strain on the hospital. Now, we would like to believe there will not be any workplace injuries, but sometimes we are a little too expectant. Accidents do happen and they will happen.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is that we have a building here that needs to be upgraded without any large amount of expenditures for the simple reason that it served as a long-term care facility before it became idle and sitting dormant with the electricity and the lights still turned on. I am hopeful this government will take a serious look at this petition and utilize the building that was set up for the use people are wanting it for now. That is, to reopen the Paddon Home for long-term care.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the Regional Economic Development 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 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 has millions in their suite of programming, some of which has poor uptake; and

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, it comes at a very sad time. The Nordic Economic Development Board in my district is coming to a close. It has to close its doors, yet it was an organization that was actually bringing value to the communities, far more than what it was costing government to operate at both levels. Just recently they adapted through the economic stimulus fund, the Economic Action Plan, \$1 million for a woodlot in the region.

We had a statement by the Minister of IBRD on rural broadband. Well, it was this RED Board that had funding through the federal government, over \$3 million, to put broadband in thirty-six communities on the Great Northern Peninsula. The provincial government only had to contribute pennies in comparison, just a few thousand dollars, for this project.

They are missed opportunities when you do not have these entities on the ground, like when it came to connecting Canadians through rural

broadband. They committed over \$200 million across the country and 219,000 homes in multiple provinces; but in Newfoundland and Labrador, we received nothing through that rural broadband. We certainly were eligible. That is quite a shame.

What we really need, Mr. Speaker, from this government is funding for these types of organizations to be there on the ground. We need funding, and not photo ops.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

I am glad to stand here and enter this petition to the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled:

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS loading the workload of 226 employees onto 139 AES employees would be an overwhelming expectation, increasing staff

turnover, and thus decreasing rapport with clients;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reverse the decision to cut funding to EAS agencies in the Province.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to stand and enter this again today. I have seen from the Ministerial Statement by the Minister of IBRD that petitions do work because we have wireless access now in Bird Cove. I know the Member for St. Barbe has been asking for that, petitioning for that, and he got it.

I am going to keep doing this in the hopes that government will come to their senses, hopefully in the next month. We have over 200 employees who are in the last month of employment with EAS services because government has made a very short-sighted and ill-informed decision to put these people out of jobs.

Again, when you think about the labour shortage we have here in this Province and the fact that these people helped take many of our individuals, many of our citizens, trying to get education and trying to get out in the workforce, and helped them with that, to take them out of rural communities is absolutely ridiculous. Even when you look at the John Noseworthy report that we paid \$150,000 for, John had a number of things to say about how the Province has handled this.

Mr. Speaker, these people, their time is running short and they know it. They have not been given any instruction on what to do with their clients. I know the Advanced Education people are calling these people at the EAS agencies and they are crying because they have not been given direction either by the minister or the department.

Again, it speaks to the entire department as a whole, which is just a horribly mismanaged and cobbled together department. It is an absolute failure. Unfortunately, I do not see it changing, but we will continue putting in petitions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Standing Order 32.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

In accordance with Standing Order 32, are you making a motion with a mover and a seconder?

MR. KING: Seconded by the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that we move to Orders of the Day.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1: That This House Approves in General the Budgetary Policy of the Government, the Budget Speech.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is always great and it is always a privilege to stand in the House and speak to this Budget. I want to thank, once again, the great people of the Port de Grave District for electing me back in 2011 and providing the confidence in me to do this.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a whole lot of conversation going on here in the last number of weeks, through Interim Supply and through the Budget Speech and the Budget presentation itself. Now we are back to the main motion of the Budget, a non-confidence motion, I believe.

Mr. Speaker, once again I just want to talk about some of the things I have heard over the last number of days and weeks. It was with some great interest that I sat here and listened to the Minister of Natural Resources and the former Minister of Finance. He spoke about the influences of the world economy and what the world economy, basically, has to do with Newfoundland and Labrador.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when you are out there talking to the ordinary citizen in my district, they do not understand or realize the impact that the world economy has on a small Province like Newfoundland and Labrador. Unfortunately, what goes on in the world certainly has an impact.

I heard one of the members across the floor the other day talk about the impact of the world economy in Europe and the European debt crisis. Well, Mr. Speaker, the European debt crisis certainly impacts what happens to us, certainly the downturn in the United States economy over the last number of years and the housing crisis in the United States economy over the last number of years. Mr. Speaker, all of those things have had significant impact on what has happened with Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, some people – and I have heard it said by Opposition members – have said we are the victims of our own success. We have heard many times in this House about six, over the last eight budgets, excluding this one, were surplus

budgets, Mr. Speaker, record surplus budgets. We did have lots of money and we became a have Province.

Mr. Speaker, by becoming a have Province means that now we pay our own way and we do not receive billions of dollars from the federal government. Mr. Speaker, that has an impact on our bottom line. When you lose billions of dollars in transfer payments, that is what that means. We are a have Province and we pay our own way now. We do not get subsidized by the federal government. In a small Province like ours, certainly that has provided some challenges.

When we talk about surplus budgets, six out of the last eight years, we talk about a have Province. Also, it is challenging for the average person out there. We talk about a booming economy but when we talk about a booming economy we also talk about tax revenues, and we heard the Minister of Finance stand up here and talk about tax revenues. We have to remember that only 17 per cent of the people pay 70 per cent of the taxes, and that is a challenge, Mr. Speaker.

We have heard from some members of the Opposition as well: Did we consider raising taxes? Who do we raise taxes to, Mr. Speaker? They accuse us of having the highest corporate business tax rates. They say we need to raise taxes, but who do you do it to? We already – if you listen to them say – have the highest business tax rates, so we are limited. We are limited in that, Mr. Speaker. We need to, but we do have a high economy. People have jobs, people are coming home.

I want to give you this example, Mr. Speaker. I have family friends, Mr. Speaker, and they moved to Ontario many years ago, back in the early 1970s, I believe, and they have always wanted to live in Newfoundland. They raised their children in Ontario. They went to school in Ontario. These people always wanted to come back home. Their sons and their daughters wanted to come home.

Mr. Speaker, they did. They have had the opportunity in the last year to come home. One of the sons decided to come home and started in real estate. He started in real estate and did very well for himself. He was in a previous position with a firm in Ontario, and he is now a foreman. He took a job recently as a foreman in the Vale project in Long Harbour. We have young people coming back who had no association outside of mom and dad.

Another person is his brother, Mr. Speaker. His brother always loved Newfoundland and Labrador and wanted to come back to Newfoundland and Labrador to work, but could not find a job. He came back recently and bought a home in my district. They both have bought homes in my district and are looking to build new homes and have new family. One of the brothers just recently had a newborn and the other brother is expecting a newborn. They came back because they have confidence in the future of Newfoundland and Labrador, and he is now working with a local distributing company here driving for them.

Mr. Speaker, these are examples of people coming back home because they believe we have a bright future here in Newfoundland and Labrador. The statistics prove it out. We have more people working in Newfoundland and Labrador today than any time in our history. They are also making higher wages than we have ever made in our history. That says something to our economy. Our economy and business prospects must be good. People are hiring.

I know in my district, Mr. Speaker, there are jobs. There are people hiring all the time and jobs are expanding. There are new potential job opportunities coming to our district. People are looking to come. We have a housing boom basically throughout our district and it even overflows, I would suggest, into my colleague, the hon. Member for Harbour Main, because he has been experiencing the same things in parts of his district and we kind of intertwine together.

So, Mr. Speaker, in simple terms, yes, we are victims of our own success. We are victims

because we have had six surpluses in nine years. We became a have Province. We do have a booming economy. We have more people employed than ever before. All of that is true. Nobody can argue that. That is true. That is just a simple fact.

Then, Mr. Speaker, there is always the “but”. What happened? Why are we facing the debt that we are facing? What happened? Why the core mandate review? The questions go on. In simple terms, Mr. Speaker, the world – we have heard it said many times in this House – has become a smaller place. Not only has the world become a smaller place, but our country in general has become a smaller place. What happens in the world and what happens in other provinces and territories in our country certainly impacts on the bottom line of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke earlier of the debt crisis in Europe, and we can see it everyday on the TV. If you get the national news, every night on the national news we see something that involves the debt crisis in Europe. Mr. Speaker, that has had an impact on Newfoundland and Labrador.

We also talk about the US economy, Mr. Speaker. For years in the local news the US economy has been going through a housing crisis. They have been trying to get back on their feet. Their recovery has been slower than expected, but this has an impact. The United States is our major trading partner, and this stalled US economy has certainly had an impact on us.

What has happened, Mr. Speaker? The result of some of that is there are lower oil prices. Lower oil prices certainly had an impact on what happened here. We are a commodity-based Province, Mr. Speaker. We look at commodity-based products and all of them have gone down. All the prices have gone down.

We have very little control over that, Mr. Speaker. You have heard the Minister of Finance here many times say we have very little control on what the price is. We look for the best advice that we can get. We go to the

markets. We talk to the right people, but, Mr. Speaker, things can happen. It cannot always be foolproof, and oil pricing is not foolproof.

Then, Mr. Speaker, we also had the impact of lower mineral prices. We talk about the emerging economies of the world. We talk about China, we talk about India, we talk about Brazil, but, Mr. Speaker, even the emerging economies of the world, these emerging economies are slowing down; therefore, they are not requiring the minerals. They are not requiring our iron ore. They are not requiring the product. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the price has gone down.

Mr. Speaker, there are good reasons why we have this – I will call it a bump in the road. I think the fairest thing we can say is this is a bump in the road and we need to work our way through it. Mr. Speaker, the bump in the road is fairly drastic. We all recognize that, but it is a bump in the road. You could nearly say it all came together; it could be the perfect storm.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot ignore the fact that this world economy has had a major impact on our bottom line and I have outlined some of the reasons here. Let’s go a little closer; let’s come back to Canada. Let’s come back to Canada for a little while and let’s just look around our country. I try to compare apples and apples; I try to compare similar economies. When we look at commodity economies in Canada, two provinces come to mind: the great Province of Alberta and the Province of British Columbia. They are commodity-based provinces.

About a month ago, Mr. Speaker – Alberta, who would think it? The Alberta government brought down a \$6 billion deficit. Consider that, a \$6 billion deficit. Did you ever think there would have been a day in our country that Alberta would bring down a \$6 billion deficit, and then not only a \$6 billion deficit, but borrow \$5 billion?

So, Alberta: a \$6 billion deficit. BC: Prior to this election, Mr. Speaker, on a recent visit that way and talking to some friends – there is BC. In BC we are looking at an \$8 billion to \$10

billion deficit. Both resource-based economies, both similar to ours I would argue, and both suffering the same problems that we are suffering. Commodity-based pricing has gone down; be it oil, be it minerals, or be it whatever it is. Commodity-based pricing has gone down; therefore, provinces like us find ourselves in a deficit situation.

Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult to understand this. Then we look at our industrial heartland, the great Ontario, our industrial heartland where all things were produced; cars, manufacturing galore. They are even struggling. Ontario, in my last forecast when I looked at these notes, was looking at something like a \$12 billion deficit.

Mr. Speaker, we are not alone. Our friends in the Atlantic Provinces, New Brunswick, they brought down recently I believe a \$4.5 billion deficit. It is not like we are out there going on our own; we are not the only Province struggling with deficits. The country is struggling with deficits and it is all based on commodity pricing.

It is based commodity pricing, I say, Mr. Speaker, and we have to address it. It is a bump. I believe this year in the Budget the Minister of Finance suggested that the average price of oil would be somewhere around \$105. When I looked yesterday, Mr. Speaker, Brent Crude was at about \$103.80, so we are a little bit below our forecast; but again, with an increase of maybe \$1 or \$2 over that \$105, we may be in a better situation at the end of this fiscal year than the half a billion dollars that we projected to lose.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of factors. I am trying to remind the people of Newfoundland and Labrador today that we are not alone, that it is across the country and around the world. What happens in our country and around the world certainly has impact on where we are to in terms of this Budget.

Mr. Speaker, the former Minister of Finance and the Minister of Finance have also said we did put aside some cash. We did it from these surpluses and we have used that to our benefit,

Mr. Speaker, and using some of those surpluses to benefit and create and stimulate the economy.

I remember the other day the Minister of Natural Resources talking about we had the need, when we went into recession, to stimulate the economy and we used some of that surplus money to stimulate the economy to get us through the difficult years. That is what we have been doing now, Mr. Speaker. We have to get through a difficult year or two, and we will. We will get the cash and we have made some great investments to make sure that our future looks bright.

Mr. Speaker, we are not in isolation as I just said. We are not in isolation. Our provincial and territorial friends are facing some of the same struggles. Yes, Mr. Speaker, these are difficult times, but we are in a good position to sustain ourselves through this downturn. We have a way out and it is through sustainable energy. When we talk about sustainable energy, we have to talk about our Energy Plan. The architect behind our Energy Plan in most of those years, or had a good finger on it, was our Premier.

One of the pillars of that sustainable Energy Plan – that we have taken a lot of criticism for, Mr. Speaker, but we believe it is a great investment. It will return over \$20 billion to this Province over the life of it. Fifty years from now, we will have \$20 billion back. It is an investment and it is an equity that we will get a return on: Muskrat Falls.

Mr. Speaker, I think we were proven out that people supported Muskrat Falls. That was proven out, Mr. Speaker, because recently when the poll came out it showed that 66 per cent of the people in this Province supported Muskrat Falls. In my own district and my colleague from Harbour Main in his district – because we share events; we go to many events together. They nearly call us Mutt and Jeff because we show up at so many events together. Again, Mr. Speaker, when we have gone out people have taken us aside and they have said Muskrat Falls is a good thing. It is creating jobs, it is creating work for

our Province, and it gives our children and our grandchildren a bright future.

Mr. Speaker, when I look around my side of the room, and I know on the other side I see the Opposition House Leader – I saw him only yesterday; yesterday, his wife and young boy were in. We all have young children, myself included, Mr. Speaker. I have two growing boys; one just starting high school and one in elementary school. I believe investments like Muskrat Falls, like Vale, investments like that have a bright future and will provide a bright future for all of our children.

I have heard of other people saying, in the last couple of days, some of my colleagues saying – I believe the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture talked about his children and the fact that we have investments and we have job opportunities here that will keep their children and his children in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Children today and young people – I see a lot of young people and I talk to a lot of young people, and they are optimistic. They are optimistic about staying in Newfoundland and Labrador. I have a young nephew who is an electrician, working in Long Harbour. Sometimes I wish I were making the money he was making because he is doing very well for himself. He is back in school right now doing his journeyman. Mr. Speaker, another prime example of young people being able to stay home and live at home, live in the community that they were born and raised, raising a family – planning to build a house this summer, Mr. Speaker. These are the things that are going on and these are the stories we need to tell.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss in my last couple of minutes if I did not talk to a couple of things that came out of the Budget that I was really proud of. For many years, in my prior life in municipal government I was working very hard, very hard trying to secure a school for Coley's Point Primary, a new school – a fifty-year-old wooden structure school built in the early 1960s, Mr. Speaker. I was very proud to see in this Budget of 2013-2014 a commitment by this government to construct a new school for

Coley's Point Primary – really proud, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLEJOHN: It took a lot of hard work, but we are going to have a new school in Coley's Point for over 420 children from K-3, Mr. Speaker – a great commitment on behalf of this government. I am very, very proud to stand here today and say long overdue, but we got it done and in a few years we are going to have it done.

The other thing, as we close, Mr. Speaker, I remember for years going through our district and driving down to go to fish plants in Port de Grave, an economic engine. The fishery, the crab fishery, and the shrimp fishery are an economic engine in our district.

Mr. Speaker, that road was atrocious, but through a commitment by this government that road is now paved. The economic activity and the boom that has been created there has been great, and it has been greatly appreciated. There is not a day goes by, and my colleague can once again say this, that someone does not thank us for the work we did on that road.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LITTLEJOHN: In closing, Mr. Speaker, we have heard and we are going to continue to hear the bad things, some of the hard, and the strife, but there are a lot of good things that came out of this Budget. I thank you for your time today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

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

It is an honour to stand in this House and use my last opportunity to speak to Budget 2013 on this afternoon. I have had a couple of opportunities to speak to this Budget, and had an opportunity

yesterday to speak to a private member's resolution that was pretty much along the same way, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to cover off as many things as I can. Three opportunities of twenty minutes go by very quickly when you are talking about something as expansive and wide affecting as the Budget. So I cannot get as deep as I would like to, but I am going to try my best.

I want to talk about a number of things. We have had plenty of opportunity to speak about the negative effects of the Budget, and I am sure I will speak to some of that again. I want to speak to some of the other issues, just the practical effects of some of the budgetary decisions, good or bad, and how they are going to affect us.

One of the big topics I want to bring up, and this does affect the Minister of Municipal Affairs and it affects many people on both sides, is the resettlement package that was a part of this Budget. As someone who actually handled the legal work for resettlement back a few years ago for Grand Bruit, I saw what went into that from the legal perspective, the money that went to the people, and the decisions that were made. This decision to up the Budget from, say, \$80,000 for an individual up to \$250,000 for an individual, it is hard to tell whether that is a positive or a negative. What I have chosen, as someone who does represent a rural district, is I am leaving it to my constituents to decide whether that is positive or negative.

The fact is there are certainly pros and there are certainly cons. We all understand how big a change that is and how big a decision that is. It is something they are not approaching lightly. All I would say to members of government, especially the Minister of Municipal Affairs, is that we need to make sure we treat these people with the utmost respect and work with them as quickly, diligently, and expeditiously as possible. If this process is going to happen, that we work with them.

I do not know about everybody else, but I have spoken to people in my communities who I

represent that this could relate to. Right now, all I can say is that in many cases they are being torn apart. This is such a huge issue, some people want to stay, and some people want to go.

I certainly do not fault government for putting this option out there. A lot of people think it is great and the option should be there. We need to make sure that it gets done in as respectful a manner as possible, and these people get the opportunity to really think it out.

I am sure it is not an easy task for members on the government side, it is not easy for us, but it is one of the things that were not expected in this Budget. It is out there, it is getting talked about. I know the department is getting numerous phone calls on it. I just hope it gets handled as painlessly as possible for these individuals.

I talk about these phone calls where you are seeing families who are not talking to each other. You are seeing brothers and sisters living in the same very small, remote communities. One has a different opinion than the other and they are not talking to each other right now. It is tough, so I just hope that it gets worked out for the benefit of all the individuals. It is something I felt I needed to bring up here, as I do represent a district that has rural communities and has had them resettled in the last five years.

Another thing I wanted to bring up, one of the questions that get asked of us all the time is what would you do? What would you do, Mr. Speaker? We are saying you are cutting this, you are cutting that, and members on government side say well, what would you do? I am just going to bring forward some of the suggestions that I would have on some of the issues. I will leave it to the public, and I will leave it to the people to decide whether they are reasonable or not.

I have always said the fact is we are where we are because there was overspending over the years. That is not a surprise to anybody. I know it was discussed at the Cabinet table for years now. The spending is unsustainable; the AG even brought it up. It is tough once you start

these things to turn them around. I have always said that you really need to streamline from the top, it cannot just be the front lines.

Something I brought up in Question Period today and I think it is a reasonable question; the Premier has allotted in her office I think it is either \$53,000 or \$56,000 for a manager of social media. That is a position I do not believe is filled yet, but it was allotted for in the Budget. I mentioned yesterday in the House there are a number of circuit courts in this Province; Burgeo, Bonavista, Springdale, Harbour Breton, Labrador, that are cut and the savings this year was \$50,000. I have to ask where the priorities are. Is the priority to have someone to manage the Premier's social media?

The Premier has opportunities with a number of communications staff in her office, and I know she needs communications staff. When you compare the two and you have a manager of social media, versus people having access to justice in their hometowns, in their communities. I am not talking about full-time courts; I am talking about circuit courts. I am talking about courts that come very rarely.

I will just give one example of an individual I dealt with who was charged with a regulatory matter. It was not a criminal matter, but it could have been a traffic ticket, it could have been a charge under the Health and Community Services Act, stuff that is carried out by Service Newfoundland and Labrador of a regulatory nature.

This person had to drive – and I will use someone in Burgeo who actually had to drive two hours each way. They had to take a day off work; they had to find alternate child care for their kids. They had to pay for meals; they had to pay for gas. The Burgeo road is not a great road, so it is wear and tear on your vehicle let me tell you, Mr. Speaker.

All this to go in for a first appearance, to go in and have the matter heard. Not every matter do you need a lawyer for. It is not like you can pay your lawyer to appear for you. You can go in and do it yourself when it is a small matter.

Have a first appearance and then come home at tremendous cost to you personally, and then to go in the second time and find out that you actually got a ticket and your fine was \$50. Your fine is \$50. When I asked that question of the minister in Estimates, I asked that I was kind of thinking I might get an answer back that justified to me this was necessary, but the answer I got back was \$1,000. One thousand dollars was saved by cutting it in Burgeo.

When I asked the second question when it was cut in Bonavista, the answer was \$600. I am not trying to say this to be facetious, but our coffee budgets and our paper budgets in some departments could be cut to allow for people to have access to this justice. When I say the manager of social media verses access to justice in our rural communities, I think that is a fair question to ask and that is a priority that I would ask. That is one suggestion I would make.

When I talk about the fact that we had the Muskrat Falls party here just before Christmas, and I know it was a momentous event to government. I know they wanted to celebrate it, but they had to have known that the crunch was coming, that people were going to lose jobs. When you take the \$16,000 it cost to have that party, that was a circuit court in Burgeo for the next sixteen years. The next sixteen years could have been paid for with that cost.

Those are decisions that we probably – did we not know? That comes back to sometimes when we question the planning. We have to question the planning when you make an expenditure like that. When you look at something as big as the Department of Health budget, which is in the billions, and it is hard to trim that down, but when you look at a decision that cost \$16,000 and it could result in people having access to front-line services, I think we have to look at that.

When we talk about the glossy ads that were sent out for Muskrat Falls that cost almost \$500,000, almost \$500,000 to put information out there, partisan information really, and when you make that decision – and I know government made it, but we had to have known

that come March we are going to be putting pink slips out to well over 1,000 people. It is not just the effect on these people. It is their families. It is the people they serve. It is their communities. We all know the effect. This was not something that was limited to urban and it was not limited to rural. It affected everybody.

I would say, and it is just my opinion, that the loss of a very well-paid provincial government job, a civil service job in a rural community, has a huge effect. It has a huge ripple effect. When I see, just in my district alone, the jobs that have been lost when you are talking about Employment Assistance, which is a third-party agency, or when you are talking about conservation officers, clerical clerks, front-line services, and probation officers getting moved, and when we talk about RCMP getting pinched, Mr. Speaker, these are decisions I think should have been considered when we are expending those funds. I think we could have done it in a better way.

Even the glossy ad that was sent out saying ten things you need to know about the Budget, these things come with a significant cost. I know in the grand scheme of things when you are talking about billion-dollar budgets these costs may be small, but they add up. They add up and they could have saved a job here. If it could have reduced that number by one I think that would have been worth it, if we could have said look, we are going to use the other methods of conveying information rather than the glossy ad saying ten things we need to know about the Budget. Some would say they are misleading because they might say some things but there are a lot of things that were not on them. That is not what I am getting at. That is not what I want to talk about.

I know government members have a job to do. I understand that and I know you are getting the calls. I know there is a difference between what you do here in the House and what you do in your district. In the House you have to act a certain way and portray a certain enthusiasm and energy. That is fine. Do you know what? It goes both ways. We are all doing it, but we are all getting those calls from people who had their

job cut. These are not people who were hurt, the part of the civil service explosion of the 2000s; these are people who had jobs that were there for decades that are now cut.

Again, I go back to conservation. Jobs people had in these communities for years and years, and they are gone. They are gone like that, the snap of a finger.

It comes back down to the planning. I know the Budget document itself, Mr. Speaker, was sent to the printers at 6:00 a.m. on Budget day. When you send something out at 6:00 a.m. on Budget day it shows there are a lot of last-minute things going on. I know we could say we were trying our best to reduce the impact and there were a lot of tough decisions. I am not saying anything about that. I know it was tough, but I have to question the planning that got us here. This is not planning just in this last year; this is planning over a number of years.

One of the things I have heard a number of times and many government members referenced it in their speeches, and that is fine, is they talked about the state of the Province when we took over in 2003; the state of the Province. Maybe back when Clyde Wells took over in 1989 he lamented the state of the Province he took over from the Tories. I do not know. We keep talking about the state we found it in.

What I would say is this Administration, like the Administration before and the Administration before, were in long enough to make changes. They have been in there ten years now. It is time to start accepting responsibility for the decisions we have made, a lot of them made in the last ten years. It is time to stop casting the blame on governments before. We could all do that, but there is no point in that. We need to move forward. We need to talk about decisions we are making now.

One of them is the Sustainability Plan. I hope it works. I hope the Sustainability Plan works. Again, I think it is suspect. I think the fact we hit surplus in 2015 is no coincidence, the same year as the next provincial election. I think the changes had to be made, but I question some of

the decisions that were made by this government as we move forward.

Mr. Speaker, I do not have a lot of time left. I am trying my best to cover a lot of the issues, not just issues in my district, but issues across the Province. I will just touch on one of them.

One of them is education. I have significant doubts about the amalgamation of the school boards. We all know the amalgamation of health boards has come with detriment. It was supposed to bring with it tremendous savings and it actually cost us more.

I do have fears about the amalgamation of the school boards and putting them all together into one in St. John's. I do not know if that is going to work. Obviously, it is no different than 3:00 o'clock in the morning on the December night when we talked about Muskrat and I said I hope this works. I hope for the sake of me and I hope for the sake of my child and my grandchildren that it works because if not we are all in trouble and nobody wants to see that. All we can do is hope the decision made is going to pan out for the benefit of the people of this Province today and tomorrow. Education is one of them. I do not think it is there, but that is just my opinion. I hope I am wrong.

We talk about a number of things when it comes to health care. Health care has taken a small cut this year compared to what is possibly coming next year. I have significant concerns about a number of things in health care.

One of the things that have been promised is the new hospital in Corner Brook. As someone who lives in Western Newfoundland and Labrador, someone whose child was born in the current hospital, and as someone who hopes to live in rural Newfoundland and Labrador for a long time, I need that hospital. I want that hospital. Any insinuation otherwise is ridiculousness at its highest, but we have concerns as residents of that area that the promise that was made will be kept. That is what I want to see kept, but not just kept, the original promise. Not a rightsized or downsized health centre, we want the one that is going to suit us all. That is what I want to see.

The Member for Port de Grave, who I have great respect for, spoke and he mentioned that he met me, my wife, and my son in the hallway. He did, and we had a nice chat. What I can say is right now my wife, child, and I live in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I still live in Port aux Basques, all my life; I hope to continue living there. What I want, and I think all members on this side want, is my son to live there. I want my son to be able to do that.

My fear with this Budget, with some of the cuts, is that it is going to contribute to the decimation of rural Newfoundland and Labrador. When we talk about some of the decisions, and it is tough, when we talk about EAS, Adult Basic Education, and when we talk about stuff like the RED Boards, these are all little things. It is not all at one time. This is probably the greatest show at one time that we have seen in sometime, but they are having a huge effect.

Members opposite will say great things are happening in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. There are great things and we need more. There is potential when we talk about the projects there, the projects that are coming, and the opportunity for people to live at home and only have to commute to Labrador, or Bull Arm, or the West Coast if that play ever moves forward. There are opportunities rather than commuting, as they do now, to Alberta, Ontario, and everywhere else. I want to see that and I want to make the decisions that help keep us there. That is why I say any of these cuts have a terrible, terrible effect on small towns and small communities. I put that out there. I hope that all of our children can continue to live, thrive, and have services in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

My time is especially getting short now. I just want to say a few more things and I have a number of notes here. There are so many things that I could talk about.

It is not my belief, Mr. Speaker, that this is a good Budget for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I know we talk about stuff like the deficit that was projected just a couple of months before the Budget came down. It was

going to be around \$1.6 billion, and then miraculously it ended up being about \$500 million. When you see that, and I say this not just for myself but for the common person who I have talked to, they say how did they find that much? How did they change that much in such a short period of time to get to this effect, to make this happen? My answer is I do not know, Mr. Speaker. I do not know what they did. I have to question it.

A lot of the things that we talk about contributing to this deficit, reduced oil production, this was all known. This was not a surprise, we knew this was coming. This was talked about around the Cabinet table for years. It is unsustainable. We know it is coming, but there was no political will to make it happen. Right now it looks like the political will carries us to 2015 and then we continue on with the Sustainability Plan after.

I say to this government, you have been in a long time; you have to take responsibility for the decisions you have made that have led us to this. These decisions were not part of the Administration before you. I say there are a lot of prominent members of former PC governments who are upset too, because some of the comments that come from government members are: Oh, the state we found it in. That reflects on them. They feel bad about this, too. Cabinet ministers from the 1980s say: Do you know what? This reflects badly on us and we do not like that. We do not appreciate that.

The other thing too, Mr. Speaker, is that there has been a lot of revenue in this last decade, revenue that was never there for any government before. That was there, and do you know what? It has allowed this government to make huge investments in roads, schools, and hospitals. Nobody ever takes that away. Nobody takes that away but what we must question is when we have – I heard a couple of members on the other side say: Well, if we have the opportunity to create jobs we are going to create jobs.

When we are flush with cash we are going to create jobs, but the problem is not the creation. It is the sustaining of the jobs. It is keeping the

jobs. We brought people home and unfortunately there are people leaving again. There are people leaving again right now. We cannot just say, well, somebody lost a public job; they are going to fit into the private sector. Some will, but it is not that easy, Mr. Speaker. It is not that easy. The skill set for a Conservation Officer does not always transfer into another good job in that area. These people are going to be forced to leave, many at that stage just before retirement.

Mr. Speaker, all I can say is I have put my views across. I am trying my best to be reasonable and logical. It is not about shouting back and forth. I am doing this because this is how I see it. I think some of the decisions made were rash. I hope that the planning going forward will allow us to keep this Province as great as it is because nobody ever disputes that or doubts it, but we have to be careful because the decisions we make, no matter big or small, are going to make a huge difference.

I say to this government, obviously I will not be supporting this Budget and I hope this will be a lesson as we move forward in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, it is an absolute pleasure and an honour to be standing in this House today to speak about the Budget. Mr. Speaker, just to remind people, this has probably been the fifteenth or sixteenth time that I have stood in this House to talk about a Budget coming down, so that makes me perhaps one of the more senior here in age.

Mr. Speaker, Budgets are –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. HEDDERSON: I heard some comment over there that I will ignore.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that in sitting back and listening, things have not changed a lot. In my experience, I have been on that side of the House as an Opposition member and I fully understand what is happening. God forbid that an Opposition member would get up and say something good about the provincial Budget that we brought down. That is almost like the kiss of death.

I would say to the people out there, you have to basically understand the position they find themselves in and trying to undermine the efforts of the government. Undermine is a good word. Mr. Speaker, from what I am hearing, you would swear that we were living in a place with no hope, that we were living in a place where we were doomed, and that we were living in a place where nobody had a chance to reach their potential.

Nothing, I say, Mr. Speaker, could be further from the truth. This Budget is one of those moments where a government takes stock of where they are and where they want to go, and make decisions to move forward in a manner which is in the best interests of the people of this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I just listened to the member as he spoke about change. He referred to the resettlement of some of our communities. We have an understanding as a government that things do change and we must be responsive as a government to that change. There are communities out there that are cognizant of the fact that they may have to move on. As a government, do we go out and force them to move on? Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker, we would give them the opportunity to make those types of decisions that are most important to them and give them the resources they would want in order to move somewhere else.

The point that I am making is that things do change. That change is an important aspect, and

resistance to change obviously causes a great deal of stress in many people's lives. Again, Mr. Speaker, change is so, so important.

Over the last nine years this government has basically brought about tremendous change to this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, change that was welcomed, change that was necessary, change that has altered our course in history. These nine or ten years – I would not say ten years, Mr. Speaker, because when this government took over in 2003 there were tremendous challenges.

The best way to describe those challenges is that there had to be a lot of catch up, not that you put on your French fries or anything, Mr. Speaker, but catch up in the way of making sure that any deficits that were before us in infrastructure, for example, could be addressed, because without addressing those deficits we would be stalled. There was no way we could move forward in a way that would be in the best interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we did move forward.

We moved forward in a very positive way, making sure that as we moved forward we were doing everything that was necessary to get us to a place to where we are today, a place where – I believe it was described in the Speech from the Throne as a juncture, and an important juncture. We had just come off a record number of surpluses.

I give credit to our Premier, I give credit to our former Minister of Finance, and certainly our current one, to bring attention to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that there are times when you have to do what is right. Not necessarily what is popular, I say, Mr. Speaker, because from what I am hearing from the other side of the House is that we have not been stewards of our Province in a proper sense, that we have squandered away what opportunity was presented to us. Again, Mr. Speaker, nothing can be further from the truth.

The rebuilding of this Province over the last decade was absolutely necessary. We make no apologies, Mr. Speaker, for the investments that

were made, and investments that were very, very important. All I have to do, Mr. Speaker, is point out to you, and to the people of this Province, the amount of the investment. We rebuilt it, and it was a lot of bricks and mortar. It was not only about bricks and mortar, because we had to rebuild in other areas as well. We had to invest in social programs to make sure that in rebuilding, with regard to the bricks and mortar, we were also building capacity within our people. We all understand how you can have the Taj Mahals, but if you do not have people who are basically able to move forward with the skill sets that are necessary and with the opportunities that are necessary in order to eke out a living in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, we would have failed. So our social programs were most important.

As well, what was hanging over our heads, Mr. Speaker, was our debt. I am not talking debt and the operating on a year-to-year basis. That was somewhere around \$750 million, I think, in 2003. It was the long-term debt, the debt that you carry from year to year. So, we, as a government, as stewards of this great Province of ours, made the right decisions in moving forward with the right plan, and that got us to where we are today. Again, as I pointed out, we came to a juncture that we needed to make some really hard decisions, and these decisions are evident in the Budget we have put before the people of this Province right now.

Again, Mr. Speaker, our investments in health care, as an example. In 2003, we were looking at \$1.2 billion. In 2012, you are talking about \$2.9 billion. You are looking at a percentage of something like 142 per cent. That is what I call an investment and an investment in an area that it absolutely needs to be in. In Education, we were looking at about \$700 million per year as a budget back in those early days. Today, we are looking at \$1.2 billion, a 71 per cent increase.

When you look at infrastructure, and people ask, what was your plan for infrastructure? Mr. Speaker, you would have to be absolutely blind not to see back in 2003 what needed to be replaced. Do I have to tell you about the state of the schools? Do I have to tell you about the

state of our hospitals and our buildings? We know, we saw, and we basically started to knock off, bit by bit.

Our roads; I do not think any of us can forget about the travel across this Province on the Trans-Canada Highway between St. John's and Port aux Basques and the state of that highway and, again, key investments in infrastructure. We were looking at probably \$154 million back in 2003. It is upwards now to \$744 million in this current year. Mr. Speaker, look at something like 383 per cent but necessary. We have knocked off a lot of it, but that is not to say we do not have a long ways to go yet.

With regard to buildings, we were investing about \$78 million a year in buildings. That was back in 2003. Currently, we are looking at \$509 million annually that we are looking to put into our buildings to make sure they are up to scratch. Maintenance – I remember as a teacher back in the late-1980s or early-1990s. They were good times, but when we looked at the buildings, I think fifty-five cents seems to be the amount of money that we were getting per square foot. That was totally inadequate. We paid a price for it because not maintaining those buildings in the 1980s and 1990s came back to haunt us in 2000 and in the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Then it was about \$11 million for maintenance of our buildings. Guess what it is today? It is \$117 million because we know the lessons that others should have learned. If you do not maintain your buildings down the road you are going to pay for it.

The member just previous to me speaking stood up and talked about his son and how when he looked at his son he wanted to make sure the decisions of this government would ensure his son had a place to live in rural Newfoundland, had an opportunity to live in rural Newfoundland, and had an opportunity to grow up as he grew up on the West Coast of Newfoundland and Labrador. I can assure the member your thoughts are our thoughts here on this side of the House.

Our decisions are always based not on our needs right now, our needs as politicians, or our posturing that needs to be done. What we base our decisions on is the very thing you drew attention to, and that is on our future generations of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is where we need to go. That is where our Premier is bringing us and insisting on us going. She knows as well as the rest of us know that if you lose sight of that, you lose sight and you lose your compass, you are on the way out that door there.

We have to because we know. I reference the debt I just talked about. Do we want to put on our children and our children's children \$10 billion, \$12 billion, or \$14 billion worth of debt, ever increasing? Absolutely not.

So if you ask about some of the hard decisions that we make, and if it is going to be this or that, as the Opposition likes to try to dumb it down to just this number or that number, that is not what this is all about. This is all about making sure that the future is secure for the future children of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, in getting back to my original thoughts, we looked at I think it is anywhere between \$5 billion and \$6 billion that has been strategically invested in the needs of this Province to be positioned to where we are right now. On the debt, the best way to try to tell the people of Newfoundland about what debt means, is what money you have to use in order to service it.

If you have a loan out, you are paying interest, you are paying cost, and all you have to do is look at your car loan, your mortgage, or whatever and you know you are paying on a weekly, monthly, or yearly basis X number of dollars. God forbid you have a credit card, which would probably have about 28 per cent interest. If you are running your household on that and you are accumulating debt on your credit card, I am telling you, by the end of the year or by the end of five years, you are going to be in over your head, no doubt about it.

On the debt service of when we came into government, we were using twenty-three cents of every dollar we have in the coffers to pay off the service on our debt. Debt service, I guess you would call it. I am looking at the former minister. Debt service would be around twenty-three cents per dollar.

Now, if we look at today, that ratio is down to 10.9 cents, half of it. Still, do you know what we are paying on our loans and everything? I think it is \$800 million.

AN HON. MEMBER: It is \$809 million.

MR. HEDDERSON: It is \$809 million.

It only goes to show that we are saving, I would think, because we have cut it in half. I can only say that we are saving at least \$800 million every year so that we can make sure that we are taking care of the hospital out in Corner Brook, that we are building the thirty-nine schools, I think, that the Minister of Education referenced the other day. We are in a good place; a very, very good place.

As I see, Mr. Speaker, I could go on. I have about 3,000 other things that I have to say, but I am looking at my time and already I am down to just four minutes.

I say to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador I am not going to waste my time trying to convince the Opposition over there, because I know exactly where they are going on this Budget. They have tried some amendments and that but, again, that is just part of what they do.

I want to get back, Mr. Speaker, to the reality of today. The reality of today is that the people of my District of Harbour Main, of which I am very, very honoured to be able to serve them, but the people in my district – I look back at when I came in government in 1999. I look now at the current date and I would say to the people of my district that we have come a long way. I say, we, because they have been very supportive of me, of which I am ever grateful. I will say that we have come a long way in the sense that the

issues that were on my plate back in 1999 were far different than the issues that are there today.

In my district, the people are working who were not working back in that; the employment growth of this Province has gone up by about 2.8 per cent. Our personal income – and let me just do two indicators, personal income growth of 7.3 per cent. Really, between 2003 and 2012, that personal income has increased by 61.3 per cent. Secondly, disposable income, because I do notice there are a lot more people building houses, a lot more people getting newer cars, and a lot more people buying things that they can now well afford. Disposable income growth of 7.1 per cent; disposable income has increased from 2003 to 2012 by 63.7 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we are in a place where we are very pleased. We do have a plan by the way, and I am still waiting for the parties opposite to come forward with their plan. There is a 10-Year Sustainability Plan that we as a government are putting forward. That follows from our previous plan of rebuilding this Province. We are moving forward. We are asking the people of the Province to bear with us as we get through this more difficult time and as we move forward.

We have been consistent. What has been consistent, Mr. Speaker, is indeed the leadership that we as government has shown. In particular, in my district one of the biggest accomplishments that they recognize of this government – and this accomplishment I must add, I trace it right back to our Premier. In 2007, our Premier came forward with a plan for sustainability that has carried us to this date. It will carry us not only ten years down the road, but it is going to carry us to 2041, when we do have an economy based on renewable resources, sustained by the children of not only the member opposite but all children.

One of the things that the people of my district keep reminding me of is the vision of the Premier who took out from our district the biggest polluter of greenhouse gases in this Province, and that is the Holyrood Generating Plant. If nothing else, I say to the Premier, a

sincere thank you from all of my district for being the visionary that you are. I look forward to moving forward under your capable leadership.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I appreciate the opportunity again to get up and talk to my colleagues about this Budget. As we come towards the end of the process, there are only a few speakers left. We look forward to hearing from the other members of the House their input on the Budget, from the Premier, and from our own leader as well on their final summations on the Budget.

It is one of these things that we have to go through when you are talking about the people who we try to serve. We all try to serve them to the utmost of our ability. We have been getting a lot of views back and forth on where we stand with the Budget.

I do not like this Budget, and I will be first and foremost upfront to say that. I can say several reasons why I do not like it. Here is another opportunity. I have gotten to hear about it from a lot of my constituents in the last couple of days.

Let me give you an idea exactly of the kind of people who we are serving out there, and the reason why we are here. I will give to start off with, a couple of cases that I have to deal with on a day-to-day basis and my constituency assistant as well. My constituency assistant gets to hear this sometimes more so than we do. It is

only sometimes in review that we get to hear about some of these cases.

Just to give everybody an idea of the people who we are serving and how this Budget does not serve these people, let me give you a couple of examples of exactly what we are dealing with. I have one constituent who recently had surgery, for example, a hip replacement surgery. He lives on the second floor of a building and he was looking for alternative housing. He was looking to get in on a ground floor somewhere because for obvious reasons he is in hard shape right now. He has other complications, back problems, that sort of thing.

We could not find alternate housing for him. We just could not find it anywhere. In spite of the efforts of the minister and the people at Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, we were thwarted in finding this particular person housing. Now here he is on the second floor of an apartment building, pretty much bedridden right now. If something happens, he cannot get out of the building. He cannot navigate stairs with as much ease as what he could if he was healthy. It is simply a fact of life that some people are going to get stricken with affliction more so than what some others would be and some people are going to need our help. That is when we have to step in and we have to be able to help.

We did not see that strategic investment, for example, in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. We know that they have a huge cry, a huge need and a huge waiting list for housing, and we know that there are an awful lot of people on that waiting list. At the same time, this person is waiting and at the same time they are put in a bit of a critical situation. That is one case.

We also have cases too in my district where we have a situation where rents are rising faster than the cost of living or the cost of salaries. We all know that there is not enough grant money out there for housing, and it is sorely needed. Again, a Newfoundland and Labrador Housing issue. It seems like lower-income earners – as much as government tries with some effort to

address some of the needs of the people on lower income, in other areas we are failing miserably. We find constantly that the people who are on lower incomes are under attack, and I will use that word, they are under attack. They are facing the pressures more so than people who are on higher salaries. Do you know what? In some cases these people are taxi drivers, these people are retail workers, or they are probably working in Tim Horton's drive-through. These are the people who are keeping the small business economy going, yet they are doing it out there for minimum wage.

Mr. Speaker, we would all love to pay them millions of dollars for the job they are doing, pay some sort of an equitable salary for them. Somebody has to work at the bottom of the ladder and we have to be a little bit more thankful for that. We are not seeing that in this Budget, I would say to the government.

We are seeing rents rise and we are seeing food prices rise. It is harder to make it. We are seeing electricity costs rise. We recently saw a decision on the part of the Public Utilities Board to increase rates. Thankfully, because of the reprieve in the price of oil, they failed, I guess, in this particular attempt. What did they want to do? They wanted to pay off their executives with it and top up their salaries. Thankfully, it did not fly.

On that basis, I guess, a little bit of success on the part of the consumer. Hopefully – and here is what the consumer is thinking; they are hoping that the price of oil will crash out there simply so that they can get the break on electricity rates. Hopefully, the cost of food items will come down because we have seen that much in fuel surcharges coming in with food items into this Province.

We have issues with food security. You did not see a dollar goes towards that. How about the increase in the price of fees, for example, to farmers? Is that going to do anything for the price of milk in the future? Again, the consumer is under pressure here. Farmers are under pressure. That is why I do not like the

permitting fees when it comes to that particular end of things.

The veterinary fees are going to be going up to farmers, the fees that government was looking after. That is obviously going to be passed onto the consumer, and probably higher meat prices and higher milk prices, most likely.

Again, coming back to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, the REEP – the cuts are absolutely devastating to that particular program. My friend from St. John's Centre tells me that it is a 50 per cent cut. What is that telling somebody on a lower income? What is it telling those people who were on the waiting list last year who are waiting to get that home retrofit done? There is some sad messaging there when it even comes to conservation efforts on part of Environment and Conservation in that regard top.

We cannot address the need. We have people next winter who are probably going to be forced into facing government programming, for example. Government is probably going to have to throw out more money for the energy rebate because some of these people could not update their homes. What does that say to the small business person who is hoping to get probably a couple of dollars into a small business because he happens to install vinyl windows or he happens to put in insulation?

Now we have a case where government cannot put the money out there because it says it does not have it, when it could be making the strategic investments anyway to put money back in these people's pockets to keep the economy going.

Again, as I said before, government came out with its own release. Newfoundland and Labrador Housing came out with its own release on January 6, 2012 talking about the impact of the Residential Energy Efficiency Program. It put \$900 into everybody's home. Everybody's home saved about 35 per cent in energy needs. I will not even talk about the impact overall if everybody in the Province did the same thing. The impact of 35 per cent less electricity would

probably draw three dots at the end of the sentence and you could use your own imagination to finish it. What would we be saving money on? That is on that particular end of things.

To measure how you are doing in an economy, go to a food bank. I did a recent tour of food banks in my district and others that were in nearby outlying areas. The biggest user right now, Mr. Speaker, of food banks are younger working people. What does that say about the wages that are being paid? The only answer that we have really heard so far is to bring in foreign workers. At the same time, we are not seeing that upwards pressure, for example, on wages that you would see in Fort McMurray. To go to Fort McMurray, chances are you are probably making \$20 or \$22 working in a McDonalds, and what is it here?

There is not an incentive, like I said, for young people to keep working in these jobs and to be starting their way up the ladder. They are just as soon to wait or just as soon to leave the Island because it is too costly to live here. They are just as soon to leave Labrador, too, at the same time because wages have not been going up in some cases. In other cases they have, yes, for somebody with skilled trades. What is the option?

MS ROGERS: It is so sad.

MR. MURPHY: It is really sad. It is sad. That is the street-level reality.

I say to government, they need to get the street-level reality when it comes to budgeting. These are symptomatic of a greater problem. When they hauled out EAS workers at the same, too, they missed out a few times on the people who need government services. They hauled out on AES workers, too. Anybody who dropped out of school, it may have been easy to get a job, but if they got tired, could not make it, and wanted to go back, now that service is not there on the part of CNA. Maybe it is in St. John's. It is probably not around the bay in some areas.

I want to talk a little bit about stimulating the economy and growing the economy. What would I have done? I certainly would have followed through on the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing initiative, I think. There is no money in there for home ownership for lower income earners. If you build somebody a house, they are the happiest people in the world. If you have a small business over there that is going to build a house, that house needs electricity so you create a demand for electricity. They work because they have something that is entitled to them. They have a home over their heads. The grocery stores keep going.

MS ROGERS: Equity (inaudible).

MR. MURPHY: Yes, exactly, as my friend says from St. John's Centre, they build equity and they have something to fall back on. Government needs to look at that, but it has not been there in the Budget.

I will compare what government possibly could have done, for example, when it came to another forestry investment. Yes, they are doing right by going ahead and backing Kruger and we want to see collateral for that, too, at the same time. We have to be always weary for the taxpayers' money, but picture what they would have done if they would have been able to take \$90 million, for example, to put into the general forestry sector.

Let's talk about wood pellets. Let's talk about one of the most energy-efficient products that are out there next to electricity right now. It sure beats the crap out of oil. What are we seeing in other jurisdictions right now? We are seeing other jurisdictions out there going out and burning biomass at the same time to turn into electricity –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: – a direct payoff.

The Government of Nova Scotia has just invested in a seventy-megawatt plant, I believe, that is due to open up shortly.

We are seeing some strategic investments that have immediate payoff. We could see government, for example, put in more money into the wharf in Roddickton, on the Northern Peninsula. We know what the impact of the pellet industry is. We know that everybody is starting to turn towards pellets. We could see government turning over its infrastructure, for example, in some cases to the burning of wood pellets.

Try it on one building, I say to the Natural Resources Minister, and see what the cost savings are. Try that on one government building and see how many jobs you are going to create, how many green jobs you are going to be able to create. This is what government could have done, something else government could have done that was signed off on a couple of years ago. They actually prevented some companies from stepping in here, shipping in ethanol, when in actual fact, what they could have been doing was investing in methanol manufacturing. They could have been taking waste wood fibre, for example, that was not being used by the Corner Brook mill – because the Natural Resources Minister says only 70 per cent of that log is used in the papermaking process.

They could have taken that, for example, and converted it over to methanol, used that as a replacement for ethanol, and you would have another viable small business out there that would be making money off wood fibre. You have to expand your horizons when you are talking about that.

Consider taking more money – outside of the Kruger mill, besides the Kruger mill, making the strategic investment in the Kruger mill – and sinking it into other forestry products, too, at the same time. Use your imagination for that. There are a lot of countries out there doing forward thinking when it comes to biomass, and this Province is so far behind on it. This Province is after slipping. We are after losing it.

Anyway, coming back again to some of the things I think this government is missing –

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

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): A point of order.

MR. MARSHALL: I wonder if the hon. member would repeat what he just said about sinking money. I wonder if he would elaborate those comments. I could not hear him.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point order.

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

MR. MURPHY: Whenever you are sinking money into something, or investing money into something, you are pouring \$90 million, sure, it is an investment, if that is what you are talking about, Mr. Minister.

MR. MARSHALL: Point of order.

MR. SPEAKER: On a point of order.

MR. MARSHALL: I think the hon. member mentioned sinking money into the Corner Brook mill. Is that what the hon. member believes, that when we make an investment in the people of Corner Brook and in that mill, that we are sinking money? Is that what it is? Tell the people. We would like to know.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No, I have no problem telling the people in Corner Brook about making a wise investment into Kruger. I have family who (inaudible) –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. MURPHY: You can call it sinking, you can call it investing, or you can call it whatever you will, but I think we all speak the same tune here about making a strategic investment that also at the same time protects the taxpayer here.

To carry on, Mr. Speaker, we have not seen any money when it comes to payday loans, for example. When I asked the Minister of Service NL last week about an investment into protecting consumers, for example, a protection mechanism for consumers out there to look after the runaway problem of payday loans, they are going to leave it under federal regulations and they are going to convict under federal regulations. We have no plan here to invest in legislation, for example, when it comes to payday loans. No plans to regulate them. We are going to leave it under the federal act. I would like to see the Province step in on that particular end.

How about cuts to public libraries? Now, a couple of weeks ago I had the opportunity, while I was over on the West Coast for a fracking meeting, I took a couple of days at the same time to gauge reaction to the Budget. So, I want to talk about public libraries, for example, and not talk about the cuts themselves, but talk about what is happening to some of the people who are working out there in libraries.

Mr. Speaker, we just heard a little while ago talk about people who were coming into the Province. I would like to talk a little bit about the people who are leaving the Province. One of these people who showed up at my Corner Brook meeting talked about the possibility of them leaving the Province. She said her and her husband are expecting a child and they have one already. We have a family of four now who are probably going to be leaving Newfoundland and Labrador. That is going to have a direct impact, of course, on the Province's bottom line.

We also have the fact we are losing a very skilled person when it comes to library work. The City of Corner Brook is going to be one person short when it comes to working in public

libraries. At the same time, that leaves us with nine librarians now to cover ninety-six libraries. That is almost unimaginable to think about in the extreme. We are talking about one person for every ten libraries almost. That is what it is working out to. I would like to know how you are going to keep the other nine of them open.

Because we have two school kids lost, maybe that is going to lead to the loss of a teaching unit in the future. That is not filling our schools. That is taking them apart. That is putting them at risk.

What about schools to music programs, for example? I would like to know a little bit more from the minister, too, when it comes to music programs. This I know a little bit more about because the simple fact is I deal with a lot of children during Christmastime, particularly when it comes to hosting the Christmas Wreath down at the Arts and Culture Centre every year. I can appreciate the skills of music students. It is all important to me when it comes to representing teamwork and that sort of thing, how much importance music has for students. It concerns me.

I have a high school in my district, Gonzaga High School. It has the number one band down there. I do not know what is –

AN HON. MEMBER: They will continue to have it.

MR. MURPHY: I would certainly hope. According to the minister they will continue to have the number one band. I would certainly hope they would have the number one support they have always had and I would love to see that support grow.

We have other music programs at Mary Queen of Peace and Vanier as well, and I worry about them, when they start off at the bottom and the skills that they learn simply by music. I do not want to see any cuts in music, not a single one and not a part of one anywhere.

The last section I want to talk about here on the Budget is environmental liability. We have a

case right now where there is a ship that is leaking oil. I guess it was an unfortunate accident several years ago off the coast of Botwood. I have not seen any government money, for example, turn over and turn towards environmental cleanup of spills and that sort of thing.

We already have gotten a big lesson when it comes to environmental liabilities out there. We know there are probably a lot more ships offshore that are leaking oil. We have a case here where I believe the provincial government, number one, should be ready with its own resources in order to clean up spills because they are talking about the introduction of a fracking industry, the oil industry. We do not have the ability to clean up spills now, it is obvious, on the Northeast Coast, but we have a good example of where the provincial government should be approaching the federal government for funding assistance to get this stuff cleaned up.

We have the case of the *Irving Whale* that happened a number of years ago and the federal government poured \$42 million into a private company to clean up that mess. Irving lost the boat. It was Irving's oil and the federal government shoved \$42 million towards that project to clean up the oil. I think it is incumbent as well that the provincial government have some sort of a funding arrangement there between companies so we always have something there that is going to ensure the cleanup of holding pond areas, for example; and sludge ponds where you are having cuttings and God only knows what else in some of these holding ponds when it comes to the fracking industry, if it happens. We do not have regulations geared towards that.

Mr. Speaker, I see my time is up. I have a lot more to say here and not enough time to say it. I will save it for next time.

Thank you very much, 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, I am absolutely delighted today to stand in the House and say a few words about the Budget. I understand I have a full hour to speak and I am delighted about that. It is hard to talk about such a tremendous Budget that we have in this Province today in sound bites or in a minute in QP. So, I am delighted to have this opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador, as we all know, is a wonderful place to live and to raise our families. That has always been true. We have always felt that way whether times were good or whether they were tough. For a significant part of the past 500 years, it has been pretty tough. It has not been easy.

Mr. Speaker, as most people know I grew up in a little village on the South Coast, one of eleven children and my mother and father, at a time when there weren't many social programs. You had to be self-sufficient, you had to be innovative, you had to be hard working to raise a family, and especially to raise a family of that size. It was no small feat to get us all raised up, clothed, fed, educated, and sent out into the world on our own.

As I have said here in this House many times, I am the middle child; I have five on either side of me, the forgotten one, Mr. Speaker. The first five went off to the mainland to earn their fortunes, and the reason they did was not because they were not passionate about this place, not because they did not want to stay close to their family and friends, not because they did not want to stay close to their roots, but because of the lack of opportunity that was available to them in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, how times have changed. How times have changed, because young people now who finish their education in our communities have a choice about whether they stay or go. The most significant part of that change, that change in circumstances, that change in the

dynamics of Newfoundland and Labrador, has occurred within the last ten years.

Mr. Speaker, some of those changes have been facilitated because of windfalls, there is no question about that. Nobody is going to argue that the rise in oil prices have not had a significant impact on the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, if you look back over our history, if you look back over the Budgets of governments over the years, it has not been a lack of funds that has been the critical problem, because we spent money in this Province whether we had it or whether we did not. Our debt that we carry around with us today is testimony to that.

We were spending money, Mr. Speaker. We were not spending it very well. We were not making wise choices. We did not have a good fiscal management plan for this Province. We did not have a vision for this Province. We did not understand the threats, the weaknesses, or the opportunities. That whole piece started to change in 2003, there is no question about it. We have come a long, long way since then and I am so proud to have been a part of that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Mr. Speaker, I believe the best is yet to come. We are just getting our feet under us. There is so much opportunity in this Province. Only day, by day, by day as we do the work, as we do the research, as we make the correct investments, do we even begin to realize what lies in front of us.

One of the most exciting opportunities we have, Mr. Speaker, is in our human potential. I am so thrilled when I speak to companies all over the world and they talk about our young people, how intelligent, how bright, and how capable. Their work ethic, their training from our higher learning institutions such as Memorial University, the College of the North Atlantic, the Marine Institute and so on, and the great work that is being done in the private sector in terms of readying our young people for the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, next week I will be in Houston to the Offshore Technology Conference where I will meet with oil companies and be in support of our delegation of companies in the service and supply sector to the offshore particularly, who will be down there marketing their goods and their skills. I will guarantee you that this year, like year after year previous to this, I will receive so many accolades about the quality of service, the quality of young people who come to work in companies all over the world, the return that they give to those companies, and the return they give to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is why it is so important that we continue on our path of good fiscal management.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to go in to the big litany again of the deficits we had in 2003. Everyone in this Province is very familiar with them. It was a daily litany of whoa, from all parts of the Province. Whether it was people having to leave their homes, their communities, and whole regions of our Province, about dialysis, or lack of hospitals, schools, roads, the litany and the list went on and on and on.

Mr. Speaker, if we were going to drive our economy, whether we were going to have companies invest in this Province, whether or not we were going to be able to attract doctors, nurses, engineers and the people we needed to drive that economy in this Province, we knew we had to make investments. We had to have decent roads. We had to have decent roads to support a growing economy. We had to have schools; we had to have hospitals if we were going to attract professionals to different regions of our Province.

If young scientists are coming to work in the aquaculture industry on the South Coast, Mr. Speaker, they need to know that their children are going to have a quality education. They need to know that they have access to quality health care, that they have access to recreation. That is all as important as any other element in growing our economy. So we knew we had to make significant investments, and we did

The stars aligned with us, Mr. Speaker, when oil prices rose dramatically. We were able to take that extra money and make the appropriate investments, not only in terms of the infrastructure, the builds that were required, and the services that were required, but also in terms of our public service, for example. The first round of negotiations that we became involved in, in 2004, we did not have much to offer to the public service. In our last round of negotiations, we put \$500 million a year on the table for our public service, and it was a good thing to do. None of us regret doing that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Mr. Speaker, we have come a long way. It saddens me, I have to tell you, that when I look at TV or I go to a movie and I have to sit through a negative ad talking about how terrible things are in this place and if we are a have Province. A whole warping of what it means to be have or have-not, a whole twisting of the meaning.

There has never been a better time. We have never had more employment in our Province than we have at the moment. Mr. Speaker, we have the highest wages being paid in the country right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have people coming home from all over the world to work here in Newfoundland and Labrador; I met one of them last night working on Muskrat Falls. How thrilled to be home from Alberta working in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: We have great schools. We have great hospitals. We have great infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, we are paying for it ourselves – we are paying for it ourselves.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: No more poor cousins. We are leading the way in this country, Mr. Speaker. We have some of the highest investment in the country happening in Newfoundland and Labrador. That does not

happen by accident. That happens from good, sound planning.

What does it mean when you are a have? It means you can pay your own bills. I had a group of high school students in here visiting not too long ago and we talked about have and have-not. I said to them: You are in university. You are living at home. Mom and dad are putting a roof over your head and putting the food on the table. They are probably paying your tuition fees. You have a part-time job that is helping supplement your education costs. You might be buying your own clothing or doing a few things other than that.

When you graduate and go out, you move from that have-not status because you are able to take care of your own needs. You move from that have-not status to have, because you are able to pay for your own accommodation, you are able to buy your own food, and you can make a payment on a car.

It does not mean that your first car is going to be a BMW or a Jag. It does not mean you are going to go buy a mansion. There is nothing wrong to aspire to all of that. Absolutely, who would not want a Jag? Who would not want to aspire to fine living? Who would not want to aspire to all kinds of things? That opportunity exists for you, but where you are now is you are looking after your own needs. You are independent; you are standing on your own two feet and by goodness, if mom and dad need some help you can offer that as well. That is what it means to be have.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: We are standing on our own two feet in this Province; we are paying our way. We are building a thriving economy that will bring more benefits, more services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is a good thing. Do we have everything we aspire to at the moment? Can we buy everything that we want? Can we go and do things that we would all like to see in place? Not yet, Mr. Speaker, but we are going to get there. We are absolutely going to get there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: One of the ways we are going to get there is by being absolutely fiscally prudent. We always knew the day was going to come when we had to ramp back our spending; there are only 500,000 of us. The other piece that we needed to take into account is where does our revenue come from?

Thirty-odd per cent of it is coming from the offshore, Mr. Speaker. Some of it is coming from the fishery; some of it is coming from mining. These are important industries. We are growing our information and innovation sectors; we are starting to get better returns. We are building a legacy in terms of our service and supply sector, a legacy that will be there long after oil is gone that we can market to the rest of the world. The bulk of what we do in this Province is funded from the revenue that comes from these natural resources that we have here in the Province.

In terms of taxes, Mr. Speaker, we try to shield as many taxpayers as we can in this Province and we have some of the lowest taxes in Atlantic Canada. Seventy per cent of our taxes, our personal income tax in this Province, are being paid by 20 per cent of the population. The 20 per cent that our young professionals, young people, young families, who have recently graduated from university, have mortgages, have car payments, have child care costs, Mr. Speaker, and who are driving the economy.

They are our doctors, our nurses, our engineers, our lawyers, our trades and technology people, the people who are driving the economy who are at a time in their life where they have a lot of burden on them at the moment in terms of what they need to meet their own family needs. They are paying 70 per cent of the personal income tax in this Province; 80 per cent of the people are sheltered from those taxes. They are sheltered for a good reason, because they still have some catch up to do in incomes, or they are seniors and have worked hard and contribute to this Province and so on.

We are not in a place where we are prepared to increase the burden on the 20 per cent and we continue to be in a place where we want to shield the 80 per cent as much as we can because they are not in a place that can take a whole lot of pressure, tax-wise. That is not what we want to do as a government.

Mr. Speaker, there are some in this House who advocate on a daily basis for us to spend, spend, spend. They also advocate for us to tax, tax, tax. I want to tell the people on the other side of the House, particularly the NDP, that is not where we are going.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Mr. Speaker, we continue to make strategic investments in our offshore, to grow our offshore, to build up our prospectively, because there are still many benefits lying out there under the ocean floor for us to harvest.

Every oil project where we have negotiated, we have generated more and more and more revenue and benefits for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are going to continue to do that, Mr. Speaker, and we are going to do it in a wise way. We are going to do it in a comprehensive way.

Recently, we had the Leader of the NDP throwing out corporate tax rates as a way of raising money from the offshore, and that we should be driving rates up to as high as 78 per cent on profit because she heard somewhere that that is what happens in the offshore, for example, in Norway. Very dangerous, Mr. Speaker – a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.

One thing that we made a commitment to when we formed government back in 2003 was that we would never go to any negotiating table unless we were well armed with knowledge, that we understood the issue that we were negotiating as well or better than the people who were sitting across the table from us.

Mr. Speaker, we have looked at every industrial benefits arrangement in the world. We have looked at every royalty arrangement in the world, every corporate tax arrangement in the world, with oil companies. We have looked at countries that have state-owned oil companies. We have looked countries that just invite entrepreneurs in there to develop resources, Mr. Speaker. We have taken the elements of those arrangements and come up with the best arrangement in Newfoundland and Labrador. So yes, they do charge 78 per cent corporate income tax in Norway; but in Norway, they also fund all the exploration costs, or pretty much all the exploration costs, that the companies have before they find oil.

If a company drills six wells and they all come up dry, tens and tens and tens of millions of dollars of liability for the people of Norway on which there is no return – no return. If a company spends hundreds of millions of dollars, they can write off practically all of that money; Norway will take responsibility for it. So when they do strike oil, the government comes to them and says we will take 78 per cent of your profit now, thank you very much. Well, I suppose they would. I absolutely suppose they would. If you had taken all the risk, you had been responsible in some way or other for all the cost, I guess you are going to come in and get your benefits on the other side of it; and good for Norway. We do not have any issue with that, but we do not have the same prospectivity here yet as they do in Norway. We are not going to expose the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to that kind of risk with no guarantee of return. We are not doing it – not doing it.

So we have negotiated with companies to say that when you strike oil, now you come talk to us. Now you come talk to us; and before you get a licence to develop that oil, we are going to talk about profit-sharing. That profit-sharing we are going to take it in a royalty regime, we are going to take it in corporate taxes. We are going to take it in industrial benefits that say engineering has to be done here in Newfoundland and Labrador, modules have to be built here in Newfoundland and Labrador, and people have to be hired here in

Newfoundland and Labrador. We make sure that our benefits match or exceed any other regime in the world. It is well informed, it is comprehensive, and it brings magnificent benefits to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: We don't go off half-cocked over on this side of the House. That has happened too much in our history and we have paid too high a cost for it. Yes, sometimes we do engage in high-risk activity. I just heard the former speaker get up and talk about the forestry industry, and the fact that we have not invested in the forestry industry. Well, let me tell you, we have had a \$28 million forestry diversification fund that we delivered over the last five years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, not only in terms of forestry but in terms of any kind of business development that has to come to the Province to look for funding, so this is our whole suite of business programming. They come to us for a reason. They come to us because there is risk associated with what it is they are doing, risk that the bank will not undertake.

If people can get funding from banks to support their business plans, they do not need to come to government. You would have to have some kind of a plan in forestry in last ten years to go get any endorsement from a bank.

The government stepped up. Not only did we step up with Abitibi, and we put a lot of money into Abitibi and would have considered further investment, but they decided to pack their bags and go. We had to get from Abitibi what we could before they were gone out the door, and somebody from New York owned the water assets and the forestry assets.

I saw some remarks in the media today about the cost of us expropriating, for example, the generation assets on the Exploits River. Let me

remind everybody in this House and out that is a revenue-generating asset. What we paid Fortis and Enel was fair market value. If we were going to go build that today, that is what we would have to spend.

That asset is generating money right now to pay for the cost that it took for us to acquire it and to make Fortis and Enel whole. A commitment we made the day we expropriated the properties in Grand Falls, that we would make Fortis and Enel whole. Everybody agreed to it. This week, we were able to put the final signature to that commitment. On this side of the House, our word is our bond.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: We do not do bad deals with people. We know what a bad deal does to relationships. We do not want anything to do with it. We are subject to one that poisons just about every interaction we have. We are not going there. We are ethical people and we are going to conduct our business in an ethical way.

So we kept Enel and Fortis whole, and we have their asset. That asset is earning money every day. It will pay us back the money we had to pay Fortis and Enel, and then it will generate millions of dollars for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: – including the people of Grand Falls-Windsor. We do not need any exhortations from anybody across the aisle to talk to the people in Grand Falls-Windsor to see what they feel. We have three MHAs who represent that area of the Province, who are there on a daily basis or a weekly basis when the House is open, who come back and talk to us all the time about what the people in Grand Falls-Windsor, Exploits, and Green Bay South feel about the expropriation of the assets and economic opportunities there.

I spend a lot of time there. Ministers spend a lot of time there. So we understand very clearly

what their aspirations are. We have worked with them from day one and will continue to work with them. That is why, Mr. Speaker, because of their own good efforts and the support they have from government, that they are doing as well as they are today. They are doing well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Mr. Speaker, so in terms of forestry, doing anything in forestry is high risk. We try very hard to develop, and we are still continuing to work hard to develop a pellet industry in this Province.

They say, do something in forestry. It is high risk, but at the same time when we make a significant investment in Roddickton, in an area of the Province that is represented by the MHA making the complaint, he chastises us on a regular basis for having made that commitment in his area of the Province that has employed, I might say, hundreds of people over the last number of years. Kept harvesters going, Mr. Speaker, have had people working in the yard and so on.

Before that, I might say to you, one of your great supporters would call on us on a regular basis to put money into forestry on the Northern Peninsula, to bring wood, to pay them. We would pay Corner Brook Pulp and Paper to take the wood from the Northern Peninsula to use in the mill, even though they did not need it.

In terms of the investment in Holson, we are trying to get that to a different place. We are trying to take the high-risk investment to get that to a place where it can stand on its own two feet, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: If you are going to help somebody in forestry, Mr. Speaker, they are the kind of risks you would take. You work hard with your partners to make sure that you get a good business plan, that you clearly understand the risk, that they are acceptable risks that you are going to take, and what else can you do to mitigate that risk. Eventually you

know that any investment you are making, there is a risk in it that you are going to lose your money, and you are not going to get return on your investment. When it comes to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, I am prepared to take the risk; my government is prepared to take the risk.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: When we talked about Muskrat Falls the same member stood up here and he talked about burning biomass. I told him I was going to say a few words about biomass. I have to say it, Mr. Speaker, because it is incumbent on all of us at least to have a basic understanding of what it is that we are talking about when we get up here in the House of Assembly and advocate certain positions.

Mr. Speaker, when pulp and paper companies, when integrated sawmillers are harvesting sawlogs and pulpwood in our forest, we have to say to them, you cannot take out the biomass. You have to leave the boughs. You have to leave the stumps. You have to leave it all in the forest on the floor of the forest so it can decay, go back and nourish the soil. We have our research; we understand what it is we are doing here. The quality of our soil is so poor in Newfoundland and Labrador that if we were to do whole-tree harvesting in this Province, we would lose our forestry within two generations.

Our friend across the way wants to keep Holyrood going. What are we going to do? In two generations of growth the forests would be gone and where are we going then with Holyrood? That must be the new technology they are talking about. In all fairness, he did have a fallback plan, Mr. Speaker. He was going to burn shrimp shells. He was going to do shrimp shells for 500 megawatts of electricity to replace Holyrood.

Mr. Speaker, we are at a place, as I said, that is enviable. The key economic indicators say it all. We have total capital investment growth of \$9.7 billion. I hear groans from the other side. They cannot stand hearing it – they cannot stand it. We have almost 4,000 housing starts, the highest

level in over thirty-five years. Retail sales are up. New cars are on track to post the highest number of cars ever sold in this Province. Employment, as I said, is at a record high, investment is at a record high, and earnings are at a record high. Investment by government is at a record high.

Mr. Speaker, as we ramp back our spending, we are off equalization, the Atlantic Accord has finished its payments, and we have given \$500 million tax relief to the people of this Province over the last number of years. There are a number of reasons our reserves are declining so we need to get more prospectivity in our offshore and firm up our reserves.

Until all of that happens we need to be careful about what we are doing. We cannot be tying up hundreds of millions of dollars in debt payments. Let me talk about debt for a minute and reckless spending by the government. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, almost \$6 billion of our current debt have to do with the unfunded liability in our pension plan and our post-retirement liabilities. Six billion dollars not spent by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, but unfunded liabilities in our pension plan. That is with an investment of almost \$4 billion over the last number of years into the pension plan. Just imagine if we had not put the \$4 billion into the investment plan. That is why we have to talk to people in the labour movement; we have to talk to the union heads.

I heard one of them say they paid off their other debt, and they did not pay off the debt of the Unfunded Liability. Four billion went into the Unfunded Liability; \$4 billion went in there I say to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, but you do not have and we do not have \$4 billion to put in there every four years.

You say hands off our pension plan. If we go hands off your pension plan, it is going to go bankrupt. We have to talk. We have to work together to find a way forward to protect the benefits you negotiated that were promised to you. One way or another there has to be some protection of those benefits on a go-forwards basis, and not talking about it is not an option,

Mr. Speaker. It is not an option for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador because we do not have billions and billions of dollars every year to put into the unfunded liability. We do not have it, so we have to talk about that.

Mr. Speaker, we have to talk about new ways of earning money and of beefing up the revenue in the Treasury because outside of here, economically, we are the envy of the country. I just came back from CAP. When I sit with my colleagues in Atlantic Canada, any one of them would trade places with Newfoundland and Labrador.

That is not to say we do not have challenges. Absolutely we have challenges. There is a long ways to go yet, but we are well on our way there. We are getting there piece by piece. We are in a really, really good place but we have to find new ways to generate revenue for our Treasury. That is why we invested in our own provincially-owned energy company, Nalcor.

Mr. Speaker, this year we put \$30 million, for example, into Nalcor for geoscience because we are getting mature in this oil and gas business now. We are learning more. We are getting more confidence with each successful project and with each successful negotiation. As we see the benefits pay back to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, we are getting more and more confident. We are getting more information. We have great people all around us, particularly in Nalcor, who have a deep penetrating knowledge of this industry, and what is happening here in this country and around the world.

Up to this point, like many other places in the world, we have said to companies you do your own geoscience and when the time comes for nomination, you nominate what lands you would like to see being put up for sale. Then we will have a bidding process. That is what has happened here for the last number of years. They do not share that data with us. We do not know what the prospectivity is of these basins. There is only a single criterion in the land sales: the highest bidder wins the land sale. We are not always sure if we have the best return on

your land sale, although it is in the hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars.

We took a new tack in the mining sector with Julienne Lake, which is a great ore deposit in Labrador, and people were interested in being able to access that body of ore. Before we did it, we said why don't we take some money, spend it, firm up the reserve, see how big it is, see what the quality of it is, and take a new approach when we go out to companies around the world, ask them to develop this, and bring benefit to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It was a really wise decision. The ore was a lot better than we thought it was, the field was a lot larger, and the deposit was a lot larger than we believed it to be. We are able to institute a whole new process to give greater value, particularly in Labrador and to the people of Labrador, but to the Province as a whole. Now we have undertaken the same process.

We had some interest in Labrador and there was some interest in land sales last year and so on. They started to be nominated again, the first time in thirty years. We said hang on a second here now. We know a little bit about the gas plays in Labrador because that is all we have seen up there so far. General knowledge says and the general scuttlebutt in the industry says that is all that is up there because once you come off the Continental Shelf you are going to be down into the earth's crust and that is not known for high prospectivity and so on.

Nalcor in its own wisdom said: Well, why don't we test that a little bit? They took \$30 million to invest in seismic work in Labrador. With that they took \$15 million to go directly on the seismic vessel to go out and study the geography. That \$15 million leveraged another \$65 million from the company that they were partnered with. The other \$15 million was used to analyze the data.

The data is really interesting. It is very interesting, Mr. Speaker. It is so good that a number of people are vying for access to the data. We have just about recovered the \$30 million from licence fees to look at the data. Right now, another sixteen companies have

applied to access the data, which will start to clear a profit just on the data.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: All the money has been recovered and leveraged out another \$65 million. What is the most exciting part of that? It is the information that we have. That is not crust; there is oil under them waters, Mr. Speaker.

I am so excited to be going to Houston to the oil show this week because I am going to be talking to those companies, and they are lining up. We are not going to move quickly, Mr. Speaker. We are going to be steady and sure, do our research and make sure that whatever decisions we make on activity, not only in the Labrador basins because we will run everything right down to Jeanne d'Arc, that we maximize benefit. Already we know that billions upon billions of dollars will come to the people of this Province as a result of that work. That is what a \$30 million investment in Nalcor does for the people of the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: We knew what we were doing when we built our own provincially-owned oil and gas company, our own energy company. We are tired of other people mining our resources. Even though our returns are better now than they have ever been in our history, Mr. Speaker, they can be better still and we are going to make that happen.

You are never going to find anybody on this side of the House apologizing for our investment in Nalcor, Mr. Speaker. Every investment we have made in Nalcor has paid off in billions of dollars, and potentially billions more, for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Mr. Speaker, by our equity investments alone in Hibernia Southern Extension, in Terra Nova and White Rose, we will be fully funded to do all the work

we are committed to in Nalcor by 2015-2017. That money will be recovered and earning more money for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, billions and billions of dollars.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: So no, Mr. Speaker, we do not want an easy out. Our philosophy is not spend, spend, spend, spend and then tax, tax, tax, tax, because there has not been one other idea come across the floor of this House of Assembly, every time anybody talks about diversification in this Province. For example, the aquaculture industry; we have rebuilt, with investors and the people of the South Coast of Newfoundland, the whole economy in the Fortune and Connaigre Peninsulas, Fortune Bay, Bay d'Espoir, and the Connaigre Peninsula.

We hear the Liberals on a regular basis condemn the aquaculture industry and want to close down the aquaculture industry, but we do not get any comfort from the NDP either. They do not offer any comfort to any company that is listening and is considering investment on the South Coast of Newfoundland, Mr. Speaker. They do not get any comfort from the other side of the House that the millions of dollars they want to invest in Southern Newfoundland will work for them and work for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

They are fearful. They listen very carefully to what goes on here. They are fearful of the crack across the neck that gets talked about on a pretty regular basis in this House. I expect oil companies, Mr. Speaker – because in generating revenue we did not hear any talk about economic diversification from the NDP. They talked about in their platform a 3 per cent surcharge on operating oil companies in our offshore.

Now, talk about ethical dealings with people. When people come and invest hundreds of millions of dollars in your Province and your economy, the only thing I have ever heard oil companies say to the people of this Province through their government is, tell us what the

rules are. Give us clarity. Tell us what you expect from us. Tell us what the laws are. Tell us how much return that you expect and the benefits.

Let's negotiate remedies if things go off the skids so we know we have a dispute resolution process available to us. Lay it all out so we have clarity, so that when we convince our companies to make this investment in Newfoundland and Labrador, we have the whole picture and we have negotiated in good faith. We understand everything that you require of us, we commit fully to give you just that, and we are going to sign legally binding documents to that effect. Blood runs a little cold when they hear about a party in this Province that is seeking to form government, and the first thing they are going to do is go out and through an act of the Legislature, override all of those agreements and put in a 3 per cent surcharge.

Anybody considering a new investment in Newfoundland and Labrador has to be thinking about it hard. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, in this world, and in this world today particularly, there are a lot of people looking for investment. There are a lot of countries crying out for investment saying come here, come here, come here. Our people are unemployed. We are in a desperate circumstance. We have a great resource. We want you to invest here.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when you come here there is going to be a clear set of rules and there is going to be a fair return to the people of the Province. We are going to maximize value to the people of the Province right from the very beginning in the licensing of the data. From your first peek into the seismic data where you can see prospectivity, right up to the point that you develop the oil wells and start to bring oil out of the ground. There are going to be benefits for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador at every level, and we are going to continue to maximize that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Mr. Speaker, when we are doing that we are going to do it in a

fair and equitable way. Through investments in our offshore, like I just talked about, with the development of Muskrat Falls – and we do these same kinds of negotiations with mining industry. When you are doing a mine you make sure that we maximize benefits.

Our friends, the Liberals, across the way, they are very proud of the deal that they negotiated in 2002 with Vale. So they should be, Mr. Speaker, in all fairness. They negotiated the deal. We had a great deal of problems with it at the time because we thought there was weakness in it, but they got the fundamental deal. There was a problem that we saw as a major, major fail in that 2002 agreement that they made with Vale.

Mr. Speaker, we got an opportunity in 2009 because the company was not able to meet its legislative deadline on its development plan. Because it did not, we were able to reopen certain parts of the contract. We did a number of things, but the most important issue we did was deal with the force majeure clause. That is what we had talked about in 2002. That was where the Mack Truck could drive through that agreement. A force majeure clause is a legal undertaking that allows the company to be relieved of its responsibilities if there is something huge happens, like an act of God, or some big major event the company does not have any control over.

That is not what the force majeure clause in the Vale agreement said at all, Mr. Speaker. In the force majeure clause that was negotiated in 2002 you could stop the project or delay the project because of a delay or failure of suppliers of labour, transportation, materials, machinery, equipment, parts, supplies, utilities or services, contractors or sub-contractor shortage; or an inability to obtain labour, transportation, materials, machinery, equipment, parts, supplies, utilities or services; or a breakdown of equipment, machinery, or facilities.

Mr. Speaker, Vale could have stopped the project in Long Harbour for any reason under the sun. They could have put their hands up and walked away at any time – any time, for almost

any reason. It was a major, major weakness in the agreement.

People asked: Where is the loophole that the Mack Truck could go through? There it was, but when we were able to reopen the development plan in 2007, Mr. Speaker, we closed the loophole. The loophole was closed. All of those provisions were taken out and a normal force majeure clause was put in.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: That is how the interests of the people of this Province are protected, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there was never any commitment to go underground. What the 2002 agreement required the company to do was spend about \$85 million exploring going underground. That is all they were required to do. Last year we had another opportunity to reopen the contract because of delays in the building of the plant and we were able to secure underground development of a mine, which is critical to the people of Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Mr. Speaker, not only do you negotiate new deals and better deals for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that relieves the tax burden on them, which is able to provide the solid services they need on a daily basis, but we are able to grow the services that we provide to them.

Mr. Speaker, you also look for every opportunity, legally, and within the confines of the agreement, to improve agreements that we already have. That is what we do as a government. When we get that money, we make investments. We make investments, Mr. Speaker, like \$2.9 million in health spending; \$1.3 million in education; \$185 million to support children and families; more than \$366 million again this year to advance infrastructure; \$230 million to support strong, safe and sustainable communities; \$149 million in the

Poverty Reduction Strategy; \$100 million still in tax credits and incentives for businesses.

So, where is the reckless spending? Where is the squandering, I ask, Mr. Speaker? These are solid investments in the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Do not apologize for any of them, Mr. Speaker. While we make significant investments in housing, do we need more? Absolutely. Mr. Speaker, even though we make significant investments in child care, do we need more? Absolutely. We need more investments in early childhood education, and that is the place to start. When we get to all-day kindergarten, and we will get to all-day kindergarten, our children will be able to take full advantage of it, Mr. Speaker, because they have been helped a long that continuum of education by our early childhood education initiatives.

Can we do it all today? Not all today. We cannot do it all today, but it is a progression, Mr. Speaker. It is like coming off have-not as a university student and coming into the have world. When you first start off, the burden can be really heavy when you have to pay your student loans and you have to buy a house, and you have to buy a car and there are other investments that you will need to make. You do not have as much disposable income to do other things, Mr. Speaker, and we are much the same way. We have come off have-not and we are slowly but surely making our way forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: We are going to do it in a prudent way, Mr. Speaker. We are going to do it in a way that works for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We are not going to run the debt clock up as high as it can go and then tie up hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars in debt payments. Nobody gives you money for free, you pay. If I am paying down interest on money we owe, you cannot invest that in education,

health care, infrastructure, daycare, and those kinds of things.

We have to be prudent, so we had to take some measures. Also, we are evolving and maturing as a people and as a Province. It is prudent from time to time to review how you deliver services, and to make sure that the people of the Province are getting the value of every nickel we spend. We are called to do that kind of stewardship.

Sometimes there is negative fallout as a result of that with new technology, new ways of doing things, and new ways of delivering programs, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes there is a human impact in terms of having to let people go.

Anybody who has ever heard me speak about the public service in my public life here in government in the last ten years knows that I have the ultimate respect and appreciation of our public service. It is second to none in this country. I am so proud when I go to federal-provincial-territorial meetings to be supported by my public service and our public servants. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have every right to be so proud of the people who work for them day in and day out.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: It takes a special kind of person to be a public servant. They do not ever look for accolades, honour or some kind of recognition of their work, Mr. Speaker. I heard them described across the way as fat cats and all kinds of hacks. That is not our public service. That is not the public service I work with every day.

Mr. Speaker, they work tirelessly. Their work is rarely acknowledged, and even more rarely, honoured. We as a government try to do that as often as we can because we are proud of the work that they do for us.

Mr. Speaker, when you start to review programs, when you start to have new ways of thinking and new ways of doing things, sometimes there are negative impacts. It is painful. It is not an easy thing to do to say goodbye to anybody when

they are going out the door, even when they are going of their own accord. It is difficult, because you are doing a special kind of work together. It is a special calling, in a lot of ways, to be in service to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and so, it is difficult.

Nobody on this side of the House found it easy. We tried to do that transition as thoughtfully and as respectfully as we could, but it was absolutely necessary, Mr. Speaker. The comfort in it, if there was any comfort in it, was that we have such a thriving economy. There is such a need for workers in this Province, and we know how highly skilled our public service is. There was comfort in knowing that there was opportunity beyond the doors of Confederation Building for these people.

Not to say that some people will not fall through the cracks, Mr. Speaker, but we will try to be there for them. We never walk away from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, in good times or in bad times. It is more important that we be there in bad times. In the same way we said to the people of Stephenville, the same way we said to the people of Grand Falls, the same way we said to the people on the Connaigre Peninsula, we do not always have all the answers right away when a storm hits, but we are here, and we are not going anywhere. We are going to walk every step of this journey with you, and together we are going to find solutions. We are going to make sure that everybody is okay, and we are going to make it our best effort.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: We are doing a really good job of that.

In terms of a 500,000 people, can you come in here with a list of stories of people who have a serious circumstance, a circumstance where they feel helpless and out of control, that they are being overwhelmed by certain circumstances, whether it is in health care or education, or in housing? Absolutely can, we do not live in utopia. We are not standing up here and arguing

that there is not one person in Newfoundland and Labrador who is not challenged.

What we are saying to people, though, is we are your government, and we are listening to what it is that you are saying. We understand that extraordinary circumstances exist in people's lives. Come to us and we are going to try to work with you to resolves those issues. We cannot anticipate them all, but when you come to our door, you will not get turned away.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: How quickly an hour passes, Mr. Speaker, because I could do with another hour, and maybe I will get one somewhere along the line. I want to talk about this place and how wonderful. The sky is not falling. The bottom has not fallen out of Newfoundland and Labrador, not by a long shot, despite what they say on the other side of the aisle.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: Mr. Speaker, there has never been a better time to live in Newfoundland and Labrador. There has never been more opportunity than there is in Newfoundland and Labrador at this time. The future has never been as bright as it is today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER DUNDERDALE: I am so proud to be part of a government, to work with the people I am surrounded by here today, with the support of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to do the very best we can do to make this place all that we know it can be.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): The hon. the Member for St. John's South.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise again to speak on the Budget debate. I know I spoke yesterday, and I will say

I have a touch of laryngitis. Yesterday I got about eleven minutes out of the speech. Hopefully I will get the twenty minutes today.

Mr. Speaker, the previous two or three times I have spoken on Budget debate, I have 'preambled' it by saying that government has done some good things and there are some things they have not done quite so right. I have given accolades to government where they have done good things. I do not believe in criticizing just for the sake of criticizing. I believe if something is being done you recognize it. If something should be improved or corrected, you point that out.

We just listened to the Premier speak for the past sixty minutes, Mr. Speaker, and I will respond to some of the points that the Premier made in her speech. She started off very early in her speech saying we need to be fiscally prudent. I did speak previously, I spoke in Budget debate and I spoke when we spoke to the Speech from the Throne talking about how as a government in less than ten years they have doubled the Budget.

Now, I was there. I was in Cabinet, in fact, for the first four years that we were in government and we did see a need because of the requirement to fix roads and buildings, what I used to call the infrastructure deficit, and there was an infrastructure deficit. I will say, Mr. Speaker, that in large part the infrastructure deficit existed because previous governments of both political stripes simply did not have the fiscal ability to do the repairs to the schools, the repairs to the roads, the repairs to government buildings, government wharfs and so on that it needed to be carried out. In fact, governments in previous years had spent so much money that they had driven up the Province's debt year after year after year, so obviously the money was not there.

We can say that it was good fortune, it was good luck. In many cases it was good luck that when we formed government in 2003 the stars, Mr. Speaker, had all lined up for us. The stars had all lined up for us because of deals of former governments, the government of Brian Peckford

with the Atlantic Accord. I want to speak a little bit about the Atlantic Accord and what government did to the Atlantic Accord. They shaved five years of the benefits we are going to receive off that. I will speak a little bit about that later.

Premier Peckford put in place the Atlantic Accord, the Hibernia deal. The Grimes Administration put in the deal on Voisey's Bay, Inco. We had other governments put other deals in place. When we formed government in 2003, and I am not ashamed to say it, we walked into good times. The stars had lined up for us, Mr. Speaker, because of what previous governments had done. We were there when the cash was starting to roll in and roll in it did.

Mr. Speaker, because of that we saw a need to improve the infrastructure in the Province. For decades and decades the infrastructure had not received the attention that it should have received, and we had an infrastructure deficit. We had buildings that were crumbling, roads that were in deplorable shape, so we increased the budget. I applaud the former party that I was involved with for doing that because it was the right thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, there comes a time when you have to say, okay, now we have increased the Budget from \$4.3 billion a year to \$5 billion to \$6 billion, to \$7 billion a year; when do you stop? There is not one program, Mr. Speaker, that government has put in place over the past eight or nine years that you can look at and say it was a bad program, or they should not have put money into that. There is not one program. Everything that government has put in place, the people of the Province would say are good programs. The difference, Mr. Speaker, is when you take the Budget and you double it, knowing that future generations will not be able to sustain that level of spending.

As a family you go out, you need a new car, you absolutely, desperately, need a new car. Do you buy a Cadillac or do you buy something a little more modest that you know you are going to be able to afford to pay for?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Gander and the Member for Mount Pearl North, I did not interrupt them when they were up speaking and I will point to them today and say that I would appreciate it if they did not interrupt me when I am speaking.

Mr. Speaker, do you buy a Cadillac or do you buy something a little more modest that you know that your family are going to continue to be able to pay for the lights and the heat, put food in the fridge and pay the mortgage? Just because you have had a windfall, do you spend that windfall knowing that you cannot afford the payments on the Cadillac?

That is the question, because there is not one program – yes, government needed the car, government needed to fix the buildings, government needed to fix the roads, government needed to fix the hospitals and the other infrastructure that were in desperate need of replacement, but, Mr. Speaker, some of the programs, which we needed, do you put in the Cadillac or do you put in something that we know future generations are going to be able to afford to pay for? That is the question.

When the Premier was up a few moments ago, Mr. Speaker, and said we need to be fiscally prudent. I would argue that government was not fiscally prudent over the last three or four years. Again, I cannot point to one program and say they should not have put it in place, but I can say that to double the Budget in less than ten years is not fiscally prudent.

Mr. Speaker, she said: some people on the other side want us to spend, spend, spend. Well, Mr. Speaker, I am one member on the other side who is here to say that you need to be fiscally prudent. You need to look at the programs you are putting in place. You need to size up the programs you are putting in place and you need to ensure that our future generations can afford to pay for those programs. Because I am telling you what, if we had not brought the Budget up to better than \$8 billion a year, if we had kept it at \$7 billion a year, without a doubt, we would

have been able to pay an extra \$2 billion, or \$3 billion, or \$4 billion on the Province's debt. That is what the future generations would appreciate, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier said: Let me tell them that it is not where we are going, our philosophy is not to spend, spend, spend. Well, I have not seen any proof of that, Mr. Speaker. I have not seen any proof of that because I have not seen the deficit in this Province paid down the way it should have been paid because of the royalties and the excess revenue that we were fortunate enough to receive.

I cannot look at the performance of government over the past ten years and say bravo for everything. Now, they have done a number of good things, absolutely. Mr. Speaker, I can say that with the Atlantic Accord – and I said I wanted to speak a little more about that. We received a \$2 billion upfront lump-sum payment on the Atlantic Accord. I did not know the full details. I sat in that caucus. I did not know the full details, Mr. Speaker, of how that came about.

Do you know what? I found out after, just recently in fact, that we shaved five years off the Atlantic Accord deal. Where we were supposed to continue to receive transfer payments under the Atlantic Accord deal, we shaved five years off that. Did we receive a \$2 billion upfront lump-sum payment in consolation for shaving five years off that deal? If that is the case, Mr. Speaker, bringing home that \$2 billion, I cannot say that was as proud a day for us as we thought it was.

Mr. Speaker, taking \$2 billion out of the hands of future generations, is that what fiscal prudence is? Is that what we are supposed to do as a government? Absolutely not, and if anybody wants to know why I had a change of heart and came to this side, there are a number of reasons. I can list them and I will, every time I get up to speak.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about resources declining. The Premier talked about resources declining in her speech. I will tell you, sitting around the

caucus table we knew that the resource revenues were going to decline, but we continued to increase the Budget to an unsustainable level.

We knew that resource revenues were going to decline. We knew the Atlantic Accord payments were going to stop. We knew that the transfer payments to this Province were going to stop because we had become a have Province, but the increases year after year in the Budget continued to climb. Is that fiscal prudence? No, it is not. It is mortgaging our children's and our grandchildren's future, because the Budget levels, the way they are today, are unsustainable. That is what it is.

The Premier said: We are not going to run up the debt and burden our people. Well, I would say that is exactly what they have done by doubling the Budget knowing that the transfer payments were going to discontinue because we have become a have Province. We are all proud of that. We are all proud of the fact that we are paying our own way in the Confederation of Canada. In fact, we are contributing to other provinces that are considered have not provinces. I dreamt of the day we could be there. We are all proud of that. There is not one member in this House who is not proud of that.

Mr. Speaker, you look at Abitibi and the fact that we took over Abitibi. Again, I sat in that caucus when that happened. We were not given all the details as backbenchers. This side of the House were not given all the details. The government expropriated Abitibi. Do you know what? I support that. I still support that today. I still support it, but I do think there were some i's that were not dotted and t's that were not crossed.

Mr. Speaker, there is an old saying that when you act in haste there is oftentimes you repent at leisure. I would say that the environmental concerns should not have been put on the shoulders as a burden for the people of this Province for future generations. That is not one of the areas of that deal that I am proud of, Mr. Speaker.

We saw the current Premier, who was the Natural Resources Minister, stand in this House in Question Period day after day saying, we are not going to be responsible for the environmental concerns. I believed it. Everybody on that side of the House believed it. She said: We will not be burdened with the environmental concerns. The company that created those environmental concerns will be responsible. Guess what? The i's were not dotted and t's were not crossed, so now she is repenting at leisure.

Do I support the expropriation of Abitibi? Of course I do, because the people of this Province own those resources, but I do not support the fact that it was done so hastily that this Province is now responsible for the environmental concerns. They will be well over \$100 million, we are now being told today.

MR. HEDDERSON: (Inaudible).

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I say to the Member for Harbour Main, he will have an opportunity to speak and stand up and repeat anything that I am saying but he should not be interrupting me when I am on my feet. I give him the courtesy of listening to him when he is on his feet.

Mr. Speaker, we should not be taking over the environmental concerns that Abitibi created. That is what happened, Mr. Speaker, that is what happened.

MR. O'BRIEN: (Inaudible).

MR. OSBORNE: I say to the Member for Gander who is saying: Oh, I see why you will be the one getting the flick the next election. Need you not worry, need you not worry, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I will say, and I have said many times when I have stood on my feet in this House, there are things government have done that are right and there are things they have done that are wrong. The funny thing is,

when I stand on my feet here and say they have done things right, they will all clap; but if I point out the things they have done wrong, the Member for Gander is not too quick to pipe and start heckling me, is he? He is not shy about heckling when you point out the things they have done wrong.

Well, I say to the Member for Gander, you will have your time. Stand up and refute what I am saying; you stand up and refute what I am saying.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I ask them for the courtesy to be able to speak. Any time those members get up to speak, I do not heckle them and I ask for the same respect.

Mr. Speaker, let me talk about legislation I brought in when I was Minister of Justice called Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods, otherwise known as SCAN legislation. That legislation had gone through a great deal of scrutiny. We had done consultations across the Province and I can tell you they were done because not only did the staff of the department do consultations across the Province, but I did consultations throughout the Province. We listened to the people and there were parts of that legislation we changed based on the concerns we heard.

It went through a Cabinet committee, Mr. Speaker. It was approved by Cabinet committee. It went through Cabinet and it was approved by Cabinet. It came to this House, and it was voted on in this House and approved by this House. There was money put in the Budget in 2007 because I made sure of it. I was the minister. I made sure there was money put in the Budget of 2007 –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. OSBORNE: – to make sure that legislation was carried out, but the legislation was never proclaimed.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know Tessier Place, which is in my district. The individuals who live on Tessier Place I am sure would appreciate the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods legislation being in place today. That legislation would have made that neighbourhood safer. It may have saved a life. We cannot say for sure, but there is a possibility it could have saved the life of the individual who was murdered on Tessier Place.

I will tell you why: because the police who we also consulted and who were supportive of this legislation, Mr. Speaker, the police forces, both the RNC and the RCMP, were supportive of this legislation. They know that property was a problem property. They knew it for almost two years, but the ability to catch the individuals red-handed, the ability to have enough evidence to carry out a successful conviction, is a lot different than being able to present the evidence to a judge to say we know there is illicit activity in that property, we know there are drugs being sold there, and we want to shut it down.

Under that legislation there were safeguards put in place for innocent people, there were appeals processes put in place, and there was the ability to protect individuals who lived in a residence that was shut down who were innocent, as long as they were separated from the individual who was guilty, Mr. Speaker. There were measures put in place in that legislation to look for housing, alternative housing, and other safeguards for those individuals.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue to say that is a good piece of legislation because it is. We should revisit that legislation. We should proclaim that legislation and put it in place.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time to speak, and I will speak again on this before the time is finished.

Thank you.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am certainly pleased to rise this afternoon to have a few words about the Budget before we close proceedings for the day. Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to a number of the speeches made today, and the Premier's, in particular, I thought was a very good speech –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: – a very well articulated vision of the Province and a good synopsis of where this government has been for the past ten years since 2003. She talked a fair amount about the vision for the future and where we are headed. I commend her for that, Mr. Speaker, as I know people in the Province do.

In politics, it is like a wave. There are days you are up and days you are down. On balance, Mr. Speaker, people of the Province recognize what this government has done for the Province, both from an economic-development perspective and a social-development perspective. People recognized that in spades in the last election when they confirmed our government and they confirmed the leadership of our Premier.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize there is not a lot of time today. I want to speak for a few moments about a number of comments made by the previous speaker relative to justice in the Province and the safe communities' bill because it is a very important issue. We take the issue of justice and safe communities very seriously in this Province. It is why, in fact, in the recent Budget we announced \$1 million dollars. We announced \$1 million dollars in the Budget to form a taskforce comprised of members of the RNC and members of the RCMP, both current resources that they have and an influx of new resources, as I said, to the tune of \$1 million dollars.

That resource, Mr. Speaker, is intended to promote safe communities. We are going to focus on crimes against our youth. We are

going to focus on drugs in our communities and organized crime. We have done that because we recognize the challenges we are facing. The economy in Newfoundland is changing, and as the economy changes, so also do the dynamics of our communities. That is not just in the city; it is all throughout rural Newfoundland and Labrador as well.

Our government is extremely committed to providing safe communities. We are committed very much so to providing solid, quality policing services, and we continue to invest in our front-line police services.

Mr. Speaker, it is a stretch, I say to you, it is a stretch for any member of this House to stand and say that any piece of legislation could prevent a death in a community. It is a far stretch. I did an interview yesterday with *The Telegram* and a number of other journalists about this particular item – and I said it then and I will say it again today; I will repeat it: That for anyone to stand and suggest that a piece of legislation can prevent a murder or a homicide in this Province, in my view, is absolutely ridiculous.

Now, can legislation assist us in preventing crimes? Absolutely, but you have to remember that crimes that are being committed in communities are not going to be prevented by any particular piece of legislation. People are choosing to commit crimes for a number of particular reasons.

The question on whether the safer communities' legislation could have helped is a good question, and no one really knows the answer. I will say this to you, Mr. Speaker, because the member opposite outlined the timeline. Let me remind the House and members here of the timeline because there is a piece of it that was forgotten.

The Minister of Justice at the time was the previous speaker. The minister is absolutely right. There was legislation brought before this House, the legislation was debated, and it was accepted. Mr. Speaker, I stand to be corrected, but I believe the member said the thing missing was the legislation was not proclaimed.

Let me remind people that the matter of fact for the record is that same member who is criticizing government remained as the Minister of Justice for nearly five months after, and he was the minister who had control over determining when the legislation could have been enacted or not. That individual is the minister who chose not to enact the legislation, as the Minister of Justice, on behalf of government. If fingers are going to be pointed, then people need to know the entire facts of the situation.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to dwell on that. That is not the intent of my remarks here because the remarks that were made were very serious. We are talking about, not crime in general, we are talking about a particular murder, a particular murder in this city, and we are talking about an individual who made a very direct statement that it probably could have been prevented with a piece of legislation.

I had not planned to stand and speak today, but I cannot, as the Minister of Justice for this Province, let the opportunity go without speaking to the people of the Province to rebut some of the things that were put forth there. I believe it is absolutely irresponsible for any member to suggest that a piece of legislation such as that could have prevented a crime. Could it have deterred some of the behaviours in the communities? Maybe, like any piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is this government is committed to safe communities. We have announced \$1 million in the Budget. I say to the member, as well, we announced that money with the entire support and endorsement of our two police forces in the Province. They are fully supportive of what we are trying to do. They are fully supportive of pooling our resources together.

They also believe, Mr. Speaker – and I do believe that both heads of the respective police forces have spoken publicly on any number of occasions to this – that what we have announced and endorsed on their behalf will make a difference in this Province. That is what this is about.

I am not standing here today trying to make political points or to do anything else. I am simply trying to highlight that the investment we have made is because it is believed by those who are out there on the streets on a daily basis, that announcement, the efforts that will go into that and the investment of \$1 million, will make a difference in communities in this Province, Mr. Speaker.

As I conclude my remarks today, make no mistake about the commitment of this government and our Premier to making sure that as Newfoundland and Labrador changes – and we all recognize that the Province is changing. The Premier just spent an hour in this House outlining what it used to be like in this Province years ago – and I can reflect back to when I was in high school, Mr. Speaker – to today, and how the opportunities have changed, the economy has changed, and the social fabric of this Province has changed. I do not believe there is anybody sitting here today who would not acknowledge that Newfoundland and Labrador today is different than it was ten, or fifteen, or twenty years ago. We all acknowledge that.

Make no mistake that this Premier and our government is fully committed to working with the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, to working with the RCMP, and to all other groups and agencies who have a similar mandate of doing what is in the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. To ensure that we have safe communities, communities where it is a great spot to raise your family, to raise your kids and it is safe to go out on the streets and enjoy your lifestyle, Mr. Speaker.

With that, Mr. Speaker, and as my colleague for Burgeo – La Poile says, in conclusion, I thank you for the opportunity.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

The House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

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