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Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

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

MS JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a point of order, this being my first opportunity to do so since Budget 2014 was delivered.

Mr. Speaker, the budget for the Premier's office as contained in the Estimates document should have been the same as the reduced budget amount for 2013-2014, the \$1.865 million. As a result, the Premier's office has directed they will operate from the reduced 2013-2014 funding amount and that any amount over this will be frozen during the 2014-2015 fiscal year.

Thank you.

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

MR. DALLEY: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: On the same point of order?

Any response to the first point of order?

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources, to a second point of order.

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, last week in a speech here in the House I referred to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I made a comment that he determined Nalcor to be negligent. Mr. Speaker, it was determined that he did not make those comments and he does not believe they are negligent. I would like to apologize to the member and withdraw the comments.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will have members' statements from the Member for the District of Humber Valley; the Member for the District of

St. Barbe; the Member for the District of Lake Melville; the Member for the District of Terra Nova; the Member for the District of Port au Port; and the Member for the District of Bellevue.

The hon. the Member for the District of Humber Valley.

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate Mr. Clarence Ford of Jackson's Arm on his recent retirement from the town's ambulance service. Clarence's decision to retire comes after twenty-six years of service with the Jackson's Arm Ambulance Service.

Clarence started on the ambulance back in 1988 and has been a consistent and a steady hand during those many years of service. Clarence spent the first fifteen years of his service as a dedicated volunteer and it was not until 2003 that he began being compensated for his work.

Mr. Speaker, Jackson's Arm is 163 kilometres from Western Memorial Hospital in Corner Brook. During his tenure with the Jackson's Arm Ambulance Service, as with many services across our Province, Clarence has made many late night and early morning emergency trips to the regional hospital in some unfavourable road and weather conditions. Clarence states he recalls many days when he made two or three trips per day required by patients seeking medical assistance in the hospital in Corner Brook.

I ask all members in this House today to rise with me in honouring Clarence, a dedicated individual who is respected by his family, friends, and colleagues, and I am sure those who he transported. As he moves forward in the next chapter of his life, may he enjoy a well-deserved retirement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize the fortieth anniversary of the raising of the Labrador flag.

In 1974, Michael S. Martin, who was a member of the House of Assembly for the District of Labrador South, took the opportunity to do something significant to celebrate Labrador's heritage as part of Newfoundland. Martin and several others designed and created the Labrador flag and raised it in all fifty-nine towns and villages of Labrador forty years ago today.

Every part of the flag has meaning, Mr. Speaker; the white bar represents the snow, an important part of life for Labradorians. The blue bar represents the waters of Labrador, important for both travel and sustenance. The green bar represents the land, and it is thinner than the other bars, as much of Labrador has short summers.

The flag was made to represent the people that live in the Big Land by distinguishing where we have come from with where we are going. Specifically, the three branches emerging from a single stalk represent the unity of the distinct peoples in the brotherhood of mankind.

I ask all hon. members of this House to join me in recognizing the fortieth anniversary of the Labrador Flag.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I rise today to recognize a tremendous individual from my district, Mr. Kevin Stroud of Glovertown. Mr. Stroud has dedicated almost his entire life to serving others both professionally and personally.

He was a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for twenty-four years, serving in various roles. Kevin has a long list of volunteer activities including being a member of the Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron #727, Glovertown Lions Club, First Alexander Bay Scout Troop, Eastport Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, Terra Nova Trail Riders, and Freshwater – Alexander Bays Ecosystem Corporation, but perhaps his most notable volunteer role has been his forty-five years served on the local fire department in Glovertown. He still remains active to this day.

Mr. Speaker, even throughout his busy life, Kevin has found the time to be an active blood donor with eighty-five donations to date. Kevin is an ideal example of an unselfish community-minded individual. I am pleased to be able to showcase the tremendous contribution he has made to my district and, certainly, the Province and country.

I ask all hon. members to join with me in thanking Mr. Stroud for all that he has done and all that he continues to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CORNECT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this hon. House to congratulate the Junior Women's and the Junior Men's teams from the Caribou Curling Club in Stephenville on winning their respective Under 18 Provincial Championships in Gander during the weekend of February 28 through to March 2.

Mr. Speaker, this is the first year for these teams to compete in a championship. This is the first time both junior teams from the Caribou Curling Club have won the gold medal. I am extremely proud of the fact that these athletes now have the honour of representing Newfoundland and Labrador at the Atlantic Curling Championships being held in New Brunswick in April.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join with me in congratulating the Junior Women's team: Rebecca Roberts, Chantal Newell, Danielle Wiseman, Jaime Lamswood, and their coach Sherrie McNeil.

Congratulations as well to the Junior Men's team: Craig Laing, Greg Smith, Ryan McNeil-Lamswood, Kyle Barron, and their coach Scott Lamswood.

Mr. Speaker, best wishes and best of luck are extended to these teams, and have fun curling.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the Junior Canadian Rangers, Port Saunders Patrol, on a successful Cultural Exchange hosted in Plum Point, March 7-9, 2014. The Cultural Exchange involved approximately 120 youth, ages twelve to eighteen from Port Saunders, Buchans, Conne River and Gaultois Patrols; as well as approximately twenty adult leaders and organizers.

The 5th Canadian Ranger Patrol Group operates out of Gander, Newfoundland and Labrador. The Junior Canadian Rangers Program, one of the 5 CRPG initiatives, offers a variety of skill developing activities that promote traditional cultures and lifestyles to youth living in remote and rural communities. The Cultural Exchange provides opportunities for youth who do not travel out of their communities often to experience other lifestyles, and to interact and see that all people are equal.

I commend Captain Devine, Sergeant Bourgeois, Master Corporal Macey, Adult Community President Vernice Rose, the adult leaders, and the youth participants on delivering a true experience.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating the Junior Canadian Rangers, Port Saunders Patrol, and commending all involved.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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 Tricentia Timberwolves male volleyball team of Arnold's Cove who won a silver medal at the 2014 Newfoundland and Labrador Winter Games on March 8 in Clarenville.

The volleyball team consisted of Cody Hollett, Jordan White, Lucas Goodwin, Richard Warren, Joshua Smith, Jordan Baker, Ryan Pitcher, Marcus Berkshire, Cass Warren, Jason Hollett, Donovan Warren, and Marcus Ralph. Part of their success lies with their coaches: Dion Piercy, Nathan Ploughman, and Kurt Goodwin.

The Timberwolves were representing the Eastern Region at the Winter Games and their silver medal, combined with the four other bronze medals that were captured in other categories from the Eastern Region including female table tennis, female individual table tennis, single male figure skating and badminton, gave the region a total of five medals overall.

I all members to join me in congratulating the Timberwolves on their silver medal and the four bronze medal winners for the Eastern Region, and all athletes from their participation in the Winter Games. I am sure they all had fun and win or lose, the determination and dedication was something to be valued.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today in this hon. House to highlight our commitment to advancing improvements in transportation infrastructure such as roads, highways, and bridges throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Since 2004, more than \$1.6 billion has been invested in transportation-related infrastructure delivering significant benefits in all areas of the Province. With close to 10,000 kilometres of provincial roads and highways, we need to take full advantage of our Province's short construction season.

In collaboration with the Heavy Civil Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and private contractors, we are delivering on a commitment to get an early start to roadwork this year with the issue of early tenders and our investment of \$81 million included in Budget 2014 for our Provincial Road Improvement Program.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: This marks one of the largest investments ever in the Provincial Road Improvement Program. Funding will be used for upgrades and enhancements to the provincial highway network including major trunk roads, community access roads, as well as routine maintenance on the Trans-Canada Highway. Funding is also allocated for the rehabilitation and replacement of bridges.

In the last couple of weeks, we have already issued tenders for significant road improvements

in Baie Verte – Springdale, Labrador West, Western Newfoundland, and on the Bay d'Espoir Highway, with more on the horizon.

Our industry partners and residents have warmly welcomed the early start to the road construction season. Industry, in particular, has applauded the early tenders as an important step in insuring they can recruit and retain their labour force and better plan and mobilize their operations for roadwork in all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador. Collectively, as a Province, we will all benefit from being out of the gate sooner.

Mr. Speaker, it is going to be a busy year as we prepare to upgrade many roads, highways, and bridges all over our Province. The work we are doing will support communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and will help drive social and economic activity in both rural and urban areas.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. We agree with the early tenders, Mr. Speaker. It is better for the construction industry. It is better for residents in the Province. It will give a greater amount of time to complete the work that is needed.

I do want to talk about bridges for a moment, Mr. Speaker, because the Auditor General points out in his most recent report some glaring statistics. Those statistics include the fact that since 2003, the overall poor condition of bridges in this Province has increased by 93 per cent. That is unbelievable. One hundred and fifty-four bridges have an overall rating of poor in this Province – again, unbelievable. The department has only completed 58 per cent of the planned 234 bridge projects it committed to in their 2004-2011 plan to repair bridges –

unbelievable. More than half of the bridges in this Province are over forty years old.

Mr. Speaker, we see the deficit increasing in this Province. The rate of debt in this Province is back to where it was when the PCs took power in this Province. As well, now we see an infrastructure deficit; something that they talked about on that side of the House, Budget after Budget.

Just some examples are two bridges in this Province, both on the Trans-Canada Highway, both with speeds reduced, leading up to those bridges, to thirty kilometres per hour because the bridges are unsafe. The surfaces of those bridges are unsafe to travel over. It is unbelievable, Mr. Speaker. There needs to be more done in this Province to repairs the bridges.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. member's time is expired.

MR. OSBORNE: 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; but when you see something like this, you have to ask yourself some questions because this is something that our party pushed for last April, in a private member's motion, that this government defeated. One of the things that we talked about at that particular time, when it came to a plan for roads and bridges in this Province, was about early releasing of tenders. Government voted us down, Mr. Speaker, on that particular day that we did that.

We are thankful that they are finally doing it. We also have to note, too, that municipalities are doing the same thing and it is going to do a lot to promote, of course, the early advancement of

roadwork in this Province. This government has to remember, Mr. Speaker, that we are \$800 million in the hole according to the Auditor General.

When it comes to roads and bridges, we need long-term plans for roads and bridges and it is about time that this government paid attention.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The member's time has expired.

MR. MURPHY: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in this hon. House to highlight our newly implemented fly-in, fly-out model, which we refer to as CONSEP – the Community of Natuashish Service Enhancement Program.

Our government continues to make significant efforts to improve service delivery in Labrador, with a key focus on the community of Natuashish. It has been four months since the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services implemented the Community of Natuashish Service Enhancement Program. This new fly-in, fly-out approach is helping to provide more supports and greater consistency on the ground for the children, youth, and families in that community.

The Community of Natuashish Service Enhancement Program, which is in addition to permanent staff already located in the community, comprises two separate fly-in teams with each having a clinical supervisor and two social workers. These teams travel to Natuashish on a two-week rotational basis, working twelve-hours shifts each day.

Mr. Speaker, in February I had the opportunity to visit Natuashish for my first time. During this visit, I met with community leaders, elders, members of the Mushuau Innu First Nation, as well as departmental staff working in the community. Each of these meetings provided a clear indication that, in a relatively short period of time, the newly implemented CONSEP model was already having a positive effect on the community.

It is essential that we build on the momentum of this new model, and through Budget 2014: Shared Prosperity, Fair Society, Balanced Outlook, our government will do just that by investing an additional \$200,000 for travel to continue to the community of Natuashish Service Enhancement Program.

By continuing to work with the Mushuau Innu First Nation and other partners such as the Department of Health and Community Services, and the Labrador-Grenfell Regional Health Authority, we will be able to further strengthen clinical social work practice as well as enhance the quality of service delivery for children, youth and families in Natuashish.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Before I begin, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to take this opportunity to remember those Newfoundland sealers who perished on the ice floes off our Province over 100 years ago. I would also like to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the Labrador Flag and its creation, Mr. Speaker. I would like to call upon the minister responsible, for his pledge, to look into having the Labrador flag flying at both entry points into our Province.

Mr. Speaker, we are also encouraged with this new fly-in, fly-out program that has been implemented. I have spoken to several of the band council members in Natuashish and they are also encouraged by the progress that is coming with this new program. This is a much needed program for a community that was in crisis.

Time and time again, review of CYFS cases reveal staff turnover and poor documentation were the key factors in our young people falling through the cracks. These challenges were amplified in Natuashish until now. We hope the fly-in, fly-out program helps improve the situation for the families in that community.

Mr. Speaker, I have asked in this House several times about the shortcomings –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Finally, it is about time government stepped up to its moral obligation in this community – finally. I am sad to say that this only happened after community leaders had to come here demanding assistance and only after media exposed the – I seem to have a technical problem here, Mr. Speaker.

It is sad to say that only after community leaders had come here demanding assistance and only after media exposed the devastating problems this community faces. This government has been in power over a decade and still has not been able to provide adequate services to this community in need.

The people of Natuashish have a right to full comprehensive social services, especially in the area of child protection. I thank the social workers who will be providing their services. I commend the leaders of Natuashish and the Mushuau Innu First Nation for working so diligently for the well-being of the people of their community.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government's annual Budget mail out, this one that I have right here, includes Five Things to Know About Budget 2014. However, it does not say anything about \$1 billion they will borrow, the increased debt, or the weak economic outlook.

I ask the Premier: Why don't you want the people of the Province to know about the \$1 billion in borrowing? Why is borrowing \$1 billion not one of the things that people know about in Budget 2014?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We want the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to know everything that is in this Budget, including every cent we spend and any money we borrow. Since 2004, we have had a remarkable record of no borrowing for either operational or capital purposes.

This year we will not be borrowing for operational purposes. We will not be putting

money on the credit card to pay groceries. We will not be borrowing to pay the light bill. We will in fact have a surplus of \$400 million on operations this year.

We will be borrowing – there are two bond issues coming due that were taken out many, many years ago. The money was taken then and spent then. We are not spending it now but we have to pay the principle. We are going to be borrowing that at a much lower interest rate.

We are going to invest \$551 million in infrastructure for water bombers. We are going to invest in Nalcor's oil and gas and Nalcor's Muskrat Falls to provide future profits for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier did mention the great work of the legacy projects from the past Administration that gave him the revenue to do all those great things. While this government made deep cuts throughout the government last year, the Premier's office was overspent by \$400,000. The minister pointed out before Question Period today that this would change.

The \$400,000 that was spent last year, Mr. Premier, can you explain where that money was spent?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I am advised that the extra money spent over last year was all for severance. It was for people who left the Premier's office. There were a number of people in the previous Administration who are taking the severance monthly instead of all at

once. That is what the money was for, it was for severance.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To pay for the election-type Budget, government is borrowing, as I said earlier, \$1 billion and projecting a half billion deficit. It is one thing to borrow when the economic forecast is good, but unfortunately the key economic indicators – as your own Budget document states – are trending down.

I ask the Premier: Why are you borrowing a billion dollars to pay for an election-type Budget against a backdrop of weak economic growth?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Premier has said, we have not had to borrow for operational or capital purposes since 2004. No other government can say that. We have posted six surpluses in the last ten years. No other government can say that.

Mr. Speaker, we have to borrow this year. It is short term. It is not for operational purposes. It is for an investment into our future in Nalcor. It is for debt coming due, and it is for much needed infrastructure. It is short term. We are going to be back in surplus next year and the year after, and this is a Budget we are very proud of, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, six out of ten years in surplus, obviously, you were the government and you did inherit the legacy of the great projects that have brought in that oil royalty. You cannot dispute that.

The labour force in our Province is expected to shrink by 2.5 per cent by 2016 and our population will shrink by over 2,000 between now and 2017. Over a year ago government announced a Population Growth Strategy, but their own documents admit there was no growth in population in 2013, and there is nothing in the Budget on how this government expects to grow our population.

I ask the Premier: Why have you not seen any results from the Population Growth Strategy, and why was it forgotten about in this Budget?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Population Growth Strategy is something that we take very seriously, and so seriously, Mr. Speaker, that we put full-day kindergarten in our Budget. There is no better thing we can do for Population Growth Strategy.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at GDP, GDP last year was 5.9 per cent. We led the country in GDP. It is going up again half a percent this year, Mr. Speaker. When you compare GDP in 2003 to where we are today with GDP, we are up 10.2 per cent over the last eleven years, Mr. Speaker, a record that we are very proud of.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ironically, the Minister of Finance did not mention about the GDP in the next three years. I find it alarming that you would not do that.

Mr. Speaker, according to the Health Minister, it appears there is money in the Budget for the demolition of the former Abitibi mill. With remediation costs estimated to be around \$100 million, the total cost to taxpayers for this government's botched expropriation is now close to \$400 million.

I ask the Premier: How much money is in this year's Budget that is allocated for the demolition and the remediation of the Abitibi site?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have several properties throughout the Province, the Abitibi site being one of them. We have the hospital site in Grand Bank. We have several sites here in the capital city that needs to be demolished or looked at. There is an amount of money this year allocated in the Budget that there is no specific amount for a specific project. What we will do is look at the projects, prioritize them, and then we will decide which money of that allocated money will be spent on those projects.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Interesting enough, you are creating a budget and you have no idea what it is going to cost on that particular project.

Mr. Speaker, our caucus has been researching the possibility of radiation services on the West Coast of Newfoundland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BALL: We have had meetings with officials from Saskatchewan, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and they have been very open and

forthcoming with the information. We were supposed to meet with our own Eastern Health officials tomorrow but the Minister of Health and Community Services cancelled our meeting.

I ask the Premier: Why is your minister blocking our meeting with Eastern Health?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have no knowledge of what the hon. member on the opposite side of the House is speaking of. I have no knowledge that there has been a meeting cancelled at my order because I did not give any such order, Mr. Speaker. I have no idea when a meeting was scheduled. So I really and truly do not know what the hon. member is talking about.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: I want to very clear here. Is the minister saying that you did not know our meeting was cancelled for tomorrow morning?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what I am saying. I had no idea there was a meeting cancelled for tomorrow, or did I have any idea that a meeting was scheduled for tomorrow. I did know that a meeting was being sought. I had no idea – if it had been set up, I certainly had no idea of it being cancelled. So it was not directed by me, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: To be very clear, your EA made a call on Friday saying that this meeting was cancelled with us. As a matter of fact, what they wanted to do was that your officials involved in our meeting – this was a meeting we had set up to get information about radiation services in Western Newfoundland. It was scheduled for tomorrow morning, to happen right here in Confederation Building. Your EA phoned and said that meeting would not go ahead tomorrow.

Can you please explain that?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will certainly investigate. As I have stated twice now, I had no idea that any meeting with an outside organization, for example, Eastern Health, was either scheduled or cancelled. I have no knowledge of that.

I did know that a meeting was being sought, I thought, with members of my department, but it was not anything I even asked a question about. We have many meeting requests that come to our department, so I had no idea of that. I can assure the member opposite that we can have a conversation after Question Period today to clarify this. Absolutely no meeting was cancelled under my direction.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, it even went a step further than that. Because to set a meeting in the future, which would include the officials from the Department of Health and Community Services, they wanted us to submit questions that would be asked in that meeting. What we were doing was going in and seeking information just like we did from Saskatchewan, just like we did from Ontario, just like we did from Nova Scotia.

I ask the minister: Will you speak to your officials so that we can have our private meeting with the people from Eastern Health? You said to the AG just recently that you would not interfere with regional health authorities –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. BALL: Will you allow the meeting to happen?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what I said in the last answer, that I will certainly go back and I will speak with the people in my department. I will get clarification as to what has happened. Again, I stress I cancelled no meeting. I had no knowledge of when a meeting was even scheduled, but I am happy to discuss this with the hon. member after Question Period and we will certainly get this clarified.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, in the Legal Aid Commission, one Labrador judge claimed that the justice system in Labrador is in a state of crisis and has been for far too long, yet the Attorney General in this House stated recently that he is happy with the system.

I ask the Attorney General: Given this government's reluctance in accepting the situation as a crisis, will you now accept the fact that we do have a crisis in the justice system in Labrador?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Attorney General.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Speaker, we recognize the fact that we have challenges in delivering legal services in Labrador. That is not unique to Labrador; it is unique to the North of Canada in general.

We are quite willing to work with stakeholders in Labrador to look at innovative ways. We have challenges there, and not necessarily challenges with money, resources, or personnel. We have geographical challenges. We have cultural challenges. We are willing to work with our stakeholders to try to find innovative means of delivering services in coastal communities. We are also willing to work with, and we have been working with, community leaders to look at ways to help residents navigate the justice system through interpretation services, translation services, and so on

Mr. Speaker, we are investing in these services and we continue to do so.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the facts say a different story.

Mr. Speaker, we have always maintained the victims of crime are the people who suffer most because of delays in the court system. Aboriginal victims should not be the exception. The fact is that the number of Aboriginal accused held for bail hearings in Labrador equals or exceeds the number of non-Aboriginal held for bail hearings throughout the rest of the Province.

I ask the Attorney General: Why is it taking so long for bail hearings to be processed in Labrador as compared to the rest of the Province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Attorney General.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Speaker, the criminal litigation process is the responsibility of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Things like sentencing, bail, and releases are all determined by the court according to the law of Canada, the Criminal Code of Canada, according to case law, and according to the parameters set out in the discussion by both sides. That is not something the Attorney General interferes in; that is something that is protocol for the Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, the government has promised a new fiscal framework with municipalities since 2008. After seeing the Budget, the Mayor of St. John's, our capital city, is questioning this government's commitment to the process.

I ask the minister: Why did you fail once again to address this important issue in Budget 2014?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. We have been saying all along the fiscal framework review process that is ongoing will take time. We still have about another twelve months of work to do. We are engaged with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador. We are engaged with municipalities across the Province and local service districts across the Province.

Any resident of the Province who wants to have a say in this process can have a say in this process. It was just this weekend I met with the Chair of a local service district in Bay St. George South who had just participated in a consultation over the past week. There is lots of

progress being made across the Province, and we welcome the input from the City of St. John's as the process proceeds.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, the candidate for Virginia Waters, Danny Breen, said it is one of the most important issues. I can see why now he is signing up to vote in the Liberal leadership; at least they have a commitment.

Mr. Speaker, seven of our biggest towns and cities have been stripped of their Municipal Operating Grants, but have not seen any new source of revenue in the Budget to compensate for the loss. There are other sources of revenues that could have been tapped while they wait for the new fiscal framework.

I ask the minister: Why have you abandoned the largest towns and cities in our Province without providing compensation for the loss of their Municipal Operating Grants?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I hope that the mayors of our seven largest communities in Newfoundland and Labrador will be very pleased with what is in store in this Budget for them. In fact, over \$100 million of the \$200 million commitment to municipal capital works funding will go to our largest communities.

The member opposite refers to the City of St. John's; \$40.9 million is being provided to the City of St. John's to address important infrastructure needs. That shows how serious we are about meeting the needs of our largest communities. In allocating those amounts, Mr. Speaker, we certainly took into consideration the previous amounts that were received through

Municipal Operating Grants and the budget is being allocated accordingly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace.

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2014 exposed that the Department of Fisheries failed to spend its full budget. In fact, it left a massive 47 per cent of its budget on the table.

I ask the minister: How does he expect to strengthen the fishing industry when he is only spending 50 per cent of the budget? Why does this government continue to overpromise and underspend?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: We have a number of programs, our equity program with regard to aquaculture, our infrastructure program that we flow funds at the point where tenders are rendered, our projects are ready to proceed. Within a couple of those funds over the past year, we went through the process with industry; those projects are going to follow through over next year. Wharf infrastructure is one. Our equity program dealing with the aquaculture industry, we have new projects coming, and that money will be flowed over to the next year.

We are keen in terms of growing the industry, growing the fishing industry. I am not sure if the hon. member understands or not but we are putting \$120 million in the fishing industry. We are leveraging another \$280 million from the federal government for \$400 million in the fishery and he is standing and talking about we are not investing in the fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is shameful, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace.

MR. SLADE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, one of the critical areas where the department has failed to invest is seafood marketing. The department has managed to only spend 30 per cent of its allocation.

I ask the minister: Why has he not used the full budget to implement all the marketing recommendations of the Fisheries MOU, which this government committed to nearly three years ago?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, in our MOU this government stepped up and put almost \$10 million there for industry, for marketing, and for a consortium to a marketing board. We have lobbied and tried to work with industry to take advantage of that. To date, they have not. We had a couple of offers last year in terms of working and to build a consortium. To date, that has not happened, but we will certainly have funds in the budget as we move forward.

I met with the small industry, the small producers a little while back and said to them, if they are willing to come together as a group and want to do marketing we are certainly willing to play, but this is an industry issue. Industry needs to drive that. We are there to play. When they are ready, we will be there to market.

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.

Last week I asked the Minister Responsible for Housing about the need for more accessible housing units. I brought up concerns that an individual has with her apartment not being accessible and injuries she has had as a result of that. The minister said if that person had contacted him directly, she would not have to wait on the list for years to get an accessible unit.

I ask the minister: Does he really believe he is solving the lack of accessible housing by helping just one person?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member likes to play with words. What I said in this House is to have that particular person phone me directly to see what I could do for that particular person. That person has phoned me today.

As a matter of fact, I was not in my office at the time and I called her right back, as soon as I got back in my office, which I do with all constituents, Mr. Speaker, who have an issue with regard to accessibility. It is really important and a foundation of our government since 2003, and we will continue to invest in people with disabilities, making homes more accessible, making buildings more accessible, Mr. Speaker, under various programs that we have under Advanced Education and Skills, along with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, within minutes of speaking to the minister today, I got an e-mail from Housing saying that she had better look in the private market because there is nothing available and there is a lack of accessible housing in this Province.

If the only chance a person has to get an accessible unit, without waiting for years, is to contact the minister, I have another person that I ask the minister to intervene on their behalf. This family had to install their own ramp at their own cost because Housing said they would not install a ramp in a housing unit with stairs that are inaccessible. They have the same issues with their bathtub not being accessible, yet the family could not get a transfer to an accessible unit.

I ask the minister: Will he intervene for this family and resolve their issue?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, it sounds like the hon. member wants me to do his job for him because he keeps referring all of his constituents to the minister, which he should, Mr. Speaker, because I will deal with each and every one of them individually as I do with my own constituents in the District of Gander, along with any other constituents who want to phone me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: There is \$9 million in this Budget, Mr. Speaker, in regard to home modification, repairs to homes in Newfoundland and Labrador, making them more accessible to people; along with \$600,000 in Advanced Education and Skills that will enable people to make their vehicles more accessible; along with not for profits can also apply under that program to make their buildings accessible to people with disabilities, Mr. Speaker. That is called good work for the Newfoundland and Labrador people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, the government says that full-day kindergarten will be implemented for all students by 2016.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: I ask the Minister of Education: Does that election promise include maintaining the class size cap for students in kindergarten?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: A wonderful, wonderful announcement, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: The answer to his question, Mr. Speaker, is yes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, our kids are already being jammed into overcrowded schools like sardines. Will the minister now table your plan for school development to prevent these planning blunders from happening into the future?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am always amazed at some of the member's choice of vocabulary.

Mr. Speaker, I can stand here and you can rule me to sit down because I can go on with a list of infrastructure that we are building in schools from the Northern part, in Charlottetown, to the West Coast, to this particular area. All the member has to do is look at the list of infrastructure projects that we have ongoing, Mr.

Speaker, recognizing the population growth, but recognizing we want top-notch facilities for our students.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Since Thursday, I have heard from public service pensioners who fear they could lose their pensions based on what they are hearing in the media from government and its apologists.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: I ask the Premier: Can he assure our pensioners that their pensions are safe?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I have said on a number of occasions that our government supports defined benefits pensions. We have also said that we are not going to take anything away from people. Anything that has accrued, any benefits that have been earned, they will be kept by people.

What we are doing, we are talking about the fact that the pension promised right now is unsustainable because conditions have changed. It is all based on math. People are retiring earlier. They are not contributing as much. People, thank God, are living longer. That means they have to take out of the fund for a longer period of time. Also, the returns have not been as great, but we are not going to take away benefits that have accrued to people.

We are talking about the future, and we said we will work with the unions. We will work with

the stakeholders to come up with a plan that will make our pension plans sustainable for the benefit of our employees.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier knows that they and the public sector unions will work out a solution to the unfunded pension liability.

I ask the Premier: Will he admit that the current scaremongering regarding the pension is just a ploy to change the subject –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: – from the far more serious economic situation, the Muskrat Falls Project, which creates real debt, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: I am sorry; I did not hear all of her question. I did hear the last part of her comments.

The money going into Muskrat Falls is an investment. It is an investment that is going to be returned to the people. In 2019, I expect the dividends that will come to the Province from Muskrat Falls will be about half a billion dollars a year. I expect that before the Upper Churchill comes back, I think those dividends are going to amount to \$3 billion a year, each and every year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: That is a wonderful project for the people of the Province. It will provide electricity at the lowest possible cost,

and also the surplus that we do not need will be sold and bring in revenues to benefit the people of Newfoundland and Labrador as long as that river runs to the sea, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: (Inaudible) to see all that.

The Harper government has decided not to renew the Federal-Provincial Health Accord, which expires today. This cut will mean a loss of \$491 million to this Province over the next decade.

I ask the Premier: Why is he not speaking out and defending Newfoundland and Labrador people against this deep and unfair cut in federal health care funding?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the member for that question because that is a very important question, and it is a very important concern of this government.

Mr. Speaker, previous premiers have spoken about this, and spoken loudly about this at COF, at CAP, and various other forums, because we all know that this was a unilateral decision by the federal government.

Interestingly enough, we have created a new working group, health innovation working group, to actually see what we can do independent of the federal government, and as provinces and territories we have been working on that particular issue. In fact, I am leaving – I am not sure if it is tomorrow or Wednesday morning – to go to meetings with regard to exactly that issue, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible).

MS SULLIVAN: Mr. Speaker, if the Member for Bay of Islands has a question, I would prefer that he asked it, as opposed to chirping across the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I hope the Minister of CYFS is now up to speed on the fifty public sector jobs that he cut last week. This is going to have a negative effect on the children at risk in their care, who have been moved so often already. I am receiving reports of children who are devastated and afraid, who do not know exactly where and when they are being moved.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: How many of these children are being moved, once again, from their current homes?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, it is most unfortunate that the member opposite uses the time here in the House of Assembly to mislead the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. DAVIS: Services provided to our most vulnerable youth and children throughout Newfoundland and Labrador have been provided by private entities for many, many years.

What we have done is we have gone through a competitive process. Four of those entities that have been providing service – one has been providing service for over a decade, one has been providing service for thirty-five years, and one has been providing the service to children

and youth for forty years, Mr. Speaker. They have been providing good service and, as a result of their ability to provide quality programs, we have given them a contract to continue to do that work, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I have the collective agreement for the private sector workers. I asked: How many children are being moved?

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: After all these years of this supposed planning by his department, why is he moving these very vulnerable children from their homes in May, before the school year is over? Why?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To continue on with what I was referring to. There are entities throughout this Province that employ staff that provide staffed residential placements for our most vulnerable children and youth. Throughout the Province, there is a variety of different operators who provide those services to the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services.

As directed by the Auditor General, just a couple of years ago, Mr. Speaker, we went through a competitive process. It was one that we announced over a year ago. It is one that has taken a considerable amount of work and effort to reach a conclusion that we could enter into contracts with these service providers who can provide the best services.

The union is fully aware of it, Mr. Speaker. They were notified of it when we entered into this process. We have had discussions with them. These operators have had discussions

with them and they should be fully aware of what is taking place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: What is his detailed protocol for uprooting these children to ensure their safety, and will he table it?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services, for a quick response.

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to point out that many of the children and youth who rely on staffed residential placements throughout Newfoundland and Labrador will stay in the communities where they are currently located. In many cases, they will stay with the service providers that are providing those services before we have entered into these new contracts, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

I would ask the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services if he would withdraw his comment about the Member for St. John's Centre misleading the House.

MR. DAVIS: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw the comment.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS JOHNSON: I am tabling, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

MS JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the Transparency and Accountability Act, it is my pleasure to table the 2014-2016 Activity Plans for the following government entities: Government Money Purchase Pension Plan, and Pensions Investment Committee.

Also, Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 26.(5)(a) of the Financial Administration Act –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS JOHNSON: – I am tabling two Orders in Council related to funding pre-commitments for the 2014-2015 to 2016-2017 fiscal years.

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the Transparency and Accountability Act, it is my pleasure to table the 2014-2016 Activity Plans for the Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board and the Appeal Board of Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board.

In fulfilling government's commitment of being accountable to the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador, it is also my pleasure to table the 2014-2016 Activity Plan for the Fish Processing Licensing Board.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker has acknowledged the hon. the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

MR. KENT: Thank you for acknowledging me, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to stand today to table the 2014-2016 Business Plans for the following entities: the Eastern Regional Service Board, the Western Regional Service Board, the Northern Peninsula Regional Service Board, the Central Regional Service Board, the Discovery Regional Service Board, and the Burin Peninsula Regional Service Board.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the Transparency and Accountability Act, it is my pleasure to table the 2014-2016 Strategic Plan for Nalcor Energy and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today in accordance with the requirements of the Transparency and Accountability Act – 2006 – to table the new Private Training Corporation Activity Plan which describes activities of the Private Training Corporation for the three calendar years, 2014-2016. The corporation is one of eleven public

entities that reports through me to the House of Assembly.

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

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to table the 2014-2016 Strategic Plan for the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

In accordance with subsection 20(7) of the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act, I am tabling amendments to the Members' Resources and Allowances Rules approved by the Management Commission of the House of Assembly on Thursday, March 13, 2014.

Also, pursuant to section 8 and section 10 of the Public Tender Act, I hereby table reports of the Public Tender Act Exceptions for November and December, 2013 and January 2014 as presented by the Chief Operating Officer of the Government Purchasing Agency.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Establish And Implement A Province-Wide 911 Telephone Service For The Reporting of Emergencies, Bill 14.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce the following resolution:

WHEREAS subsection 20(7) of the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act provides that a change to the level of amounts of allowances and resources provided to members not be made except in accordance with a rule that has been first laid before the House of Assembly and adopted by resolution of the House; and

WHEREAS an amendment to the Members' Resources and Allowances Rules, which would change the level of the amounts of allowances and resources has been laid before the House by the Speaker;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that his hon. House of Assembly adopt the amendment to the Members' Resources and Allowances Rules as approved by the Management Commission of this House on March 13, 2014 and tabled by the Speaker of this House today, March 31, 2014.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

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

I have the following private member's resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House of Assembly urge government to immediately repeal Bill 29.

Seconded by the Member for St. Barbe and pursuant to Standing Order 63.(3), this is the private member's resolution to be debated on Wednesday.

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

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I present a petition today again on the hospital in Corner Brook. I will read it.

The petition of the undersigned residents humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS we wish to raise concerns regarding the recent delay of the construction of the new hospital in Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to commit to the planning and construction of a new hospital in Corner Brook as previously committed to and in a timely manner as originally announced without further delay or changes.

Mr. Speaker, once again I present this petition on behalf of the people. There are some from Valley View Drive. There are people here from Pasadena on the petition. Once again, we are urging the government to go and finish a commitment that they always made.

I heard the Premier's comments out in Corner Brook this week. From my understanding, they are going to be putting some bunkers in the hospital, Mr. Speaker, just in case they may need them in the future.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is a change from what the Minister of Health has been saying, and said up until last Friday, that there is no need, it will not be happening. This is the kind of thing people in Western Newfoundland are finding kind of odd. When you put a microphone in front of the Premier's face out in Western Newfoundland he says one thing. The Minister of Health in St. John's is saying something else. It is getting kind of frustrating, I have to say.

I heard the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health, the Member for Terra Nova, mentioned my name again apparently on *On Point*. Mr. Speaker, I stood up for the people of Western Newfoundland and Labrador for this hospital. This member who is speaking on behalf of the minister as parliament assistant, if he has something to say on behalf of the committee, have the audacity, have the courage to go out and face the people. Stop getting in the Twitter world. You are speaking on behalf of the minister. The minister will not have a public meeting. You are out on your Twitter world –

MR. S. COLLINS: (Inaudible).

MR. JOYCE: The Member for Terra Nova, if you want to deny these people –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, if he wants to deny these people, have the courage, which I know he does not, because the last time he did something like this was put the knife in Premier Dunderdale's back. If you want to deny the people of Western Newfoundland this opportunity, have the courage to do it. Stop getting on the Twitter world saying these people do not deserve it; they do not know what they are talking about. The member does not have the courage.

He should stand with the people, Mr. Speaker. I am sick and tired – from the members of the committee and members of Western Newfoundland. They would love to see him and face him one on one, and say the things he is saying.

There is a meeting on April 24, here is his opportunity again. On April 24, come out and say what you are going to say on Twitter. If you do not think they deserve it, tell them; have the courage.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker has recognized the Member for St. John's East.

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the residents of the Pynn's Brook area are facing dangers in turning their vehicles safely off the TCH Route 1 Highway into their own driveways; and

WHEREAS it is common practice along the Trans-Canada Highway Route 1 to impose speed reductions for traffic travelling through communities such as Badger, Deer lake, Bishop's Falls, Gander, Clarenville and Whitbourne; and

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MURPHY: WHEREAS highway traffic accidents along the stretch of Trans-Canada Highway Route 1 through Pynn's Brook have caused deaths and injuries;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reduce the maximum speed limit on the Trans-Canada Highway Route 1 through Pynn's Brook area from the present 100 kilometres an hour to sixty kilometres an hour;

As in duty bound your petitions will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time I have stood on this particular petition. This is the second, I think, in this particular session of the House that I have actually stood and commented on, and I am told there are going to be more coming.

Mr. Speaker, people have rights to safety. They have a very good right to speak about the issues that are happening on the Trans-Canada

Highway in Pynn's Brook. We know, as users of that highway, there have been untold numbers of accidents happening in Pynn's Brook. The latest, I think, that I can remember, causing a death to a young man from the Deer Lake area.

I am told these petitions are going to keep on coming. There is a failure here for government to address this. A failure on the part of government, as it has done in other communities, it has done it in Gander, it has done it in Whitbourne, and it has done it in Badger, where they have reduced speeds. The people of Pynn's Brook – and not only the people of Pynn's Brook, Mr. Speaker, but the people of Deer Lake are on this petition. People in Corner Brook were on the last one as well.

There are users who frequent this area of the highway who also want to know the reason why government will not lower the speed limit. We all recognize the dangers on the highway in that particular area. Mr. Speaker, I will leave it to government to address the issue when it comes to dropping the speed limit. We all know that a drop in speed limits can lead to the safety of the users of the highway there. We know lower speeds means less likelihood of accidents.

It is a direct consideration for government here – it is almost a no-brainer for government to look at this and say: Well, if we do reduce speeds, obviously there is going to be a reduction in car accidents here. I fail to see why the government has not addressed it before now.

Mr. Speaker, I will leave this petition –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

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

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

WHEREAS we wish to raise concern regarding the recent delay on the construction of the new hospital in Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to commit to the planning and construction of a new hospital in Corner Brook as previously committed to in a timely manner as originally announced without further delay or changes.

Mr. Speaker, as everybody in this House should know, this is a hospital that is based in Corner Brook but it is going to service people all over the West and Southwest coast up into Labrador. This is a promise that has been made on numerous, numerous occasions by this government and never lived up to. The latest Budget was a great example of that.

One of the things the government put a \$500,000 study in place for was radiation. If you listen to the minister, she has already made quite clear that she wants nothing to do with that. In fact, she plays a lot of politics with the situation.

One example was this past week. We asked for a meeting with Eastern Health to discuss radiology, to discuss radiation. We put the request in to Eastern Health. We put that request in and it came back to us, we are going to have a number of people there. We had a confirmation that the meeting was going to happen tomorrow here at Confederation Building. That meeting was scheduled until Friday. On Friday I received a call from the minister's EA saying that the meeting is changed in scope. The minister's EA called me and said the meeting is changed in scope, therefore we need to reschedule and I want you to put all your questions in in advance. Again, this is an open government – put your questions in in advance.

Mr. Speaker, I did not ask for the scope of the meeting to be changed. The leader never, we never, Eastern Health never, the minister did. The minister's EA called my office and said we are going to reschedule. We received

confirmation again today. They do not know where it is coming from. The Auditor General has pointed out Eastern Health is not supposed to be interfered with, but all of a sudden the EA is rescheduling the meeting because the minister cannot be available for a meeting that she was never invited to in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, this government has promised a number of times to do this hospital. We know it is not there. In fact, now when we try to go out and get the information behind it, they get in the way of the meetings. They cancelled the meetings.

I will put it out again. On April 24 there is a meeting with the Western Action Committee. I invite the Member for Terra Nova to come out and have that chat on April 24. The minister should come out. I invite all the members to come out and have a chat, or are you going to try to cancel that meeting as well?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the Family Violence Intervention Court provided a comprehensive approach to domestic violence in a court setting that fully understood and dealt with the complex issues –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the Family Violence Intervention Court provided a comprehensive –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker has recognized the Member for St. John's Centre. Other members get the opportunity to stand and present their petitions in quiet. I would ask the members to extend the same respect to the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

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

WHEREAS the Family Violence Intervention Court provided a comprehensive approach to domestic violence in a court setting that fully understood and dealt with the complex issues of domestic violence; and

WHEREAS domestic violence continues to be one of the most serious issues facing our Province today, and the cost of the impact of domestic violence is great both economically and in human suffering; and

WHEREAS the Family Violence Intervention Court was welcomed and endorsed by all aspects of the justice system including the police, the courts, prosecutors, defence counsel, Child, Youth and Family Services, as well as victims, offenders, community agencies, and women's groups; and

WHEREAS the recidivism rate for offenders going through the court was 10 per cent compared to 40 per cent for those who did not; and

WHEREAS the budget for the court was only 0.2 per cent of the entire budget of the Department of Justice;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reinstate the Family Violence Intervention Court.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS ROGERS: As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy I guess – it is an odd word to use in this context – at least to have the opportunity to stand once again in the House and present this petition on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. There are people in the legal community who are shaking their heads, scratching their heads, and saying: Why was this court cancelled? These are people who were involved in the court. These are people with expertise.

Your average citizen is shaking their head, scratching their head, and wondering: Why was this court cancelled? I am shaking my head, scratching my head, and wondering: Why was this court cancelled? It seems to be, Mr. Speaker, that nobody can think of a good reason why this court was cancelled. It makes no sense. That is sad.

Mr. Speaker, at this point in our history when so much money, so much time, so much training was poured into creating a program that was working so well – that, in fact, saved the government money, saved the regular court system money, that was more efficient, and also was safer for women and children. This government talks so much about prevention, it talks so much about its commitment to violence prevention, yet it cut one of its most effective tools.

It was only this past week, Mr. Speaker – and I hope the Minister of Justice knows this – at the Law Society of Newfoundland and Labrador that they had an ongoing educational luncheon session where they talked about how effective the court was.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The member's time has expired.

MS ROGERS: Thank you very much.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS Route 430, the Viking Trail, is the primary highway on the Great Northern Peninsula; and

WHEREAS the current road condition of approximately sixty kilometres between Plum Point and Eddies Cove East have sections that are in dire need of resurfacing and/or repaving; and

WHEREAS it is the government's obligation to provide basic infrastructure to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians; and

WHEREAS an improved road network on this primary highway is needed to enhance road safety and help with local commerce, as well as deal with increasing passenger traffic levels in this section of highway;

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge government to allocate funds under the provincial roads program to pave this section of Route 430.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, it is highly critical that when you have a primary highway that is very similar to the Trans-Canada Highway, that this type of road be maintained and have good infrastructure. All commerce that flows north basically travels over this highway. Also in this section as well is the St. Barbe area, which is the port of call for the Strait of Belle Isle ferry crossing – which, between May and October sees about 77,000 passengers crossing on that ferry service going

into Labrador. There are a lot of commercial goods that are being transferred there.

Looking at what is happening in the Shoal Cove area with the Muskrat Falls cable crossing, with the drilling, and the heavy equipment that is going over that highway, there is a lot of erosion, there are a lot of potholes, there are depths, and there are areas where we need to look at making that improvement. We have a UNESCO World Heritage Site in L'Anse aux Meadows, another in Red Bay, Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: We need to look at making sure that we have quality infrastructure so that the tourism market that is tapping into this area would have good infrastructure so that they continue circulating money back into the economy.

It makes good sense, Mr. Speaker, and that is what the petitioners are asking. I look forward to having conversations with the Minister of Transportation on this particular matter.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

MS DEMPSTER: (Inaudible) 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 most communities in the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair do not have cellphone coverage;

WHEREAS residents of coastal Labrador require cell coverage to ensure their safety and communications abilities;

WHEREAS the opening of the Trans-Labrador Highway has increased their dependency on mobile communications;

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 appropriate agencies to provide cellphone coverage along the Trans-Labrador Highway and to all communities in coastal Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I live in one of the harshest, weather wise, parts of the Province – although it has not been very kind this year in any part, I have to admit. We live in a very remote area. I know there are some provisions in place. Transportation and Works have some satellite phones they place around in businesses, but every time I have gone since I have been travelling this year to pick up a phone, it seems the stock is never replenished. So that is not working.

The minister talked about 911 that they are implementing. I thought they can spend all the money they want in 911, but if we are out on a stretch of the Trans-Labrador Highway and we have an accident, 911 is not going to be any good to us because we are not able to pick up the phone.

Mr. Speaker, I am just going to reference what happened to me yesterday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: I was escorting a four-year-old child from Labrador back here with me and driving over the highway in all of the mud. Once it turned dark, the mud froze onto my vehicle. When I arrived in Goose Bay, I could not get out of my vehicle. Now, my phone was no good to me on the highway; I could not even get out if I had a mishap there because of the thick ice that was on my vehicle. I had to go to my uncle and after some effort, he managed to get me out.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard many sad stories of differences that could have been made had someone been able to pick up the phone and make that quick call. With the connection of the highway now from Red Bay on down into Goose Bay, we are seeing a huge increase in traffic. Contrary to what people at Nalcor say, we are seeing a huge increase in commercial traffic. All of this increases your risk for accidents and things like that.

Mr. Speaker, tourism – we have tourists coming from all over the world into the district and through the district right now visiting places like Red Bay. We are expecting that to increase. These people are used to using their phone everywhere they go, but when they hit Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair there are just a couple of places where they are able to use their phone.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has referenced many times the very sad story of Burton Winters and finding him with a cellphone in his pocket. I believe that should drive home the important need for cellphone coverage in rural areas –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Your time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

MR. LANE: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS there is a waste recovery facility being proposed by Eastern Waste Management in the Peak Pond-Reids Pond area; and

WHEREAS such a site will drastically impact the pond and general area in a negative way from an environmental perspective; and

WHEREAS there are many species of wildlife that will be negatively impacted by such a site, such as moose, rabbits, loons, ducks, and Canada geese; and

WHEREAS such a site will result in litter and strong odours in the general area; and

WHEREAS there are significant numbers of cabins and permanent homes in the Peak Pond-Reids Pond area which will be negatively impacted by this site; and

WHEREAS Eastern Waste Management has many sites available to them for such a facility, including former dump sites in the areas;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to intercede in the matter and advise Eastern Waste Management to withdraw this proposal and find a more suitable location for this waste recovery facility.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I presented this now a number of times and I have numerous similar petitions here to present. Of course, this is coming from the cabin owners and permanent residents in the Peaks Pond-Reids Pond, but we are also getting people from Blaketown, South Dildo, Old Shop, New Harbour, Whitbourne, and so on.

I think everybody realizes the need for this waste transfer facility. There are eight other such sites throughout the Province and this would be the ninth and final one, I understand. We want to find a place which is convenient for people to bring their bulk garbage; that makes sense. We do not want garbage going out into the woods destroying our environment.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of potential sites in the area that were former

dump sites, former industrial sites, and would make all the sense in the world to put this facility in one of those sites as opposed to destroying a beautiful, pristine area such as Peak Pond area.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue to present this until government is prepared to listen. I realize there is an environmental assessment process taking place, but what the residents are saying here is that we do not even need to go down that road of environmental assessment, this is not the right place, move it somewhere else.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KING: Orders of the Day, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I move, second by the Minister of Health and Community Services, to ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Health Professions Act, Bill 7, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Minister of Health and Community Services shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act To Amend The Health Professions Act, Bill 7.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the minister shall have leave to introduce Bill 7, and that the bill be now read a first time?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services to introduce a bill, “An Act To Amend The Health Professions Act”, carried. (Bill 7)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Health Professions Act. (Bill 7)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the bill be read a second time?

MR. KING: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 7 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, to ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act, Bill 9, and that the said bill be now read the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Minister of Finance shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act, Bill 9, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the minister shall have leave to introduce Bill 9, and that the said bill be now read a first time?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill,

“An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act”, carried. (Bill 9)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act. (Bill 9)

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask members to take their private conversations outside. We are introducing some legislation in the House for debate.

This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the bill be read a second time?

MR. KING: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: On tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 9 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador, to ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Buildings Accessibility Act, Bill 10, and that the said bill be now read the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act To Amend The Buildings Accessibility Act, Bill 10, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the minister shall have leave to introduce Bill 10, and that the said bill be now read a first time?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador to introduce a bill, “An Act To Amend The Buildings Accessibility Act”, carried. (Bill 10)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Buildings Accessibility Act. (Bill 10)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has been now read a first time.

When shall the bill be read a second time?

MR. KING: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: On tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 10 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1, to move that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, the Budget Speech.

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my privilege to stand to respond to the Budget Speech that was delivered in this House on Thursday of last week, March 27. For those people who have been paying attention to Budget Speeches in the past, this is my third opportunity to respond to a Budget Speech. The first time was back, as I said, almost three years ago now. In this particular case here for me, not as Leader of the Official Opposition but as a critic for Finance, I get the opportunity to open debate now on the Budget.

For those of you who are watching at home, if you tune in in about two hours we will probably still be standing. This is a lengthy response and typically it takes upwards to about three hours in order to do this.

What I will do is I will outline the number of things in the Budget. For those of you who have watched me over the years if it is there and it is positive, I will say it is. Then through the response, we will also identify areas of concern for us, especially as the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of things that goes into making a Budget the document that it is. I want to, first of all, mention the minister, this being her first speech on Thursday, and congratulate her on that delivery. Included in this, there is a lot of staff over many, many months. I know, based on my own experience in volunteering in health and in other areas that affected departments over the years, that the Budget process requires a lot of time. It takes up a lot of staff time and it goes on for weeks and weeks in preparation to what happened on Thursday, the Budget delivery. So I want to thank the staff in advance for the great work that they have done in preparing the document.

Also during Estimates, we rely on staff in various departments as we, as Opposition, get together and go over the Estimates document, and that in itself is a lengthy process. The Estimates document is what I really find to be very interesting because it is where you get your staff, your ministers, and the engagement is basically to and fro, and you get a chance to ask any questions at all, based on the Budget. So I would encourage people as they watch and have been pouring through those documents that are available online that if you see anything at all, to reach out to your MHA – either in the Opposition, or in government, for that matter; but reach out, because it is during this period that you can actually get those questions answered.

From why I understand, it typically takes about seventy-five hours of debate time before the Budget could get approved. Some of this has been already done, as we have seen unanimous

support in the House of Assembly on a vote for Interim Supply. This time will be factored into the Budget debate. Of course, with Interim Supply what we get then is the allowances and budgetary measures that will allow the activities of government to actually continue while the Budget is being debated.

Mr. Speaker, the House of Assembly staff obviously get quite busy during Estimates time and through the Committee work themselves. We want to mention them as well, because there are various committees that have been set up as part of the Estimates. As I said, people in their different ridings, if they have questions on the Budget, please feel free to reach out. As a matter of fact, just this morning in my inbox, I received a number of questions and concerns that people were asking and looking for clarification. All of this will come out as we delve deeper into the Estimates.

Mr. Speaker, before I get too far into the Budget response, I just want to talk about a service that I had the opportunity to attend on March 27. That was the same day as the Budget, but it was a service that was attended by the Minister of Transportation and Works and myself, as well as the MHA for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, the MHA for Mount Pearl South, and some other MHAs, the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi as an example, they were also in attendance. It was really a proud moment in the House of Assembly, not on an issue that we are proud of, I would say, Mr. Speaker, and that was a vigil to honour Loretta Saunders.

If you remember back a few days ago, all members of the House of Assembly put a letter together requesting Prime Minister Harper put together a national public inquiry into the death of so many young Aboriginal women and young girls.

There was a service held in Loretta's honour last Thursday night at St. Mary's Anglican Church in St. John's. We were happy to be there with other members of government, but what was really telling in that service was the number of people who took time to actually attend, and the cultural events that were a part of that service.

That service was held in conjunction with many other services that were held, not only in our Province but in other areas and in other jurisdictions.

All of us in this House of Assembly, I am very proud to say, we come with a common voice and a strong voice that an inquiry be started because we need to figure out what the systemic problems are within our Aboriginal community. This has to stop, Mr. Speaker. Truly, the only way for this to stop is to get a national inquiry in place so that we can point out what the systemic problems are and put in the preventative measures.

Mr. Speaker, also in our Province, 100 years ago today, we remember back in 1914 the experience of the devastating tragedy of so many young men who lost their lives participating in the seal fishery. Mr. Speaker, this is a point in our history, and I guess one of the many occurrences we have seen over the years where tragedy, especially with people losing their lives at sea. Just a few weeks ago we had another memorial service about people of the sea.

There was a service today in memory of this particular event back in 1914. Communities across our Province, communities across Newfoundland and Labrador mourn the loss of those 254 men who died at sea. It is important that we do that because it is an important piece of our history.

Today, as people prepare to take part in this year's seal fishery, it is important that we look back to 1914 and remember what happened 100 years today and the loss of 254 lives. Seventy-eight sealers perished on the ice after being stranded in what was one of the worse winter storms at that time, while 176 men died from the *SS Southern Cross* and sank in that same winter storm.

What a tragedy that must have been. Just imagine, as you are waiting for the news and you hear there are 254 men who are lost. Today we remember that. As I now begin to speak to the Budget, you do this with this as a backdrop,

as the many tragic events we have had to face as a Province, Mr. Speaker, over our history.

Mr. Speaker, we will start the Budget response. Really, if you go back to the Budget Speech itself, this is where the Minister of Finance – this being really the Budget Speech, there are many things that get listed into this. It gives you a brief outline of what indeed is entailed in the larger Budget document, being more around the Estimates book, which clearly outlines where every single department and every single salary would be spent. We did ask about the salary document. The indication we had from staff was that this would be something that is posted online.

Coming out of the Budget document on Thursday, what typically happens is you will get a mail-out. The mail-out will go something like this. It will tell you that in this year, Budget 2014: Five Things to Know About Budget 2014. It goes on to talk about the five things this government felt was important the people in Newfoundland and Labrador would know about. It goes on to talk about shared prosperity, fairness, and balance. Under that particular category it talks about a return to surplus next year.

Really, when you look at the details of how you expect to return to surplus, there are not a lot of details around that except for the fact you would see oil royalties increase. Mr. Speaker, much of what has happened over our Budgets for the last ten years – well, less than that, because the royalties really did not start coming in, in any significant sense until, I think, around 2005. We will have more detail on that as we go through this.

When you talk about returning to balance as part of a 10-Year Sustainability Plan that was discussed last year in 2014, there is really no clear indication, except for the dependency on oil, of how we will get there. If something should happen, for instance, either with currency, production, or whatever it is, all of this would change the ability to get the surplus. The contingency plans with this particular government when it comes to budgeting have

just not been put in place. Mr. Speaker, this is the shared prosperity, the fairness, and the balance.

The second of the five things you need to know about in this particular Budget is: Creating First-Rate Education Opportunities. Mr. Speaker, there is no question that members from all three parties in this House of Assembly, and in particular, I know members of the Official Opposition have openly spoken quite often about the need for full-day kindergarten. In this particular Budget – as a matter of fact, just as recently as a week or so ago we were asking questions about full-day kindergarten.

Full-day kindergarten brings quite a number of benefits to young families in this Province. As a matter of fact, there are certain schools in our Province right now where we already have full-day kindergarten. As an example I have one school in my own district, because of the busing situation, full-day kindergarten applies right now. It was actually cheaper for the school to keep kids there, offer the full-day kindergarten, than it was to bus the students back and forth.

Full-day kindergarten will be an asset to young families. As a matter of fact, my colleague, the candidate for Virginia Waters right now, she openly spoke to the Board of Trade about a year or so ago, bringing the business community on side, because it was important that everybody understood the value of full-day kindergarten in our society. It is not something new. Many jurisdictions across the country already have full-day kindergarten. Right now, this initiative that was announced will come into effect by 2016, the money being allocated. In 2016, people in the Province will be able to enjoy the benefits of full-day kindergarten.

I would encourage the government members opposite to make sure that this becomes an action item because we know first-hand by looking at some of the budget items in the past, that it is one thing to say something, one thing to announce something, yet not always does it get delivered. You need not look any further than last year's Estimates as an example, to see there were millions and millions of dollars that were

actually mentioned in the Budget package but just never were implemented. The action just was not there.

As a matter of fact, in the midyear report this year we found the number I believe to be around \$270 million of things that were announced in the Budget, yet clearly did not get done. That was the biggest line item that changed the Budget process this year, where they actually saved money, where the revised number was put in place from the budgeted number of last year to the revision this year. It was simply because they had a problem spending the money they had allocated for in Budget 2013. Now that was on top of all the budget cuts that came with that.

Mr. Speaker, of the five things, Providing Quality Health Care, that was the third item mentioned in the five things to know about in this pamphlet, which I am sure you will all receive in your mail. The third thing was around quality health care, and \$3 billion in total for the health care budget – always a big number, Mr. Speaker, in our Province when you look at that. About 40 per cent of the Budget as a whole goes into health care, because that is something that is first and foremost. When you talk to people in the Province, they will tell you that health care is extremely important to them.

Back in July of last year, we met with a number of health care professionals around the Province. They were very encouraged to have the opportunity to meet and to openly discuss all the things that affected them, the things that affected their associations, and the things that affected them and their families. They were telling us that was the first time that they had a chance to meet at a round table like that since the 1990s.

Mr. Speaker, this is communication. In order to make a decision, this is something that you would expect that should happen on a regular basis. Improving health care has to be a number one priority. It is a number one priority for us as the Official Opposition, but you have to do that and you have to make sure that when you make a decision to do it, it is sustainable.

We found out last year with the Adult Dental Program as an example that there needed to be cuts made at that particular time by the Department of Health, simply because the planning was not put in place from the beginning. The people who got involved, the numbers were much higher than they anticipated; and you would normally expect that because when you develop a new program, when you put a new program in place, of course, the uptake is always higher in the early years. You could expect that in a program like that.

This year, we will see some changes in the Adult Dental Program rising from \$150 to \$200 – I believe the number is – changes for people who need dentures and all of that; but we are not really seeing any change in the number, so there will be less people who would be able to take advantage of that.

Mr. Speaker, it talks about building stronger communities as number four of the five things to know about Budget 2014; \$200 million spent in the three-year municipal capital works. One of the things when we talk to communities around the Province, and one of the things I know we have done as a party is that we have made a commitment to actually holding a Premier's forum and we would do that on an annual basis. That is a commitment that as a Premier we would make. That would give certainty and assurances that the feedback, the communication, is available to communities across the Province.

We have done that in conjunction with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador. They see that as their opportunity to actually get their ideas brought forward, because right now what we know is that there is a new fiscal framework that has been sought by the municipalities. Right now, they feel that at least around the schedules of meetings, the number of meetings that are actually transpiring, that they really will not meet their target. They need this to happen in the fall of 2015.

The former Minister of Municipal Affairs had made a commitment that this is something that would be seen as a Budget item by 2015. In

order to get to that, there has to be a series of meetings, timelines, and milestones that are put in place. You will never meet your target if you do not make people accountable, do not put those milestones in place, and do not put those targets in place. That can only happen with communications with the people whose lives would be affected. That is how you build strong communities.

When you look at the AG's report over the years you will see there are a number of our communities – there is the aging infrastructure that we have right now in terms of our water and sewer, in terms of our fire protection, and in terms of our streets. All of this is becoming older infrastructure. They want to get involved because a fiscal framework for our municipalities gives them the opportunity to be more involved in the decisions. They even say that the legislation they have to work with is actually standing in their way and prohibiting some of the decisions they have to make today.

Even with the St. John's act as an example, right now that piece of legislation is very old and very outdated. We have been hearing from the city that this is something they would see that needs to be updated. Bring them into 2014, not just the Budget in 2014 but bring their cities into 2014 with legislation that is relevant to where we are in our history.

Encouraging a Vibrant Economy: This was the fifth. It goes on to say that there will be over \$1 billion to encourage economic growth and to spur innovative innovation and entrepreneurship. Mr. Speaker, there was one thing that we have not done a very good job of, or this government has not done a very good job of, and that is diversifying the economy. You need not to look any further but just drive around the Province and you would see – as an example right now we have unemployment rates in the St. John's and the Northeast Avalon somewhere around 6 per cent. When you look at provincially an unemployment rate of around 12 per cent, it goes to show that in many of our small communities people are just not working.

You could take that and extrapolate that a little further. When you go really off the Trans-Canada Highway and off our major centres, you will see that unemployment rates are extremely high in those locations. As a matter of fact in many, many locations you would see that they are in the 20 per cent and the 25 per cent range of people who are unemployed. Mr. Speaker, we need to be creative but we cannot wait too long because people are not willing to stay when they cannot work.

What happens is we now find ourselves with a new economy that has evolved and that, of course, being the Alberta economy. I know in the area where I come from many, many people are actually having their families who would live in the communities that surround that area. They then commute back and forth to Alberta. I have been told that it is upwards of 20,000 to 25,000 people who are doing that on a regular basis.

Mr. Speaker, that is actually good for our economy, but it is an Alberta workplace that is actually bringing money back to the Province. That is not something we have had anything to do with. The money, of course, is always good when you can spend that in your own communities and you give people the freedom to go and find work no matter where it is. You encourage that, but seeking economic development and innovation in our own Province is what people want. Everyone I talk to, the people I talk to, want the option to return home to go to work. That is what Newfoundlanders and Labradorians want to do.

Mr. Speaker, these were the five things to know about Budget 2014. Throughout all of this, there was not much said or anything at all said about borrowing \$1 billion. Now, a borrowing of \$1 billion, just think about that. That is a big number, I would say. In our Province right now, it just adds to our debt. Here we are in a situation where we thought we could actually do quite fine off our oil royalties, but in this particular case this is not what happened. We go out and we borrow this year and next year we will have to borrow again.

This was at a time we were always told we were a have Province living in a golden age. We were flush with money in some cases. In this particular case, we now do not have enough money. We had to go and borrow.

To the minister's credit, \$371 million will go to pay down debt and the rest will go to Nalcor, what they say is an investment into Nalcor. Therefore that would be an asset and it is really not borrowing. Well, the truth is, indeed it can be seen as an asset, but it must be valued to become that asset. We do not know where it would go. All we know is that people in Newfoundland and Labrador will be forced to pay for this no matter what the cost, so to see that as the investment that gets often trumpeted.

As a matter of fact, at the federal loan guarantee, it was the reporter with the *National Post* who said it was easy to line up the bond markets for this simply because the federal loan guarantee was in place. In their sense, that was actually sure money, Mr. Speaker, \$1 billion at a time in our Province when most people thought we were living in a golden age.

Mr. Speaker, I want to open the Budget document up to where it really starts. There is a table in the document that is called Statement of Operations. It is the Statement of Operations that refers to 2013 and 2014, and it talks about revenue. When you go back about a year ago, the Budget was set to be at \$6.8 billion in fiscal revenue and net income, when you look at all government enterprises, it was just over \$7 billion. It was actually \$7,092.6 million, so just about \$7.1 billion. That was revised down at the end of the year, so far – this, of course, is subject to change again at \$7,059.4 million, so that is a variance of some \$33 million. That was the Statement of Operations for 2013-2014.

When you look at the expenses, when you go back to Budget time last year, the net expenses were anticipated to be \$7,656.4 million; therefore a deficit of \$563.8 million. Based on program expenses is \$6.8 billion; and debt servicing –and I will get back to this later – at around \$847.6 million. That is \$847.6 million in debt financing based on last year's Budget.

That did change a bit; that has been revised. The deficit budgeted to be at \$563.8 million has been revised downward to \$348 million, \$349 million. Mr. Speaker, you ask yourself: Why is this? Why was it budgeted to be at \$564 million and then budgeted down to be between \$348 million and \$349 million. The reason, of course, being that this government could not spend the money that they budgeted for last year. They could not get the infrastructure money out; it could not be done fast enough.

This was one of the reasons that, through the course of the summer, I have often talked about multi-year financing, multi-year funding for various projects so that people would not have to worry about getting money out the door. We all know how difficult it is when you have a project or some infrastructure work that is tied up, waiting to go through the tender process, waiting to get permitting, it becomes very difficult to get that done. Therefore, multi-year commitments to projects is extremely important in our Province. We have a short construction season, as you know, and in this particular case in this winter of 2014, one being the worse in my recent memory, the construction season will be short again, I can imagine, given the late spring in just about all areas of our Province.

When you look at trying to get the projects that you have made the commitment to, getting them done is very difficult. One of the reasons around having multi-year commitments and multi-year financing, what contractors are telling me, is that it important because it lets them know with certainty that they can tell their staff when they finish up a project the year before that we will be there, we will have this particular job, and we can start at this particular day. So, it is important for staff to know that. That is a great retention tool. It is a great retention tool for companies so that when they send people home in the fall of the year, they know when they will come back. That was the reason why we have seen such a significant change in what the Budget of 2013-14, to the revised number.

Now when you look at The Budget Outlook, which is on the following page, and you look to 2014-15 which is this year's fiscal year, the

revenue this year would be around \$7.3 billion and that is up by around \$300 million; so for 2014-15, around \$7.29 billion. Program expenses of \$6,954.7 million and for debt servicing next year at \$874 million.

Mr. Speaker, I already said just a few minutes ago that debt servicing this year would be \$874 million and debt servicing last year was \$847 million. That has been revised, by the way, to \$840 million. So the revision of our operations last year, debt servicing at \$841 million, this year debt servicing will go to \$874 million. So you can see what is happening here when it comes to debt servicing in our Province.

Mr. Speaker, for this year a revenue of \$7.29 billion, total net expenses of \$7,828.7 million and that is a deficit of \$537.9 million. So we borrowed money to make our commitment to Nalcor and to pay down one of our outstanding loans that we had – we borrowed money to do that, but on top of that, Mr. Speaker, we are still going to have a deficit.

When you look at the change here, you have to borrow \$1 billion to meet your budget demands and you are still going to have a deficit. Really, when you look at it from a business sense, that is over \$1.5 billion to get you to balance, Mr. Speaker.

So what is the forecast? What are they forecasting because we know that this government, last year, adopted a 10-Year Sustainability Plan and we have heard quite often over the last week or so that they are still committed to the 10-Year Sustainability Plan, I say, Mr. Speaker. So what does this mean?

This all means that in 2015-2016 this being the forecast – this year is budgeted so for 2015-2016 would be the forecast. In 2014-2015 we have had about \$7.3 billion in revenue. In 2015-2016 the revenue is forecast to jump to \$8 billion. Details on how we get there, Mr. Speaker, we do not know them yet; we will go looking for them.

What are the sources of revenue that is going to bring in the extra \$700 million next year? Where will that be? In all likelihood it is

anticipated that it is oil again because really that is the only source of revenue that we hear much of at all. Mr. Speaker, when you look at the forecast for 2015-2016 you look at the expenses of \$7,126.8 million that is up from \$6,954.7 million, so we are seeing an increase in the expense line.

Mr. Speaker, I will raise your attention to this one again, debt servicing expenses go up to \$927 million. It goes from \$874 million this year to \$927 million next year, so another \$50 million in debt servicing. You can see the trend that is happening here right now with our debt and the cost to manage that debt. When you look at the total net expenses of being around \$8 billion, in 2015-2016 it is really a balanced Budget anticipated to be around \$28.5 million in surplus.

Mr. Speaker, one more year – they go out three years or two years past this one with this Budget. A revenue line anticipated to be around \$8.2 billion. This is all in the Budget document on page 7. When you look at the revenue of \$8.2 billion you look at program expenses it is \$7.2 billion, again I draw attention to the debt servicing. The debt servicing in 2016-2017 is anticipated and forecast to be \$970 million, so just shy of \$1 billion, with \$8.2 billion in revenue just shy of \$1 billion in debt servicing.

This is in what we is considered to be a golden age. An age when we have had our oil royalties, by then it will be over ten years of using oil royalties. The offshore oil production will be decreasing as we know because those wells have a life. At some point production is falling off. We already know back in 2007, I think it was, we were just over 100 million barrels of oil, and this year it is anticipated to be 86 million. So we are already falling off on production, I say, Mr. Speaker.

This is a given for us, and we will have to wait. We do have, of course, Hebron, which will come on and is expected to pump first oil in 2017, but beyond that, it is still very much in the exploration stage. That is what we – until we get to the Flemish Pass and those areas. Hopefully we are successful, Mr. Speaker. We

need to be successful, but any find that we find out there today in terms of exploration, these are years away. Now there would be hours in construction and getting ready for that to be completed, but, Mr. Speaker, the oil royalty coming from that would still be uncertain.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I have had meetings with many, many people over the last few years, and even the pricing around Hebron and those sorts of things. We are not even sure where the royalties will be in terms of super royalties and the regular royalty regime, just because of the cost of that project and where the cost has actually gone. You have to reach payout before you reach the super royalty level. That comes into question, if we can actually keep the project to the point where we can recover the costs fast enough. Of course, that depends on the price per barrel of oil. Getting to payout will determine where the royalty is.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the Budget outlook, their own documents right now, we see revenue going from \$7.3 billion in 2014-2015 – that actually rises to \$8.2 billion, Mr. Speaker, but in year 2016-2017 we still only find ourselves in a situation where we have \$32 million in a surplus. So it is really a balanced Budget at best, when you go right out to 2016-2017. All of this at a time when we have had significant revenues, and I will get into this.

I will go back in a few minutes to every single Budget that we have had, right back into the late 1990s, just to give you the history of what oil has meant to our Province; what oil royalties have meant to our Province. In light of the fact we have these four wells that are pumping right now, what happens and how do you replace this? Because the creativity, the innovation has not been there to diversify our Province. The opportunity to do so, we must be very careful because we do not want to lose the next opportunity, I say, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Budget document itself tells us many different things when you look at where the revenue comes from, how it is as a Province. When I talk about oil royalties, and we all do in this Province, as you know, we have become

very dependent on that. When you look at where it comes from – and it is very enlightening when you look at it. From the federal government sources right now, it is about 9.1 per cent, and other federal sources around 9.1 per cent, or \$680 million.

Mr. Speaker, health and social transfers is around \$490 million, which is about 6.6 per cent of our total revenue. These are our transfers that come from the federal government, and we all become very disillusioned when it comes to health transfers with the federal government.

As a matter of fact, even earlier today there was a discussion on the floor of the House of Assembly about the transfers from the federal government. We know they are not doing their part when it comes to taking an active role, not only in paying for the services or doing the part of paying services and getting involved in our health care. They want to go the other way. They feel they should pay less. Yet when you look at the Canada Health Act, they have a commitment they have made to the people, not only of Newfoundland and Labrador but certainly Canadians as a whole.

It is has been their position as the Health Accord that was put in place by Prime Minister Martin at the time in 2004, the ten-year Accord that expires in 2014, just in a day or two. As this Accord expires, it is the federal Conservative government that feel they need to be less involved in health care with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and indeed Canada as a whole. This has been a unilateral decision that has been made by the federal government.

It is health and social transfers at \$489.6 million or \$490 million. Right now it is less than 7 per cent of our total income. Between the two, with other federal sources and our health and social transfers, it is about 16 per cent right now of our income.

Mr. Speaker, where else does the revenue come from? Taxation, as an example. I know the Minister of Natural Resources is over there: Please talk about my department. They produce the money. Taxation is \$3 billion, or 41.4 per

cent, of our total revenue. Of course, this is paid for by the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is paid by our corporate citizens, many of which are medium and small businesses, I would say.

Investment income of \$197 million; of course, this would be investments we would have in various companies around the Province. I understand that is really 2.6 per cent of the income. Fees and fines are \$470 million, 6.3 per cent of the income. Of course, the big number is our offshore royalties, and those are 32.1 per cent of our total income. We are staggering \$3.4 billion of our income comes from offshore royalties. When you look at total revenue of just under \$7.5 billion, you look at offshore royalties to be almost \$2.4 billion of that. Mr. Speaker, that is a big chunk of your money. Over 30 per cent of all the money we collect in our Province comes from our offshore royalties.

Mr. Speaker, it really reinforces the need for this Province, our Province, to diversify so that we can create other opportunities for revenue. Mr. Speaker, you can only do that by working with your communities. You can only do that when you work with the medium and small businesses within our Province.

Communities, enlightening enough and interesting enough, is one of the things as they talk about the fiscal framework, because they also want to mention the opportunity for communities to get involved in economic development. This is very key to them, because they are looking for ways so they can create their own source of money in helping build their own economies. That is where the money comes from. That is where the revenue comes from and how we get a total of almost \$705 billion.

Where does it go? This is why we have budgets. You make decisions on how you actually spend that money. Where does the money go? I guess not surprising to anybody in our society, that the health care sector is just over \$3 billion of our Budget. Three billion dollars of the \$7.5 billion that will be collected as revenue, \$3 billion of it will go into health care. Mr. Speaker, \$3 billion,

or 36.4 per cent of our total revenue will be spent on health care, and there is a need.

When you look at the aging demographics of our Province and you look at the challenges we face in terms of obesity rates, smoking rates, we live in a very tough environment. Health care costs in our Province, just in the geography alone, it is very hard to do that in an efficient manner. I am not surprised at all, like people in our Province would not be surprised, to know that our health care budget is so high. It costs a lot of money to deliver those services.

One of the things that came out loud and clear when we met with health care groups across the Province and their willingness to dialogue, willingness to communicate, one of the things they said is that they have many ideas on how they could deliver services more efficient, and they could do so. It was not always about the money. As a matter of fact, as a group they had said that \$3 billion at the time would be enough to carry out the health care services in the Province, but we had to spend our money wisely. We had to look for ways to spend money more efficiently.

There was a lot of discussion at that meeting around expanding the scope of practices for many of our health care professionals; how we do so in areas where our population is not high and very difficult to recruit and retain health care professionals. Their advice was we need to communicate more with them, meet more with them, get together, use their ideas so that we can spend our money more wisely and spend it more efficiently.

Mr. Speaker, that is \$3 billion in health care of the almost \$7.5 billion in revenue. The social sector being \$836 million; the resource sector being about \$1.5 billion, and general government just over \$2 billion. Education is another key area in our Province where a lot of the money goes, Mr. Speaker, about 10.4 per cent, or some-\$860 million gets spent on education in our Province.

AN HON. MEMBER: Did you get your school fixed? What a member.

MR. BALL: Mr. Speaker, speaking of education, the member just quite rightly reminded me, as I went home – I mentioned earlier about the aging community infrastructure that we have in our Province. We see it in our communities, but we also see it in our government buildings as well.

I know in my own district, just last week we had some major problems with leaks that were occurring in the roof, in a building that is really forty years old. When you go in the school you will see tarpaulins and there were certainly many, many leaks that happened. Parents were afraid that if this was left you would have to deal with mould issues and so on and so forth. I will say the work is now started. We will see this project being done when the weather becomes better and they can actually get the new roof in place. These are the kinds of things we face now as we deal with aging infrastructure in our Province.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is where the money goes. The thing is, though, when you look at \$2.4 billion coming from offshore resources, the stark reality is you can pump it once. Once it is out of the ground you cannot pump it the second time, it is gone. Therefore, it is important for us, that no matter what programs we put in place, there has to be a sustainability factor that gets attached to it. Not sustainability for one, two or three years, because when you put programs in place that people expect and they have become accustomed to, it becomes a way of life for them, then the sustainability has to be there for them.

Not like we saw last year, as I say, Mr. Speaker, with the adult dental plan, because really, quite frankly, there was no idea what that was going to cost when the plan was put in place. As a result of that, we found ourselves in a situation where we had to make changes just months after the program had gotten started.

When I talk about sustainability, you need to look at the benchmarks we have readily available to us in our society, and they are there. As you know, especially with governments and with businesses, they rely on this quite heavily.

They look for forecasting models and they look for information they could use to help them make a decision. Government, of course, is no different than that. There is a lot of information that exists out there. As a matter of fact, in our own Province right now we see a lot of information about forecasting, where we would anticipate to be in our economy.

Right now, what we see is the major drivers in our economy are essentially around three megaprojects that are occurring. One being in Long Harbour, which is starting to wind down now. It has provided significant employment for people in the Province for a number of years. This is a project that has been started – really, when you go back to the first shovel in the ground – quite some time ago.

Again, I will say this was done by a Liberal administration, and the legacy is living on today. It is one of the first mines we have seen in our Province, if not the only one today, where we have seen any degree of secondary processing; any degree of secondary processing that is happening in our Province right now from the mining industry.

The minister knows; I am sure he would be the first to say this. He has visited Long Harbour many, many times. I am sure he has toured the building. He has his updates and he is very proud of what is happening down there and the number of jobs that has created, and it will create into the future, Mr. Speaker. So, that is one of the megaprojects that we have in our Province right now.

Number two, of course, is the Muskrat Falls Project, which is starting to ramp up right now. We will see quite a few thousand people who will be working there from all areas of the Province this year. This is a megaproject.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. BALL: The member opposite asked me if I support the Muskrat Falls Project. Mr. Speaker, of course I support the development of the Lower Churchill, I always have. There are certain aspects of this deal that I have many

questions about; a first right of refusal, as an example, to Emera with zero cost.

Bill 53, the third line going into Labrador, creating economic benefits for the people of Lab West. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, the minister opposite knows where we stood on that and how we fought, we stood hand in hand to see that line done.

Mr. Speaker, we have Muskrat Falls, we have Long Harbour, and of course we have Hebron. That is a project that we have a significant equity position in and one that I just spoke about that will create thousands of jobs in the Province.

Cost control on that particular project is extremely important for us. If we cannot contain the costs, cannot manage the budget on that particular project, well it has a number of implications for us. We have to put money in to take care of our equity position which would be required.

We will be asking questions about that, I say to the minister, looking for details on that. He can expect that question I am sure in Estimates about where we are with that, where they anticipate the schedule and the budget to be. Payout on that triggering the super royalty is extremely important for us as that project – and as we pump that oil of at least some 700 million barrels of reserve out of the ground there. It is extremely important that we get that project into position so it can actually reach payout.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the economic forecast that we have in our Province, you make the decision when you go and build a business plan, it is important that you understand what the economic indicators are. What direction do you anticipate your Province to go? It is no different than we would be if it was a business. You would look at the business plan, you would look at the future, what you think the future would be for your catchment area, and you would make the decision at what to invest in.

This is all in the Budget document itself. When you go back to the economic statistics that we

have here from 2010-2013, so this really essentially is based on last year. These would be known numbers. There are many there. It talks about population in 2010, 522,000; 2013, 526,000. We all know that when you look at the forecast, population is expected to decline. It is expected to decline simply because right now in our Province we are seeing more people dying than we are children born. That is a significant concern for us. When you talk about putting in place population growth strategies, it is not really being effective at all. We are not really seeing the numbers that they first anticipated to be.

Mr. Speaker, one thing that is very concerning for me is when you look at the employment. We have heard from various ministers over the years – as you talk about the Labour Market Outlook 2020, and you need some 70,000 people to actually fill the jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador, many of those occurring simply because more people will be retiring. The size of the labour force, how many people in our Province are available to work, is an important number to look at because if you are actually going to meet the labour demands in your Province, you need to know that the labour force is of a size that could actually meet that demand.

In our particular case, what we have seen here in our Province in 2010 was the labour force at 256,000. In 2011, it was 258,000. In 2012, it went up to 263,000. In 2013, it actually dropped to 262,000. It is pretty consistent when you think about it, some small growth, but when you look at the forecast of the size of the labour force over the next four years and the 263,400 that we had in 2012, it actually drops to 251,000 over the next four years. That is actually a loss of some 12,000 people, 12,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are part of the labour force today who in four years' time will not be part of the labour force.

Why is that? Well, first and foremost, that is as a result of the megaprojects that primarily will be over by then. Work will begin winding down, so the labour force will have dropped. It is either through people who have retired or people who would have moved away. If you

think it was simply because of retirement, you think people would come in and fill the void, and other people would go to work. You would determine that in your employment workforce number.

If you look at the number of people who were employed in our Province, and if you go back to 2010, we had 219,000 in 2010. In 2011, it was 225,000. In 2012, it was 230,000. In 2013, it was 232,000 or 233,000. When you look at that, you would say, well, that trend is good. Most people would stand and they would say: Look what we have done. The employment numbers in our Province, the workforce and the people who are working, are at record levels.

So it is today, and that is the accurate number, but when you look at the forecast on that number, people who are actually looking at those numbers in detail and looking at what will occur in the Province over the next few years – as a matter of fact looking out over just four years. Many people in this House – and I am hoping this side of the House will be over there in four years – but in four years many people in this House will still be playing a key roles in politics.

In four years, what we will see is the employment workforce in our Province from 233,000 drop to 219,000. Mr. Speaker, that is almost 14,000 people over the next four years, the employment force, people who are working in our Province; we will lose 14,000 people. These are significant issues and significant economic indicators that we face as a Province, Mr. Speaker.

Quite often, we hear members opposite talk about the number of people and the employment rate in our Province; some people will even argue if using the unemployment number is a fair number, if that is really a true indicator, but it is a number in our Province that we have been using as a benchmark for quite a number of years. So when you look at the unemployment rate and you look at the forecasting on unemployment – this coming right from the government's document itself, right from the Budget Speech, go no further that page 2 and it

is all there. It talks about the unemployment rate in our Province at 11.4 per cent. What will it be next year? It will be 11.4 per cent, and the year after it will be 11.4 per cent. In four years' time, the economic indicators that are used in this Budget, it goes up in just four years to 12.3 per cent, so that is a full percentage point.

So think of what I have just mentioned here. The workforce, the labour force, is falling, the people working in our Province are falling, and the unemployment rate is actually going up. On top of that, as I started to speak about the Budget, there was another number that I quoted a few times and that is the debt servicing. Over the next three year, debt servicing goes from \$874 million, next year to \$927 million, and then in 2016-17 to almost \$1 billion at \$970 million. So Mr. Speaker, it is less people working to pay taxes and it has increased debt for the next generation and the debt servicing, of course, is increased as well.

Now, Mr. Speaker, people would say that you stand up here as an Opposition Leader and you are just laying all of this out there, but what I am doing is I am quoting right from the Budget document itself. Everything that I have mentioned today is right in this Budget document. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I have not touched one other note. The only book that I have mentioned so far is this *Budget 2014: Shared Prosperity, Fair Society, Balanced Outlook*. Everything that I have said so far, that is where it has come from.

So it is \$1 billion in borrowing to pay down \$971 million in past debt, and the debt changes – the debt this year in 2013 will be at \$11.6 billion and in 2014 it goes up to \$13 billion and net debt to \$9 billion to \$9.8 billion, and it is all based on currency of around 91.25 cents in oil at \$1.05.

Mr. Speaker, when you look back at it and you look back at the last ten or eleven years and you look at the amount of money that has come in this Province – and I will get into that later in terms of how much that has been in oil royalties – and you look at where we are today, the situation really has not changed much at all.

When it comes to debt – now people will come and they will say: Well, we spent a lot of money on infrastructure. That is the first thing that you hear. Oh, yes, we spent a lot of money on infrastructure. Well, yes; but then if you go to the AG's report, which I will get in to a bit later, and you talk about \$800 million right now in old infrastructure just in bridges alone. So there are a lot of people that have adhered to old infrastructure and there is no question right now that there has not been a whole lot done with that.

I had a message over the weekend; it talked about a slate roof on a building in Corner Brook or something that was just built a few years ago, and getting the courthouse open. The question came to me: Would they ever use that again? Quite frankly, I thought they would never use that again in this climate. I am not sure, but we will be checking it out. I have heard that is something that they would be considering using again.

MR. JOYCE: Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to take it off.

MR. BALL: The Member for Bay of Islands is telling me \$250,000 just to take it off. When you look at that, Mr. Speaker, it is decisions – and when you talk about sustainability, it is no different than making decisions that you would actually use in your own house, and it is not something we would use in our own.

Mr. Speaker, what we do – and this stuff is all posted online. So far, I went through bits and pieces of the Budget document. There is another booklet that gets handed out – and it is online. It talks about The Economy 2014 and it is entitled the same thing: Shared Prosperity, Fair Society, Balanced Outlook. This speaks to the economy of 2014 where this government would anticipate seeing things going.

I talked at great length about the economic indicators just a few minutes ago, talked about the change of employment and the population, and all of those sorts of things, and the impact that would have on our economy, which really is what we need to drive our revenue. One thing I

did not mention, which I will mention because it came up in Question Period today, was around GDP and leading the country in GDP at 5.9 per cent. Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? That is true. Leading the country in GDP at 5.9 per cent is true. That is a true story and that is a true indicator.

What happens in 2014? In 2014 the forecast for the real GDP to be at 0.5 per cent and in 2015 zero per cent, and in 2016 forecast minus 4.2 per cent. All these indicators that I am talking about are things that affect the revenue stream within our Province. When you look at real GDP you can stand up today and say it is at 5.9 per cent, but also stand up and tell us why in 2016 we are losing 4.2 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, household income over the next three years is forecast to fall off. Retail sales is expected, by their own document, to fall off. Housing starts, which is absolutely a startling number to me – back in 2012 one of the things that we heard from a lot of government members was that the housing starts in our Province have reached all-time levels and they did at almost 3,900, a lot of new houses being built in our Province. That was great for the construction industry. In 2013 that has dropped off by almost 1,000. That is down now to 2,862. It is down from 3,885 down to 2,862.

What are they forecasting? What are the economists forecasting for the future of our Province? When you look at going out, taking out the credit card and borrowing \$1 billion, you must know with certainty that something in the future will be there to pay for all of this. Housing starts in 2012, 3,885; and in 2013, 2,862; 2014, 2,843 down again, marginally, but down again. The forecast in 2015 is 2,712, down again. In 2016, Mr. Speaker, it goes to 2,173.

In 2012 it was 3,885 and in 2016, 2,173. That is the economic indicators for housing starts in our Province. That is right in the Budget document. Everything that I have said today is right from this Budget document.

The capital investment in this Province goes from \$12 billion down to just under \$10 billion, I say, Mr. Speaker. I am not here today to sound as an alarmist, but I am here as a realist. When I mentioned the fact that the economic indicators in our Province are pointing in a different direction, they are actually trending down, we have to take this stuff serious. Because if we are indeed concerned about our next generation, if our legacy is to leave this Province in better shape than when we took it, these are the indicators that we have to pay a lot of attention to. We have to pay close attention to this, I say, Mr. Speaker.

We cannot leave the next generation with a burden of debt. We have come through all of this, Mr. Speaker. There was planning that went in place with Voisey's Bay, there is planning that went in place with Hibernia, there is planning that went in place with White Rose, planning that went in place with Terra Nova to create economic benefits and royalties for the people of this Province. We are given the opportunity to diversify our economy, I say, Mr. Speaker. We ask ourselves ten years later why it is we are still borrowing money.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the population in our Province, keeping your population to a point – because there is a critical mass that you need; you need people working in your society who are actually contributing, paying tax dollars, paying money to the Treasury so that you can afford to put those programs in place. This year, what we have seen is – and part of all of this is putting in an aggressive immigration strategy. Other provinces have done this and in our particular case, what we have done is actually cut that money.

Just a few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to attend a craft fair that was occurring here in this Province. It was done by the Multicultural Women's Association. It was great to be part of it because they actually love living in St. John's and, certainly, playing a large role in cultural developments in their own lives, making sure that they got together as a group, sharing their own ideas and making this particular St. John's area a vibrant community.

Mr. Speaker, often when we bring up immigration we hear from people saying: Well, no, I do not want immigrants coming in and taking my job. That is not what this is all about. In certain areas of our Province, we cannot find people to do the jobs, so you put the postings up; and when you cannot find people to do the jobs, you have to look for others ways of doing this. One way to do this is certainly retrain our own people who go in and do those jobs; that is a very key aspect of this and something that we should always do. When there is not enough there to do that, of course, from time to time you need to have an aggressive immigration program in place.

Mr. Speaker, when you talk about the economy in this booklet called *The Economy 2014*, it talks about the outlook. There are about sixteen indicators that are mentioned here throughout this booklet. One of the things, I must say, I found very striking is it says, "Economic activity will remain at high levels in 2015 and although growth will be weak, some indicators will post improvements." So that is for 2014.

It goes on to say, "Beyond 2015" – just next year – "the provincial economy is expected to contract as major project development activity progresses past peak levels". What we saying here is that once the megaprojects pass your peak levels, we are actually going to see a contraction in the economy in our Province. Mr. Speaker, this is the same economy we need to drive our taxation so we can actually pay for the social benefits and all the programs we have become so reliant on over the years, like our education, I would say.

I would encourage people to take a good look at this book. It also speaks about, I want to mention, oil and gas as an example when you look at offshore oil production. We actually peaked in 2007. That was our peak production. We actually dropped a bit in 2008 and 2009. It was fairly stable in 2010 and 2011. It dropped significantly in 2012. It rebounded a bit to just less than 85 million barrels in 2013 and around 86 million barrels in 2014. Mr. Speaker, we will then see Hebron starting late in 2017.

“Between first oil from Hibernia in November 1997 up to March 2013, oil royalties contributed roughly \$14.7 billion to the provincial treasury.” Mr. Speaker, when you think about that, it is \$15 billion to our Treasury. When this particular government gets up and they start talking about all the great and wonderful things they have really done, they have done it on the backs of \$14.7 billion in oil royalties and not one of those projects did they have anything to do with, except for some extensions and some expansions, I will say, Mr. Speaker. I am not here to suggest today that it was just one individual because making those programs and those projects successful, I would say, Mr. Speaker, goes back to 1985. You cannot stand here and say you have created revenue to support the programs that we have done.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit now – when you look at The Economy 2014, there are so many things here that concern us. I want to talk about future development. There is not a lot in here on forestry, but really the need for a provincial-wide strategy on forestry in our Province because we are down now to just one paper mill.

This was the reason why, when it was discussed in this House of Assembly about a year or so ago now about the need to make sure we had a stable newsprint mill in Corner Brook, and members in the Official Opposition in support of Kruger and the \$110 million in a loan to that company, that would then be used to stabilize the whole forestry industry. It was not just for Kruger alone. It was to stabilize sawmills. It was to stabilize forest management and on and on it goes. I think the numbers being used were around 4,000 to 5,000 people who were attached to the forestry industry. That was important, that we continue to see that industry thrive.

What we need now is what we seen in the Province, is a fragmented forestry strategy. A forestry strategy that right now, what is required is a provincial-wide strategy, because sawmills – when you look at the value of the forest industry in our Province, the number one valuable piece of any log that is cut today, any timber that is harvested today, is the sawlog. Therefore, when

you look at our forestry today you put an evaluation on it or you try and value that. It is the sawlog that is the most important piece of the harvesting of our forestry.

Second to that is what we would use to turn into pulp that is used to turn into newsprint or paper or some other secondary products. Of course, next to that would be a pellet plant, or what we would use around agriculture and so on and so forth. The important thing in all of this though is to make sure we use every single piece of that log or that piece of timber as possible. In order to do that, what we need is a province-wide strategy. This is not something that we have seen so far.

As an example with the investment in the Roddickton pellet plant, it is important that we get the raw material in place so that pellet plant can survive. We have a tremendous resource on the Northern Peninsula right now that is not being utilized to its full extent. We need to get that going. A pellet plant up there would be able to use some of the biomass, some of the forestry, and they could connect with the pulp and paper mill in Corner Brook and sawmills around the Province as well, Mr. Speaker. This is the reason the future of the forestry is best determined by an interconnected forestry strategy, something that we truly do not have in our Province right now.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at The Economy 2014, and you look at all the things we have available to us, I guess there is nothing that becomes a little more disheartening to some degree in what we have not done around agriculture. What we have seen, and through the meetings I have had over this summer, this is really an opportunity for us in our Province. Food security is extremely important for us. It is an industry that has truly not evolved and has not been developed in our Province.

We have seen 510 farms in our Province in 2011. That is down from 558 in 2006. We are losing land. If it is important, if we are going to have a proper food security program in place, we need to make sure there is land available to us.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at our natural resources and you look at the opportunities that we have in front of us, especially around rural Newfoundland and Labrador – I mentioned the fact that the forestry sector is important to that. We must make sure that is something we use to its fullest extent so that we can create employment in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Agriculture is another great example. I know in my own district there are a lot of farmers, a lot of people who make a living from agricultural development. It is extremely important, Mr. Speaker, and we have to do more. We have great educational institutions here we could use for research so that we can find ways – so that we can use agriculture to at least feed ourselves as well as export.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at forestry and agriculture, there is nothing more important to us as a Province than what we see within our fishery. The important thing right now as I talk to fish harvesters across the Province, as we see certain species like shrimp and snow crab, people are talking again about a transition back into groundfish.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at The Economy 2014 and you look at the numbers, what are the numbers telling us about where we would be last year over this year? As an example, Mr. Speaker, in 2012 the volume of shrimp that was landed in tons was just under 86,000 tons. In 2013, that was down to just under 84,000 tons. With that, the value, of course, has dropped as well.

In snow crab, we have seen the volume at around 50,000. It went up just a little bit, 0.7 per cent, but the value of that actually dropped, Mr. Speaker, and other shellfish as well. So we can see there are certain species that are falling.

The groundfish on the other hand is actually increasing. We have seen groundfish, in terms of volume and tons, grow from 27,000 last year to just under 36,000 this year. When you look at all of this and you say, what is the revised value of the whole fishery to our Province last year in

terms of landings and landed value, it is just less than \$600 million. It actually dropped 0.4 per cent this year. Some of that, you have to factor in the processing aspect of this as well.

Mr. Speaker, what people are telling me is that we have to do something about marketing our seafood in the Province. People are telling me right now that if we are to transition and create a very vibrant fishery in our communities again, Mr. Speaker, there needs to be a marketing initiative; a very dedicated and aggressive marketing initiative so that we can find our place, so we can make sure the fishery is as vibrant as it used to be.

Mr. Speaker, I have told this story quite a few times about my trip to Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair in June of last year. Of course, this was during the by-election, and communities were thriving. The Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair is reminding me of just how beautiful that district is. I can hear her words now ringing in my ear back there, saying how beautiful it is, because it is home for her.

I have made many trips to that district over the last few years, but in June of last year, as we went through the district, it was really at the prime time of the fishing season. I can remember watching trucks and trucks of turbot that was coming into the community of L'Anse au Loup and it was actually being processed there. It seemed to me everybody was working. We went through the plant. There were teenagers who were working and there were people who were well into their seventies working in that plant, I say, Mr. Speaker. It goes to show that once a vibrant fishing industry in our Province, how that can actually impact many of our small and rural communities. It is something that we have to do more, and we make sure that we get a marketing initiative in place to make sure that that happens.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on about the economy, using the government's own books that we would have here. One of the things, when you look at manufacturing though, you quickly realize how little manufacturing, with all the natural resources that we have in our

Province, with the power that is available to us, how little secondary, or how little manufacturing that actually occurs right here in our Province. So you have to ask yourself why that has happened over the years.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at manufacturing in our Province, one of the key areas will certainly be Long Harbour, and the Vale smelter, and we should see the true benefits of that – we will certainly in the very near future. One other one, of course, is the North Atlantic oil refinery. We know right now, and as I was reading this document over the weekend, that there is a Swiss company looking at the North Atlantic oil refinery. That is something that, again, we will be looking for more information on. It is very important, some 500 jobs to that area depending on the North Atlantic oil refinery.

When you look at the economy in our Province, I would love to be able to stand here today and say that every single economic indicator in our Province is point upward, that it is trending upward, and just like the yellow arrow that we see on our flag, that it is going in that direction. Mr. Speaker, when you look at the government's own documents themselves, you will see that the true economic indicators that they are actually using are not going in that direction. You need not look any further, as I mentioned earlier, than housing starts.

Housing starts are very indicative of where your economy is going. When you are seeing such drastic decreases, or forecasting such drastic decreases in housing starts, you have to wonder, indeed, what the future is like. Then indeed when you look at the affordability – the affordability is another thing when it comes to housing. When you look at the seniors out there who are actually being caught in the middle of all of this, trying to find affordable housing is very difficult in our Province.

We are now in a situation where we do not have minimum standards around our housing, and as a result of that we are having seniors, we are having people with disabilities who are actually living in housing situations that are, quite frankly, not that good. Mr. Speaker, when you

pore through the numbers of documents we have available these are all things that are not my words, these are actually words of the government and everything they have actually given us to pore through.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the opportunities to grow your economy, we often talk about, especially in rural areas, when you look at the core opportunities being around forestry, being around fishery, being around mining, and being around agriculture, one other area is around tourism. When you look at our tourism numbers this year, and as I went through The Economy 2014 booklet, I was a little surprised to see that our visitors this year – in 2012, we had just over 500,000 visitors; 505,300 visitors in 2012. In 2013, we had 497,900. That is an actual change of 7,400 visitors or a decrease in 1.5 per cent. We not growing even our tourism industry. Not only are we not only growing food and agriculture, but we are not even growing our tourist industry.

When you look at the air travel that is really the only bright light we saw when it comes to tourism. That number went from, in 2012, 360,000 people who travelled into our Province by air and in 2013 that number went up to 367,000, an extra 7,100 people or a 2 per cent change.

This is the one, actually, that people will be surprised to see, and that is the auto traffic, how many people actually came to Newfoundland and Labrador by car, by vehicle, by automobile. In 2012, that number was 106,000 people; 106,200 individuals travelled into our Province by automobile. In 2012, it dropped to 99,900. That is a 5.9 per cent change, so really a 6 per cent change. That is a 6 per cent drop in the number of people who actually travelled to our Province by automobile.

Our cruise ship business was down as well, from 39,000 last year down to just less than 31,000 this year. Mr. Speaker, when you look at the tourism industry, you will see that even though there were less people came, there was more money spent; but I can assure you, you need to keep the footprints on the ground in the Province

if you want to grow your economy. If you want to grow your economy, you want to use tourism. If you are committed to using tourism as part of this, what you do not do is cut money from your marketing campaign, which is what this government did in 2013, cut money from a marketing campaign and expect to see more people there. If you do not believe marketing works, why are you doing it in the first place? You do not cut from a marketing campaign and expect to see more people come to your province. Last year that value was around \$460 million, I say, Mr. Speaker.

I mentioned about the automobile traffic; it had dropped in 2012 from 106,000 people down to just under 100,000. What was interesting about that is that the 99,900 people, the 5.9 per cent drop since 2012, and this is a trend, but it was the first time that we dropped below 100,000 visitors to our Province by car or by automobile since 1986; 1986 was the last time that we have been that low, less than 100,000 people who have actually come in to our Province by automobile.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at that opportunity of losing that many people, less than 100,000 people coming in to our Province, travelling into our Province, you must ask yourself: Why is that? You have to look at your marketing campaign but you also have to look at the problems that we ask people to go through, the hoops that we expect people to go through to get here. Marine Atlantic as an example, we have the *Apollo* on the Straits coming in to Newfoundland from Labrador –

MS DEMPSTER: No crossing again today.

MR. BALL: – and no crossing again today, the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair reminds me. When you look at it, this is not an experience that people look fondly at when you get on the Marine Atlantic ferry today and expect them to come into our Province. It is not a good experience at all. It is very prohibitive not only in cost, Mr. Speaker, but it is prohibitive in many of the ways that we look at this.

We have to ensure that when people show up at North Sydney that the experience to get into our Province, as they land in Port aux Basques – and my colleague for Burgeo – La Poile is right there now – that the experience is indeed a good one, that there are services on the Island portion, and the experience when you travel on Marine Atlantic is good so we can grow that. It is a key industry for us. I think everyone in this House of Assembly understands that, Mr. Speaker. In order to grow our economy, tourism will have to be an essential part of that. We cannot always depend on oil royalties like we have over the last ten or eleven years to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to pour through some of the numbers again when it comes to spending for the Province. It has been mentioned, I think six of the last ten years this particular government have talked about having surpluses. There is no question that surpluses have all been created by oil royalties.

Mr. Speaker, if you go back over the last ten Budgets of this government, in eight of those ten you will see that spending was higher than it was in the previous year. Just twice did we see spending decrease, that being in 2004-2005, which is really the first year in government, and last year 2012-2013.

Spending has increased 56.6 per cent since 2004, I say, Mr. Speaker. If we remember, sustainability was something that was on the forefront and on the minds of this government back in 2011 in their election Blue Book, whatever that was now, if it was a promise, a commitment, or whatever it was. In 2011, in the Blue Book they promised a spending ceiling.

That was more about sustainability. People in our Province were interested in that simply because they wanted to make sure that – the debt portion of where we are within our government was something that was very important to them. A spending ceiling was mentioned in the Blue Book. It established "...a ceiling for new spending growth and make our choices accordingly." To ensure our "...provincial expenditures do not grow beyond the level our economy can sustain."

That was making the decisions that we talk about, Mr. Speaker. Yes, all the programs that have been announced are all programs that we have advocated and asked for. There are certainly areas of the Province when you manage them effectively – within the size and the magnitude of this Budget we believe that if you manage it correctly, spend your money wisely, spend your money more efficiently there is room, you are able to do that and do it within a sustainable fashion. I say, Mr. Speaker, that is a commitment we do not anticipate will be lived up to. Mr. Speaker, what one guy was telling me this weekend, and I have used it a few times, is talking about taking out your kids' credit card.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back because much has been said about successes and all of this, but the numbers do not lie. When I look at the numbers, and I have numbers here that will take me right back and make people's eyes glaze over, I would say, right back to 1997 to 1998.

It is interesting to note that our offshore royalties – it was not until 2003 and 2004 that we saw our first offshore royalties. Prior to that, there were no offshore royalties. As an example, in 1997-1998 we had total revenue of \$4.1 billion. In 1998-1999 it was \$3.95 billion – it actually fell. In 1999-2000 it was \$3.9 billion. In 2000 it was \$4 billion. In 2001-2002 it was \$4 billion. In 2002-2003 we had revenue of about \$4.1 billion.

That is where we saw the results of an Administration that had planned, that had put a process in place to generate an industry that had never been here before. Hibernia had been pumping oil for a number of years. It took some time to get to payout and then the royalty regime had started to kick in.

In 2003-2004, there was \$126 million, just under \$127 million in royalties that year. That year – by the way, it was a PC government – the deficit was \$913 million. When you look at it, up to that point in our history that was the largest deficit we had. That continued, of course, on and on. This year we anticipate a deficit of \$537 million.

Mr. Speaker, my point to this is that in 2003-2004 is when the offshore oil royalties really started to kick in, because in 2004-2005 that number more than doubled. It went from \$127 million up to \$264 million. You could see the impact of the decisions made back in the 1990s and even in the 1980s was having an impact on our economy. In 2005 and 2006, we saw that number jump up again. It actually more than doubled again to be \$532 million. The next year it was at \$423 million.

Next year, in 2007-2008, is when it really started coming into its own. If you think about it, back then, that was about the time when things were very different in many parts of the world. The global economy was starting to contract. We were starting to hear about serious problems. In that particular year, we had oil royalties of \$1.75 billion. That was not our best year, but that was when it really started to change. That is all as a result of some key work – good work – that had been done by previous Administrations, I say, Mr. Speaker – \$1.7 billion.

The next year, in 2008-2009, that jumped to over \$2 billion, \$2.2 billion. Then we stayed well over \$2 billion right up until this year, except for 2012-2013, and that was because of some problems we had offshore and oil just did not get pumped. This is all very good news. When you look at the level of money and what it has meant to the people in our Province, what has made us a so-called have province, it is all because of the work that has been done to create and put those oil royalties in place, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at it, you go back through all of this, and you ask yourself about deficits, about budgets, and about how much we owe in terms of debt, net debt, and all of that, we are approaching numbers we have seen really back into the late 1990s in numbers we are looking at right now with the debt load in our Province. Mr. Speaker, that is a synopsis of where we were when you go back some fifteen or sixteen years and the impact oil royalties have had on our Province. I am sure most of us in the Province right now are happy to know that at some point they did strike oil because I would not want to

be in what this Province would look like today without having access to this oil royalty money.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the budgeting process. Many people over the years have heard me talking about budgeting, how volatile we have become, and how dependent we have become on oil. The budgeting process itself and how difficult that is, because it is impacted by things that, as a Province, no matter how good you are you cannot control it, things like the currency. This year we are budgeting on a currency of around ninety-one cents, and that is at a US dollar. Let's keep in mind that, as a commodity, oil works best for us as the Canadian dollar loses its value. So the lower the value of the Canadian dollar, the better it is for our oil royalties – that being currency, of course.

The second thing that we do have some say in but it varies depending on events as they occur in our offshore, and that is around production, I say, Mr. Speaker. So we have currency and we have production, these are things that affect our Budget in a big way, but the biggest thing is also oil pricing.

Oil pricing is something that we have zero control over. It is very competitive in the world today, where we are with oil pricing; therefore, when you budget on \$105 for a barrel of oil – I can just show you what is happening, the variations that we have seen in our Budget and how volatile this has become based on our budgeting processes to date. As an example, in the fiscal year of 2004-2005, on Budget day this government budgeted a deficit of \$840 million and that was revised down to \$249 million. That happened I would say, Mr. Speaker, because of oil.

In 2005-2006, on Budget day it was a deficit of \$492 million and the revised Budget from public accounts, which came sometime after, was \$199 million. So you are looking at almost a \$700 million swing in 2005-2006. In 2004-2005, that swing was almost \$400 million. In 2006-2007, we saw something similar that happened again, it anticipated to be at \$6.2 million, it actually came in at \$154 million. This goes on and on

and on, every single year the story is that same, missing your Budget projections.

It makes it very difficult when you sit and you listen to a Budget Speech and you talk about going back into surplus next year and surplus the year after and 10-Year Sustainability Plans, when all you need to do is go back in history, go back to 2004 and you see the number of variances that we have seen from one Budget to another.

In 2007-2008, the budgeted surplus was for \$261 million, it actually went to \$1.4 billion; and all of that, as I said, was all as a result of oil pricing and currency, something that this government has nothing to do with, could not do a thing with it, I say, Mr. Speaker.

In 2009-2010, nowhere even near its Budget projection, missed it by over \$700 million. In 2010-2011, missed it by almost \$800 million. In 2010-2011, missed it by \$910 million. Mr. Speaker, these are big numbers that I am talking about when you are looking at Budgets in this particular time frame of between \$6 billion and \$7 billion and you are missing it by almost a billion dollars – you cannot even forecast in one year. So you then tell me that I am supposed to believe that, because some minister or somebody stands up and says, well, we do not mind borrowing a billion dollars this year, because we are going back in surplus next year. Well, based on those numbers here and the volatility that we have seen in budgets, in the track record – I know teachers, when I grew up, you would get a report card on that; and if you did not get your sums and your pluses and minuses right, you would get deducted marks for it.

AN HON. MEMBER: No zero these days, though.

MR. BALL: Yes, no zero.

So, Mr. Speaker, there would be a lot of deductions there; and I say to the Minister of Education, the numeracy skills, make no wonder they have become a question.

So, Mr. Speaker, these are just examples that we raised today. Not simply to be alarmist, these are actual facts that I have tried to outline for the people of the Province today. These are the known facts, based on the historical track record, based on the information that we had.

We have spent now over an hour talking about the economic indicators that we see that we have in our Province, Mr. Speaker. All of this comes from the Budget document itself. So, when the ministers and when the members opposite get up and they start speaking to this, just go look and quote your own document.

When we look at the current conditions within the Province – and we need not go back any further than January this year when you talk about planning. One of the things that this government has been often accused of – and I would say, rightfully so – is that they actually have not done a very good job of planning. When you go back to January of this year, what has become known and branded and defined as DarkNL, what does that all mean?

Now, Mr. Speaker, I was really expecting in this year's Budget a very aggressive energy conservation plan, expecting that to be in this year's Budget. It really was not there. What we have seen is some of the retrofit programs go back to where it was last year. Last year it was cut to be at 500 homes and gone back to 1,000 this year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn): Order, please!

MR. BALL: That was the only thing that you see in this year's Budget around energy conservation.

When you look at Nova Scotia, when you look at Manitoba, these are provinces that have put clear energy efficiency, energy targets in place, looking for ways for people in their province to actually find ways, number one, to avoid the use of energy if they can and when they do, they would do it in a more efficient way. Nothing in

this Budget of last week demonstrates this, Mr. Speaker.

When you remember January 2014 and people went without power for a considerable number of hours, schools were closed, health care appointments were cancelled or rescheduled, when you look at all of what happened in January of 2014 during that crisis period in our Province, when at some point we had almost 190,000 customers, people in this Province, their houses and homes impacted by that, businesses lost the ability to do business, do trade in the Province and we had employees, many on low incomes, that their work had been cancelled simply because they could not go to work because of the power outages in January.

Yet, in this Budget we do not see any conservation measures. There is an announcement of a pilot project, \$350,000 on a two-year pilot project to provide real-time energy display monitors to some households. There will be some details, I am sure, that we will be looking for on that, I say, Mr. Speaker. Really, except for some retrofit programs within their own buildings, within government's buildings – nothing wrong with that – the majority of what we see here will be done on government buildings.

There is nothing about smart meters, something that is widely used in jurisdictions across our country right now, giving individuals in their own houses, giving people the opportunity to have a say in how they use their energy, giving them the opportunity to know on a regular basis where they actually stand, where they actually are with their day-to-day use of energy. I was expecting that in this Budget, I say, Mr. Speaker.

The Residential Energy Efficiency Program for low-income households is part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. This is a good program. Nevertheless this is a very good program, 1,000 people this year up from 500 last year, but 500 last year as a result of last year's cuts I say. We are only back to where we were last year.

Mr. Speaker, what is not in this Budget around conservation; number one, as I said, no clear

conservation targets for the people of this Province. We are not willing to go where many other provinces have already gone, and that is to put in conservation measures so that people within their own provinces can set their own targets, use your energy more efficiently, and avoid use wherever they can. Smart metering is one of the ways of doing that.

Mr. Speaker, so much attention has been paid to the weaknesses in the electrical system this year within our government. We really thought there would be tangible energy conservation programs in place. It is one of the common themes of this Province or this particular government, they do say a lot of stuff but taking action on key priorities that affect the people in our Province, they do not do that.

Government needs to make more energy conservation. It needs to be part of, as I have mentioned so many times in the past about our Energy Plan. The Energy Plan, when it was developed said a lot of nice things in that plan about where we would be around conservation, but it delivered very little I say, Mr. Speaker. From where we are today, from when that plan was first developed in 2007, very little has been done with conservation measures in our Province.

Mr. Speaker, I touched briefly on tourism, culture and recreation and the opportunity we have in our Province to grow that industry to a critical mass where it can bring in revenue and can be part of the diversification that we have seen within our Province. Seeing the marketing money put back in, we need to see that. It has to happen. We have lost too many visitors and there is too much of an opportunity out there right now for us to take advantage and create some revenue around a growing and an emerging tourism industry.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to a topic that comes to the floor of the House of Assembly on a regular basis. This is around Newfoundland and Labrador Housing within our Province and the need for affordable housing, the need for minimum standards that we do not have within our Province.

AN HON. MEMBER: Call the minister.

MR. BALL: Yes, you can call the minister, as my colleague from St. John's South brought up in Question Period last week. Call the minister to get it fixed. Mr. Speaker, that is not something that people should have to do. Having affordable housing available to them is important. Right now, having minimum standards in place is something that should not be something people see as a premium; that should be a basic expectation.

Last year we talked, and I believe it was in a public member's resolution here, about the need for regional rental rates. In different parts of the Province and different regions in our Province, where rental rates are much different than they are in some others, we need to put in regional rental rates so people can find and have access to affordable housing.

Mr. Speaker, we also saw in the 2014 Budget a \$5.3 million decrease from 2013. Just imagine, in 2014 a decrease to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and we did not see an increase in the rental allowance. Putting regional rental allowances in the different regions of our Province is something we see as a priority.

Mr. Speaker, this government has also made a commitment to having over a ten-year period at a per capita debt on the Canadian average. This has been announced now, my guess is, if I remember correctly, about two or three years ago. There is nowhere in this Budget where I see we are actually going in that direction. As a matter of fact, what I am seeing here is that the average debt for individuals in our Province per capita is going up.

It is hard to determine right now, when you make those announcements, if indeed this is something you see as a priority or not. Mr. Speaker, you need not look any farther than rural development in the Province right now and you will see that the track record of spending, budgeting money, allocating money, putting it in the Budget, and actually getting it out the door is

not something they have done a very good job at.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to speak about Outlook 2020 and our forecasted – no, I think what I will do first, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about something that is really in my own backyard. My colleague there from Bay of Islands quite often brings it up in the House of Assembly. When you talk about commitments and making announcements, there is an expectation that when you get premiers, ministers, and people like that – they are in the decision-making processes and departments within government. So when people make announcements like that, you would expect that they would follow through on that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back through some timelines for the new hospital for Western Newfoundland, that being the hospital in Corner Brook. As a matter of fact, my colleague from the Bay of Islands often says he will probably end up in the long-term care facility before that, but just to lay out the timelines as they existed. Back in 2007 – it is 2014 now, but in 2007 this was first announced. It was announced at a price tag of \$150 million.

In Budget 2008, government announced they would move forward with planning and site selection for the new hospital in Western Newfoundland. In 2007, \$150 million and in 2008, site selection. The Budget of 2008 said they would do the site selection; July of 2008. The selection was going to be made by 2008 and they had hired a group. AMEC out of St. John's was hired to undertake the site investigation.

In 2009, government made this splashy announcement – I can remember this. They announced the site for the new hospital and they bragged about the fact that it was a beginning of what is undoubtedly one of the largest, single infrastructure projects that this government has seen in many years. In 2009, this is the beginning of what is undoubtedly one of the largest, single infrastructure projects this Province has seen in many years. That was in 2009, five years ago, I say, Mr. Speaker.

In 2010 – what happened in 2010? Well, the Province committed to starting construction by 2012. Despite spending \$20 million on the project for the last couple of years, it is not started. In the summer of 2012, the previous Premier met with the Corner Brook council and expressed concern over the cost of the project. Coming out of the meeting they were told, point-blank, that the numbers had to be \$600 million or \$700 million and that it would not be built; that as long as the numbers were at \$600 million to \$700 million, it is not built and it actually ratcheted back the budget to \$500 million. This was around the same time that we started to hear words like now we are going to rightsize. Well, to anybody who was listening on the West Coast to the new words rightsizing through construction; to them, it meant downsize. Rightsize now became downsize or, vice versa, downsize became rightsize.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to be on the record as saying this: Whatever you are going to build, you actually build it to be the right size, but it should have been the right size when it was announced in 2007 or what was the announcement all about – what were you announcing?

Mr. Speaker, in 2012 they went back to the drawing board to actually rightsize this hospital. In August of 2013, the minister said that it would begin in 2015. They said that once the functional planning and the design is done that they would have a better idea of what the end date would be. This would be a flagship for the Province. Well, that was back in August of 2013, here we are in 2014 and now it is going to begin in 2015, and the functional plan should be completed within two or three weeks – this was in January.

I am just laying out a timeline here of what has happened to the hospital in Western Newfoundland. It has become, as many people would know right now, when you look in Western Newfoundland, this is becoming very, very much an issue front and centre on the minds of people in that part of our Province.

So far, what have we seen? We have seen \$20.1 million and \$15 million in this year's Budget, so that is a total of \$36.1 million for the hospital in Western Newfoundland. Keeping in mind the previous Premier's comments about between \$500 million and \$600 million or \$600 million and \$700 million. Well, just recently in media outlets on this weekend, we know now that the discussion is more around the lines of this being \$800 million.

We will see, and we will continue on behalf of the people in Western Newfoundland, as the Official Opposition, to stay on top of this development and we will certainly be asking questions because we feel that the right hospital is the appropriate thing – and I am sure the Member for Humber West is over there listening right now and he feels the same way. He lives in that area and I know he is hearing from people concerned about this, just like I am.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit now about Outlook 2020 and the forecast for the worker shortage in the Province. In 2011, the provincial government released its report, entitled Outlook 2020, and it highlighted the number of workers that would be needed by the end of this decade – not only the number of workers, but also the types of positions that they would be required to fill.

They came to the conclusion then that by 2020, as part of Outlook 2020, that they would need 70,000 jobs by 2020. Only 7,700 of those jobs would be new jobs; most of it would be as a result of people who were actually retiring or through attrition and so on. So, around 63,000 of those people would have been retirees. So, there is probably a way here that some of them can actually stay and work longer, nevertheless 70,000 new jobs required in the Province by 2020. So how do we do that? We knew, as a result of this, the average working age is increasing, but we also know that if this is indeed true, there needs to be a program that is in place.

So this was done in 2011, and here we are now in 2014 and there has been very little done to address this. We already know that the

economic indicators will probably have some impact on this, because we know that the employment force will shrink, based on their own indicators. I would almost like to see these numbers actually updated, because we have no idea, based on the economic indicators that are used in the Budget, if what we developed back in 2011 is even relevant today; but it is a number that this particular government right now continues to stand by and continues to quote on a regular basis.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I said in the past, there are only a number of ways you can do that. You have to take either your underemployed people that you have in your Province now, you put training measures in place so that you can train them for the appropriate jobs. That is one option. Of course, the other option is make sure that we have apprenticeship programs in place that are aggressive enough that actually people can find apprenticeship programs and training on those programs right here in our Province.

I can assure you now, Mr. Speaker, the apprentices that I am talking to, that is not the way they feel. They feel that it is very difficult right now. All you need to do, with the closure of Wabush Mines, when you talk to apprentices in that area, you will quickly find out that it was very difficult for them to get from one block to another. Employers have had apprentices hired. They were concerned because they did not want to lose the apprentice who they had working for them. Therefore, when the apprentice was not available, how to replace the work that he or she was doing. Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of questions around the apprenticeship program and how that would work.

A lot of people in the community also say that if indeed Outlook 2020 is still a relevant number, the apprenticeship program – making sure that we train our Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first, making sure that we employ every single Newfoundlander and Labradorian as we can. Not like we have seen on some projects here right now where we seem to be satisfied to meet a minimum threshold as opposed to meet the maximum threshold.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at meeting the worker shortage that is anticipated and forecast in Outlook 2020, we always bring up the question around population in our Province. Are they connected or not? Of course they are connected. We need to make sure that we put in place whatever we can to grow our population. Right now in this particular Budget we are not seeing any benefit from a population increase in terms of immigration in our Province at all.

I know when the Conference Board of Canada released its numbers there were some people who disagreed with it, but many people in the Province – again I will just go to the facts. There are more deaths than births. Quite frankly, we may not like it, if you have more people dying in your society than are being born then the numbers will tell you that the population will drop.

According to the recent statistics from the Conference Board of Canada – and I do not mind arguing some of these numbers myself either, but what they are saying is that the population will decline from 527,000 to 482,000 by 2035. Whether they are true or not, what we know is that in our Province right now there is a natural decrease in our population.

Mr. Speaker, when you go back over the population of our Province it is not just the overall population, but it is where people are living in our Province right now. Our smaller communities, the Northeast Avalon right now are showing some good signs of maintaining a population and growing its population. All of this happens. You ask yourself: Why are young families not having as many children? I think our provincial average is 1.1, 1.2, or 1.4. Whatever it is, it is very low when you compare us to other jurisdictions in the Province. A lot of it has to do with access to child care and those kinds of programs. It costs a lot of money to raise a child, when you look at access to affordable child care spaces and affordable living arrangements, I say, Mr. Speaker.

It reminds me of a story that was told to me by a good friend of mine just last week when we were chatting. We were chatting about this very

same thing, but it was a little different because they had made a decision. They left the Province and they were working in Alberta. His concern was about his aging parents who were living in the Province and how he would deal with this.

He thought: Well, maybe the best way for me to do this is rather than disrupt my parents from where they are living in a rural community in Newfoundland and Labrador, maybe the best way for me to handle this is I should move back. I would move back to the Province and I would commute from there. Therefore, his family would be left in the community where his parents are living and in this particular case he would be on a three-and-one turnaround. He would live like that.

After having the discussion with his family and with his parents, it went in a different direction. It was one that actually surprised me. The decision was made that what they would do is they would move their parents with them to Alberta. I am sure there are many other stories, and I am sure every member in this House of Assembly could stand and tell a story of something a little different when you look at the problems and the challenges families face when they are stuck in this dilemma.

If you look at the population within our Province, it is not only about the numbers, I say, Mr. Speaker, but it is about where people live in the Province. For instance, the Avalon Peninsula as an example, back in 2003 it had a population of just under 250,000 people; 249,252. In 2013, that number is 273,000. So a net increase in that ten years of 9.6 per cent on the Avalon Peninsula. Now, the greater St. John's area has seen an increase of 16.2 per cent. When you combine those two areas, you can see there is an extra 54,000 people who would be living in those areas.

Mr. Speaker, there is a very different story when you look at other regions of the Province. If you look at the Burin Peninsula, as an example, in that same period of time there was a population decline of 11.3 per cent, a drop from just under 24,000 to just over 21,000.

If you look at the South Coast of our Province, I say, Mr. Speaker, a 15.4 per cent decrease in population from about 19,000 in 2003 down to 16,000 in 2013. The list goes on and on. It is no different in the St. George's area at 6.6 per cent. Central Newfoundland and the Humber District in Western Newfoundland have maintained their population and show some modest increase.

On the Northern Peninsula, in 2003, 19,515 people were living there. In 2013, there were 16,467. That is a decline of 15.6 per cent. That, Mr. Speaker, was actually the largest decrease that we have seen in our Province.

When you think of that beautiful part of our Province, the home of Gros Morne National Park and L'Anse aux Meadows, and all the other attractions we have there for people to see, areas that we can build our opportunities around and many, many more; yet, we have seen a decrease of 15.6 per cent. When you think about all the great fishing and forestry resources we have on the Northern Peninsula, and to see such a drastic decline in population in just ten years, Mr. Speaker.

When you talk about rural development and the decision this government made last year to cut its rural development program, make no wonder we are seeing our small and rural communities lose numbers and lose its people like we see now. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you now from my own experience, what is left behind in those communities is not our young people. It is our older people, and they are looking out and reaching out to see who is there to support them when they need things.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak just for a few minutes on immigration again. I will go back to that because it is seen by many as one way that we can increase our population. First and foremost, when I think of immigration I compare it to where we are to other provinces. I think of the Provincial Nominee Program, commonly referred to as PNP.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate and repeat once again that any time I talk about immigration, I am not talking about people from other countries

coming in and taking jobs from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That is not what I am talking about. It is when we need positions that we cannot fill here, then we have no choice. In order to keep the services continuing on – in many cases health professionals, we all know the tremendous impact they have had on that, Mr. Speaker. The PNP program is one opportunity that this government has not taken full advantage of.

Mr. Speaker, if you ask what it is, this is an immigration program where we have eleven provinces and territories participate. Two, Nunavut and Quebec, are not part of the program. What you do is as a Province you nominate individuals you want to bring in to immigrate into your province. The federal government on the other hand plays a key role here, because it is the federal government that is responsible for issuing visas and screening nominees for health and security reasons.

Under this particular program, I say, Mr. Speaker, in the last ten years the PNP program has become the second largest source of economic immigration to Canada. In 2011, more than 38,000 provincial nominees, including their spouses and dependents, were admitted to Canada. That is a six-fold increase from 2004. They did so under two categories, one being the skilled worker category and the international graduate category.

Mr. Speaker, this is the quota that has been put in place. What did we do to get our share of a quota, Mr. Speaker? Not much. Quite frankly, Newfoundland and Labrador, of the 38,000 provincial nominees we got 300. Manitoba got 5,000; Ontario at 1,300. PEI has been outpacing us. I spoke to the Premier in PEI; this is a program they use quite regularly and very effective in their own Province. When you look back at the demographics of what this program does, 90 per cent of the Province's nominees are under the age of forty-five.

Mr. Speaker, when you are looking at ways to grow your population and you want to do it with younger people, well, there is no better place to

start than with your PNP program, I say, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: It should be a priority.

MR. BALL: Yes.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to touch on, when you look at the industry and when you look at the feedback and how you grow economic development in a province, of course, you need to grow your population, you need to grow people, and you need to have more people come to your province. So one way – and, of course, oil development off our Province, Mr. Speaker, as we become very dependent on it, we have to find new sources, new reserves.

This was something that I was just reading about just over the weekend actually, when you look at where we are with oil production off our East Coast. In 2012 it says that Eastern Canada's oil production essentially comes from three offshore projects off Newfoundland and Labrador. In 2012, we had 200,000 – but my point is this: By 2030, we will be producing 90,000 barrels per day; and that is down from 2020 of 250,000 barrels per day; currently in 2012, 200,000 barrels per day; 2015, 230,000. My point is this: We have to find new resources. We have to find new sources. By 2030, as I said, that falls to 90,000. Can you imagine the impact that would have on our provincial Budget if indeed we cannot replace or cannot find alternate sources of oil?

Mr. Speaker, I have touched on much about the economy today, talked about finding new sources of oil, what impact that would have on our economy and how dependent we are on having that oil royalty money readily available to us. I want to talk a little bit about our municipalities and the work that they do – the committed individuals that they have.

Right now, this is a large group that we have in our Province and today they find themselves struggling. They have been working and trying to get a new fiscal framework in place with this government. They are not having much luck but there is a commitment, and we remain hopeful

that this is something that would be done. At every single chance that we get we will raise this issue because they raise with us how important it is that we get a handle on making sure that our communities are sustainable, making sure that our communities are viable.

When I talk about infrastructure – I mentioned that earlier about the infrastructure deficit that we are actually having in our Province right now. When we look at the bridges, the aging bridges that we have, \$800 million that it will take to actually get our bridges where they need to be, get the repairs in place. The same sort of thing is happening within our communities. What they are asking about is that they need to find new sources of revenue. In order to do that, they require legislation – simple things that we do in the House of Assembly. It is nothing new that a municipality should be – why should they have to be out there asking to get legislation changed so that they can find new ways to be empowered?

Mr. Speaker, when you go on and you look at the concerns they are having and the concerns they are facing, the fiscal framework is certainly one. That is the most important thing. Why is it important, I say? It is important because it has not been reviewed since 1973. When I look at the MOGs, or the Municipal Operating Grants, they are one-third of what they were in 1990. The MOGs in our Province right now are one-third of what they were in the 1990s and this has not been reviewed since 1973.

MR. JOYCE: What is Danny Breen saying about it?

MR. BALL: In some areas and in some campaigns I agree with the Member for Bay of Islands that this is an important thing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) Member for Grand Bank.

MR. BALL: Tell the Member for Grand Bank. I am sure he has heard it from his community leaders as well that they want to see a new fiscal framework put in place, since it has not been

reviewed since 1973. The MOGs are still where they were in the 1990s.

Staffing is another issue for municipalities. They are telling us as we meet with them they are having difficulty finding staffing. As I look to ex-chairs and ex-mayors in this room, staffing is a concern for them. They are having problems keeping in place. The staff is getting older; the pay is lower. People are going to other places to look for work.

Mr. Speaker when you look at the problems that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BALL: – municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador are facing, many of them are very small. Their populations are small and, therefore, they are having quite the difficulties I will say come election time getting people to even run for seats within their council. There was some information when you look at the small and single-staffed municipalities are just not sustainable.

To them, we often hear the word amalgamation. This is not what we are talking about. We will always look for efficiencies within the system, but amalgamation is not the option. These communities still want to maintain their identity, Mr. Speaker. When you look at the average age of councillors, and this was quoted here, it says that only 7 per cent are under thirty-five years and 40 per cent are over fifty-five years I say. We are losing thirty new administrators annually and there are no succession plans in place.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at all of this and you look at the great work that has been done by many of our municipal leaders over the past, they have laid the foundation, I will say, for many of our departments within government, yet out there right now they are struggling. They are expecting a resolution to this. They need to know that with the ministers and with the various departments involved in this, this is

something that is taken seriously. We need to find the solution.

I know the minister last year had mentioned that by 2015 this would be part of the 2015 Budget, Mr. Speaker. Well, I encourage government to continue to not only say we are going to do it, but put a timeline in place, put a schedule in place, and put milestones in place, so if indeed you are committed to doing to this, this is something that will happen. They are expecting this to happen for Budget 2015.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things we have talked about is oversight. I know in this House just last week there was much discussion around oversight of the Muskrat Falls Project. I have often said that any oversight you put in, whatever the project is and no matter how big or how small it is, it should have a level of oversight. That oversight needs to be independent because oversight is just not about a group of individuals, a group of bureaucrats, and a group of ministers actually receiving reports from various agencies.

It is not about receiving reports. That is not what oversight is. Oversight is when you get the reports and what it is you do with them. Right now, the best way to do that in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, and we have said this publicly, is to make sure it is done with independent oversight. Oversight so that you actually report to Cabinet is not the answer.

Now, if you look at areas within our Province where we have seen much discussion, one of the things is around the internal audits around Natural Resources. There is an audit process. In the AG's report of last year that came out in January 2014, and I can assure you I read this with great interest, they realized that the auditing process within the Department of Natural Resources – and indeed if there is a commitment to fix this or not. The AG, as he pored through all the reports out of Natural Resources, identified a number of issues and findings that this needed to be addressed.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, there is good reason for this because we need to know. There is an

example given there in the findings around Terra Nova. There was millions of dollars' worth in the reporting period that was not included in the Terra Nova royalties, simply because they discovered it during an audit process.

Mr. Speaker, having timely audits in place is only good business. Even the businesses themselves, the oil companies themselves are asking for this because they need to know if they have paid the right amount of money or if indeed there is a credit or a liability there that they would have. In some cases now it is taking years and years and many years to get those audits completed, and they are behind. There is a graph that shows where we are when it comes to oil royalty monitoring. I can assure you, most of the benchmarks, Mr. Speaker, we are not meeting.

As an example, when you look at auditing times it goes on to say if the division did not have a time management system in place, what would happen is – what he is speaking to there is, if you got behind on your auditing process, what you would do is you would go out and hire consultants to come in and to finish the work. The problem was there was no time management in place.

If you were going to hire someone, you had no idea what it is you are hiring for or how long they would be there. There was no benchmarking in place, no time management system in place. I am sure lawyers in the room or accountants in the room or most anyone in the room would understand that if you are starting a project you need to make sure you have time management processes in place. It is not just the oil royalties; it is about the cost of the project. Sometimes when you have to factor in certain costs of the project that impacts the return we get as government. It impacts our royalties, I say, Mr. Speaker.

So, there is a lot at stake here. I have not been through the Estimates, but from what I gather is we are not seeing any improvements in this yet. I will implore upon this government, if you truly want to be in the oil business it is important that we get those monitoring processes in place so

that not only us as a government, that we will get the full value from our oil royalties, but indeed the companies that are participating and doing business offshore Newfoundland and Labrador, that they themselves will have certainty and will know what it is they will have to pay in royalties. Is it a liability to them? We need to know because there is probably, in some instances, examples there that we could actually have more benefit than we thought. There are examples there of that happening.

Mr. Speaker, we have been speaking now for quite a long time about Budget 2014. I know the members opposite have been listening intently and taking notes, but as the Official Opposition and as the critic of Finance, I am going to move a non-confidence motion for Budget 2014.

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

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

I move that motion, seconded by the Member for Burgeo – La Poile.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The House will take a brief recess to review the amendment to see if it is in order.

The House stands recessed for a few moments.

Recess

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Chair rules that the amendment is in order.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I just want to remind members of the House here this evening that tomorrow, April 1, the Resource Committee will meet here in the House at 9:00 a.m. to review the Estimates of the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture. Also, the Social Services Committee will meet tomorrow in the House at 6:00 p.m. to review the Estimates of the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs.

With that, Mr. Speaker, we are at I think sort of a natural conclusion in the debate as we begin to hear the Leader of the Official Opposition start the next round of debate on the Budget. Given the hour of the day, I think with concurrence, I will move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, 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. tomorrow.

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