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Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will have members' statements from the Member for the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair; the Member for the District of Bonavista North; the Member for the District of Torngat Mountains; the Member for the District of Exploits; the Member for the District of Humber West; and the Member for the District of Harbour Main.

The hon. the Member for the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize a young lady from Red Bay, Labrador, who at the age of fourteen is already a volunteer extraordinaire in her community.

Michelle Brown attends Basque Memorial All Grade School in Red Bay, where she volunteers with anti-violence activities, Kids Eat Smart program, Junior Achievement, DARE program, seniors' groups, and the Red Bay Recreation Committee. She also participates in sports and has attended sports camps for soccer and volleyball.

Now that Red Bay is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a preferred destination for cruise ships, Michelle is very active on the Stakeholder Committee and is part of the welcome committee for cruise ships. Most recently, she is sitting on the Red Bay Come Home Year Committee. She also appeared on the *Land and Sea* episode on Red Bay this past weekend.

Michelle has volunteered with the Janeway since the age of seven, raising over \$10,000 since that time. She has participated in Shave for the Brave in 2013. Michelle attended the 2011

Regional Youth Leadership Conference and the Forum for Young Canadians in Ottawa in 2014.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in recognizing Michelle Brown – a young lady who is already making a huge difference in her community.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista North.

MR. CROSS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed a privilege to take my place today.

Robert Tulk, "Bobby", was born in 1945 at Dover, but most recognize him as a long-time resident of Newtown, Bonavista Bay.

Bobby endured a very painful school experience. Due to a hearing impairment, his enunciation was affected and he was a target of many an insult. Even though he left school at Grade 8, books and reading were a daily passion. After a lengthy experience as a fisherman, Bob took the moratorium in stride and enrolled in the FFAW sponsored school at Templeman and, in his fifth decade, he resumed a love affair with reading and gained confidence finally in his own writing ability.

The opportunity arose for him to become the community correspondent for the Gander Beacon. The news from New-Wes-Valley became a growing column, which spawned into his weekly mini rant on topics of the global village which he called "Too Foolish To Talk About". He also published two volumes of *Tales from the Kittiwake Coast*.

Bob never owned a car, and rode his thumb everywhere he needed to travel on shore. On March 13, he hitched his final ride through the pearly gates. Please join me in a collective condolence to his family. Rest in peace, Robert Tulk.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate several young people from my district who recently attended the Newfoundland and Labrador Winter Games in Clarenville.

Amanda Dyson, Taylor Jacque, Dylan Anderson and Sydney Ford from Nunatsiavut displayed their talents in badminton and came home with the gold. Erin Gear, Eric O'Brien, and William Forsey from Labrador were part of the badminton team as well.

Kirsten Dicker, Sophie Jararuse, Louisa Lampe, and Natasha Pilgrim from Nain won gold in the table tennis competition.

Mr. Speaker, these young athletes were part of the Labrador team that garnished the highest number of medals for a region at the Winter Games.

In the past, athletes from the North Coast of Labrador were often overlooked because of logistics and were considered to be non-competitive. Mr. Speaker, we have proven them wrong on many occasions. Nunatsiavut athletes can compete with the best and they look forward to participating in the provincial and national events.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating the athletes from Nunatsiavut and the rest of Labrador on their tremendous success at the Newfoundland and Labrador Winter Games and wish them every success in the future.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: Mr. Speaker, during February 13-15, Bishop's Falls hosted the Junior Provincial Broomball Championships. The tournament featured players aged twenty and under. On Saturday morning, Bishop's Falls defeated St. Anthony by a score of one to nothing; this advanced Bishop's Falls to the finals against Corner Brook.

Mr. Speaker, in the championship game the Bishop's Falls boys put up a strong effort and won the 2014 Junior Provincial Championships by another close score of one to nothing, holding onto the title for the second year in a row.

Bishop's Falls captain, Tyler Tremblett, was awarded the team MVP; top defenceman Kevin Rose, top goaltender; Jeff Thornhill, MVP of the playoffs.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Bishop's Falls on winning the Junior Provincial Championships.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Humber West.

MR. GRANTER: Mr. Speaker, I stand in this hon. House to congratulate Dean Kean and Pat Fewer on their most recent recognition last fall by the Corner Brook West Sports Club. The West Side Sports Club has had a long history of community sport involvement and at this year's award ceremony recognized these two strong supporters.

Dean, who is a member of the executive as well as a member of the Corner Brook West Side Monarchs Senior Men's Broomball Team, was awarded the Crown of Achievement Award which is presented to a person or a group who has made outstanding contributions through service or otherwise during the past year or number of years.

Pat, who is a member of the West Side Monarchs Senior Men's Soccer Team, was

awarded the Terry King Award, presented in memory of the former monarchs athlete to a person who exemplifies the combination of sportsmanship, leadership, dedication and effort while participating on the field of play.

I ask all hon. members to join with me in congratulating Mr. Dean Kean and Mr. Pat Fewer on their recent recognition by the Corner Brook West Side Sports Club.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MR. HEDDERSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate forty-three brave souls who participated in the Holyrood Crystal Carnival Dip on Maloneys Beach on Saturday, March 22, 2014.

Mayor Gary Goobie kicked off the event, thanking the volunteers for not only taking up the challenge, but doing it for a good cause. All proceeds from the event were donated to Heavenly Creatures, a registered charity dedicated to the care and protection of Newfoundland and Labrador animals. The chair, Ms Jessica Rendell, accepted a cheque for \$10,883.70.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HEDDERSON: She thanked the town for organizing the event, indicating all proceeds would be used to further the aims of her organization.

Mr. Speaker, it was a sight to see as forty-three scantily attired individuals lined the shore, eagerly awaiting the count down. At the count of ten, a stampede ensued and all hurriedly did the customary dip into the cold waters of the North Atlantic. I am happy to report all survived, and none the worse for the experience.

Mr. Speaker, I will say that I am so glad the hon. members will rise and congratulate all members

and the Town of Holyrood for supporting this event in aid of Heavenly Creatures.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, that is a hard act to follow.

I do rise today to recognize April as Records and Information Management Month in Newfoundland and Labrador. Effective and proper information management and protection is critically important to organizations large and small. It is particularly important for governments because of the types of information they collect and create. It also supports our government initiative by making information more readily available to anyone wishing to see it or to use it.

Guided by the Management of Information Act and related policy and guidelines issued by the Office of the Chief Information Officer, public sector information management professionals play an important role in managing and protecting provincial government information. This includes the personal information of citizens collected to provide services to them, as well as the records that document and inform the business and policies of government.

As Records and Information Management Month is recognized here and around the world, it is a good time for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to think and learn more about managing and protecting information, both in the workplace and at home. Some general measures include: understanding the legal requirements around managing information; setting up a filing system for paper and

electronic records and avoiding keeping duplicate records; completing regular back-ups of electronic records, and, where appropriate, securely destroying both paper and electronic records.

It is also a good time to be mindful of cyber-threats that might jeopardize information. For example, never reveal usernames or passwords; avoid sending confidential information via e-mail where possible; be extra vigilant when viewing unsolicited or suspicious e-mail and never click on unrecognizable or unfamiliar links or attachments; lock computers and other electronic devices when not in use; and, ensure that up-to-date security software is installed on such devices.

In this digital age, the practice of information management and protection continues to evolve in the face of expanding mobile technology and social media, as well as more persistent and sophisticated online threats.

Our government will continue to review new developments and best practices to stay on the leading edge in managing and protecting information.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I would like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate all of our public employees working at information management and record keeping during Records and Information Management Month. I concur with the minister that this is a great time to bring attention to the issue of cyber-threats to private information and to ensure that public institutions, private entities, and people in general are taking the necessary precautions to protect their private information online.

I note, the minister indicates in the release that effective and proper information management and protection support their so-called Open Government Initiative by making information more readily available to anyone wishing to use it.

As my colleague for The Straits – White Bay North indicated the other day, it is not just important for government to release information but to release accurate information, which is not necessarily the case on the government's current Web site.

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.

Just reading his statement today, I was wondering about the handling of government information, the way it has been going. I know the general public has been susceptible in other areas too. I know some of the health agencies, for example, had leakages of personal information over the last couple of years. I would also like to point out too that Bill 29, that deals with information people should have readily access to, needs to be dealt with by this government. I know it is going to be reviewed by government.

We also have to remember that in the pursuit of protecting information, sometimes we can become a little bit overzealous, such as, what I believe – what we believe – is what we saw in Bill 29. Hopefully this will be addressed by government and people will also at the same time be able to avail of information that they should be privy to.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise today in this hon. House to provide an update on our Hazardous Material Response Training program.

As our Province continues to attract new and diverse industries, it is important for the safety of our residents that our firefighters are prepared to respond to any type of emergency situation that they may face, including those involving hazardous materials. Risks include ammonia leaks, chlorine leaks, and mercury spills.

Mr. Speaker, since 2002, the provincial government has supported a Hazardous Material Response program in this Province, involving nine fire departments from the following communities: Channel-Port aux Basques, Clarenville, Conception Bay South, Corner Brook, Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, Labrador City, Marystown, and St. Anthony. There is also response capacity elsewhere in the Province, including the St. John's Regional Fire Department, and Serco Facilities Management at 5 Wing Goose Bay.

In the fiscal year just ended, Fire and Emergency Services Newfoundland and Labrador committed \$62,000 for a ten-day Hazardous Material Technician course that took place in Grand Falls-Windsor in March of this year – that would be last month. Firefighters from seven communities participated in the course, which trained eleven new technicians and updated skills for six existing technicians.

Mr. Speaker, participants were trained in a number of areas, including: scene management; chemical and physical properties; container identification; personal protective equipment; and, decontamination of hazardous materials. These training areas equipped participants with the knowledge and skills to deal with a host of potential hazardous material situations which they could face.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard from the participating fire departments that were seeking predictable, annual funding support for hazardous materials training. This government has listened, and through *Budget 2014: Shared Prosperity, Fair Society, Balanced Outlook*, we have responded.

The provincial government is allocating \$120,000 annually, beginning in this fiscal year, to provide hazardous materials response training to support the fire departments that manage this necessary program. This funding will support the ongoing training requirements for these departments, and will help address their occupational health and safety needs.

In February of this year – also 2014 – officials from Fire and Emergency Services Newfoundland and Labrador participated in an orientation seminar and tabletop exercise in Ottawa, alongside emergency management representatives from other provinces and territories. During this session, each province and territory provided an update on chemical, biological, radiological- nuclear, and explosive capabilities. From this discussion, it was clear that Newfoundland and Labrador ranked highly in capabilities and preparedness when compared with our provincial and territorial counterparts, and for this we should be very proud.

Mr. Speaker, providing fire protection and emergency services is a top priority for this government, and through the financial commitments made in Budget 2014 we will continue our work to protect and safeguard the residents of this Province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. We, too, on this side would like to recognize mostly the volunteers, Mr. Speaker, I

might add. I do not think the word volunteer was in the minister's statement. Most of those individuals, some paid, but most of those individuals who are going through this training are volunteers in our Province. I must recognize the volunteerism by the people in departments to make their towns safe.

To the government, I think we as a government have downloaded, and rightly so at times, because these people act very professionally, these fire departments, to help in any situation we can to protect all residents across Newfoundland and Labrador. This is one step that is being done that was asked for. I must note that taking the garbage from Corner Brook now and Port aux Basques out to Central, we are going to need more of this here because there is going to be more hazardous waste travelling across this Province without proper consultation and without a proper plan in place for this, Mr. Speaker.

To all the volunteers who are keeping our towns safe through this program thank you very much. To all the other firefighters, from Corner Brook, Gander, and all the other places, thank you very much. Government, it is a great first step to help in training of this. We must continue this training because they are keeping our residents and our people safe, and I think we should continue to support them in any way possible.

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. At the same time when he is talking about hazardous materials training, the first thing that came to mind, of course, was the volunteer firefighter out there who is handling and sometimes is probably the first responder at some of these sites wherever a spill occurs of hazardous material.

One thing that occurred to me, and it is question again that I will ask the minister in Estimates

later on this evening, is about the training for some of these volunteer firefighters who are out there responding. Sometimes we have trouble getting the volunteer firefighters to a course. Sometimes I think government should have the consideration, too, of bringing the course to some of the volunteer firefighters. We know sometimes they do a job for absolutely nothing and they deserve our undying gratitude when it comes to that, so hopefully government will consider that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the Premier said the Muskrat Falls Project will pay \$3 billion in dividends to the Province in the year 2040 – that is one year – but Nalcor's own documents to the PUB show a profit of \$517 million in the year 2040.

I ask the Premier: Will you please clarify the difference of the \$2.5 billion that was presented yesterday?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I became aware last night that there was an error in my comments. I was answering a question on borrowing and we talked about the \$1 billion. You had asked me what we were borrowing the money for and I said that part of it was to pay off two debt issues that were coming due that had been taken out years ago. I also talked about half a billion dollars, \$551 million in infrastructure investment, and I also started to

talk about the investment in Nalcor for oil and gas and Muskrat Falls.

The figures I was referring to were for all of Nalcor. I inadvertently used the word Muskrat Falls, but it is all of Nalcor. I talked about how the investment that is being made in a company that is owned by the people of Newfoundland will pay dividends and create wealth for the people in the future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I accept the apology from the Premier that in fact the numbers were wrong, but these are the same people we depend on to make big budget commitments. Mr. Speaker, accurate information from any government is important. This is one of the reasons why we have asked for the oversight committee on the Muskrat Falls Project to include the AG.

I ask the Premier: Will you revisit this as well and bring the AG into the oversight process for Nalcor?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: First of all, the half-a-billion-dollar figure was right. It is actually \$450 million in 2019. The figure was right. It is coming from Nalcor. If I said Muskrat Falls that was through inadvertence.

The other night when you were being interviewed here you referred to the Finance Minister as Tom Marshall. We all make mistakes. The numbers are right.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: I do not know how you could have mixed the two of us up.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the AG, the AG is an independent officer of this House. As government, we do not order the AG what to do. I have a great respect for the AG. I know him; I have great respect for him and his predecessor. The AG is welcome to go into any government office and any Crown corporation, including Nalcor, anytime he wishes to do so.

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.

We all know that the AG can go into Nalcor; we all know how the reporting process works when the AG goes into Nalcor on his own. What we are asking for is to include the AG as part of the oversight process so that we do get his impact in what is happening in the external oversight, I say, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is saying the former Abitibi mill will be torn down this year and that the tender for the work will be released soon; but when we asked the Minister of Transportation and Works yesterday, he was noncommittal.

I ask the minister: Will the former Abitibi mill be demolished this year and, if so, at what cost?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I stated yesterday, there are several projects that are the property of the government that are being considered for demolition, the Grand Falls Abitibi mill being one of those. We prioritize those. The mill is on the top of the priority.

I am very surprised. Yesterday I did not get into it deep, but I am surprised that someone with such a strong business background would not know the difference, that you cannot release prices when something is going to be tendered until after it is tendered. It would defeat the purpose of the tendering process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Absolutely, I say to the minister, but you have to know that you are out there on record as saying you would expect this cost to be \$100 million. That is the number that has been out there for quite some time, which includes the environmental impact.

Environmental costs at this site have been estimated, as I said, to be about \$100 million because of the government's botched expropriation of the Abitibi mill. The taxpayers of this Province are certainly on the hook, so we need to know the timeline for this. People in Central Newfoundland – the minister is on record for this.

Is this something that will be done this year, I say to the minister?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I stated before, right now we are in the process of talking with different companies and organizations that have shown a great interest in the Abitibi mill. We have narrowed it down now to two or three possible prospects, and we are going through the process of dealing with them. As soon as we make our decisions, then we will start the process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In November, the Minister of Natural Resources said that Harvest Energy was in phase two of selling the refinery in Come By Chance. In January, it was revealed that a Swiss group is considering buying the facility, but no details have been released.

I ask the minister: What is the status of the takeover of the Come By Chance refinery?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DALLEY: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the hon. member. We are not in a position to reveal any details, other than to say the company continues to work with other proponents who have an interest in the refinery. We are optimistic we will see some conclusion soon. Suffice it to say there are no details available as to the negotiations between the owners of the refinery and interested parties. Outside of that, we are not in a position to make information public.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, according to *The Telegram* newspaper, the government provided \$10,000 to the School Bus Operators Association so they could hire the past-president of the PC Party to lobby government about their concerns.

I ask the Minister of Education: When you approved the \$10,000 grant, did you know that the consultant hired by the association had such close ties to the PC Party?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I guess the question would be is Mr. Lundrigan qualified?

Mr. Speaker, we have been working with the School Bus Operators Association certainly since I have come into this department in two-and-a-half years, and I know that ministers previous have been trying to find a solution. I make no apologies in providing support to see if we can find a solution to this annual problem.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, all this seems very suspicious. A former PC Party president hired on the advice of a senior PC Cabinet minister to lobby his own government, all through the use of public funds provided by the Minister of Education.

I ask the minister: How do you justify using your department's funds to pay a high-level PC Party member to lobby you about school transportation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, anyone who has followed the busing situation over the past number of years knows that every September we have this annual problem. Usually it starts in around the spring. I have met personally with this association on numerous occasions.

Mr. Speaker, it was up to the association who they hired. I believe the total amount they invested was \$36,000, so they put \$26,000 into it themselves. We offered up a support to see if we could find a solution to this. Who they chose as their consultant was entirely up to them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, the school bus operators have serious concerns about government's school transportation policies. When they asked how they could raise their concerns, it was suggested that the operators pay \$100 per ticket for five-minute meetings with Cabinet ministers at a PC Party fundraiser.

I ask the Premier: How does paying for access to Cabinet ministers square with your idea of open government, or is it open wallet?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, absolutely untrue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I have been to political events, I have been to other events when people have come up and raised concerns of their various associations. They ask, can we get a meeting with you? They will preliminarily discuss their item then we set up a meeting afterwards.

I can outline for the hon. member a list of things that we have tried to do with this association over the number of years, Mr. Speaker. They have asked us to extend their contracts by five years, and we did. When fuel prices were rising, we put in an escalator clause to help offset the cost of that.

Documentation was always an issue for these operators. Through working with them we found solutions to that. Mr. Speaker, we are working to find a solution.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when I asked the minister last week to leverage some financial flexibility to the English school board to develop more suitable options for the Mount Pearl school system than the ones promised he refused, saying he did not want to interfere.

I ask the minister: Since you were willing to interfere and hand-pick the board, can you now provide the financial support needed to arrive at options that better suit the Mount Pearl school community?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, the board is going through a process. They have met with the parents. There is a meeting that is coming up; they will again discuss with the parent community what are the best options to go forward. They will lay them on the table before the board.

Mr. Speaker, we have not interfered with a process previous and we will not. We are not putting limitations on the district.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, I am not asking him to interfere with the process. I am asking for some financial flexibility which they do not have. At the same time the minister refused to provide financial support to the Mount Pearl school system; ironically he listed all the money he put into schools in other communities, which are all good investments.

Mr. Speaker, will he now provide that same level of support to the Mount Pearl school

system so they too can have the benefit of more suitable options than the ones on the table?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, in all of the schools that we have constructed and all the major renovations that we have carried out, it went through a process. This is going through the same process, nothing different.

The board is meeting with the parent community. They will lay out the plan, a vote will be taken. Mr. Speaker, as I have said to him I do not know if the man is just not getting it or whatnot, we have not placed limitations on the board. They will roll out their plan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JACKMAN: Hopefully, one day, Mr. Speaker – I thought he understood it on this side, but, hopefully, now that he has crossed the floor he will come to understand that on the other side as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, government's ambulance review was released in 2013. Centralized dispatch is a critical component to improving service delivery and it will cost roughly \$5 million. The consultant said that central dispatch should be up and running in spring 2015 and that this was a very doable timeline.

I ask the minister: Given you have only budgeted \$400,000 towards central dispatch this year, will dispatch be up and running in spring 2015?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, central dispatch is in fact central to all that we will do in terms of providing a more efficient ambulance service here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have budgeted money in this Budget to start the study and do the preliminary work on that.

Until the study is done, it is premature to say exactly when we will have things up and running. We understand the importance of it, and we are working forward to ensure that we can do that as quickly as we can.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, they just paid consultants who said this could be done in spring 2015 and what the cost was.

I ask the minister again, can you confirm: Will this be done in spring 2015 like your consultant said it should be?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, once again I will tell the member opposite, we understand the importance of this, we are working towards that. When we nail down an exact date then we will have them asking questions of us as soon as they get the chance next year.

Our plan is to do this as efficiently, as effectively, and as quickly as we possibly can. Our job is not to rush it so that we meet a target date. Our job is to do it right and make sure we

have the best central dispatch that we can possibly afford the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Speaker, that is what we will work toward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge that the administration of justice in Canada's North is challenging, which is why it requires additional resources to function properly. The justice system in Labrador is on the verge of collapse because the necessary resources are not in place.

I ask the Attorney General: When will you finally take responsibility as the Attorney General for the collapse of the justice system in Labrador?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Attorney General.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

With respect to investments in the Labrador justice system, this government has made significant investments in the justice system in Labrador in recent years. As a matter of fact, there have been no cuts, which have been suggested, Mr. Speaker, to the Crown Prosecutor's Office. We added one in Budget 2013. There have been no recent cuts in Legal Aid. We have made significant investments in a new Supreme Courthouse, renovations to the Wabush courthouse, twenty new policing positions in Labrador, a provincial court judge in Wabush, upgrades to video-conferencing equipment, and permanent Aboriginal court clerks. We have continued to invest and we will continue to do so, to make sure everybody has reasonable access to justice in Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: A clean courthouse, Mr. Speaker, and no action.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House, the Attorney General stated, "...the criminal litigation process is the responsibility of the Director of Public Prosecutions." I remind the Attorney General that he is responsible for the Director of Public Prosecutions. Justice in Labrador is collapsing under this government's watch.

I ask the Attorney General: Why is he washing his hands of the justice system in Labrador and blaming somebody else for the mess?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Attorney General.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. F. COLLINS: Mr. Speaker, there is a set of parameters and protocols that governs criminal litigation. It is governed by the parameters of the Criminal Code of Canada. It is governed by the parameters of recent case law. It is governed by the particular circumstances of individual cases and presentations made by the parties in court. The judge makes the decision based on all of this consideration. That is something that is set. The same protocols are followed in Labrador as it is in Newfoundland and as it is in every other province in Canada.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, this year's budget for Advanced Education and Skills quoted numbers from Budget 2013 that do not match up with the actual budget for 2013. In fact, completely different numbers are stated for 2013 than were actually budgeted last year. In Estimates

yesterday, when asked the minister said he changed the numbers from last year because of departmental reorganization.

I ask the minister: Will you table an Estimates document that actually reveals how almost \$1 billion in taxpayers' money was spent?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, with a budget of about \$1.5 billion, including Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, we try to get every dollar we possibly can out the doors of Advanced Education and Skills to support our students in this Province, to support the most vulnerable in our Province, and to support people in this Province in each and every way they want to avail of the services within Advanced Education and Skills.

I explained to the hon. member yesterday in Estimates that, yes, we did have to make an adjustment in regard to this year's Estimates. The simple fact is we reorganized the department. We collapsed certain divisions, three into one, two into one, whatever it may be, and it is reflected in the estimate, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, we are just looking to get a copy of those Estimates tabled.

Mr. Speaker, three years ago the Department of Advanced Education and Skills released a report that anticipated 70,000 job openings in the Province by 2020. Last year, the ADM for Workforce Development and Immigration stated those numbers are now outdated. In Estimates yesterday, the minister was unable to say when those numbers would be revised.

I ask the minister: When will you release updated labour market information so employers and students can better plan for their future?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, we support people in this Province who want to avail of the great opportunity that this government has created, the economy that this government has created.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, we will continue to do so.

As I explained to the hon. member yesterday in Estimates, that 70,000 job openings by 2020 is actually a moving target. That is over a period of time. We are not going to see 70,000 jobs in 2020, Mr. Speaker. We are going to see that over the next five or six years when we bring things to fruition, such as Alderon, the Alderon investment in Lab West, such as Muskrat Falls and all the other big items we have in the hopper, Mr. Speaker, that the people of this Province can avail of, and have meaningful lives.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in April, 2012, government introduced a strategy to improve accessibility called: Access. Inclusion. Equality. This strategy was to guide departments across government to prevent and remove barriers. One of the concepts outlined in the strategy was to promote a design of visit ability, including a barrier free entrance, wider doorways and accessible washrooms.

I ask the minister: Considering the strategy is two years old, how many housing units have been renovated since the strategy was introduced to make them more accessible?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Nine million dollars' worth, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Maybe I am not great at math, Mr. Speaker, but I will ask the minister again.

How many housing units were refurbished, renovated, to make them more accessible?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Nine million dollars' worth, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Now, Mr. Speaker, the minister can play cute if he wants, but the people of this Province who need accessible housing units are watching today. The people of this Province who need accessible housing units are not impressed with that type of answer.

I will ask him again: How many housing units have been renovated or remodeled to make them more accessible since this strategy was put in place?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, playing cute. I take exception to the hon. member referring to me as playing cute in this House today because he certainly played cute yesterday using a constituent for his own means in regard to political means in this House, Mr. Speaker, when I was absolutely trying to help that particular person.

I will answer his question, Mr. Speaker. We have a little over a thousand units in this Province that support seniors, in regard to having disabilities alone within our inventory in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, I say to the hon. member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member for a quick question without any preamble.

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I asked the minister responsible how many housing units have been renovated since this strategy was implemented to make them more accessible.

I will ask him: How many housing units –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I asked the member to be very quick.

The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills for his response, very quickly, please.

MR. O'BRIEN: Mr. Speaker, we continue to support seniors and people with disabilities in this Province. As a matter of fact, I referenced in Estimates yesterday, \$600,000 in regard to accessibility in regard to vehicles; \$200,000 of that also as well, Mr. Speaker –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

In today's media, the Minister of Education says he is grappling for a solution regarding school bus contracts and is willing to sit with anyone who can show him how to make it work.

I ask the minister: Why not put effort into coming up with a solution rather than contributing money to a lobbying process forced on the School Bus Operators Association?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, as I said previous, I believe I have met with this group more than I have met with any group since I have come into government, and that is about trying to find a solution to this annual problem. We have sat with them, we have found solutions to many of the issues, but, Mr. Speaker, the one that we are grappling with is the requirement seeking more money. This is a tendering process, Mr. Speaker. We cannot simply open up tenders after the fact.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said, and I said in *The Telegram*, I am more than willing to sit with anyone, and if we can come up with a solution here I am more than willing to support that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: Does he think that encouraging operators to buy \$100 a plate dinner tickets to get a chance to talk to politicians is an open and transparent process?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Education.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is up to individuals what tickets they buy and what events they go to. Mr. Speaker, I have been to numerous events where people have approached and discussed certain issues and we have set up meetings afterwards. I will do this with this group, as I have done with many other groups.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I say to the minister, the group was advised to buy the tickets and go to that dinner.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Premier noted he expects the Muskrat Falls –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS MICHAEL: – hydro project to return half a billion dollars a year to the Province in 2019 and by 2041, \$3 billion a year.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Can he show us documentation that backs up his statement?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, this government under the leadership of Premier Williams and Premier Dunderdale set out a strategy, set out a plan, to bring wealth to the people of this Province. It is being done through a vehicle called the Newfoundland and Labrador energy (inaudible) –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

PREMIER MARSHALL: I am delighted you asked, because it is time you learned.

That company, Nalcor, has invested in oil and gas, where it is in our interest to do so. It has also invested in electricity and it has invested in Muskrat Falls. That investment will pay off. You cannot get anything out until you put it in, and like the oil companies and the electrical monopolies that make a lot of money, it is time the people of Newfoundland who own the assets, who own the water, who own the power, who own the oil and gas, it is time they got wealth out of it, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I ask the Premier: Will his new oversight committee of bureaucrats have access to the information so that they can determine what we are going to get from it?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, one thing I have learned since I have been in this House is that the more information we give to the people of the Province, they will be able to tell us better what they want and that will help us make better decisions. I want more information to go to the people of the Province, they own the assets, they own the water, they own the power, they own the oil and gas, they own the trees, and they own the land. It is their assets; they should know what is going on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Premier ignore Bill 29 so that the people of the Province and the committee reviewing the work will get the information they need?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, the ATIPP legislation was brought in when the members opposite were in office. They did not proclaim it. They did not have to live under it. They brought it in and kind of left it there.

We proclaimed it and we have lived under that legislation. It called for a statutory review after five years. A statutory review took place; recommendations were made with Bill 29. People have concerns about Bill 29 so we have established a blue-ribbon panel to go out and tell us, to do the research, go ask whatever they want to do and then come and tell us. I am not going to prejudge what they are going to say, but maybe they are not going to say revoke it. Maybe they will say there are some good things in it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What is this government's plan for the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council? It has been long enough now; the committee has not met since 2006?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, one of the priorities that I had when I became Minister of Environment was to ensure that the WERAC was activated. There had been a number of people who sent in their names in interest or referrals came in, and I felt at that time there was not sufficient youth representation on WERAC.

We have since gone out and solicited people who may be interested to put their names forward. Mr. Speaker, I would think probably in the next couple of weeks we will be able to announce the new appointees to the WERAC.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, I have it on good authority that the WERAC, if it was in place, that it would be issuing an opinion on the Big Triangle Pond project.

What is the minister using to get an opinion as to whether this project of exploration, or any other, should be going ahead?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS SHEA: Mr. Speaker, the environmental assessment process allows public input into any of the decisions that lead into an environmental assessment. Whether an individual in Newfoundland and Labrador, which there would only be eleven on WERAC, but there are 500,000 others, along with those eleven, who can provide input through the public consultation process for an environmental assessment. So, Mr. Speaker, no one person has to be a member of any committee. We certainly welcome submissions from anybody in this Province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. East, for a quite question without preamble.

MR. MURPHY: Mr. Speaker, in the Budget they announced \$2 million for the clearing of brush. Are they still intent on using chemicals at the roadside for brush clearing?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works, for a quick response.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MCGRATH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the \$2 million that is put aside for brush clearing will be used for brush clearing. Then it will be decided, through another department, whether or not they will use chemicals.

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

Present Report by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS autism spectrum disorder has been estimated to occur in as many as one in eighty-eight children; and

WHEREAS individualized and intensive early interventions are important for improving outcomes for children with autism; and

WHEREAS long wait-lists are forcing many parents to wait up to two years before their children receive needed pediatric assessments and diagnostic services; and

WHEREAS the Intensive Applied Behavioural Analysis Program is not available for children after Grade 3, while research supports the use of applied behavioural analysis throughout the lifespan; and

WHEREAS a co-ordinated multi-agency approach among key government departments and agencies is need to ensure that individuals with autism spectrum disorder are provided with services that will promote independent living; and

WHEREAS a comprehensive Province-wide strategy for autism spectrum disorder will decrease the lifetime costs of treating and providing services for persons with autism;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to develop a comprehensive Province-wide strategy for autism spectrum disorder in consultation with parents, advocates, educators, health care providers, and experts in the autism community.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition, it looks like we have petitioners from around Labrador City on this particular one – and I note that this petition, I have presented it on a number of occasions before, it continues to come in and people are interested in a more co-ordinated way of dealing with the issues associated with autism. It is interesting that the prevalence in here says one in eighty-eight children, but I think the Centre for Disease Control in the United States actually said last week that the prevalence is actually higher than that.

I know government did provide a couple of things in the Budget this year – there was not a lot. I know they talked about hiring another developmental pediatrician who could do diagnoses and help shorten the waitlist, but the proof is in the pudding. That is going to take some time to do, and we will have to wait and see if there is any evidence that the wait-list will actually be reduced.

I also note that tomorrow is World Autism Awareness Day, and there will be a demonstration here in front of the Confederation Building prior to us taking our seats here in the House of Assembly tomorrow to bring attention to this particular issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again I present a petition to this House on behalf of the residents of Western Newfoundland:

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

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 and in a timely manner as originally announced without further delay or changes.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I have petitions from people from all over, from Lark Harbour, Pasadena, and in the Corner Brook area. This is a petition I have been presenting for a while, and I presented one yesterday.

I heard some disturbing comments from the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of

Health. I do not know if she is speaking on behalf of the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker. After I presented the petition yesterday and I challenged the people to come out to the meeting, I was being called a fool.

Mr. Speaker, I take those comments rather personally. When the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health is calling me a fool for presenting petitions on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, I take it rather personally.

Mr. Speaker, I find it insulting to the people of Western Newfoundland that I cannot stand in this House – and I have yet to see the Member for Humber West or the Member for Humber East presenting these petitions also on their behalf. Yet this government and this Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health who – we had a meeting planned with the oncologists. We had meetings with oncologists from all across Canada. The only one that was cancelled was through the minister's department, through the minister's office somehow. She is saying she had nothing to do with it. It was here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Here we have a minister's office cancelling meetings they were not even invited to and were not notified of. Now we have the minister's Parliamentary Assistant calling me a fool for presenting petitions? That just shows how insulting it is, Mr. Speaker, to the people of Western Newfoundland. I find it insulting when we are trying to get information for those people. I find it rather insulting and I take it personally.

Like I said before, if the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health and Member for Terra Nova wants to come out and tell the people of Western Newfoundland I am a fool, there is a meeting on April 24. Here is your opportunity. Hide behind the minister, but if you want to call me a fool for doing this on behalf of the people of Western Newfoundland and Labrador come out and say it to their face. If not, sit down and give them the proper information, Mr. Speaker, because this is a very serious issue. I do not care

who calls me a fool, I will stand there every day and present the information, Mr. Speaker, until I get the right answers.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Your time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you very much, 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 with the passage of Bill 29, the Access To Information and Protection of Privacy (Amendment) Act, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has weakened citizen's access to information and has reduced government transparency; and –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has moved towards greater secrecy and less openness; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is breaking its own commitment for greater transparency, accountability and freedom of information, which it said at one time was the hallmark of its government;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to repeal the passage of Bill 29.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners -

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker has recognized the Member for St. John's Centre to present a petition. While other members want to carry on a conversation across the floor of the House, I would ask them to take their conversation outside.

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

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

To finish up this petition:

WHEREAS the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to repeal the passage of Bill 29

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I have stood up in this House on numerous occasions since Bill 29 was first passed in this House, and one wonders does Bill 29 affect the lives of the people of our Province. Does Bill 29 affect how we govern as legislators in this House? I would say absolutely.

Since Bill 29 the democratic deficit that this government faces has increased. It has increased because we do not have all-party standing committees. Because we do not have all-party standing committees, a place where information is given, citizens and experts can testify, members of all three parties are there to look at specific issues that really affect people's lives, then that information is public.

How this government is operating, Mr. Speaker, is that any kind of information – and it is all about government listening. This government says they are open and transparent and that they want to listen. They are talking over every single word I say right now. This is about the lives of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador

We cannot get information. For instance, we cannot get information on why the Minister of Justice closed the Family Violence Intervention Court. There was a report done, but if we had all-party standing committees we would know on what basis decisions were made. We would have the information; we would be listening to the people of the Province. We would be listening to experts on issues that affect the very lives of the people of the Province. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I ask that this government repeal Bill 29.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS there are many individuals within our Province who have mobility issues; and

WHEREAS it is extremely important as an inclusive society to ensure appropriate access to both public and private facilities and institutions; and

WHEREAS a key component in the provision of access for a person with mobility issues is the provision of regulated blue zones; and

WHEREAS our provincial government implemented new blue zone regulations two years ago but has failed to adequately enforce them; and

WHEREAS this failure of our government to adequately enforce blue zone regulations has resulted in continued denial of appropriate access for persons with disabilities to many public and private facilities;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to start enforcing its blue zone regulations in order to provide appropriate access for persons with mobility issues;

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, we presented this now a number of times. We will continue to do so. All you have to do now is look outside today, on a stormy day, a wintery day, and in particular it really drives home the point behind the petition, the point behind the legislation really, when it was drafted and passed unanimously in this House of Assembly.

If you were a person today with a disability and you went looking for the blue zone you would not be able to find it because it would be covered in snow. You, as the individual looking for the blue zone could not find it. You, as an individual who does not require a blue zone could possibly end up parking in the blue zone because they cannot see it, it is covered in snow. Hence, the reason why the regulation was put in place that for every blue zone there would be permanent signage put in place.

Mr. Speaker, there are numerous properties throughout the Province, certainly throughout this region, the city, and the general area that are not in compliance. We are asking the minister to take further action to bring us in compliance with our own legislation. Mr. Speaker, I do not even see any major cost to it. I am sure it is not even going to interfere with the Minister of Finance's billion-dollar shopping spree.

Thank you.

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

MS DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament

assembled, the petition of the undersigned humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS the Strait of Belle Isle is a very important transportation link between Labrador and the Island of Newfoundland; and

WHEREAS both commercial and residential traffic is continuously increasing because of the opening of the Trans-Labrador Highway and increased development in Labrador; and

WHEREAS the existing ferry service can no longer effectively handle the traffic; and

WHEREAS there have been many interruptions in the ferry service, especially during the 2014 winter seasons;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to complete a comprehensive feasibility study for a fixed link across the Strait of Belle Isle that would include a geological assessment and a full cost analysis.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, Tom Kierans, I think he lived to be 100, and right up until the day he died he advocated very, very strongly for a fixed link across the Strait of Belle Isle.

This year we have had a really, really difficult year with ferries, where in January, February and March people have been disrupted. They have been out of pocket hundreds and thousands of dollars because of the ferry woes.

We look at Norway and we see that they have over 900 tunnels. We are spending millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, in ferries. The ice is unprecedented. How long are we going to continue? This is impacting tourism, it is impacting medical, and it is impacting businesses.

I know the minister stood the other day and said we have an Air Foodlift Subsidy. By the time I

got back to my office, I had a call from a businessman who runs a bakery – flour is one of the examples. Flour is very essential in a business like a bakery, yet that is not included in the Air Foodlift Subsidy.

So all of the stuff, Mr. Speaker, is just a band-aid solution; it is not getting at the problem. We have \$1 billion that is going in a subsea cable across the Strait of Belle Isle and because there was no vision and no planning, sadly that is not running through a tunnel when it could be.

It is time, Mr. Speaker, to get at these figures.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS DEMPSTER: We have a prefeasibility study eight years ago; those figures are now dated. It is time for us to look at this once and for all and see. People are telling us it is going to cost less than \$500 million. Let's have a look at that and let's see.

Somebody mentioned today that I am not smiling enough here in the House. I can tell you, I am not here to play house and smile; we have big issues. The people elected me to try to get to the bottom and to try to be instrumental in bringing some positive change, especially to Cartwright-L'Anse au Clair, but it very, very difficult, the travel arrangement that we have right now. I drove over a mud highway to fly in here on Sunday and when I got to Goose Bay, I could not even get out of vehicle (inaudible) –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The member's time has expired.

The hon. the Member for St. Barbe.

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

WHEREAS there is no cellphone service in the Town of Trout River, which is an enclave in the community in Gros Morne National Park; and

WHEREAS visitors to Gros Morne National Park, more than 100,000 annually, expect to communicate by cellphone when they visit the park; and

WHEREAS cellphone service has become a very important aspect of everyday living for residents; and

WHEREAS cellphone service is an essential safety tool for visitors and residents; and

WHEREAS cellphone service is essential for business development;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to partner with the private sector to extend cellphone coverage throughout Gros Morne National Park and the enclave community of Trout River.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I was in Trout River on Saturday for most of the afternoon and one of the serious issues for people in a community that is not as remote as it is isolated – it is isolated because you have to go through Trout River Gulch from the Woody Point area. The signs say when the lights are flashing the road is closed, and the road is closed in this kind of weather fairly often.

The snow level immediately inland from Trout River is measured by the roadside markers; the snow is higher than the markers. In fact, I would suspect that Transportation and Works may have to invest in twelve-foot markers next year because the snow is up past the eight-foot markers. So if you cannot find an eight-foot tall marker, then you know there is a fair bit of snow in that area.

Mr. Speaker, in meeting with constituents in Trout River on Saturday afternoon, I found myself in a situation of running late for appointments on other side into the Bonne Bay area. When you are sitting in the home of a constituent, somebody who is on Income Support – and it is no disgrace to be on Income Support; it is fortunate that they have Income Support to look after them. How do I say to them I would like to use your telephone to make a long distance call so that I can tell other people that I am going to be late because I have a cellphone, a government-issued cellphone, sitting here that I cannot use, and I would expect this person on Income Support to support my telephone call to say I am late for an appointment?

That is the type of obstacle that the people in Trout River face on a daily basis. When 911 becomes widespread through the Province, they will be left behind. They certainly feel like they are being left behind, and this petition is on their behalf. I did ask them to get more petitions when I was there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I have a petition.

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

WHEREAS hundreds of residents of the Southwest Coast of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, including residents of Margaree, Fox Roost, Isle aux Morts, Burnt Islands, Rose Blanche-Harbour Le Cou, Diamond Cove, and La Poile use Route 470 on a regular basis for work, medical, educational, and social reasons; and

WHEREAS there is no cellphone coverage on Route 470; and

WHEREAS residents and users of Route 470 require cellphone coverage to ensure their safety and communication abilities; and

WHEREAS the Department of IBRD announced significant funding to improve broadband services in rural Newfoundland and Labrador; and

WHEREAS the residents and users of Route 470 feel that the department should also invest in cellphone coverage for rural Newfoundland and Labrador;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to support the users of Route 470 in their request to obtain cellphone coverage along Route 470.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is a petition I have presented before on numerous occasions, but I felt today I had to put it in again. I just received a Facebook message, actually, from a constituent in Rose Blanche who told me about the night of March 26. This is a citizen who lives in Rose Blanche, but he spent the night of March 26 sleeping in his truck that was blocked in by snow on Route 470.

Now, it would have been fine, but the fact is we know plows cannot get back and forth. The weather has been unusually bad. He could not make a phone call and he was stuck there in that truck all night. God forbid if there was an emergency situation and this person had a health issue. Thankfully, he did not. He made it home okay, but I am coming back to the same story here.

This is not just a want any more; this is a need. We have people who are being trapped and the next thing you know I am going to be presenting this petition and talking about someone who has lost their life because they could not access this

cellphone that should be natural. Now, we all have them. They should be able to be used everywhere.

I have asked for information on this repeatedly. I have received none. People want service; they need it. If not, we are going to have something terrible happen. Thank God this individual from Rose Blanche made it out safe.

I say this today: I have roadways in my district that are blocked in with snow. We have people who cannot get back and forth. There is not enough equipment on the roads to take care of this snow. We have people with emergency situations that cannot get to the hospital. I have people who are losing days of work because they cannot get over this road. Again, all of that pales in comparison to the person who gets stuck and cannot use their phone to call. If an emergency comes up, somebody is going to be liable for it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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 Labrador-Grenfell Health employs a nurse practitioner at St. Anthony able to take appointments and operate a full scope of practice for which nurse practitioners are licensed to operate; and

WHEREAS Western Health at Port Saunders and Norris Point on the Great Northern Peninsula has similar nurse practitioner practices; and

WHEREAS nurse practitioners have advanced education and training beyond the Registered Nurse level and provide comprehensive care

ranging from health promotion and prevention to diagnosis and treatment, including ordering diagnostic tests, prescribing pharmaceuticals, and performing procedures within a legislated scope of practice; and

WHEREAS nurse practitioners are alleviating physician shortages in rural areas across Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador by operating clinical practices in collaboration with physicians and other health practitioners, leading to better access to service and shorter wait times;

WHEREAS residents from Eddies Cove East to Reefs Harbour deserve to have regular nurse practitioner clinics that is available to other residents of the Great Northern Peninsula;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to ensure that a nurse practitioner clinical practice be established at the Strait of Belle Isle Health Centre to be fully integrated with clinical practices of physicians.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, we see that our health care budget is just shy of \$3 billion in this Province, in Newfoundland and Labrador, and we have at the Strait of Belle Isle Health Centre in Flower's Cove a nurse practitioner that can certainly practice the full scope, and there are many instances where there is not a full complement of physicians. To have better health outcomes we could have a regular nurse practitioner clinic operating Monday to Friday, and this would help provide a better continuity of care to those who are utilizing the service at the Strait of Belle Isle Health Centre.

We have this established in St. Anthony. It is established in Port Saunders, and other areas. This is a great opportunity for the Minister of Health and Community Services to look at implementing nurse practitioner clinics at Labrador-Grenfell Health at the Strait of Belle Isle Health Centre. It will save money, and it will improve health outcomes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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 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, rabbit, loons, ducks, Canada geese, et cetera; and

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

WHEREAS there are a significant number of cabins and permanent homes in the Peak Pond and 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 dumpsites in the area;

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 this matter and advise Eastern Waste Management to withdraw the proposal and find a more suitable location for this waste recovery facility.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, there is a concern with this site because the site is approximately 100 feet from a pond. The site – not only with concerns of

leachate from the site getting into the pond, Mr. Speaker, but because of permanent residents and cabin owners in the area we are asking that government and Eastern Waste Management look for an area that is more suitable, that is not in very close proximity to cabin owners, the homeowners in the area.

Mr. Speaker, we are concerned because this facility will attract rodents. It will attract other animals. It will attract nuisance animals to the area. There are children who use that pond and families who use that pond for recreational purposes, Mr. Speaker. There are children and families in the area who would be negatively impacted by rodents and nuisance animals in that particular area, not to mention the odour that may come from that facility which would have a negative impact on the enjoyment of those who are living in the area and those who have recreational cottages in the area.

Mr. Speaker, I ask government to reconsider and to intercede, and ask Eastern Waste Management to reconsider this particular proposal and to look for an area – this is a much needed proposal, but it is not needed in this particular area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS 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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this particular part of the petition I have been presenting, I do not know how many times. I am sure I can almost repeat it in my sleep. I know the members across the floor have heard me stand and present this on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador several times. Perhaps they even could repeat it in their sleep. This is signed by folks from Norris Point, from Baie Verte, from Peterview, and from St. John's.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I stood up and I presented this same petition again. What I said was that it was a mystery because so many people I encounter keep wondering. They shake their head and they wonder: Why was this court closed? Why was it cut when it was so effective and was such an effective tool in the area of domestic violence?

Last week, the Minister of Justice said in a press conference that perhaps the decision was not

made in the best interest of the courts. I raised this in the House and he said I was wrong, that he had not said that, when in fact I have testimony here that is what he did say.

This past week, there was a continuing education session that was sponsored by the Law Society of Newfoundland and Labrador. The participants there, from judges to lawyers, were talking about this court and how important it is. Mr. Speaker, it is a mystery.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I want to do something upfront I forgot yesterday. I just remind members of the House that tomorrow, Wednesday, April 2, the Social Services Committee for Estimates will meet here in the House at 9:00 a.m. to review the Estimates of the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services.

Also, the Government Services Estimates Committee will meet tomorrow in the House at 5:30 to review the Estimates of the Department of Finance and Treasury Board.

This afternoon, the Social Services Committee will review the Estimates of the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, commencing 6:00 p.m. right here in the House.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to call from the Order Paper Motion 7. I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Conservation, 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 this 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 on March 31, 2014.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader, to the motion.

MR. KING: Yes, I will speak to the motion, Mr. Speaker, for a few moments. I want to thank you very much.

Just to give a little bit of context to those who are following the debate either here or at home, Mr. Speaker, the House of Assembly Management Commission is a group or a committee, if you will, that is represented by all three parties in the Legislature here: the government, the Progressive Conservative Party; the Opposition Liberal Party, the Official Opposition; and the New Democratic Party.

The Management Commission has a broad range of responsibilities, but in effect it is about running the affairs of the House. So, it would deal with members' benefits and allowances, policies, procedures, regulations, those kinds of things that affect all members of this House and the House of Assembly itself.

With respect to the resolution today, an issue was brought before the Management Commission. Just by way of some process background, the Management Commission would have had an issue presented to it; the issue today in particular, of course, is on travel allocations per district. That would have been

debated at the Management Commission meeting. For the benefit again of the people who are paying attention to the debate, it would have been debated, a decision would have been made by the Management Commission, and the process requires that the decision, the document if you will, be tabled here in the House of Assembly as you did on March 31.

It also requires a full debate in the House of Assembly and support of this entire House before the change that the Management Commission is recommending can actually be implemented. That is why we are in this particular debate today.

I want to just share some of that by way of process. What we are talking about today is a small piece of the Members' Resources and Allowances Rules. In particular, it is Schedule A which talks about the intra-constituency allowances of members. That schedule, Mr. Speaker, essentially lays out a dollar figure of what each member of this particular House of Assembly is allocated. It also talks about, under section 38, further details on eligible expenses; for example, what members can claim for travel allowances, for living allowances, and any other pertinent allowances that members are allowed to claim as part of their daily work on behalf of the people of the Province and the people of their district when they are travelling within their own particular district. It also makes reference to the ability of a member to claim some outside of district travel if it is for business related to representing a constituent in some manner or another, or constituency business.

The resolution that we are bringing forward today basically deals, in particular, with the dollar value – the budget total, I should say, for each of the forty-eight districts in the Province. I want to say again, just to be clear, what we are doing is we are realigning some of the allocations for some of the districts. So, in some districts that I will present to you in a moment, there will be a reduction in their budget; in some other districts, there will be an increase. That is a result of a piece of research that we had conducted by staff here from the House of Assembly who looked at the past number of

years and the trends, and how much of the budget allocation members were spending over the past number of years.

What it revealed, Mr. Speaker, is in some cases there are a number of districts here, based on the kilometres that members have to travel, that really maxed out the budget and members were really being challenged to live within the budget and still serve the needs of their constituents; while, at the same time, there are other districts within the Province where there was an extremely high dollar figure attached to the budget, and at no time were members able or showing that they were spending even close to, in some cases, 50 per cent or 60 per cent of the budget.

The changes we are making today, they are a budgetary decision with respect to allocations per district, but it is all within the overall budget that is allocated within the House of Assembly. So, in other words, there is no increase in the overall travel budget for members; it is just a rearranging of the allocation per district within the global budget, Mr. Speaker. I want to just make sure that people understand that. There is no budget increase here in the big budget of members' travel; it is just a reallocation. So we are seeing some districts reduced in their travel allowances, and others increased.

Specifically, for the record, there is a document – I do not think I need to table it, I think it is probably already with the Clerk; but for the benefit of anyone who want to see it, the document is a public document. The affected districts that we are going to discuss and vote on today are as follows: Baie Verte – Springdale district will see an increase of \$1,800 in the budget; the District of Grand Falls-Windsor – Green Bay South will see an increase of \$700; the District of Terra Nova will be increased by \$2,500; and The Straits – White Bay North will be increased by \$2,500. In addition, Mr. Speaker, there are four districts: the District of Conception Bay South, Humber West, Kilbride, and Labrador West will all be decreased by \$1,100.

Mr. Speaker, as I said a few moments ago, what we are talking about is a global budget dollar amount that is attached to members' travel, that has not changed – if memory serves me, it has not changed for the seven years I have been here. I think when the budget was set, probably with the Green report, if I am not mistaken, that budget has not changed. What we are doing is we are essentially moving money around within that budget to help members who require extra travel assistance to better serve their constituents, recognizing, in other areas where there are reductions, members have not been using even close to the full amount of the budgetary allocation.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that, on behalf of the members of our party and members of government, I am very pleased to stand in support of this motion and urge my colleagues, as well, to vote in favour of the motion.

Thank you.

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

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

I thank the member opposite for his opening commentary on this resolution. To provide some backdrop, I guess, I am speaking as the Opposition House Leader; I have only been here since the October 2011 election. I know the member opposite has been here longer, and I under the Leader of the Third Party have been here and is going to speak to this – she may have a better understanding or grasp of the entire time.

What I can say is that it seems to be a very simple notion, in that since the time the Green report came out and we looked at the allocations of travel that were allotted to each member, what we now have – and I guess I have to give credit here to the staff who did the analysis of over seven years' time of travel patterns – what we realized is that the allocation may not be realistic with what people are actually travelling; and that could be due to travel habits, that could be due to actual size of districts, roadway, et cetera.

So what we had is we had certain members who were going over 80 per cent of their travel budget. Some people were actually hitting 100 per cent and some people, I know, actually exceeding the amount of actual travel and going into their own pocket to do the travel necessary with the job. Again, we have gone back and we have a great record of this, done by the staff, and I appreciate that, to show that in certain cases we needed to increase the allowance that was provided to these members.

The Government House Leader stated that it is the Districts of Baie Verte – Springdale, The Straits – White Bay North, Grand Falls - Windsor – Green Bay South, and Terra Nova. Just to give you an idea, I know the monetary amount was there, but for instance, Baie Verte – Springdale had an allocation of 15,000 kilometers; now it is 20,000. If you look at the chart, every year prior to that the member for that district was hitting that mark. On the flip side of that, you had districts where – due to size of roads and maybe if there is a Cabinet minister there, et cetera – they were not coming anywhere near close to the allocation. What we have done here, there have been requests to increase certain and in return we are going to decrease certain districts.

The part that I really think is important to get out there is twofold. Number one, since the Green report we are doing this on camera, here in the House of Assembly. It is all recorded. It shows the openness and transparency that I think is incumbent on us and necessary since the release of the Green report. Anybody who can watch this despair – we need to show integrity. It was a tough time. I do not need to get into that, but going forward we need to show the decisions that are made: How do we get there? We are showing this.

I would say to people out there, if they ever have questions on expenditures and expenses, everything is online. You can look at how I travel, where I travel, when I travel, and the cost for said travel. We need to put that out there so the public can be maintained, that the integrity is there and people can see, look, everything is happening for a reason and it is above board is

the main thing. I want to put that out there that these changes are happening on the record as it should be.

The second part; and I thought this was very important. We talk about expenditures and how much money is spent. The big thing to me, too, was that should the district allowances be adjusted as outlined – and it is being proposed here – there would be a net budgetary impact of \$3,100 which can be absorbed within existing budgetary allocations. To me that is important here.

For the amount that it is increasing, there is almost an equivalent decrease, therefore it is not costing taxpayers any more than was already allocated, and I think taxpayers want to know that. It is not a case of people getting extra money to travel, it is a case of taking these allowances that are put out there and making sure they are accurate, which we have been able to do through tracking this over seven years. I want to make sure that is out there.

It is something we all go through. I do not think it can be – sometimes I think you have to be in this job to really realize the amount of travel that goes into it and how important it is for people, especially outside. It is important in the capital region but take anybody who services a rural district or has to travel a lot. Travel is a part of the job. You have to do it. It is necessary to do it, so therefore we have to have something that is reasonable and makes sense.

This might be something that comes up again down the road as new members come in, as districts may be realigned in the future. These things need to be changed. Chief Green came in and made his allocations but we have now had the benefit of time and experience to show if there is necessary changes.

When it comes to making claims, all this travel is reasonable. It is necessary, and is proven to be necessary. We all go through a very rigorous claims process in putting this forward. Everything is checked, double-checked, and triple checked to make sure it falls within the guidelines that Chief Justice Green laid out. So

I think that it is important that this be on the record.

I think the member opposite laid out why we are doing this. I think I have added a little bit to that. I do not think I need to go on any further. Obviously, we as the Official Opposition will be joining in supporting this resolution that needs to be made. I think it is going to help us do a better job, and at the same time do a better job of representing people in this Province without there being extra expenditure of funds, which is obviously very important to taxpayers in this Province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I am glad to have the opportunity to stand today and to make some comments with regard to the resolution that is before the House. I am not going to repeat everything that has been said by my two colleagues. I am sure people have been listening to them as well. When people go to Hansard, if they want to check on this they will be able to read everything that was said prior to what I say. So I will not do a lot of repetition, but I do think it is important to repeat what the role of the House Management Commission is.

It is a serious responsibility that members of the House Management Commission hold, because they are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the process that we went through beginning in 2006, when Chief Justice Green first took on the role of Commissioner to study the whole situation of members' salaries and disbursements, et cetera, at a time when we had been through a very rough time here in this Province with regard to what turned out to be, in some cases, actually illegal use of public funds. That process which began with Chief Justice Green continued over the year and a half and resulted in a wonderful piece of legislation which is the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act.

First of all, it is the House Management Commission that has the responsibility to study on a regular basis the disbursements that happen in this House, to study those disbursements and to monitor them according to the regulations that come out of the legislation. The legislation itself is very descriptive and prescriptive, but besides the prescriptions that are in the legislation, there are other regulations as well that this House has approved. The House Management Commission has the job to make sure that we are living up to the regulations, living up to the prescriptions of the legislation; yet, even with the work of the Commission, everything still has to come back to this House for final approval.

The work we did with regard to the intra-constituency allowances and the work that was done by the House management staff, because they did the bulk of the work in figuring out how much was being spent in the various districts and if there were any anomalies or something that did not look logical – to do that work and then to bring it to the House Management Commission.

We then took that information, analyzed it, and discussed in an open process, open to the public and with cameras on us so that everybody could access the information we were looking at. If anybody to this day wants to, they can go and find those reports as well, the reports of our meetings. We then took in that open process the information that was prepared for us by the staff and came to the conclusion that the recommendations they were making were very logical.

I think it is very important we know that Commissioner Green understood the report he would make and recommendations he would make back in 2007, the spirit of them would be maintained but there might be, over the years, details that would have to change. For example, changing the actual amount of the allowances under the intra-constituency travel. It is our responsibility to continually monitor to keep things up to date so the MHAs can do their work, and do the work their constituents expect of them.

I really liked the process that the staff used to try to determine whether or not there were sufficient monies allowed in each district. In actual fact, what they found was that the kilometrage was not always correct, adjusting for correct kilometrage, and also using logic. For example, the one I am going to pick – and I hope my colleague from the District of Kilbride will not mind my picking on his.

The District of Kilbride, which is within the City of St. John's, in actual fact, had a larger amount of money allowed for it than the other districts within the capital city. When you looked at the travel that was done by the member for that area, it was the same as what was happening in the other districts in the capital city area. So it did not make sense that the District of Kilbride had more money attached to it than the others.

That was the kind of thing we did. As I said, it was openly discussed in the Commission. We are now openly discussing it here again today. I am sure that the public listening to us will understand why we are agreeing to these changes for the districts that have been outlined by the Government House Leader and the Opposition House Leader, and will also understand that in making these changes we are not in any way changing the overall budget line. We are just reassembling the money throughout the districts where changes needed to happen.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat and will look forward to voting for this resolution.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

You have all heard the motion.

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Motion carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time I would like to call from the Order Paper under second reading, Order 5, second reading of a bill, An Act To Repeal The Printing Services Act, Bill 5.

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

MR. CRUMMELL: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Cape St. Francis, that Bill 5, An Act To Repeal The Printing Services Act, now be given a second reading.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 5, An Act To Repeal The Printing Services Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act To Repeal The Printing Services Act”. (Bill 5)

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

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of legislation Service NL is responsible for approximately 180 statutes and regulations, standards, and codes of practice. When it comes to legislation, our department has one of the most extensive portfolios in all of government. As such, we are continually reviewing, updating, and performing general housekeeping measures to ensure our legislation is current and meets the needs of our citizens. As part of this ongoing review, it was discovered that the Printing Services Act was still on the books but it is outdated and no longer required.

Mr. Speaker, Service Newfoundland and Labrador is responsible for the Office of the Queen’s Printer and the Printing and Micrographic Services division, which handles printing services for the provincial government. The functions and responsibilities of the Queen’s Printer and division are outlined under the Works, Services and Transportation Act

including the requirements to publish the Newfoundland and Labrador Gazette, official government reports and other documents, legislation and regulations, other orders and anything else directed by government.

Mr. Speaker, these functions continue on a daily basis and we are very proud and appreciative of the high quality and efficient work that our staff at Printing and Micrographic Services and the Office of the Queen’s Printer do to support this essential work, especially their support of the work of this House.

The Printing Services Act, on the other hand, was created in 1996 for a very specific purpose; that being to facilitate a potential agreement for the provision of printing, microfilming, and electronic services for government by the private sector. It is my understanding that this legislation was created to specifically exempt any potential agreement with Kodak Canada Incorporated for these services from the provisions of the Public Tender Act, provided the agreement was entered into within thirty days.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that this measure was undertaken as a result of a proposal brought forward by the private sector to establish a document imaging centre that they had indicated had the potential to offer substantial savings to government and bring new business to the Province, which could in turn have had a positive impact on the local printing industry. It was this latter potential benefit on local industry, which I am again given to understand – because it was 1996, under the Liberal Administration almost twenty years ago – that was the rationale for seeking an exemption from the Public Tender Act.

Mr. Speaker, I also understand that for a number of reasons the agreement did not come into fruition and the thirty-day expiry date outlining the Printing Services Act passed and, as such, the act is defunct and needs to be repealed. Again, this is very much a housekeeping matter. It is something that in our research we found was still on the books and it is just a simple

procedure here today, Mr. Speaker, to repeal the act.

As such, Mr. Speaker, I propose that the Printing Services Act be repealed.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl South.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am not going to be very long in my comments. I think the minister explained that it is simply a piece of housekeeping really to remove this act which is no longer applicable. I would note, though, before I sit down that exemptions from the Public Tender Act certainly is something that has continued on in recent times through this government, as we have seen by the AG's report with Eastern Health and so on. Certainly, that is something that we want to see remedied for sure.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I will take my place and we certainly support this piece of legislation.

Thank you.

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

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

I would like to thank the minister for giving me the opportunity to get up today and say a few words on Bill 5.

Mr. Speaker, this bill, Printing Services Act, was introduced back in 1996 and basically it was with a company called Kodak to have them come in and do special services at the Queen's Printer. Back in 1996, I had the opportunity – I used to work with a company similar to Kodak, called Cannon, and did a lot of work at the Queen's Printer. Back then what used to happen were the companies used to come in and they would offer services that would take care of everything you were doing in whatever it was,

microfilms, printing, or whatever needed to be done at the time. They would come in and they would offer the complete services and take over. I guess that is the reason government looked at a company like Kodak to come in and take over that.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to work with a lot of people down in the Queen's Printer and I am sure today the same expertise and the same quality is there. I know Mr. Tucker was the person in charge back in 1996 and I used to spend a lot of time in there. I was the one who used to come in and take care of all of the colour machines that were down at the Queen's Printer.

The one thing that amazed me the most was how dedicated these people were. There were documents that had to be out the next day and there would be no doubt that you would see the people working down in the Queen's Printer office until 12:00 o'clock, 1:00 o'clock some nights, and even all night long just to make sure the documents got out the next day. Mr. Speaker, like I said, they would be there until late in the mornings making sure everything got out and everything got out on time. Their quality and the quality of work they did were amazing.

We have some great public employees here in government. Sometimes it is nice to be able to get up and recognize them. Today I am really happy to be able to get up and speak a little bit on this bill and recognize our workers down in the Queen's Printer. I know there are a few of them still down there; Judy, Don, Arlene, and the whole lot of them are still down there working. I used to be always amazed with their quality of work and their dedication to this government. I think today is an opportunity for me just to get up and say what I saw and the quality of their work.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to printing services, microfilms, and stuff like this, like I said, back in 1996 there were a lot of companies out there that basically offered this service. I think whatever happened at the day, Kodak must have fallen through because it was only thirty days they had to do this agreement.

Again, all we are doing is just taking this bill off the table altogether and repealing it. I will be fully supportive of this bill. It gives me the opportunity just to get up here today and to thank the people who are down in the Queen's Printer for the great job they do, the hard work they do, the dedication they have, and the quality of work they do, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MURPHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure to rise in the House today to have a few words to say on this bill. At the same time, to the minister, I would like to thank his staff for the briefing on this bill and what the purpose of this bill is. As was said at the briefing, we did not get enough time to pour up a coffee on this one. Recognizing it for what it is, it is the repeal of a bill, but it did have a few questions for me. I thought this was kind of interesting at this particular time, because, Mr. Speaker, I said to myself, government back in 1996 saw fit to entertain a proposal by a private company – in this particular case Kodak. I am still doing some research on this one by the way.

I have asked staff to look this one up, about the actual process of how Kodak ended up being a supplier of a service to government when there were so many other companies out there, just for argument sake, to see if everything was done properly when it comes to procurement. Because at that time I can particularly note three other manufacturers of paper products, for example, and microfilming. I can think of Polaroid, I can think of Minolta, I can think of Fuji that was out there in the markets as well.

I do not know, while one would be happy in seeing the repeal of this act, that is one of the things I had noted. Then I came upon this one. I will ask the minister again about the new procurement act – we are still waiting for it – and hopefully, Mr. Speaker, I can see where

there are times when government will take a proposal, for example, for something that would be unsolicited by government in an attempt for a company to go ahead and pursue the sale up, a particular service or a product.

It may be good for the taxpayer, it may be good for the consumer out there, but at the same time, what is going to happen in the procurement process in the future? Government may be able to save themselves in a process like this, where they entertained the Kodak company at the time – and we know what happened to Kodak of course, with modern changing times I guess and with the changes to the Internet and the printing industry and everything, it has found itself in some severe difficulties.

What is going to happen to the new procurement act, and when are we going to see that? Because at the same time, while one company might entertain something for the sale of a particular item, a service, hopefully government will be able to look at other companies out there that are also offering that same service.

While we agree with the act itself, with this one being repealed, it still brings a number of questions as regards to the advent of the new act, to the new procurement act. Hopefully, we will see that one coming up shortly. That is about all I have to say on this one.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: If the hon. the Minister of Service NL speaks now he will close the debate.

The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. CRUMMELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I would like to thank my colleague from Cape St. Francis for his very kind words for the people who work in the Queen's Printer's office. Thank you very much for that. I am sure they appreciate that. I would certainly like to thank the Member for St. John's East.

I would just like to say a few words about the public tendering process and the new public

procurement act we are working on, and working very diligently on, Mr. Speaker. We are getting very close to being able to bring it to the floor of the House. We have had a (inaudible) experience under the strategic procurement project where we used new processes to make sure the taxpayers' dollars are being used more wisely in public procurement. We are taking those learnings and incorporating it into the new act.

It is a Blue Book commitment that we made, Mr. Speaker, and within our term we said we would bring it to the floor of the House. I am confident in standing up here today and saying that we will be bringing this to the floor of the House in the future, so you can mark that down.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to reference something the Member for Mount Pearl South referred to in terms of – this piece of legislation that came into place was unique and it is an interesting piece of legislation. We are not sure why exactly, what happened. I think we will probably have to go back through Hansard to see exactly what happened here. There were questions that were raised, but that was twenty years ago under another Administration.

With regard to public tender exceptions, Mr. Speaker, that the Member for Mount Pearl South referenced. He mentioned the Auditor General has mentioned a couple of times in his reports about exceptions and he has called them out, but the reality of the situation is this, public tender exceptions are rarely used, Mr. Speaker. The AG report clearly shows that tender exceptions account for less than 2 per cent of the annual expenditures. These exceptions, Mr. Speaker, are only done under very strict situations and conditions. It is outlined in the Public Tender Act.

The Public Tender Act is a good act, Mr. Speaker. It was good for its time, but the advancement of procurement in this Province is what the new procurement act is going to be all about, and we certainly look forward to putting that to the floor of the House.

The strict condition that we want to reference is due to sole-sourcing, where there is a pressing emergency. That happens on occasion, Mr. Speaker, when we have a hurricane and we have to put a bridge in, or we need a piece of equipment that only one vender can provide to the government. That does happen on occasion. It represents less than 2 per cent of our purchasing.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing untoward going on with our procurement in our government right now. I know for sure that when we bring this new act to the floor of the House it will be a solid piece of legislation. It is going to be well researched. It will be a benefit to all in the Province, Mr. Speaker, and certainly for the taxpayers. I look forward to the day when we do bring that into the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the repeal of this act is pretty straightforward. I will just leave it with my colleagues in the House to approve it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Is it the pleasure of the House that the said bill be now read a second time?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Repeal The Printing Services Act. (Bill 5)

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

When shall the bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole House?

MR. KING: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, “An Act To Repeal The Printing Services Act”, read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole presently, by leave. (Bill 5)

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Conservation, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 5, An Act To Repeal The Printing Services Act.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the said bill.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Littlejohn): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 5, An Act To Repeal The Printing Services Act.

A bill, “An Act To Repeal The Printing Services Act”. (Bill 5)

CHAIR: The Clerk.

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative session convened as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Repeal The Printing Services Act.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, ‘aye’.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, ‘nay’.

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 5 without amendment.

CHAIR: It is moved by the hon. Government House Leader that we rise and report the bill without amendment.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, Mr. Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Verge): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Port de Grave.

MR. LITTLEJOHN: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 5 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 5 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. KING: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MR. KING: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time I would like to call from the Order Paper, Motion 1, to move that the 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 again and to speak to the Budget – speak, actually, to the non-confidence motion that we tabled yesterday. The reason why we did this is because going through the Budget process, as I mentioned yesterday in my first opportunity to speak to the Budget, there were some concerns for us as the Official Opposition about presenting a fiscally responsible program – and the non-confidence motion, as it reads, “...present a fiscally responsible program which addresses the immediate economic problems of rural areas of our 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, the reason why we say that is we see now, over ten years, where there has been an opportunity to use the oil royalty money we had. When you go back into the 1980s and the development of an oil industry in our Province, one of the things that we were looking forward to is that we would actually use the royalty money to create an economic program throughout the Province so that the wealth would be distributed for all people, all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

That would be done by economic development in all regions of our Province. If you look around the Province right now, Mr. Speaker, you really do not need to go very far to understand that this is not what is occurring in our Province right now. We have many areas of our Province – most of them being very rural by nature – that

right now are living in very economically depressed times, I say, Mr. Speaker.

I know in my own district, as an example, just in the last three or four years we have seen the closure of fish processing plants right now, and we have many people out of work. In order for those people to go to work, what they have to do is look for work outside of the Province, usually, and those people would actually go to Labrador, or to Alberta.

There has been some success with some people finding work within other regions of the Province, and I mention Labrador as an example, but we know that those megaprojects will not last. The whole idea behind the oil royalty money was diversifying the economy. When you look back over the last ten years of this government, we do not see any action when it comes to putting the economic development in process. If we go back to 2003 and we remember the original Tory platform they ran the election on in 2003, then there was a lot of talk about creating industry around our Province so that we would have economic development, so it would produce wealth, not only for this generation but for generations to come.

How was that supposed to occur? When we heard, certainly, there were departments, if you remember – the Department of Business was something that was put in place at that particular time. The focus there was to help develop businesses in all areas of the Province, in all regions of the Province. Well, Mr. Speaker, we know what happened to that. That was not a successful department. As a matter of fact, when you look back at the history of that department, really the only jobs that were created in any substantive way were within the department itself. The previous Premier, Premier Dunderdale, she saw fit that the department was not delivering what it was intended to do, and indeed what they did is they walked away from the department.

That Department of Business no longer exists. In actual fact, what it has become, it has become absorbed within the Department of Innovation, Business and Rural Development. You look at

that particular department, and when you look back even over the last few years and the number of budget allocations that we have seen within that department and how much of that money they have been able to put out the door to create economic development around our Province, it has not occurred.

Even today, when you look at the current minister of that department, that is just seen by this particular government right now as really a half-time position, as that is a minister who is sharing the responsibilities within that department with Tourism, Culture and Recreation.

Mr. Speaker, there has been no real focus on diversifying our economy, and the whole idea there was to create the wealth that we have had from our oil royalty money to actually share that with people all across our Province so that we can create business.

People always ask: Well, where are the opportunities within our government? When you look for that, as I mentioned yesterday in this very House, there has been really four core areas – and there will be others, opportunities, as they become available to us. Fogo Island is a perfect example of that, I say. It is very unique by nature, but what they have been able to do is through tourism and through development within the island they have been able to create a lot of activity there. For people in the Province who have not had the opportunity to visit there, you would see what an individual group can do when they are focused on putting development within the Province. That is not something that is easily duplicated, I say, Mr. Speaker.

So when you look around the Province, you look at the four key areas that we can actually build on – one being forestry, of course; agriculture being another one; tourism being another one; mining, of course, in many areas of the Province; and there are others. So how did this government actually respond to make all of that happen based on the commitments that were made in 2003 in growing this economy so that we could actually generate revenue for future generations using the oil royalty money,

knowing that it would not last forever? It is no different than mining royalties. Once you take it out of the ground, once you pump the oil, you cannot do it twice. Once it is out, it is gone forever. We know now, just looking at the amount of oil that we have had produced offshore already, that the reserves are dropping, and they are dropping fast.

So, where are the opportunities? I will give you an example around forestry, and even in my own district, Mr. Speaker. I grew up in a family and that was their job. They were foresters; they were loggers. I have many memories of being a young boy watching my father go to work in the morning, as they would take a bus to go into what we would call then “the woods”. This is where they made their living. What is happening today, of course, this whole industry has evolved to the point right now we are down to one newsprint mill. We have seen two close up, which is in our Province – one in Stephenville and one in Grand Falls-Windsor. We know now, Mr. Speaker, that it is a very different industry right now.

So how do you fix that problem around forestry? Well, as I said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and I will continue to say this, we actually need a provincial strategy on forestry so that we can actually integrate that industry so that it is just not focused on newsprint, just not focused on sawmills, just not focused on pellet plants. Everything needs to be integrated so that we can create an industry here that once again can be viable, and I really believe that it can be. As it exists right now, I know in some cases we are still actually importing wood to use at some of our plants when we have vast forestry resources within our Province. As the Premier mentioned today, this is a resource that is owned by the people of the Province.

The neat thing about that resource, I say, Mr. Speaker, it is renewable. When you manage it right, it is a renewable resource. When you put the business foundation in place so that those businesses can grow and you can actually export lumber, you can actually use it for your local and domestic needs – but right now it is

underdeveloped. It is an industry that is vastly underdeveloped.

Mr. Speaker, there are others. I talked about agriculture. This is a Province right now where we really cannot even feed ourselves. We still import about 95 per cent of the food we eat. Yet when you look back to 2003, you would see that there was quite a lot of chat, quite a lot of talk, about developing an agriculture industry within our Province that we would be able to at least reach targets that, as a Province, we would be able to feed ourselves. In this particular case, we have not reached those targets either.

Mr. Speaker, one that really stands out to me when you look back at the commitments and the strategy as part of the Blueprint of 2003 was: How do we create a shipbuilding industry within our Province? What has occurred since then? Just last year, we have seen the Minister of Transportation and Works as they go out and they make announcements to actually see vessels built – in all aspects of those vessels – outside of our Province.

Here we are a Province that has been surrounded by water, a seafaring people who have a living off the sea, yet we are at a time in our life when we cannot even build a vessel here, those vessels that are required to transport residents to and from islands like Bell Island, like in Fogo Island, Change Islands. Here we are today sitting on a huge asset on the Burin Peninsula, and down there we cannot use that to create an industry within our Province. We do not have the ability to work with business, create that partnership, and create an industry in our Province that could actually provide employment.

This is the ferry system that we are talking about here right now; it needs to be supported. This is really what integration and business is all about. When you actually see a need within your Province, it is money that you are actually going to spend, so you spend it and you spend it right here creating jobs for people of Newfoundland and Labrador. This is an industry in itself. Once you get used to doing that, Mr. Speaker, what happens is that people from all over the world would look at Newfoundland and

Labrador as a place to go and that they would actually come here and see their own needs developed.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many examples as you drive around the Province. The one thing that is missing is that you have to reach out to the people. The ideas across Newfoundland and Labrador, they are there. When you talk to our community leaders, to our business leaders, they have the ideas that are in place. I have talked to many, many people – if it is from the forestry industry, if it is from the mining industry, if it is from people that are in agriculture, tourism operators, they are very keenly interested in making sure that they are a part.

Right now they feel that they are disengaged and there is no one reaching out and looking to them. Many of our chambers of commerce across our Island right now, they feel that there is a disconnect and there is no one listening to the ideas to actually create and develop an economy in our Province. That was very obvious when you look back at the disbanding of the Rural Economic Development Boards last year. Just last year alone, when you look at as we were getting closer and closer and closer to the reserves of our oil being depleted, and here we are in a situation when the Rural Economic Development Boards no longer exist in this Province, I say, Mr. Speaker. People in those areas are really finding the impact of that.

Yesterday I talked a lot about numbers and the impact on our Budget. I just want to go back to that for a minute. Putting the Budget together is indeed a lengthy process and all the departments being involved in this and putting together this year – and we have a Budget this year in 2014-2015, the Budget outlook for 2014-2015 is revenue of \$7.3 billion. This year we are forecasting a deficit for \$537 million. So here we are with a \$7 billion Budget, a billion dollar loan in place, and deficit this year, at some of the best of times, we were lead to believe in our Province, of \$537 million. Next year what we already know is that we will be borrowing again. Even though the amount is not known; what we do know is that we will be borrowing again next

year. So next year's Budget will be another year of borrowing for our Province.

It is fine for the minister to say that we are not borrowing to meet operational needs; but when you look at where we have come in the last ten years, with oil royalty money, the money that has been available, over \$18 billion in oil royalties, and here we are borrowing for those investments. We have been saying for a number of years if we have to set aside so much of our oil royalty money so that the money is available to actually produce economic development so that revenues could be generated, but here we are ten years later still borrowing to do that.

This is not what was discussed when you look at the discussion that was occurring around the Province. This is not what we were expecting in 2014. When you look at it – I actually did a table that we used. When you look at the amount of oil – and I want to just speak to this again because yesterday one thing I did not talk about is where we are with the amount of reserves that we have had in our Province. We know now that these reserves will come to an end, simply because they are a non-renewable resource.

In 1997, we had about 1.3 million barrels of oil that was pumped out for the full year. When you look at 1997 that continued to grow. We peaked at 2007; that was at 134 million barrels, Mr. Speaker. Now this year, we are anticipated to be somewhere around 86 million barrels. You know that this is actually starting to fall off; therefore, the oil royalties that are connected to that will obviously fall off as well. The opportunity that we have to create economic development using that oil royalty money will soon come to an end.

We know now that we have Hebron and the first oil will be late, if it stays on schedule; it will be around 2017, Mr. Speaker. We have one more opportunity starting in 2017 when we will see the volume will actually pick up again, but that is only for a small period of time. Not like we have seen here in the last ten years. We only get these opportunities, they obviously do not occur – we cannot expect this to happen.

I know there are a lot of people around the Province and you kind of forget the fact that this is happening and you almost live with the expectation of thinking that this indeed will have to happen, that more oil will be found. Mr. Speaker, when you make decisions for the future, when you make decisions for the next generation of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, you need to know with certainty where we will be. You need to know the facts on where we will be before you go out and you start borrowing, and borrowing, and borrowing again. Before you put programs in place you have to know that they are sustainable. We found out even last year with our Adult Dental Program as an example. These are programs that were put in place but there was no sustainability attached them to them I say.

That is the oil royalty, the money that we are talking about, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I spent a lot of time around the economic indicators of where we are in our Province. These are very important. I would say for anybody who is watching, anybody who is listening to this, if they want to know what I am talking about here, all you need to do is go online and look at the Budget document of 2014 and look at The Economy 2014 booklet. This is information that is put out there by government as part of the overall Budget documents. There is some real good information in it.

When I talk about the key economic indicators we face in our Province, it is not me as the Leader of the Liberal Party or the Official Opposition as I am standing up and saying this. This is what the economists are saying. These are the people this government would have used to put the Budget document together. This is their information. This is their research that I am talking about here, Mr. Speaker.

When I say the labour force is falling in our Province, this is not the Official Opposition saying this. This is the people who did the research for this government. When I talk about the employment rates increasing in our Province, Mr. Speaker, this is not me saying this. This is this government saying this.

When I talk about housing starts, how they have reached their peak and that they will continue to fall from around thirty housing starts in 2012 – we were at 3,800, almost 3,900 last year. They will fall off to just over 2,100 housing starts in our Province in just a few years. You will see that this is a tremendous decrease. This is where you stimulate your economy. This is a business in itself, just in real estate I say, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at the trends and you look at your own documents and you see housing starts falling off, you see unemployment rates climbing in the Province, when you see GDP falling – and we have been so accustomed because of oil, because of the work that has been done with developing this industry back in the 1990s and as far back as 1985, you will see that we cannot depend on this and we are missing the opportunity if we do not get this right. Not only will we find that the economic trends are falling, Mr. Speaker, but we also know that our population is falling.

These are all key economic indicators when you look at the future, when you look at making a commitment, when you look at borrowing, and you are looking at making a sustainable economy and a sustainable Province. When you look at all those issues you have to face, you would want those to be looking more positive.

In this particular case, what we have seen as a result of this year's Budget is debt is increasing and key economic indicators are actually going and trending the other way, I say, Mr. Speaker. Here we are once again not having any vision for the Province and not having any ideas for the Province, except for just cashing the cheque of oil royalties. Yes, let's use that \$2 billion. We are getting used to having this around, but when you look at what the future holds for the industry you know it is going in the other direction.

You look at the reaction from the Budget. You say: How do we fix this? There must be more oil out there. There has to be more opportunity in this whole area off Newfoundland and Labrador, including gas and oil opportunities within Labrador. Mr. Speaker, I hope there is. I really hope there is because we need this. We

have become accustomed to having this kind of wealth and this kind of oil royalty money around, but it just will not happen on its own. It needs to be fostered. It needs to be facilitated.

The responsibility for that comes from government. You have to put in measures that you would actually encourage not only business but industry and people who are interested in finding those oil reserves offshore in Newfoundland and Labrador. They have to be encouraged to come here.

When you look at the level of activity that happens offshore Newfoundland and Labrador and you compare that to other jurisdictions that have been very successful over the years, areas like the North Sea, Mr. Speaker, where the whole oil industry has been – when you look at it, they almost mirror each other in its age. Back in the late 1970s, I think it was, when we saw the oil industries in the North Sea and we saw it in offshore Newfoundland and Labrador, very similar, I would say, but the advancement in the North Sea is very different than what we have seen here in offshore Newfoundland and Labrador.

That is as a result, I believe, Mr. Speaker, of companies being encouraged to come in. There has been a fair amount of research that has been done, a fair amount of exploration that has been done, yet offshore Newfoundland and Labrador is quite different. We have to find a way to make that happen, to encourage those companies to be here and make sure they do the exploration. Give them the information they need so when this happens you will see positive results and positive outcomes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have talked a lot, of course, about oil royalties and the impact that would have on our Province. That goes without saying. Anybody who has been around our Province over the last number of years knows very well the impact that is having.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak just for a few more minutes again on the demographics. When I talk about what is happening in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, you can see there is a huge

demographic shift within our Province, not only in terms of numbers but also the age of people who are living there. If you travel to any area of rural Newfoundland and Labrador right now you will find not only do we have shrinking numbers but the ages in most of our rural communities now are older.

We really want to thank the seniors and we want to thank them for the work they have done over many, many years in keeping our Province going. They have been significant contributors. I know in my own family, the great job they have done in making sure they took part, did their part in contributing to our society and to our Province and to our communities. When you look at the volunteer groups right now that we still have in our Province, it is no problem to see that many of those people are still heavily engaged and still doing their part in keeping our Province alive and well, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at the population numbers within our Province and you look at what is happening with the demographic shift, you cannot ignore the fact that right now the Northeast Avalon is seeing quite an impact from what is happening around the oil industry. Even though it only represents 3 per cent of the total employment within our Province, what is happening as a result of the economic activity that comes along with all of that, we are seeing that in the Northeast Avalon. This is coming, Mr. Speaker, where we are watching other areas of our Province seeing population declines.

I mentioned the shipbuilding industry or the opportunity to build ferries within our own Province, that this would actually occur on the Burin Peninsula. One of the areas that have seen significant population losses by 11.3 per cent is the Burin Peninsula. In 2003, Mr. Speaker, 23,880 people. According to the census information we have here from Statistics Canada, 23,880 people were living on the Burin Peninsula in 2003. In 2013, we have 21,187. That is an 11.3 per cent decline just in that ten-year period.

When you look at the opportunity we have had in communities like Marystown – if indeed this

government was able to work with the local business groups, work with the industry stakeholders on the Peninsula, can you imagine what could have happened if we could have put an industry in place where the ferries that are now going to be built offshore, not built even in Canada at all, but built outside of our country, outside of our Province, the real impact that would have had on those communities on the Burin Peninsula?

That is just an example, Mr. Speaker. It is an example of a commitment that was made in 2003, but has not been followed through. As a result, without some kind of stimulus or something happening in an area like the Burin Peninsula, we will continue to see population decline.

We have seen a decline on the South Coast of our Province, Mr. Speaker, of 15.4 per cent in 2003, 18,000, almost 19,000, people down to 16,000; that is a decline of 15.4 per cent, and there you go. It is a government that has actually made the commitment to actually put in rural programs, and what we have seen is quite the opposite with the disbandment of our Rural Economic Development Boards. There is really no way to bring it back without that kind of community engagement and without that kind of business engagement within our Province.

That is very obvious when you look at the recent numbers on February of 2014, when you look at the labour force survey that was done in January, and when you look at the unemployment rates that we have in our Province. Mr. Speaker, overall we see an unemployment rate of around 12 per cent – 12 per cent overall in the Province – and this has been a steady number and one that has been forecast. As I said, it expected to increase over the next three years. When you look at this, it really goes to show. When you look at 12 per cent overall for the Province, and less than 7 per cent, around 6 per cent, within the St. John's area, you can imagine how high this number is in many areas of rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

My colleague from The Straits – White Bay North often talks about having access, and the

MHA for Burgeo – La Poile, they talk about having rural broadband and cellphones. I can give you an example of where in my own situation, in my own district, we were actually looking to recruit a health care professional to a community in our area. The person came in to supply what was a need, a very big need, I would say, Mr. Speaker, in the district, in that community. When he came in, we did the tour of the area. He loved the area and he loved the people, but he had two children.

When he walked into the accommodations that were put aside, that were put in place for him, he went looking and said: Okay, so where is my high-speed Internet? It was not available, I say, Mr. Speaker. He could not use his cellphone and it was impossible for him to raise, in his mind – because he had come from a lifestyle where this was really basic in his life. It was something that was very common for them. His family really could not live without it and they decided to move elsewhere.

Just today, from petitions in this House of Assembly, the Member for St. Barbe raised the point of people living in the community of Trout River, which still does not have cellphone service. Here we are essentially in one of the very busiest tourist areas in our Province in the beautiful Bonne Bay area, in Trout River where you cannot use a cellphone, I say, Mr. Speaker, and it is 2014. We see this throughout the Province. I have heard it from ambulance drivers and I have heard it from people who are emergency responders that, indeed, having cellphone coverage across our Province is something that would be extremely important to them. Without it, people find it very difficult to actually live in those communities.

Mr. Speaker, as most people know, my district is Humber Valley. Being home on the weekend I can tell you there is an awful lot of snow in this area right now. I can tell you I was speaking with many of the snowmobilers on the weekend. April is the new February in some cases. There is just as much snow on the West Coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, and outside today we would say the same for here.

Speaking to people with the Snowmobile Federation, once again this is an issue. I can remember back in 2007 when I first came into the House of Assembly, one of the first questions I asked the minister at that time was: How do you support this industry? In certain areas of our Province there is a significant opportunity around this.

They have a budget of around \$900,000 a year. When you look at it compared to many industries, it is not a big number but, Mr. Speaker, \$900,000. What I look at there is the opportunity we have in our Province to do that. This whole federation operates with about twenty groomers. They have some paid operators right now.

I was asking some people who are closely involved with this: What do you use? Where are your expenses? If you are only generating \$900,000 a year, well, first of all there is about \$150,000 of it that goes to fuel. The groomers themselves, the twenty groomers they have, are all now reaching to the point where they are eleven to eighteen years old.

When you talk about developing an industry, you have to look at the infrastructure, no different than our communities, as I mentioned yesterday. They own much of the infrastructure around our Province in terms of water and sewer and community infrastructure. That is aging as well. We look back to the AG report in January 2014 and they talked about aging infrastructure, only what he was raising was the number of bridges we have in our Province that are really getting very poor and in disrepair. The fix for that was estimated to be \$800 million.

When you look at all of those infrastructure problems, we have to find ways we can actually create revenue so we can solve those problems. I mentioned this at a function I attended on the weekend, speaking to a group when people talk about ideas. There is no silver bullet here; there is no one idea that will actually solve these problems. There will be multiple ideas and in one area the idea will be different.

The opportunity will be different. The opportunity will be different in Western Newfoundland. There will be opportunities in Labrador that are very different than Western Newfoundland. The opportunities in Central will be different as they will be in Eastern Newfoundland. Then we will find areas around all our unique areas where there will be opportunities that will develop because you have creative people, people who have come together in co-operation, and you will see new businesses and unique businesses because Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are very creative. They are very industrious and they will come up with those ideas.

The snowmobile industry is one that is more provincial in scope; as I say, Mr. Speaker, \$900,000 a year and twenty groomers. Right now we are into paid operators, but over 60 per cent of the people who are involved in the snowmobile industry in our Province are still volunteers, I say. What do we need to do? What is the ask? What is it this group needs to actually be a sustainable industry within our Province and so they can attract tourists to the local areas?

We cannot be only focused on people coming from other provinces and people coming from outside. People are not going to leave areas like New Brunswick and Quebec where we have fully developed snowmobile industries and come to Newfoundland and Labrador unless they know there is certainty here that the experience will be great. Right now, unfortunately, I say, Mr. Speaker, the experience would not be that because already we are into a situation where they are actually reducing the grooming time. Here we are with some of the best snowmobiling conditions we have had in many, many years.

So, Mr. Speaker, what is required here to make this industry work is a commitment from government. It will take core funding, and it will take a commitment to long-term core funding to make this work. Many MHAs that we have sitting in this House, I know, given the opportunity to speak, will speak to great opportunities that they see within their own

areas, within their own regions, where this could actually develop into an industry.

The reason why I say it would have to be long term, because what we will do is challenge business to actually grow up and develop around this industry. So if someone is going to make an investment close to a snowmobile trail, they need to know that this is an investment that is made for the long haul, and this is something that if I make the investment next year, well, government will continue to support this for years – not just a year, not just come in with a band-aid approach, stick a band aid on what is a problem and say, okay, next year we do not know if that is going to be there or not. It has to be long term, I say, Mr. Speaker.

This year, there is about 12,500 passes that have been sold, Mr. Speaker. That number, when you look at the number of snowmobilers that we have in our Province right now, is very, very low. When you look at the tourism numbers that we have seen in the economy, the 2014 report that I mentioned yesterday, when for the first time since the mid-1980s we have seen less than 100,000 people who have come into our Province by automobile, by vehicle – less than 100,000 people. The first time since the mid-1980s, I say, Mr. Speaker, that we have seen our tourism numbers so low.

This is something when you think about it, and then you look at the actions of last year, the marketing program and the cut in the marketing budget. When you market things, when you advertise Newfoundland and Labrador, we are all very, very proud when we sit, no matter where it is, and we see the ads about Newfoundland and Labrador, when they come up, it makes us all proud. The whole idea there of course is to attract people to our Province. What did you do last year? You actually cut core funding from the marketing. This year's Budget brings it back to where we were last year, I say, Mr. Speaker.

So, these are examples of where you are developing programs and developing industries and finding new and creative ways to generate revenue so that we can indeed pay for the many

social programs, many of the commitments. So when I talk about making a commitment and making it sustainable, these are the things that I am talking about.

In my capacity, I will say, I get an opportunity to meet many, many people as I travel the Province, and one of the things that I have been able to do – and this goes back to tourism; it goes back to just a way of life, just living. I always look forward to going to the Combined Councils of Labrador. That is a group that, for the third consecutive year, I have had the opportunity to go and participate in those meetings. This year the meetings were in L'Anse au Clair. We had our MP for Labrador there, our MHA for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, and our MHA for Torngat Mountains, all in attendance, as were some government MHAs too.

Mr. Speaker, it is always interesting when you sit and you meet with this group of people, highly engaged, very concerned about the issues that they have to face in Labrador – and, of course, the ferry system was front and centre when we met there this year. Those meetings were on February 19-22, and I can tell you people were very concerned about the future of the ferry and freight service, not only on the North Coast but also when you look at just getting from St. Barbe to Blanc Sablon.

So when you look at what they have to overcome, living in that area, I would say that it is time now, they feel, with all the development that we have seen coming out of Labrador that it is actually time that there be something given back. A ferry system, a means of transportation, in 2014 is not a luxury; that is something that is very basic. People who live in that area expect it. That is their road. That is their highway, I say, Mr. Speaker, right now. When you have it, when there is no set schedule, right now it is very difficult.

When you look at a ferry schedule that has been in place – and one of the things that came up at those meetings, and people were concerned about, is the schedule being twenty years old. When you look at all the activity that has

happened, a schedule that is as old as that, it needs to be adjusted; it needs attention. All they are asking for is people to pay attention, and some of it does not require a lot of money when you look at things like that. The group from NML did a presentation up there; we were glad to see that they were there to support the Combined Councils of Labrador.

I will say that it says a lot for the people who live in the area because the day that we were there, we were on our way to Red Bay, we were going to do a tour of Red Bay, and in the afternoon we had been watching what was the Olympic gold medal game for female hockey – just a little anecdote, just a little story, it tells a lot about the people who live in that area, but indeed you could apply similar examples throughout the Province.

We were almost in L'Anse-au-Loup. When we had left L'Anse au Clair the score was 2-nothing at the time. Going into L'Anse-au-Loup the Canadian female hockey team had put on quite the show and of course tied the game and the game had gone into overtime. I can remember saying to the people we were travelling with: I do not care where, we have to stop this right now; we have to find somebody who is watching this game.

Mr. Speaker, we pulled in, got to a phone, and we called some people we knew there. Sure enough, with warm Labrador hospitality, we walked in the door and finished watching the Olympic female hockey team win gold medal right in L'Anse-au-Loup in someone's house. That was completely unexpected, I would say.

Mr. Speaker, I have about twenty minutes and there are so many things I wanted to talk about. One thing when you think about 2014 and you think about living in a Province, one of the things we all take often, I think – and I just picked my glass up there without even thinking about this – is about safe drinking water in our Province. Just think, as of March 7, 2014, and I can remember talking about this last year around Budget time, there are 218 boil water advisories in 156 communities in our area – in 2014, 218 boil water advisories.

In this Province, it has been ongoing. It comes up at every single MNL meeting that I attend. It comes up at the Combined Councils of Labrador. Nowhere do you go around our Province and this issue is not raised. When you think about it, 218 boil water advisories in 2014 in Newfoundland and Labrador at what is supposed to be some of the best times in our Province, Mr. Speaker, it is hard to believe that number still exists.

Mr. Speaker, when you talk about negotiations, when you talk about engagements, and when you talk about connecting with people and opening up the dialogue so that people feel engaged, I have been saying for quite some time people understand decisions when they are given the information. Sometimes every decision you make may not be as popular as you would like. Sometimes tough decisions do have to be made, but Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, when you show them the information, they are reasonable.

This is a government, I will say, Mr. Speaker, that we all know, given their own history around Bill 29 and what that has become, they do not really like sharing information. They really do not like going out there and having engagements with people so that information is shared so that the proper decisions get made.

In the amount of time I have left, Mr. Speaker, I do want to touch on health care, but one thing before I move on from that, I wanted to mention some things about Labrador. People have asked me questions when it comes to Lab West. We were in Lab West and spoke to many of the individuals who were impacted with the closure of Wabush Mines at the time.

This is one of the reasons why we had supported the development of the third line going into Lab West, and many people of the Province have looked at us. Economic development is certainly a centrepiece for the way we want to manage government, with the support of people in our Province, is that we would use the resources we have, not only to put the primary industries in place but we would use it to create secondary industries as well. You need not look

any further than Lab West for the opportunities around that.

It is no different than a previous Liberal Administration, when you look at the smelter that is now soon to be finished in Long Harbour. When you see that that will be successful, and it will be successful not from the ore that comes from the ground, Mr. Speaker, because that can only be taken out once, but it will be successful and will have a long history because it will be a situation where secondary processing, one of the few industries in our Province, in my recollection where you can actually see where you use a natural resource, where you use a mine and you will generate secondary processing around it creating hundreds and hundreds of jobs and millions and millions of dollars' worth of value to our economy, Mr. Speaker.

We always need to look for those opportunities, wherever they exist, to make sure we can leverage whatever opportunity we have from the people's resource, from the natural resources we have in our Province, whether it is forestry, mining, the fishery, or if it is our oil industry, we have to make sure we look for all the opportunities around secondary processing wherever they exist. All of this can only happen when people feel engaged. When people feel they are part, that they can actually have some say in their future.

Mr. Speaker, you need not look any further than – in this session of the House of Assembly, one of the first questions we asked was around the bargaining with NLTA. We have many people in this House right now who, being a teacher, being part of NLTA, that association, they have been part of it for many, many years. What are they saying, Mr. Speaker, about the way this government is listening to them?

On January 24, 2014, the negotiating team said this: This is the seventh set of proposals and unfortunately at this time five representatives began expressing concerns about the contract language upon which agreement had been previously reached. What you are seeing here is when you get at the negotiating table – and this

can be very tough, Mr. Speaker, from time to time – certain things get put on the table. It goes through tremendous discussion. Then when you reach an agreement on that, there is an expectation that you do not have to go back there.

In this particular case, what the NLTA are saying, what the teachers are saying is this was a situation they felt was off the table, and indeed was put back on the table. That is not good negotiations, Mr. Speaker. Professionals, when they go at that table, expect to know that when they reach an agreement on something, that this is not something that would have to be revisited.

When you look at openness and transparency, Mr. Speaker, within our government, I believe right now that is an expectation. Often when people say: Well, to be honest, there is an expectation that if you are going to speak you should be honest. There is an expectation when it comes to any government that openness and transparency should be an obvious part of that. That is one of the reasons we have been calling – when you look at the oversight on the largest project in the history of this Province, Mr. Speaker, that being Muskrat Falls, indeed, there needs to be some external oversight in that.

From my own experience around business, my own experience around associations, no matter what it is, no one minds that level of oversight, because what happens is all of us will benefit from that. It is a project, and in this particular case the Muskrat Falls Project, as it evolves, as it develops, as it continues to be constructed down there, Mr. Speaker, external oversight cannot be seen as a bad thing.

As I said in the past, oversight is just not about a committee or a group of individuals getting together and collecting reports, collecting information, gathering research, it is what you do when you get that. That is what oversight is all about, how you respond to any specific situation as it evolves. We all will benefit as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, Mr. Speaker. If indeed something comes up, something on polls that need to be dealt with, we have the experience and we have the people who

are part of that oversight, who are in a position with their own experience to deal with that situation.

In this particular case, a bureaucratic oversight committee that reports to Cabinet is really not the type of oversight that a project like this deserves. This is the largest expenditure in the history of our Province. External, independent oversight is not something that you would not expect on this particular project.

This is the reason why we have put two solutions to this; one, bring in the AG. The ministers and the Premier keep saying the AG can go in. Under section 16 of the Auditor General Act, the Premier can ask the AG to go in and provide that necessary oversight as they can the PUB as well, Mr. Speaker. This is not something that would be unexpected within our Province. It is something that I believe would add to the overall oversight of this project.

We would encourage and we would make sure that the project gets on schedule and it gets on budget, which is certainly first and foremost in the people's minds right now, Mr. Speaker. If not, any cost overruns on this, some future generation will pay for this. The cost will be higher and will be absorbed by them.

Mr. Speaker, in the few minutes that I have left I want to talk about – there are so many things within health that I wanted to talk about today. One, being the ambulances, one being ultrasounds in Western Newfoundland. Some of the economic indicators, or the health indicators we are seeing and the impact that will have on the future of Newfoundland and Labrador if we do not begin to see strategic investments within our Province.

Mr. Speaker, with the few minutes that I have left here I want to talk a little bit about two things. One being diabetes and I will talk a little bit about smoking cessation as well. Diabetes right now in our Province, Mr. Speaker, if there is an opportunity that we could have to make a strategic investment in the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and their health care needs, it would be in diabetes. What is

happening within our Province right now is that we have the highest rates of anywhere in the country, I say.

This is where you get the connection between the economics of health care and providing health care. With intervention as a government, you can make a difference. When you look at the statistics right now, we have the highest prevalence of diabetes of anywhere in Canada. The impact this would have not just on our workforce, but on productivity at work, on lifestyle, and just getting to and from appointments, I say, Mr. Speaker. The number of people with diabetes in Newfoundland and Labrador is expected to rise from around 55,000 in 2013 to 98,000 in 2033. This is from the Canadian Diabetes Association, I will say.

When you look at a situation that affects our health care needs anywhere in our Province right now, diabetes without a registry, for instance, in our Province right now, we need a registry so we know where people who live with diabetes are living so we can encourage them, contact them, and we can actually work with them to prevent this from happening. There are so many things, if it comes to access to drugs, access to things like insulin pumps, and on and on it goes.

We can be proud of some of the economic indicators. In 2013, we would lead the country in some, but this is not an area that we can be proud of. This is an area we need to address. When I talk about economic indicators from an economic point of view, if we do not diversify the economy, these are areas that we will have less money so we can invest in programs like diabetes. It goes hand in hand, I say, Mr. Speaker.

What we do know is all the indicators around diabetes is that we are indeed reaching a tipping point and for the money we will have to spend on diabetes if we do not curb the growth. I am not even suggesting we could actually do anything to reverse it; we cannot. Simply, a lot of it has to do with lifestyle, and we have so many people now who are predisposed to diabetes, Mr. Speaker. We have to find a way to

curb it. The only way to do that is to make the strategic investments.

Smoking cessation, Mr. Speaker, is another example of that in Newfoundland and Labrador. When you look at the health indicators we have in our Province – I will just go through these – with the rate of heart attacks, I would say, and per 100,000, these numbers are, it would be 205 in Canada; in Newfoundland and Labrador, 292. We have the highest rate of all provinces. Stroke as an example: per 100,000, it is 121; Newfoundland and Labrador, 137. That is Newfoundland, as well as PEI, at the highest of all provinces. PEI is at 144. So you can tell, and the list goes on and on.

High blood pressure is another example: 17.1 per cent at the Canadian rate; Newfoundland and Labrador is 24.2 per cent and again, Mr. Speaker, the highest rate in Canada. When you look at where you want to lead the country, these are not the areas that you want to lead the country.

When you look at the adult body mass, and this goes to obesity, it is 51.2 per cent in Canada; 63.4 per cent, again, another area where we lead the country. When you look at smoking, as a Province we are still extremely high. This is one of the reasons why the smoking cessation program we have seen put in place will impact low-income earners, Mr. Speaker. We have to take those things seriously. The list goes on and on again.

Mr. Speaker, I will go back to diabetes: 6.4 per cent of our population of Canada; and in Newfoundland and Labrador it is 8.3 per cent. These are startling numbers, numbers that have an impact not only on the lifestyles and the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, but it is having a tremendous impact on the financial situation within our Province. When you look at where we go in the future, making adjustments and how we spend our money more wisely, strategic investments in health care is certainly one of the ways we do it.

Mr. Speaker, as I finish up today, I talked a lot about the economy, I talked a lot about the

economic indicators, and I talked a lot about how we used oil royalties over the last ten years to diversify our economy and to grow other industries within our Province, if it is around forestry, if it is around shipbuilding, if it is around agriculture, or if it is around the fishery. The history of this government has been dismal in creating more revenue outside of oil royalties, which was really something that was inherited, groundwork and work that was done by previous Administrations over many, many years.

If we are to continue to make decisions by government that will be sustainable, we are not interested in passing on more debt to the next generation, Mr. Speaker. That is not why I got involved in politics. We want to make sure the Administrations we serve under will pass the keys over to the next generation of Newfoundland and Labradorians, that this Province is indeed a better place to live, the debt is lower, the programs that we put in place are indeed are sustainable, and there are vibrant industries that are developing in all regions of the Province.

That can only happen with engaging people. That can only happen with networking with people. There are people out there who are ready to get engaged. There are people out there who are hoping, who want to be part of the discussion and who want to be part of the dialogue, I say, Mr. Speaker. All we have to do is reach out.

The ideas are out there. The ideas just need to be mined within Newfoundlanders and Labradorians so in the future the next generation of Newfoundland and Labrador will indeed have the experience of staying home if they so choose. That would be their choice. Right now, Mr. Speaker, in many areas of our Province they do not have that choice. Making wise investments and making sure we continue to work with our community leaders and continue to work with our associations throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, we can generate and we can create an economy that is vibrant and create revenue so we can then make sure the social programs we depend on are there and that they are sustainable.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I will close my session in this hour of debate. I look forward to participating in other opportunities within the Budget debate in the days and weeks ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am not actually standing to speak. We have been advised that the intention is to close down the building here at 4:30 o'clock. Apparently, Metrobus is coming off the road and people are concerned; a number of employees of the House have to get home. With the consent of the other two parties, I am going to make a motion that the House do now adjourn before 4:30 o'clock so people can get comfortably on their way and get home in the bad weather.

With that being said, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, 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 2:00 p.m. tomorrow afternoon, being Private Members' Day.

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