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*Speaker: Honourable Ross Wiseman, MHA*

Monday

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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 have members' statements from the hon. the Member for the District of Port de Grave; the hon. the Member for the District of Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi; the hon. the Member for the District of The Straits – White Bay North; the hon. the Member for the District of St. John's East; the hon. the Member for the District of St. Barbe; and the hon. the Member for the District of Burgeo – La Poile.

The hon. the Member for the District of Port de Grave.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today in this hon. House to recognize the TriPen Ice Atlantic Triple A Pee Wee Hockey Champions. The local paper called it the "Miracle on Ice". This was the first Atlantic Championship by a team outside St. John's since 1993.

When a team loses its opening two games, things look mighty bleak in these tournaments, but not in this case. The Ice roared back with two victories, needing a 6-0 win in their last round robin game to secure a berth in the final.

Coach Bo Bennett called the team "a family" where parents and players from across the region came together and dedicated themselves to a championship season. Mission accomplished!

Lead by tournament MVP Kyle Petten and Top Forward Dawson Mercer, this dynamic duo tied for the tournament's top scorers with eleven points each. TriPen would not be denied. In the final, Mercer would score twice and Petten once in leading TriPen to a 5-1 victory.

Other team members included: Caleb Andrews, Riley Petten, Luke Akerman, Cole Mackey, Shailynn Snow, Ethan Crosbie, Lucas Russell, Liam Best, Dawson Laundry, Michael Ingram, Taran Leonard, Ethan Pollett, Lucas Adams, Riley Mayne, Tyler Dohey, Tyler Green, and Mark Davis.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating the TriPen Ice on this championship season.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi.

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

Last Tuesday, April 8, the City of St. John's welcomed more than 100 volunteers to the Foran/Green Room at City Hall for the annual Volunteer Appreciation Reception. As always, I congratulate all the winners, but I have to say I was pleased to hear that Ed Dunne had received the city's award in the Individual Category.

Ed, known as Mr. Ed to the people in Virginia Park, has been a volunteer in the Virginia Park Community Centre for twenty-five years, and is currently the Vice-Chair of their Board of Directors. He has started up programs and services that range from a woodworking group to the "Soups On" program, to hockey and darts leagues.

In his quarter-century as a volunteer at the centre, he has been particularly successful in engaging the youth of Virginia Park in community projects. The annual haunted house and the Christmas parade float are two particularly memorable ones. On top of all this, he is active in the Virginia Park tenants association and is a very familiar figure at Virginia Park Elementary.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Ed Dunne, the City of St. John's Individual Volunteer of the Year.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize two individuals on the Great Northern Peninsula who have shown true innovation in business.

I awoke on the morning of April 5 to hear the exciting new community development endeavour over the airwaves. Radio Quirpon, created by musician Wayne Bartlett and entrepreneur Cheryl McCarron is something wonderful for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians everywhere. This locally-owned and operated online radio station gives listeners a thick, hearty slice of life in rural Newfoundland.

Started in a small town of seventy-five people, this venture allows both locals and others the opportunity to experience the unique and colourful talents of surrounding residents, boasting an array of remarkable musicians, storytellers, and artists. They now have a licence to express themselves to an audience that would not have been possible without technology and innovation.

Radio Quirpon is available at [www.radioquirpon.com](http://www.radioquirpon.com). Beyond listening to Newfoundland, country, and commentary, the Web site also depicts photos, videos, and comments from their listeners.

I invite all hon. members of the House to join me in acknowledging Wayne Bartlett and Cheryl McCarron for their creativity and hard work done to share with the world more of rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to congratulate the staff and students of Mary Queen of Peace Elementary School. They held their first Shave for the Brave on Friday, April 4, and it was a huge success. Sixty-three students got their heads shaved to raise money for Young Adult Cancer Canada, which offers supportive and informative programs to young adults who are dealing with cancer.

I had the great pleasure of attending Mary Queen of Peace's first Shave for the Brave, Mr. Speaker, and it was inspirational to see these young students and young children sacrificing their crowning glory to raise money for such a good cause.

The sixty-three kids raised more than \$20,000 – I call that pretty good for a first-time event.

Thanks go to Academy Canada staff and students for volunteering to come in and do the shaving. Members of this House will note that I was not one of the brave ones getting shaved this year, but I have promised the kids that if they repeat the event, I will be back next year, ready to submit to the razor.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Mary Queen of Peace for raising \$20,000 this year for Shave for the Brave.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize and show appreciation for all the volunteers in Newfoundland and Labrador, especially those in the District of St. Barbe.

In communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador there are approximately 197,000 volunteers who contribute a total of 35 million hours of unpaid time in an effort to make our towns and Province stronger. They are integral

and vital to our continued social, cultural, and economic development.

The theme of this year's Volunteer Week is ...for the health of it! This is very fitting because as well as community benefits statistics show that there are personal benefits, both mental and physical, for volunteers; decreased stress, a sense of purpose and community, decreased isolation, lower blood pressure, decreased risk of stress-related illnesses, and greater longevity, just to name some.

During Volunteer Week several appreciation events took place in the District of St. Barbe, with approximately 300 persons attending. Thank you to all who attended, and to all volunteers in the district.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the House to join me and show appreciation for all volunteers ...for the health of it!

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise to recognize and commend Darrell Neil, Matthew Sweet, and Travis Walters of Margaree, on their rescue of snowmobiler, Rick Sheaves.

On March 6, 2014, when Mr. Sheaves did not arrive home after a Ski-Doo trip at his scheduled time, his wife contacted Mr. Neil. Darrell jumped on his snowmobile and retraced Mr. Sheaves' tracks to his cabin. He found him in a gorge 500 metres behind his house with his legs protruding from beneath the Ski-Doo. Darrell cleared the snow away from his face but was unable to lift the 800 pound Ski-Doo. He raced back to his home and grabbed two neighbours, Mr. Sweet and Mr. Walters. They were able to move the snowmobile and dig him out of the snow. The snow may have actually protected him from the minus thirty wind chill.

Sheaves said the accident happened because he was blinded by snow and lost his way. He had stopped on the edge of a cliff with a fifteen foot drop. As he started to reverse, the snow gave way and he tumbled down. Sheaves needed twenty-three staples to close the cut to his head and had a dislocated shoulder, but he is now back home and very grateful to the three men.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in commending Darrell Neil, Matthew Sweet, and Travis Walters on their brave actions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

#### Statements by Ministers

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise today to talk about this past Friday's national launch of the cross-country We Create Change Tour in St. John's, which was attended by more than 800 students from around the Province and Webcast live to thousands more.

The We Create Change Tour is organized by the international charity and educational partner, Free The Children. You may be familiar with Free The Children as an organization founded by twelve-year-old Craig Kielburger in 1995 to fight child labour. Today, Free The Children has more than 2.3 million youth members focused on ground-breaking education and development programs. The organization has, in fact, built more than 650 schools in developing countries, enabling 55,000 children to attend classes where they otherwise would not.

Mr. Speaker, I think we sometimes forget how fortunate we are to live in a country, and a

Province, which provides educational opportunities that most children in the world can only dream about. That is why we were pleased to share the launch of the We Create Change Tour with thousands of our students. It is also why I announced on Friday that the Department of Education is partnering with Free The Children to introduce *We Act*, a school program which encourages community service at home and abroad.

The *We Act* program supports the ideals of the Province's Safe and Caring Schools initiative, Mr. Speaker, and complements our efforts to establish caring school communities. For example, as part of *We Act*, schools commit to taking action on at least one local and one global initiative of their choice during the school year. But, Mr. Speaker, it is also about instilling a sense of positive activism and social justice in our youth. It is about learning that one person can make a difference in their community. One person can effect positive change. And working together, we can make the world a better place.

I believe that, Mr. Speaker, and I believe the *We Act* program will enhance the existing character education and citizenship education programming in our schools, and encourage more development of personal qualities such as leadership, responsibility, honesty, fairness, and the ability to see past ourselves for a greater good.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Thanks to the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

The Official Opposition also congratulates those behind the We Create Change Tour. Through their work with this initiative, Craig and Marc Kielburger and their collaborators have demonstrated that actions speak far louder than words. We hope young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians follow their example.

The minister says he believes we sometimes forget how fortunate we are. There is a lot of truth to that old adage, but it is also the case that those who are less fortunate are often overlooked, neglected, misunderstood, and forgotten.

We applaud the minister's efforts to cast a light on the growing poverty abroad. We also hope this government will redouble their efforts to deliver our own citizens from the shadows of exclusion and the depths of despair and hopelessness that arise from poverty in our own communities.

We welcome the *We Act* citizenship initiative. Community service begins in our homes and in our schools. There is much truth to that, but make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, it is the way we act as members of this Assembly toward one another and those whose interests we represent that sets a standard for the leadership, responsibility, honesty, fairness, and the ability to see past ourselves for a greater good that the minister speaks about.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. It is an honour that the national We Create Change Tour began in St. John's and that they recognize the easternmost point of the country is St. John's. That is a good one.

Free The Children and its founder, Craig Kielburger, have done incredible work over nearly twenty years to expose and fight against labour and other forms of child exploitation around the world. It is important for our young students to be aware of these kinds of youth initiatives and find new ways of making positive changes and linking with youth in other countries.

There is a long history in our schools of students being involved in youth community service organizations. I hope the We Act program will enhance that activity by creating links between local and global initiatives, and getting more young people involved.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to make members aware that the *MV Celtic Explorer*, a research vessel chartered by the Fisheries and Marine Institute's Centre for Fisheries Ecosystems Research, will soon arrive in provincial waters to continue vital fisheries science work.

Mr. Speaker, the *MV Celtic Explorer* is a sixty-five-metre state-of-the-art fisheries and oceanographic research vessel, which is capable of conducting offshore fisheries surveys and other oceanographic work in the waters off Newfoundland and Labrador. It is the most sophisticated purpose-built vessel ever used for fisheries science research in the Province.

The vessel has multi-beam sonar capability for ocean mapping, remote operated vehicle capability, a wet and dry laboratory, and accommodations for up to eighteen scientists, technicians and students. Under the direction of Dr. George Rose, Director of the Centre for Fisheries Ecosystems Research, this vessel contributes significantly to the most impressive fisheries research undertaken by any province in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial government is investing in fisheries science because it increases our knowledge of the Province's fish stocks and changes in the ecosystem. This helps maintain the overall sustainability of

Newfoundland and Labrador's fishing industry. Through *Budget 2014 Shared Prosperity, Fair Society, Balanced Outlook*, this government has increased its support for the Marine Institute's Centre for Fisheries Ecosystems Research with an investment of \$4.95 million over the next two years.

That investment is supporting groundbreaking work like the Satellite Cod Tagging project, which helps us better understand the movement and migration patterns of our valuable cod resource. It is also supporting studies related to haddock on the South Coast, shrimp distribution and dynamics, and deep water species like turbot and redfish. One additional benefit resulting from investments in the Centre for Fisheries Ecosystems Research is that graduate student numbers have more than doubled since the centre was created. There are currently twenty graduate students and six post-doctoral fellows at the centre.

Clearly, this government has made it a priority to build fisheries research capacity within the Province, and to support the sustainable management of our valuable fish resources that many rural communities rely on. Our investments have put the Province in an ideal position to take on a greater role in the management of our fish resources, and protect the well-being of our fisheries and aquaculture sectors well into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. SLADE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, any time we can improve the signs of our vital fisheries, we certainly must aim to do so.

While I commend the work of the Centre for Fisheries Ecosystems Research, (CFER), we cannot ignore the obvious, which is their

research is a mere drop in the bucket of what is needed to truly inform the huge science effort needed to understand cod and our ecosystem. The fact is this government has basically failed to hold the federal government accountable for the science research and stock rebuilding. They are supposed to be doing the carryout as managers of our fishery.

It is interesting that in the past week or so this government has been holding PR exercises to highlight their minimal efforts on the fishery. What they are glossing over is the fact that this government has failed in the past eleven years to even have a vision or a plan on the fisheries, or show any interest in the fishery. This is the same government that has failed to achieve joint management of our fisheries, which was a promise in their 2003 election Blue Book. They have failed to achieve a collaborative marketing approach, which is critical to us moving forward. The fact that this department has done little for our fisheries is highlighted on page 10.12 of this year's Estimates, which shows that they left 47 per cent of their budget for the development of our fisheries on the table last year. I say, Mr. Speaker –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I remind the member his time has expired.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I acknowledge the work of the *MV Celtic Explorer*; it is a much needed.

The minister says his government has made a priority to build fishery research capacity in this Province. I say to the minister, actions speak louder than words. His priority gets \$4.95 million over two years for research in a \$1.1 billion industry. The same government is putting half a billion dollars this year into Nalcor

alone. The 18,000 people working in the industry, most of whom live in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, can see clearly where government's priorities lie, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. FRENCH:** Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador tourism marketing continues to redefine tourism advertising in Canada, and is now recognized as an industry leader. Our *Find Yourself* tourism marketing campaign has proven successful in raising awareness of Newfoundland and Labrador as a vacation destination, and has become one of the most recognizable advertising campaigns in the country.

I am delighted to stand in this hon. House today to announce that our campaign has won a second consecutive Canadian eTourism Award, this time for *Best Online Campaign*. With this win, Mr. Speaker, the *Find Yourself* campaign has garnered 211 awards.

The Canadian eTourism Awards recognize the evolution and marketing power of campaigns for the travel and tourism industry that are innovative, original, engaging, and have proven to be successful. The award was presented last week during the 2014 Online Revealed Canada Conference held in Toronto, Ontario. Since 2010, our *Find Yourself* campaign has won four Canadian eTourism awards.

With the 2013 television advertisement *Conversation* as the anchor, an unconventional online advertising campaign called *Language Lessons* was linked with a social media campaign titled *Word of the Week* and launched. Nineteen YouTube videos were produced with people providing definitions of Newfoundland and Labrador-based words. Users were encouraged to interact with the ads and social media posts and try and guess the meaning of the words before watching the videos. The

videos received more than 385,000 views, 16,000 Facebook likes, and 9,000 Facebook shares.

As a government, we are pleased to see our incredible *Find Yourself* campaign honoured once again for its creativity and innovation. It is encouraging how our social media engagement strategies have strengthened our Province's online presence and have fostered a loyal and engaging online community of travellers and brand ambassadors alike.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, as you proudly told me about the fifty-two students from Clarenville High School – again, tourism ambassadors who represent us well as the only choir from Canada to be at the WorldStrides music festival, a true example of ambassadors for our Province.

Since 2006, we have invested over \$100 million in tourism marketing, and the positive impact can be seen in the growth in visitation and tourist spending. In fact, tourism spending reached \$1 billion in Newfoundland and Labrador for the first time in 2011. Between 2009 and 2013, Mr. Speaker, non-resident visitation increased 19 per cent, surpassing a milestone of half a million visitors during that period. Non-resident tourism spending increased 30 per cent between 2009 and 2013, reaching \$467 million in 2013, the highest level of non-resident spending ever in the Province.

Our *Find Yourself* campaign truly is an important component of our efforts to promote Newfoundland and Labrador as a premiere destination.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**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 an advance copy. We here would also like to congratulate the

campaign for winning another national award. We all enjoy the ads; we all like the ads.

I have to say, they are very important to this government, these ads. So important, Mr. Speaker, last year they cut \$4 million from it. That is how important these ads are. It is going to take a long while now for us to catch up, Mr. Speaker, after taking \$4 million, without consultation to Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador, I might add. So now they put back \$2 million this year, and I suppose \$2 million again next year, there is a commitment.

I am glad that you are going to put the money back into it, because it is worthwhile. When you lose those two or three years, Mr. Speaker, it is going to have an impact. We see this year, alone, that the traffic has been down. Cruise ships are down 25 per cent; traffic has been down a fair bit.

Mr. Speaker, Marine Atlantic is very important to our tourism. All of us here in this House have to come together to try to establish something that would make it feasible for tourists to come to Newfoundland and Labrador when they travel on Marine Atlantic.

This government has been very quiet on that issue, Mr. Speaker. We have not heard a word on that. They have been very, very quiet. We have to stand up to your brothers and sisters in Ottawa, it is affecting tourism.

Mr. Speaker, another way to promote tourism is infrastructure in rural Newfoundland and Labrador like roads, cellphone coverage, and other things. This government is so important on infrastructure for rural Newfoundland and Labrador – they never spent \$272 million in last year's Budget. That is how important infrastructure is to promote tourism in the Province.

I think we all have to come together. We all have to find a way and we have to promote it in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. We have to stop the talk and start the walk, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.



**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS ROGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Bravo to all those who worked on the Find Yourself Campaign and won the award. Congratulations on the innovations, you make us all proud.

In Budget 2014-2015, government is returning money it cut from the Department of Tourism in last year's Budget, \$2 million this year and \$2 million next. I congratulate the department on winning that money back. Government has also found money for other initiatives this year to the tune of millions and millions of dollars, especially, Mr. Speaker, to redress some of the ill-planned cuts they made in last year's Budget.

Why is it government will not return funding to other departments to help them with the important work they do? Why won't government, for instance, reinstate the Family Violence Intervention Court? It is only \$500,000 and it is crucial to the safety of battered women and children in this Province. Why will government not do the right thing?

A successful tourism campaign is called Find Yourself. I believe, Mr. Speaker, this government has lost its way and needs to find itself.

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.

Government promised to release a Natural Areas Systems Plan by March 31, 2011. This plan would identify the protected areas network and increase protection for green spaces along our coast. It is three years after the deadline and we have yet to see details of the plan.

I ask the Premier: Where is the plan that you promised to deliver over three years ago?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. FRENCH:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That is something that the department has been working on for some time. It is quite a bit of work involved with the Natural Areas Systems Plan. We are presently in the process of putting the committee that would be involved with that, WERAC. The new committee should be announced within the coming weeks, Mr. Speaker, and I can see that rolling out over time.

Obviously, as a government we are very concerned about protecting our natural areas in this Province. That is why we have the provincial parks that we have, that is why we have things like we have in Salmonier Nature Park, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, we have always been stewards of the environment in this Province, and this government speaks to that.

Certainly, we will continue to look into that, Mr. Speaker, and look after the people of the Province and all the natural areas that we have.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is a difference in saying something than actually doing something. Simply saying does not mean it is done. Three years after you said

you would release this plan; here we are saying that it is going to come soon.

During the 2000 election, the government promised to conduct public consultations on the draft Natural Areas Systems Plan but they never delivered. Through an Access to Information request, we asked for the details of the public consultations and were told there were no records of such consultations.

I ask the minister: Did you do any public consultations like you said you would do during the last election?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. FRENCH:** Mr. Speaker, what I can tell the hon. member is that we are very concerned about our natural environment. We have always been stewards of our environment here in this Province. That is why we have the Environmental Protection Act, Mr. Speaker, one of the most robust in the country.

Obviously, we are very concerned about our areas and we protect them on a daily basis, Mr. Speaker. We have officers who go around. We are very concerned about – any business that comes here to set up any kind of an industrial company has to go through an EA process.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my last response, WERAC is a committee that has come together, made up of people concerned with the environment, specialities, and a number of people from the university. We are in the process of putting that board back in place, and that should be back in place, Mr. Speaker, in the coming weeks.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We filed an Access to Information request for an update on this plan but we were blocked from receiving the information by section 18 of Bill 29. We were told there were no working documents that could be released because of Cabinet confidences.

I ask the minister: Since you now claim to be open, why are you hiding this plan behind the broad definition of Cabinet confidences and Bill 29?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. FRENCH:** Mr. Speaker, Natural Areas Systems Plan and he is trying to tie that to Bill 29, I think it is a far step. It is a big step to make, a big leap to make.

Mr. Speaker, the Natural Areas Systems Plan is a plan that is being developed by officials in the department. Like I reminded the hon. member, that would have to go through WERAC. WERAC is in the process of being reappointed and those names are coming forward. In the next couple of weeks, it is my information that will be announced.

For the hon. member to try to make that big leap that it is some kind of secrecy, absolutely nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I remind the minister it was not the Official Opposition that made the leap; it was the minister's department that made the leap. They were the ones who said you could not release the information because of Bill 29. It was not the Official Opposition; it was this government.

I ask the minister: Will you release the plans you have already done and the information you have? Stop hiding behind Bill 29. Will you release the information?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. FRENCH:** Mr. Speaker, I have been in this House now for twelve or thirteen years, and I have not seen a bill that I can hide behind yet. I say to the hon. minister, I am certainly not hiding behind any bills.

Like I advised the member, they are working on the Natural Areas Systems Plan, Mr. Speaker. It is one of those things that take a long while. There are a number of regions across the Province with different ecological pieces to it that we want to protect. Obviously, like I said, the WERAC committee, who would be involved in this process, will be put in place in the coming weeks and then the process will move on.

I do not know where he is trying to make that leap, Mr. Speaker, but this is certainly not the place to do it.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Before I move on, Mr. Speaker, the leap was you made the commitment to release it in 2011 and you did not do it. It is simple, three years later.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education has been sidestepping decisions made by the English School Board when it comes to a lack of resources and overcrowding at several schools. He has repeatedly said he would not intervene, but the Minister of Municipal Affairs has no problem second guessing the planning process.

I ask the minister: Do you intend on meeting the Minister of Municipal Affairs on this issue?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, the Member for Mount Pearl North being part of our government, him and I speak quite frequently, as a matter of fact. He is the Member for Mount Pearl North. People have expressed their concerns to him and he has expressed them to me as he expressed them to members of the board. I would hope all of us who represent our constituents would express the concerns and he has expressed his own opinion in this particular case.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. JACKMAN:** If the Member for Mount Pearl South would stop chirping for a minute, I might finish my question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my door is open; my door is always open.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now that the door is open, I ask the minister: Will you also meet with the parent groups and the school councils?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, as I have said my door is open, but let me make something very clear. Let me be clear in this, as I discussed with anyone who has raised this with me, we have a board that is independent of government, established under the Schools Act, Mr. Speaker.

I have not interfered in their decision making, nor will I in this particular case.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, this government's supersized school board is not only unelected but inefficient as well. It is building schools that are too small; we know that. It is unable to resolve busing issues and inclusive education problems, and now we have the forced redesign of the school system in Mount Pearl.

I ask the minister: When is he going to come down on the side of our children and provide quality education, including a proper planning process for our school system?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, I can assure you one thing and I can assure that member who continues to point out – if you had to listen to the Member for St. John's North, you would have to think that we are about in the worst place in the world when it comes to education. Mr. Speaker, my commitment first and foremost, our government's commitment first and foremost is always to children – always to children.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, I will not have time to run down through this list. We have had thirteen new schools built. We have nine new schools –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, a lack of resources for the Mount Pearl school system has backed the English School Board into a corner and even the planning process, as has been acknowledged by the Member for Mount Pearl North, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, is flawed.

I ask the minister: Given the uproar from parents and from students, will you now revisit the decision not to intervene in the decision made by your appointed English School Board trustees?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, any time that I have encountered that there has been a school closing or a reconfiguration, there is always challenges that come with it. It is a very emotional thing because parents and students are attached to teachers and to a building.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said in this House, the school board has made their decision. What supports they need financially, they will put into us, as the Department of Education, and it will go into a budgetary process. We have not limited other areas when it comes to funds, nor will we do it in this particular case, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. LANE:** I say to the minister, that is not what the chair of the board said at the public consultations.

Mr. Speaker, this past weekend the unelected English school board voted on an imposed decision that will have devastating impact on many students, parents, and teachers in Mount Pearl. Had the minister listened to the people and provided the board with the financial flexibility to develop more suitable options, this unacceptable decision could have been avoided.

Will he now do the right thing and intervene in this matter so that the board is provided with the proper financial resources to do what is right for our children's education and not government's bottom line?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, I find it a little bit ironic that when the hon. member was over here he talked about the restructuring of the system. He said: Do you know what? There are going to be people upset out there, but we have to do it because it is needed.

There is some space out there where we can reorganize and put students. It is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that we do get people who play politics with children's education. I am not about to play politics with these children and these parents and their education. As I have said, once the board puts forward their financial request, then we will do, as we do with all other projects, give it due diligence and then move ahead with what needs to be done, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. LANE:** Mr. Speaker, I would say I said that to the minister three years ago and the school council said it probably about five or six. If you had acted then we would not be in this situation today.

Mr. Speaker, even after the new changes are made the English school board admits there will still be students eating lunch at their desks and doing gym and music in the cafeteria.

I therefore ask the minister: Is this his idea of quality education? If not, will he provide the board with the needed resources to provide more suitable options for the children of Mount Pearl?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, I would expect that the board will be submitting their request very soon. As I have said to the member, Mr. Speaker, we are not going to put limitations on the school district. They will put in their request —

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. JACKMAN:** They will put in their request, Mr. Speaker, and it will receive the due diligence, as do all other projects. Then we will move on with what needs to happen in the Mount Pearl system.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS DEMPSTER:** Mr. Speaker, government recently announced the *Apollo* would begin its Blanc Sablon to St. Barbe run tomorrow. However, as of this morning the vessel is still on dry dock here in St. John's.

I ask the minister: With the expected increase in traffic over the Easter season, what is the plan to ensure we have a continuous ferry service in the Strait of Belle Isle?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MCGRATH:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the *Bond* is running now between Corner Brook and Blanc Sablon. The *Apollo* is scheduled to start in the near future. We were hoping that she would start today. With the conditions in The Straits we are not sure that is a good idea and also, she has to pass her sea trial.

We have a continuance plan that the service between –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. MCGRATH:** – Blanc Sablon and Corner Brook will continue as is through the Easter season.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS DEMPSTER:** Mr. Speaker, I am really, really pleased that the minister is concerned about the *Apollo* because so am I, business people, and residents in my area. With the unprecedented amount of heavy ice in the Strait of Belle Isle and the Gulf, the *Apollo* is ill-equipped to make the run to Corner Brook with trips running up to fifty hours.

I ask the minister: Will you commit to operating the *Bond* to Corner Brook until ice conditions permit the *Apollo* to get into St. Barbe and do the St. Barbe-Blanc Sablon run? Will you make the commitment minister?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MCGRATH:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if you were to go back to Hansard on May 23, the Leader of the Opposition acknowledged the ice conditions in The Straits and how thick the ice was. We all know that the ice is extremely thick this year. I have no control over the ice unfortunately. What I said is that we will continue with service through the Easter season until the *Apollo* is ready to go into service.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS DEMPSTER:** Mr. Speaker, the Journeyperson Mentorship Program was heralded by this government as an excellent example of embracing innovative solutions that are maximizing our potential, having budgeted \$2 million to train 120 to 200 apprentices per year, but only \$600,000 was spent and only five people were trained.

I ask the minister: How could you have been so far off the mark?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. O'BRIEN:** Mr. Speaker, there are various programs within Advanced Education and Skills that support apprentices to become journeypersons. The Journeyperson Mentorship Program is just one. It is innovative, and it was going to be innovative; but, in the meantime, what it meant to do was take journeypersons who had retired and move them into a position to mentor apprentices through the program. We ran into issues in regard to – I will give an example, a journeyperson on the South Coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, down in Ramea, we needed a journeyperson up in Corner Brook, but the person could not move. These are the kind of things that we had challenges with.

So I have asked my staff to re-evaluate the program, and certainly we will address any issue that comes forward on a go-forward basis.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS DEMPSTER:** Mr. Speaker, last month in this House I asked why government was not requiring employers like Kruger or contractors awarded capital projects by government to hire apprentices. The former minister responded that

such companies can contact the department if they have an interest in training apprentices.

I ask the minister: When are you going to get proactive on getting apprentices trained and require companies receiving loans or capital contracts to hire apprentices?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. O'BRIEN:** Mr. Speaker, we have an unprecedented number of apprentices in Newfoundland and Labrador right now. As a matter of fact, we have about 6,000 moving through the system as we speak, in regard to being in their block training, or either that they are out working.

As a matter of fact, since 2005, we have doubled the number of journeypersons in this Province. We invest about \$38 million of provincial money in regard to labour market programs, in regard to training, and when you add in the federal component as well, on top of the \$39.8 million, we invest over \$163 million in supporting Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who want to avail of training.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the organizer of the botched Mud Immortal event received over \$420,000 from government to start a new business in 2008, and closed its doors just nine months later.

I ask the minister: Was there ever an investigation completed on that failed company to determine how the tax dollars were spent, and how much of the \$420,000 was recovered?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. FRENCH:** MedicLINK the company was called, and it was between 2006 and 2008 that the gentleman did come forward and request money. Once the Province got wind in IBRD that there was trouble in the company, they immediately went to see what assets the company had. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this is intellectual stuff, so it is not like they have physical stuff –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. FRENCH:** Mr. Speaker, government did go out and try to access what they had in the company. Unfortunately, there were no assets in the company and government was out the money.

Obviously, at times like this, nobody likes to see this happen. Unfortunately it does happen when you are involved with businesses, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** So the answer is zero.

Mr. Speaker, government has a responsibility to spend taxpayers' monies wisely. They failed. Government also has a responsibility to protect our provincial parks and our natural areas. They failed.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Why did you allow the same individual who walked away owing hundreds of thousands of dollars in taxpayers' money to this Province access to a provincial park with absolutely no due diligence – well, other than to say, are you going to use a motor in the park?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation.

**MR. FRENCH:** Mr. Speaker, just let me say the member opposite has certainly failed at being an actor because his acting capabilities are something to behold.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. FRENCH:** He has also failed, Mr. Speaker, at being a good Tory. So those are two things the hon. member has failed on.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. FRENCH:** I could go into a whole list of things about the hon. member and how he has failed.

Mr. Speaker, this is unfortunate. We deal with hundreds of businesses over time. Unfortunately, they are not all successful. They come to government sometimes because they are high-risk investments. We have had a number of success stories, now employing thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Unfortunately, when you are in that field it is not always a success story, and that is the reality of it.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I came to my senses and realized there are no good Tories.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment and Conservation confirmed for me last week that a full evaluation of the damage of that park has not been completed.

I ask the minister: You had months to do an evaluation on the damage to that park before the winter snow set in, yet you failed again; why?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. FRENCH:** Mr. Speaker, I could get into environmental damage the hon. member has been involved with, but I certainly would not get involved with that. I would not mention that here in this House.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. FRENCH:** – a gentleman tried to have an event at the park. Obviously, I am not intimately familiar with the latest details on that, but I could certainly provide them to the hon. member in the coming days.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, just this weekend we heard of another story about a person with mental health issues who ended up in the justice system. He was given time served and now has no place to go.

I ask the minister: Do you feel that sending people back to their communities without intensive case management is truly helping people with mental health issues?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the member for the question. It is a very serious issue. I certainly do not want to get into discussing details of this particular case because of privacy concerns, but I can say to the member opposite that in the justice system when it comes to planning for the release of those who are in correctional facilities, it is taken very seriously and there is a very extensive process that we engage in with our officials to plan for, whether it is financial challenges that the individual may



face, housing challenges or, in fact, health needs and health concerns that need to be addressed. All of that is a part of the release planning process.

Where it is identified that there are services required to help the individual transition back into the community, we work with groups like the Mental Health Association, the Justice Project, Stella Burry, for example, all of that is a part of the process.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I have a few questions of clarification from information we learned in the Estimates meeting for the Department of Finance.

I ask the Premier: Has the Province engaged the services of an outside company to the tune of \$700,000 to assist in an audit on possible transfer pricing by Vale?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, audits and due diligence is something that is part of regular business for us in the Department of Finance and certainly, I would think, that the taxpayers would hold us up to doing due diligence with their taxpayers' dollars. We do certainly spend money on these audits. If there is something specifically that I can get her some information on, I would be happy to do so.

The other piece of information, Mr. Speaker, is when we do these audits it is confidential information in terms of the work being done.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: Is the focus of the audit to assess whether these transfer pricing practices resulted in the Province receiving less money for ore mined by Vale than we were due?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The focus of any audit would be to ensure that everything is being done in compliance with the way it is supposed to be done, that revenues are being received, that expenses are being done properly. All the things that would normally be done in an audit is what we are doing.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS MICHAEL:** Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Is the passing of Bill 9 in this session of the House tied to the audit currently being conducted on Vale's ore sales?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The passing of Bill 9 is important for any business that we deal with, any audits that we

do. The passing of Bill 9, which we talked about in this House yesterday, is around third-party information, getting rid of ambiguity in the act, so we ensure that taxpayers' dollars are spent in the most effective and efficient way possible.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS MICHAEL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly it is going to help in the audit of Vale getting at papers that are held by the third party that Vale sold to. Mr. Speaker, we were told in the House Bill 9 was a housekeeping amendment.

I ask the minister: Why was this government not open and transparent on the importance of this amendment to the ongoing Vale audit?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It certainly is a housekeeping amendment. Both parties were briefed. My understanding is that there is full support. It is getting rid of any ambiguity and it is ensuring our taxpayers' dollars are spent in the most effective and efficient way.

There is nothing here that we are trying to be closed about, it is very open. I welcome the support from both sides of the House.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MURPHY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Budget this year projects another large increase to gasoline taxes collected, \$183

million in the government coffers yet again. Yet the government has announced just \$81 million for this year's roads programs. The Auditor General says that we have over \$800 million in neglected bridge work that has to be dealt with.

What is the government's plan for roads and bridges?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MCGRATH:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite said, we have \$81 million in this year's Budget that we will be allocating to the roads program this year. On top of that, we will be spending over \$70 million with the federal government on the Trans-Labrador Highway. We will also be spending money on maintenance. I keep hearing from the opposite side of the House about the number of bridges that need work but I never hear anything about the number of new bridges that are being added.

Mr. Speaker, we are constantly upgrading our road system. As I said, we will be putting \$81 million into it again this year. We will continue to improve on the over 10,000 kilometres of roads that we are responsible for in the Province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MURPHY:** Mr. Speaker, that is not what the Auditor General says that they are constantly upgrading. The Auditor General says the condition of roads and provincial bridges has deteriorated since 2003. That is in the Auditor General's report.

Why did your government neglect needed road and bridge work since that particular time?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MCGRATH:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to bridges, they are graded within the Province. Sometimes when a bridge is graded with a poor rating it does not mean that a bridge is unsafe. When a bridge is graded as an unsafe bridge, then we stop the usage of that bridge.

When it is graded poor it goes into the system and through priority we will move forward and have the upgrades done as we are doing with our roads. That is evident, Mr. Speaker, when we said that we would be spending \$81 million this year in our Budget in the roads program.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MURPHY:** The math is not working out. The Auditor General is talking about \$800 million. Most of the bridges are over forty years old. We have a problem here the government has not dealt with.

I ask the Premier: The condition of roads and bridges today is an accident waiting to happen. Why do you not have a plan for roads and bridges in this Province?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MCGRATH:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if I were able to accommodate every ask that came into my department this year for upgrades to roads and bridges, I would need \$852 million. I got \$82 million, so it is

impossible to come up with the \$852 million in one year.

This government has invested over \$5 billion in improvements since we have been here and we will continue to do that. As I said to the hon. member across the House, we are spending \$81 million this year for those road improvements.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. MURPHY:** Mr. Speaker, I would say by the number of potholes that are on the highways these days it is pretty hard to see the investment. It is going down at the bottom of a pit, I say to the minister.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. MURPHY:** Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister, even some recent road and bridge repairs have failed. Approaches to bridges, for example, on the Outer Ring Road are a very telling example. Asphalt is going to have to be reworked and, of course, rotting still exists.

I ask the government again: Previous work, we are going to have to go back and revisit and I think the people want to know, why?

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

**MR. MCGRATH:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, again, we do not have the capacity in this Province to get all of the work done immediately. The contractors just are not out there. So what we do every year is budget the money that we feel the capacity can fulfil.

When it comes to a contractor doing work, there are guarantees out there. We monitor that very closely. If a contractor does a job there is a guarantee on that job, and if the work is not up

to par then we will go back to the contractor and they will address it.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

#### **Tabling of Documents**

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Pursuant to section 8 and section 10 of the Public Tender Act, I hereby table the report of the Public Tender Act exemptions for the month of February, 2014, as presented by the Chief Operating Officer of the Government Purchasing Agency.

Notices of Motion.

#### **Notices of Motion**

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

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

I give notice that I will on Wednesday be moving the following private member's motion:

WHEREAS more than two-thirds of minimum wage earners in Newfoundland and Labrador are women, and one-fourth of minimum wage earners are the sole earners in their household; and

WHEREAS the minimum wage is inadequate and does not provide enough money for the necessities of life because a person earning minimum wage working forty hours a week makes \$20,800 a year which is barely above the Low-Income Cut-Off of \$19,496, and a working couple with two children are also close to low income; and

WHEREAS in 2012 the Minimum Wage Review Committee recommended an increase in the minimum wage in 2013 to reflect the loss of purchasing power since 2010, and an annual adjustment beginning in 2014 to reflect the Consumer Price Index; and

WHEREAS the provincial government instead legislated two 25-cent increases, one in October 2014 and one in October 2015, with no indexing; and

WHEREAS other provinces and territories are continuing to raise their minimum wage and six now have a higher minimum wage than Newfoundland and Labrador;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly urge government to legislate an increase in the minimum wage in 2014 to reflect the loss of purchasing power since 2010, and make an annual adjustment to the minimum wage beginning in 2015 to reflect the Consumer Price Index.

The motion is seconded by the Member for St. John's East.

Mr. Speaker, the motion just read is the motion for debate in the House of Assembly on this Wednesday.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

Answers to Question 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 oral health is intrinsically linked to overall health, and health care is universally covered in our Province; and

WHEREAS many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have been forced to wait a year or longer for much needed oral surgeries; and

WHEREAS residents with emergency cases and others who need oral surgery must seek medical attention in other provinces; and

WHEREAS the cost of access of oral surgery outside the Province is prohibitively expensive for many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador covers only 50 per cent of travel costs and requires a \$400 deductible; and

WHEREAS this financial burden and the lack of adequate oral surgery services in Newfoundland and Labrador is creating a two-tier system within the health care system;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to ensure that a more adequate level of access to specialist primary care based oral surgery and oral surgical procedures is provided in Newfoundland and Labrador;

We further urge the House of Assembly to urge government to review the level of financial assistance currently provided through the Medical Transportation Assistance Program to residents who leave the Province for oral surgeries.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition relates to problems in accessing oral surgery in this Province right now, and this problem has existed for some time. This petition is being spearheaded by a constituent of mine who last fall came to me to point out that she had been waiting for about a year-and-a-half to access an oral surgery that she

needed, that was medically necessary; however, because of a shortage of oral surgeons or very few oral surgeons here in the Province at the moment, at least here working at the Health Sciences, the person had to wait, as I said, a year-and-a-half.

When they finally saw an oral surgeon, they then had to travel to Halifax in order to get the surgery. There was a \$400 deductible in the Medical Transportation Assistance Program that automatically they had to incur and then beyond that, they had to pay a further 50 per cent of their travel costs.

You would think, in this day and age, we have a universal health care system in Newfoundland and Labrador, there are people who have to go through excruciating pain for a long period of time and then pay out of their own pocket to get the surgery they need – we need to act on this, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**MR. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, I rise again today to present a petition on behalf of the residents of Western Newfoundland and Labrador concerning the new hospital in Corner Brook.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here from people from Humber Road. The Member for Humber West's own district, there is six of them here

from Humber West who are petitioning the government on the new hospital.

Mr. Speaker, this is something that has been committed. I think the Minister of Finance is going out to Corner Brook tonight to speak at some function, the Chamber of Commerce or something, and she is going to announce the \$15 million more for planning that was in this year's Budget to go along with the million that was spent last year. She is going to go out tonight and announce the \$15 million; that we are going to have new planning.

Mr. Speaker, that was the same planning that was done in 2011, when the Premier today announced that the hospital will start in 2012. So, Mr. Speaker, excuse me for being a bit skeptical on this hospital. I am willing to bet I will stand here tomorrow with a copy of *The Western Star* in my hand and say how the minister announced what a great budget, what a great \$15 million for the new hospital to do with the planning, to prolong the planning, to try to enhance the planning for the same building they were supposed to have started back in 2009.

Now, Mr. Speaker, last year the planning was complete; the functional design and the planning were complete. I am willing to bet, and anybody from out in Corner Brook wants to bet with me now that the minister is going to announce there is \$15 million for future planning. Now, what is going to be in that hospital is going to be the big key. Is there going to be radiation? When the Minister of Finance goes out tonight will she answer that? Will she just say oh, here is \$15 million; it is going to progress? It is going to open up in 2014 now, 2015, or 2016. That is when the construction is supposed to start.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is an ongoing issue out in Corner Brook. We cannot get any answers. On April 24, there is a public meeting in Corner Brook; all are invited. The Member for Humber West, I am not sure if he confirmed his attendance. The Member for Terra Nova, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health, I do not know if he confirmed his attendance.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The member's time has expired.

**MR. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, again.

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS Route 434, Conche Road, is 17.6 kilometres of unpaved road; and

WHEREAS the current road conditions are deplorable; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Automobile Association ranked Route 434 the seventh worst road in Atlantic Canada;

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

WHEREAS an improved paved road would enhance local business, fish processing operations, and tourism which is vital to the health of the communities affected;

We, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge government to allocate funds in the provincial roads program to pave Route 434.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to drive to Conche and drive over this deplorable road, which has not been paved. It is riddled with potholes. As the road receives upgrades and grading, which is now down to bedrock in places, there is a significant amount of dust,

which has an impact I am sure on people's health.

When I was in Conche, I received this petition and it is signed by members in Roddickton, Main Brook, Bide Arm, and Englee. Conche certainly is a key employer in the region, given the fish processing facility that is there and the hundreds of commercial trucks that transport product to and from the community, as well as the commuters who work there.

It is something that government has invested in, and I am going to commend government for putting in upwards of \$6 million in the mid-2000s to realign and rebuild this road. With it, there was no plan to pave, to finish the job. There needs to be a commitment.

The former Minister of Transportation and Works said they were going to pave the road. They had all intentions to pave this road. Now it is almost ten years later since this realignment and rebuilding has taken place and the investment is eroding, it is wearing away, because there is no paving being done. Even if it had to be done in a multi-year stage, and if the Minister of Transportation and Works would commit at least to a bare minimum of implementing dust monitors, we could ensure that the people who are travelling this highway, the commuters of this highway, their health and safety are being protected while we work through that plan.

I understand there are a lot of asks in Newfoundland and Labrador, but we have to take gravel roads out of the provincial inventory so we are advancing economies, especially those that have a strong, vibrant economy like Conche, Newfoundland and Labrador.

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 humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS residents of the Southwest Coast must travel the TCH between Channel-Port aux Basques and Corner Brook for work, medical, educational, and social reasons; and

WHEREAS Marine Atlantic ferries dock at Channel-Port aux Basques at various hours on a daily basis resulting in extremely high volume of commercial and residential travellers using this section of the TCH; and

WHEREAS the world-renowned Wreckhouse area is situated along this section of the TCH; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador initiated a twenty-four hour snow clearing pilot project in 2008 that excluded the section of the TCH from Channel-Port aux Basques to Stephenville;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House to urge the government to include the section of the TCH from Channel-Port aux Basques to Stephenville in the twenty-four hour snow clearing project.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, obviously I have made this petition on a number of occasions. We started back in March when I was putting them in. We all know about how rough March was and the amount of snow we got, and it has continued right up until April. The fact is, thankfully, the snow seems like it is going away little bit by little bit, but that does not mean I am not going to continue entering this petition. In fact, I think sometimes the department hopes that they can put this issue off until the weather gets nice and we will forget about it and deal with it a year later. That is not going to happen.

We have written letters asking for more information on the data used to make this

decision. We still have not received the answers to the questions we have asked. This is a government that likes to tout how they are a newly-formed open government, but I am still not getting the information I need to justify government's decision on this. Therefore, I still do not believe it has been justified.

We have more people coming on here and supporting this including the Atlantic Provinces Trucking Association, a number of commercial truck drivers getting on and off the ferry. They can tell you first-hand how desperately we need this service on that section of roadway. The TCH does not end in Stephenville, contrary to some people's beliefs, it continues on right to the ferry.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. A. PARSONS:** We are the gateway to the Province and we deserve to have the same treatment as everybody else.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**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 Holy Cross school is a small, family-oriented school that gives all the children the highest education possible; and

WHEREAS the school helps support the many students who have difficulty and or learning disabilities to reach their highest potential; and

WHEREAS the school has a friendly atmosphere for children and parents, the staff knowing all the children and parents by name; and

WHEREAS the teachers at Holy Cross bring the extra supports that would not be present in a larger school or larger classroom;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to consider keeping Holy Cross open, and to allow the children of the area to attend a neighbourhood school as was promised with education reform.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand and present this petition on behalf of parents of the children who attend Holy Cross Elementary school in my district. I met with the parents on two different occasions and with the principal and school council. Some of the parents have real grave concerns about what this move will mean for their children.

The school has a new principal who has been there for two years and the school is thriving, the students are thriving, the teachers are thriving. The school is a real community school; it is the hub of the community.

There are a number of extracurricular activities that happen in the school. One of the things that the parents have identified is that every morning when the children come through the doors in the school, the teachers are there calling them by name. It seems like an ideal situation. It is the type of school atmosphere we would all want for all of our children. There also are a large number of children attending Holy Cross Elementary who do have special needs. There are some extra resources available through the school, as it should be, in order to help these kids.

What was really heartbreaking, Mr. Speaker, was to hear some of the families, some of the mothers, talking about the fears on behalf of their children, children who have autism, children who have special needs. When they talk about the fear they have for their children,



they also talk about how wonderful the teachers are there.

They are so afraid. Mr. Speaker, they are so afraid that their children are going to fall through the cracks because they are going to a school that is bigger and they will be absorbed into this bigger school. They are going from a school where there are 140 students to a school where there will be over 550. They are very concerned and they are asking the government to listen to their concerns.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. SLADE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the communities of New Ferolle, Shoal Cove West and Reef's Harbour has always relied on the fishery as a means to earn a sustainable income; and

WHEREAS the main employer for these three communities has been a seafood processing plant located in New Ferolle; and

WHEREAS this plant was seized by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador as a result of mortgage arrears; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador then permitted an outside operator to operate that plant, but that operator became insolvent and closed; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador then sold the plant to another operator for the sum of \$1 and has not operated the plant but instead has stripped most, if not all, of the equipment from the plant instead of operating it;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to find a local operator for this plant so that people can go back to work.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, just to elaborate a little bit on it. In New Ferolle, the fish plant was operated approximately fifty years by the Doyle family. It was mostly cod and was hard hit by the cod moratorium, but it struggled along with other species: pelagics, lump roe, turbot, lobster, and seal. Finally, it could not pay the mortgage and government foreclosed and took the plant. They put one operator there for three or four years, the Eveleighs, and trucked the products to other plants until it went bankrupt.

Three or four years ago it was sold to new operators, Deep Atlantic, Greg Maloney, for \$1. It only opened a few weeks. Of course, since then the equipment in the plant has been stripped out of the plant. The petitioners right now are calling upon government to see that plant reactivated so it can give them some security for income.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thought we had a new district for a little while there.

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

WHEREAS Route 510 from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay is in deplorable condition and requires immediate upgrading; and

WHEREAS the condition of the highway is causing undue damage to vehicles using the highway and has now become a safety hazard for the travelling public; and

WHEREAS both residential and commercial traffic has increased dramatically with the opening of the Trans-Labrador Highway and increased development in Labrador; and

WHEREAS cold patching is no longer adequate as a means of repair;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately allocate resources to Route 510 from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay that allows for permanent resurfacing of the highway.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, we have a serious situation in the Labrador Straits that with spring thaw become a critical situation. We have an emergency situation in the Labrador Straits, Route 510. This morning at 9:30 all of the councils in the Labrador Straits came together and held an emergency meeting.

Mr. Speaker, I have been impressing upon government, impressing upon the member for months and months now that we have a serious situation in the Labrador Straits with the road. I listened to him in Question Period. Yes, we do not have enough money to meet all the capacity around Newfoundland and Labrador but we must, we have a responsibility – I say the government, Mr. Speaker, has a responsibility and the minister that when you have an emergency situation it has to be addressed immediately.

This weekend we have ambulances, we have videos out on YouTube of ambulances and what they are driving over. It is basically now all potholes. The safety of the people in the Labrador Straits is very, very seriously being compromised right now with the lack of

attention that is being given to the road. We need an immediate temporary solution. I say not next week and not tomorrow, but today people need to be out doing something with the potholes that are there right now, and then we need to get on the horizon for some new pavement to replace this thirty-five-year-old pavement.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to stress the minister is from Labrador, he knows the issues, and he knows this situation. I had a number of people this weekend say: Bring him in; bring him in right now and let him see the seriousness of this situation. I hope something is done before somebody loses a life, because that is how bad it is right now in the Labrador Straits on Route 510.

I am calling upon the minister to take this situation very, very serious and see it for what it is, and I will continue to stand and petition on this.

Thank you.

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a petition. To the hon. House of Assembly, the petition of the undersigned residents humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS Holy Cross school is a small, family-oriented school that gives all children the highest education possible; and

WHEREAS the school helps support the many students who have difficulty and/or learning disabilities to reach their highest potential; and

WHEREAS the school has a friendly atmosphere for children and parents, the staff knowing all of the children and parents by name; and

WHEREAS the teachers at Holy Cross bring an extra supports that would not be present in a larger school or larger classroom;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to consider keeping Holy Cross open and to allow the children of the area to attend a neighbourhood school, as was promised with education reform.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there was a decision made roughly two years ago on Holy Cross to close Holy Cross in support of the new St. Teresa's School that is going to be built, but the situation has changed somewhat. I would put forth the fact that since government has announced the introduction of all-day Kindergarten that has changed the situation. If nothing else, that has changed the situation.

I will speak a little bit more about Holy Cross in a second, but the fact that there is all-day Kindergarten and there will be additional classroom space required, I think that Holy Cross can add to the inventory of schools in the metro area and provide some of the additional classroom space that is going to be required as a result of all-day Kindergarten.

I understand the argument that government made a couple of years ago in saying that they were going to build a new school, St. Teresa's, but I am a supporter of smaller schools, Mr. Speaker. I do have a couple of smaller schools in my district, and I know that the smaller schools are far more personal, the teachers have a much closer relationship with the students, and if a student has needs, special needs, or is having difficulty, the teacher is more in tune to that. Most of the teachers – maybe all of the teachers – know all of the students in a smaller school. So there is something to be said about smaller schools, Mr. Speaker, and the strength of smaller schools.

I know that there is a smaller school in my district, St. Mary's, and the academic performance of that school is much greater. I would argue that there is less bullying. I do not think of any bullying, in fact, going on at that school. It is a very close-knit community with the parents, the students, and the teachers.

That is another strong reason for keeping Holy Cross open, but I ask government to reconsider the decision made on Holy Cross and look at keeping it open.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS current government regulations deny busing services to students who live closer than the 1.6 kilometres from school; and

WHEREAS parents have expressed concern that children living within 1.6 kilometres of school face dangers in walking to school, such as congested streets, busy intersections and no sidewalks, especially during winter weather conditions; and

WHEREAS the \$75,000 review of the school transportation system completed by Deloitte recommended that the Department of Education consider reducing the 1.6 kilometre eligibility zone for Kindergarten and elementary students; and

WHEREAS the \$75,000 Deloitte report also noted that only 10 per cent of those surveyed for school transportation system review agree that the current 1.6 kilometre is reasonable for students and families; and

WHEREAS parents are continuing to demand more flexible policies to meet the current needs of school children;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to change the outdated 1.6 kilometre school busing eligibility policy in order to ensure safe travel to

school for primary and elementary school children in the Province.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is a petition now that I have presented a number of times, and I will continue to do so until the Minister of Education decides he is going to listen. We realize he did not listen when it came to the Mount Pearl school reorganization, which is absolutely shameful; but, hopefully, we are going to change his mind. We are going to keep pressing that issue, but we are also going to press this issue. This is a very serious issue for students, particularly young children in high traffic areas, urban areas in particular, having to walk to school.

There are a lot of children that may be only a kilometre away, 1.2 or 1.3 kilometres away. That is quite a distance for, say, a child who is only going to Kindergarten, Grade 1 or Grade 2 to have to walk to school, particularly, as I said, in busy areas, high traffic areas, having to cross four-lane roads in a lot of cases. Of course, that is made even worse in the wintertime when you do not necessarily have the sidewalks cleared and so on.

This is a serious issue. It is a safety issue. I am urging the Minister of Education – unlike he did on the Mount Pearl school reorganization, I am asking him to start listening to people. The government claims to be open and accountable and is starting to listen. The Premier has said they want to listen to the people.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. LANE:** This is what the people are saying. I ask the government to start listening and take some action.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, a petition to the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of

Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS there is no cellphone service in the Town of Trout River, which is an enclave 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, Trout River is a remarkable little town. Actually in my region it is a relatively mid-sized town. It is 650 people; it is about the fifth biggest in the district.

If you go to Trout River, which is a very nice place, you can see the resiliency of the people; you can see the initiative that they take simply by going to the town office. The town office is a nice blue clapboarded building. If the Speaker remembers, a few years ago there was news coverage of a criminal act of arson in the community. This resulted in the burning in some part of the town office.

The people in the town, being self-reliant, were able to arrive at a settlement with the insurance

company for cash for materials. They were able to successfully apply for a labour project. They were successful in that. They put their town office back together. It is a very nice facility, a nice building. They are practically no burden on anybody in that respect. They are self-governing. They pay their taxes, but some things are beyond their reach, Mr. Speaker.

They just cannot put in cellphones. They do not have the technology. They do not have the know-how. They cannot build a tower. They need government to partner with the private sector. The private sector would certainly be willing to have the discussion with government as what can we do to work together to have cellphone service in the Town of Trout River. Mr. Speaker, that is all that these people are asking: for the government to partner with the private sector to provide cellphone service to them in their town.

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 another petition here:

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has announced tenders for rehabilitation of 11.75 kilometres of highway between Baie Verte and Fleur de Lys to be completed by September 30, 2014; and

WHEREAS government has now added an addendum to limit the funding in 2014 for approximately 30 per cent of the roadwork tendered for the Fleur de Lys road, roughly four kilometres; and

WHEREAS government has not provided funding in 2014 for roadwork on the La Scie highway but has said the roadwork will be completed by September, 2015; and

WHEREAS we the undersigned are disappointed at this delay;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon this House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to honour its commitment to us and complete the entire 11.75 kilometres as announced.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by residents from King's Point. We have a number of petitions coming in from that area. We have received a phone call saying there is another envelope of petitions coming in from the area.

Mr. Speaker, the people in the area want that roadwork done. To say the road in La Scie is not to be completed until 2015, that was not their understanding when the announcement was made. I commend government for putting out multi-year tenders, but there is a difference in putting out a multi-year tender and providing the funding for the work they are requiring to be completed this year and what will actually be completed this year.

Mr. Speaker, the people in the area protested last year because of the condition of the road and the fact that the work was not going to be complete. If the work is not complete this year, Mr. Speaker, you can bet they are going to be very, very disappointed, very upset indeed. So we call on government to provide the funding that is required to complete the work they promised would be completed this year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**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.

At this point in time I would like to move us into the Order Paper on Motion 1. I move that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, the Budget Speech.

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

**MS DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am happy to stand and have a few minutes to speak to issues in my district again. Mr. Speaker, just before I stood I was looking at the title: *Budget 2014 Shared Prosperity, Fair Society, Balanced Outlook*. Shared prosperity and a fair society; it is not what you are seeing in my district and in many places throughout Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I hear members across the way touting we have a new school. Every time I stand and raise the issues in the District of Cartwright – L’Anse au Clair someone hollers across, you are getting a new school. Again I have to say, a clean environment for children to learn in is a right. The government of the day has a moral and an ethical obligation to ensure that all of the children in Newfoundland and Labrador learn in a clean and dry environment. We fought for a decade and a half to get that in a community in my district and we are very pleased the minister came through on that.

Again, I say to the member across the way, we are not the only place in Newfoundland and Labrador to have a school. I do not know why they keep touting the fact that we are getting a school. We are finally, in certain areas of Labrador, getting some things equal to the rest of the Province, but I can tell you now that we are still a long, long way behind.

Saturday night I was heading down to a hockey game in a cab. In a small conversation with the cab driver, he asked me where I was from. When I said Labrador, my dear he said you must be some frustrated living in Labrador with all your issues. He said Newfoundland have long been upset about how they are being treated by Ottawa. He said, I always think that the Island is treating Labrador the way that Ottawa treats Newfoundland. I thought that was noteworthy by a cab driver on the weekend to pass along here.

While I was down there that evening I met a number of gentlemen who were happy to share stories with me. I see the minister for Labrador is nodding his head, Transportation and Works. I am going to get to the roads, minister, big issues all this weekend on the roads. I met a couple of gentlemen down there on the weekend from here in town who told me they were in my district in the summertime. I think one was down there who drove through in June, another one in August, another one in September.

Mr. Speaker, everybody shared the same story. They could not believe it. They got off the ferry and could not believe what you guys have to drive on every day. They could not believe what people have to commute to work on. They could not believe what ambulances have to move on.

I do not know if the minister is aware – and you can get up and speak to the issues once I am down but I am going to use my ten minutes right now. I do not know if the minister is aware, and I am going to jump right to it, but there was an emergency meeting held this morning in the Town of Forteau, talking about the very pressing situation of Route 510. We are really, really fortunate here that nobody has been killed yet, and I fear that is on the horizon. People are swerving all over the place.

I know we have some potholes here and there in the city. You look at the little barricades they have up to warn you that you are coming onto a pothole. Well, I tell you, if they stuck them up on Route 510 everything would be blocked up. You would not move. Everything would be shut down because there are so many potholes. Mr. Speaker, we have a big, big concern about that.

Do you know what? The Member for Labrador is doing a lot of heckling while I am up on my ten minutes. I am really disappointed. I said to him before, he is the man who knows the issues of Labrador, better than an awful lot of people here – a lot.

I will give you credit. I am very pleased to hear the minister commit to keeping the *Bond* on the run until the *Apollo* can get into St. Barbe. He

has delivered on something the area wanted, and I thank you, Minister. I have no problem to give credit where credit is due.

Every time the school comes up, I give the Member for Burin – Placentia West credit for looking after the children in a coastal community in Charlottetown because for fifteen years prior they went ignored – fifteen years. We could not even get a letter answered from the previous minister. I give you credit, Minister, for keeping the *Bond* on. That is what the people want.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MS DEMPSTER:** Well, the pavement is coming, but right now we have an immediate serious situation. We cannot wait. We need an immediate temporary solution. Everything is ready to be shut down.

We had meetings yesterday in the Labrador Straits. Nalcor is in. They are doing quite a big contract there with the rock procurement and there is a lot of money that is going into someone's pocket because of that, but I can tell you what we are getting are a couple of dozen jobs. People are really taken aback that the number of jobs was so small. Once again, here is an area that is providing something substantial to the Muskrat Falls development, yet we are so greatly lacking in every single other area, Mr. Speaker.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MS DEMPSTER:** I am still hearing the Minister of Transportation across the way.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible) clarification.

**MS DEMPSTER:** What is the clarification, Minister?

The minister is happy that after this government's \$17 billion revenue from oil alone, from first oil to last year's \$17 billion, more than a decade later, and this government decided we need to help the people getting their equipment in and out and using Muskrat. We

will announce the pavement. That is what Labrador gets repeatedly, Mr. Speaker. Nothing has changed.

Yes, we got an announcement after a decade and we are going to wait another five or six years until we get it. In the meantime, it is imperative that something be done to address the emergency situation on Route 510 in the Labrador Straits and we need to continue with the ongoing maintenance down the coast in Labrador in southeast. I drove home last week and I tweeted out what I drove on. I said: A land so rich in resources and so poor in infrastructure, unless something is being taken out.

I wondered what I was going to say when I stood up because I always seem to say the same thing along the same lines and I thought: Why change it? The issues are not changing, why do I need to change my story? I need to keep hammering away at the very pressing issues, transportation, the road, and the ferry is huge. Yes, we have had a difficult year with the ice, Mr. Speaker. Right now, given the situation, we are happy the *Bond* will stay on because the *Bond* is better equipped to do that run, that has taken up to forty and fifty hours.

I have to go back and I have to hit on all of the rich resources out of Labrador. Many times, through my years with Combined Councils and in dialogue with the different towns, we have raised the issue. Actually, the minister for Labrador probably will remember. We have asked many times. If we had a 2 per cent royalty fund coming back to Labrador for the resources that come out, we would have our water and sewer needs met. We would not have people turning on a tap and the colour that is coming out is like a chocolate milkshake. We would not have seniors who are living in the conditions that they are in.

We would not have people in Black Tickle, grown men that I saw moved to tears when I was there in January, who want to get out and get a job somewhere but do not have any income. They do not have the money they need to save for that \$1,000 or \$1,500 down payment that you need, Mr. Speaker, when you move into an

apartment. It is a very, very sad situation. I have not even touched on Black Tickle and what they are driving on in roads and the state of the road of the airstrip but I am hoping something is coming on that in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, I want to mention Crown Lands. It is not something we hear talked about a lot here in the House. I can go on and on about the pressing issues in the district with the roads and transportation and health. Cell service is another issue, Mr. Speaker.

We have that sub-sea cable, that \$1 billion cable that is running across the Strait of Belle Isle. It has fibre optics going through it; yet, because of poor planning and poor vision, we have communities like Red Bay that are going to see a big influx of tourists again soon and they are on a dial-up service. Mr. Speaker, we have to work together to ensure Labrador has a better standard of service than it has right now. The time has come for us to sit down and try to work out some solutions and move some of these very pressing issues forward.

The issue at Crown Lands, they had drastic cuts in Budget 2013 and it has not improved. Primarily, the pressing issue with Crown Lands is because they are under resourced. The last call I had was there were 800 applications that need processing, and there is no system of priority, Mr. Speaker; 800 applications in Crown Lands that need processing and no system of priority. Therefore, the gentleman I spoke to told me it takes about three to six months to get an application processed. When I was in the system myself, it actually took more than two years. I have talked to a number of people where the extended wait times have gone over two years.

While I empathize with the staff at Crown Lands, Mr. Speaker, what is really pressing in my area is that many of the little rural and outport communities have limited registered title, and a grant from Crown Lands is required by lending institutions to ensure that the title to the land is protected. You have people who go to a bank and they need a loan, they want to start a house or they want to carry out renovations

and they are held up for a year, they are held up for two years. We do not have a big influx of people who are wanting to come into our rural communities and build, but I believe that when we do, there should be provisions made so this process right now is not held up, Mr. Speaker, for a year or two years.

In almost every department you go to there is a deadline on when you can expect to get something back. I think on government's new initiative they declared – and I did have it here somewhere – thirty days getting something back on a report and within sixty days they would act on the report. Here we see Crown Lands that play a very important role into families who are coming in and wanting to build, yet we have no deadline when you submit an application, no deadline on when you are going to hear back from that application.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge the department to look at that. Look at the significant strain in the resources and see if they can address some of these concerns that we are continuously hearing about and getting back from the public.

I did want to mention, in my critic area of AES I am very concerned that the government is touting a 5.3 per cent poverty rate, yet we have almost 15 per cent of the population who are actually living in poverty.

My time is up. I have a lot of issues and I look forward to standing again to raise some of them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER (Verge):** The hon. the Member for Port de Grave.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am very pleased today to rise and speak to Budget 2014. Mr. Speaker, today I believe I am speaking to the sub-amendment. I think we have



had the general motion and amendment, and this is the sub-amendment.

I am very pleased to stand up and have an opportunity to speak today to *Budget 2014: Shared Prosperity, Fair Society, Balanced Outlook*. Obviously it is the Opposition's role to be critical and point out flaws and all the rest.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Perceived flaws.

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** Perceived flaws, yes. The hon. member says, perceived flaws.

Mr. Speaker, in this Budget there are many good things. I have taken a role today that I am going to talk about some of the good things that are in this Budget. They are not only good for myself and before I – the hon. Member for Carbonear – Harbour Grace, I want to congratulate him, too, on his maiden speech from last week. He did a wonderful job. I have known the hon. member for many years as we served together on Joint Mayors for many years in our region in Conception Bay North.

I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I never spoke and thanked the people of the Port de Grave district for their continued support and encouragement. Without their support and encouragement every day I do not know if you could go into the office and continue to work as hard as we do on a daily basis on the matters that concern them.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few minutes to talk about several topics that are important in my district: education, infrastructure, and the fishery. Also, if I have some time I want to talk about some of the important contributions volunteers make. We are coming off Volunteer Week, Mr. Speaker, and some initiatives in this Budget were very important to some very important volunteers, like firefighters and our search and rescue people.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about education. I know in this hon. House last Wednesday we talked about full-day

Kindergarten and what that would do and the importance of full-day Kindergarten.

Mr. Speaker, I am a father of two boys. One boy is about to enter post-secondary schooling, getting very close. I was very pleased to hear in this Budget about the continuation of the tuition freeze. Mr. Speaker, that is not only important to my family but it is also important to my friend's families, as we all have children about to enter post-secondary schooling. That freeze ensures that our children receive a great education at very affordable and accessible pricing. That is very important.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I remember in my day there were the grants and loans. We hoped to get a grant and then you hoped to get a loan to match your grant. That is how you made your way through university, by having a matching loan to the grant. I was so pleased to see in this Budget the elimination of the provincial student loan program. This government is going to have non-repayable grants, and this government has committed \$14.7 million to this program over the next two years.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** That will eliminate student loans in this Province. That will certainly have a significant impact on young people who want to go to school in the colleges and universities here in our Province.

Mr. Speaker, I had one student come up to me; she was about to start university. She said: Mr. Littlejohn, is it real? Is there going to be an elimination of the student loan program? I said: Yes, you have heard right. She said: That would be great. I was so glad that these students will get an opportunity to go to university and have no loans to pay back.

What does it mean to a student? What does it mean to a student not to have a loan and to go with grants? Well, Mr. Speaker, less debt. We have all stood and heard in this House from both sides the tremendous debt that students have incurred trying to get a post-secondary education over the years. So, what else does that mean?

Less stress – less stress on the student because they do not have to worry about paying back this great debt and finding a job and a job immediately, and when is the student debt going to come free, and when do I have to pay this debt, and when do I have to start paying. So, Mr. Speaker, it is a lot less stress, and it is a lot less stress on the families.

I remember my mom and dad, Mr. Speaker, when I went to university. I remember my mom and dad saying: Glenn, I do not know if we can do this. If we have to pay back all this money, I do not know, Glenn, what we are going to be able to do.

Well, like all families, they made sacrifices. They made sacrifices that allowed me to be able to go to university. Mr. Speaker, they did not only make sacrifices for me; they made sacrifices so that I would not come out with a burdensome debt – and that was very important.

The other part of that, Mr. Speaker, it is encouraging our young people to seek a quality education. Whether it be at Memorial University, whether it be at Grenfell, whether it would be at the College of the North Atlantic, it is encouraging our young people to look at a post-secondary education in our Province. We have world-class institutions in our Province and world-class study areas in our Province that I am very proud to say students can avail of.

Mr. Speaker, just to give some examples: A student at the College of the North Atlantic in a one-year program would have his payments reduced by 42 per cent. So what does that mean? Well, that means if you are out of the student loan program, with the elimination of the student loan program, instead of paying \$113 a month, he would now be paying back \$67 a month – a 42 per cent reduction, Mr. Speaker.

A student at MUN in a four-year program – and four-year programs are standard degree programs – would benefit by 44 per cent, having their payments reduced from \$300 a month to \$167 a month. It is very significant, I would say, Mr. Speaker. Over a lifetime of this, a four-year undergraduate program, the average total

debt for a student who did a four-year undergraduate program at Memorial University in 2003-2004 paid about \$26,592. With the 2015-2016 projected total debt, it will only be \$14,787; a total reduction of \$11,805. Mr. Speaker, that is nearly 50 per cent for a four-year undergraduate program. I think that is very significant.

Mr. Speaker, the longer term impact of all of this is that this is just a point of reference. This will allow more kids to go to school, more opportunity for kids graduating high school to go to a post-secondary institution. At the end of the day, I think all students will benefit.

Just as a point of reference, the average government-sponsored student debt in the country is about \$27,000. In our Province, we are estimating it will be a little less than 50 per cent of that.

In this Budget, Mr. Speaker, we had some great news for our district. I heard the hon. member across the way talk about the new school for her District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair and it took her a decade-and-a-half. Well, it has been nearly a decade that I have been involved in trying to get a new school for Coley's Point – just about a decade. Back in 2006, Mr. Speaker, we started trying to advocate for a new school at Coley's Point Primary.

Coley's Point Primary is a sixty-year-old wooden structure building, Mr. Speaker. Today we have a K-3 program in that school with nearly 400 children. I can honestly say that every piece of available space in that school is being utilized. What used to be janitorial closets are now resource rooms. What used to be libraries are now technology rooms and libraries. So, Mr. Speaker, every bit of space in this school was used. I was so pleased that this government committed to building a new school, Coley's Point Primary.

Mr. Speaker, over that decade I have to sing out accolades because there were a lot of people who put a lot of effort into making sure that this new school came to fruition. The former principal, Joy Brown – Joy was a Trojan, never

ever took no for an answer and continued to work with us and for us and for the children of Coley's Point Primary.

Mr. Speaker, the school councils over the years continued to advocate, whether it was to the town, the government, to the Minister of Education directly, and to the schools boards, they continue to advocate for the need for a new school.

Mr. Speaker, the Town of Bay Roberts and all the surrounding Towns of Bareneed, Port de Grave, their unwavering support that this needed to happen; the parents of all these children continued to work together and work with us to ensure that the new school would be a reality.

Mr. Speaker, I want to give accolades to the Minister of Education because without his co-operation and his support, I am not sure we could have made this happen. I want to publicly state and thank the Minister of Education for his time and his support in making sure this new school happened. So, thank you, Minister.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** Mr. Speaker, it has been a long journey and we still have some work to do. There is no doubt we still have some work to do, but the announcement is great news for the people of the Port de Grave district.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other issues that we talked about for a long time in our district was infrastructure, municipal and provincial infrastructure and the needs. I do not think that any hon. member in this House will look at us and say that they do not have some type of infrastructure needs, be it roads, be it water and sewer, be it septic systems, whatever it may be, they need it.

Mr. Speaker, in our district we continue to see investments in the improvement of Route 70. I want to thank the Minister of Transportation who came out recently and did a tour of the district, saw some of the needs and some of the effort that we need on Route 70. I was very pleased – even though you hear hon. members

get up and say it is only \$81 million. Well, \$81 million is a significant investment. I say it is a significant investment in roads and infrastructure in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, in my district we have seen improvements to trunk roads. We have seen improvements to Crane's Road, a major secondary road for the people of Upper Island Cove. We have seen improvements to the Thicket Road. We have seen improvements to all other provincial roads in the district. Mr. Speaker, we need that.

The provincial road system going through the Town of Spaniard's Bay, we saw roughly a kilometre-and-a-half last year of provincial road improvements through the Town of Spaniard's Bay. These roads, Mr. Speaker, have not had any upgrades in just about twenty years. This is a significant improvement in the roads in our area.

Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to see as well investment in our communities through our Multi-Year Capital Works Program. It was very good to see in our Budget the commitment of \$200 million over three years in these programs.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** Two hundred million dollars in over three years.

Mr. Speaker, we all have needs. Some needs are water and sewer, some needs are roads, and some needs are new well systems. We all have needs. All my communities have needs. I am very pleased to see that through this \$200 million investment over three years, we may be able to address some of those needs. Mr. Speaker, by addressing those needs we also support the region in general because it improves the overall quality of life for everybody in the region. It is very important.

Mr. Speaker, in the last two-and-a-half years since I have entered this House, we have seen significant improvements in infrastructure in our communities. We have seen new water and sewer in the Town of Clarke's Beach. We have

seen improved ditching and drainage in North River. We have seen water, sewer, and paving in the Town of Bay Roberts. We have seen paving in the Town of Spaniard's Bay and Island Cove. We have seen improvements to the water system in Makinsons. In the coming days, I hope that we will see projects announced through Transportation and Works to further infrastructure development in our communities and on our roadways.

Mr. Speaker, I have a depot. In my district there is a depot, the Department of Transportation and Works depot. In the Budget I saw for fleet improvements I believe was how it was put, Minister – fleet improvements?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Yes.

**MR. LITTLEJOHN:** Yes, fleet improvements for new vehicles for the Department of Transportation and Works. It included plow trucks, loaders, backhoes, equipment for brush clearing, equipment and painting trucks. Some 620 pieces I think have been allocated at a cost of \$27.7 million.

Mr. Speaker, having a depot in my district, I am hoping that some of these new pieces of equipment find their way into the depot at Bay Roberts. I know and I am an advocate for it, Minister, we have been having some trouble with our backhoe for a couple of years. A new backhoe would not go astray, I say to the minister. Minister, we have had some issues with a couple of plows. I hope in the days to come we see some of these pieces of equipment in our district.

Mr. Speaker, once again, this Budget is supporting our fishery. We have a number of harvesters in this district, I would say. Over seventy harvesters participate in the fishery in my district, everything from twenty footers to sixty-five footers. I know the hon. member on the opposite side is looking at me and I think he can concur it is all sizes from twenty footers to sixty-five footers.

Mr. Speaker, we have invested money in our Fisheries Technology and New Opportunities

Program, some \$4 million over the next two years. Since 2007, through our Fisheries Technology and New Opportunities Program we have invested in over 240 projects – 240 projects – everything from biodegradable twine for our crab nets and our crab pots to eco-friendly new shrimp trawls – I cannot read my own writing so I need my glasses at this point – which would be more efficient and have less impact on sea beds, worthwhile projects when we talk about our crab and shrimp fisheries, big, major fisheries that employ a lot of people in my district, as I said over seventy harvesters and plant workers. The crab and shrimp fishery is an important economic generator in our area.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but mention CETA. I believe the \$400 million we have invested from CETA will bring about more investment and more opportunities in the fishery, and enhance our fishery for the fishery of the future.

Mr. Speaker, I am winding down and I want to talk a little bit about farming. For many years, farming was a very vital piece of the economic engine of our district. Over the last number of years, our agricultural sector kind of has been forgotten. At one point, not so many years ago, we had five or six major farms in my district. In recent years, we have seen that decline to two. These people have worked hard for many years in the farming industry and we forget sometimes that over 6,500 people, mainly in rural parts of our Province, work directly or indirectly in the farming industry.

In my district – I wanted to mention this because I think this is a great news story. We have two young women who began farming in my district last year and they are farming organically. They can be found in-season selling their produce from the parking lot of the local visitor information centre. They also are giving back to our schools. They have been in our school system this fall and this winter teaching our children how to plant and grow crops right in the classroom.

Just last night, Mr. Speaker, my wife was on the phone having a conversation with another teacher from another neighbouring school and

she was talking about how these two ladies have gone into her school in North River and how they are teaching the kids to grow lettuce. It is organic lettuce, but you can pick the root and two weeks later it regenerates and you can have lettuce again. So it is only planted once, but it continues to regenerate. So they are doing some very fascinating things and they are growing different types of crops.

Mr. Speaker, seeing I only have twenty seconds left, I hope to have another opportunity to get to speak to the Budget on a future date because I have so much else to say. I want to talk about our volunteers, our firefighters, and our search and rescue.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your time.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I take pleasure in rising to talk to the Budget for the first time out of – I will have another couple of occasions later on to talk about it. At the same time as that, Mr. Speaker, while there may be some good measures in this Budget, we will get into them a little bit later, there were also several things in there to be alarmed about.

If I was to point anything out, one of the big concerns I think that everybody has been talking about is not the simple fact that government has borrowed, but they borrowed against what I will call borrowed time. Because I think the time is running out for government to have an opinion, a policy, put in place where they are going to be able to look after the people. As the trend currently goes now, it does not look like, according to this Budget and what the numbers are saying, and when you compare them to other numbers and what those numbers are telling you, this government is not only in trouble this year, but they are in trouble for several years down the road; and possibly there has to be some concern expressed by everybody in this

House exactly where governance is going to be going over the next twenty years – and there is the reason why.

If I go to the Budget book itself on Roman numeral IX we will call it, it is great to see that offshore royalties are up, but I want to come to the section where we talk about personal income tax. Personal income tax, I am going to link into what they are saying in Stats Canada as regards to population here. I think everybody should be concerned here in the House when it comes to the numbers that we are seeing and the changing demographic in the Province. I want to give everybody an example of that, where I am coming to from this.

Right now it says that of the monies taken in by government, about 17.6 per cent is taken in by personal income tax. That is down from last year's number of about 18.9 per cent, or \$1.2 billion. Government can stand up and say it has been taking all these initiatives to lower income tax rates and everything like that to the taxpayer out there, and that may be a good measure, but there is something else here that is very telling in the numbers as well.

When you move down to sales tax, for example, sales tax is also down. Not by a big amount, mind you, Mr. Speaker, but down by about \$2 million or so. Again, not a very substantive sign here or a very substantive drop in the numbers, but when you come to matching it to other numbers, that number kind of jumped out at me. Even though it was the lesser of a drop in the monies, I had to go and look elsewhere as to the reason why.

If sales tax is down in the market that we are presently in, I had to ask myself: Is it coming from somewhere else, this drop in the sales tax number, along with a drop in the personal income tax number? Because, Mr. Speaker, we hear so much from this government about things being so positive that are happening in the economy, you would think, for example, that your number based on sales tax would be up somewhat and at the same time you would think that your numbers for personal income tax would also be up somewhat.

How many times have we seen government members stand in the House and talk about the positive things that are happening in the economy, and how much wages have gone up, and mean incomes for families have gone up over the last couple of years, but we are not seeing it in personal income tax. Why is that? It is a bit of an alarming statistic, Mr. Speaker.

When I went to check out the numbers as regards to what is going to be happening in the future, and I do not know that I found it but I am going to put it out as a supposition to government here now. That the most important issue in this Province right now, some may argue as the rate of decline we are seeing in the dollars that we are taking in, but I think it is the decline in population that we are going to be faced with and at the same time the increase in the age demographic. We are going to see a lot more seniors.

I have stood up in this House a number of times and talked about a Canadian Labour Congress study that shows we are actually going to have a heavier population of seniors in this Province such as this Province has never seen before. I think by the year 2030, just to recollect, their study from two years ago showed that we were going to have an extra 103,000 seniors aged sixty-five and over. That is very telling.

It is also very telling in the Statistics Canada survey of 2011. Here is the comparison I want to give as regards to what they are saying right now about population. I do not think I have seen that addressed in this particular Budget.

I took my own demographic between fifty and fifty-four years old, and I saw that according to Statistics Canada there are 43,180 of us; for fifty-five to fifty-nine years age bracket, 42,645; and for people between forty-five and forty-nine years of age, 42,220 people. We know there are a good number of people say between forty-five and fifty-nine years of age as comparison.

When I went back twenty years and I looked at that demographic, the number of people now – they are comparing it to the population that we have right now – between thirty and thirty-four

years of age, 29,275 persons, against the fifty to fifty-four year age bracket of 43,180 people. There is a difference there of about 15,000 taxpayers who would be in that bracket in twenty years' time from now.

I look at twenty-five to twenty-nine years old, 28,000 people; twenty to twenty-four year olds, 30,000 people. If I keep going back in years, fifteen to nineteen years old, about 29,000 people; ten to fourteen years of age, 27,000; and the number keeps going back, zero to four years – and again this is from 2011 – 24,495.

It is between forty and fifty-nine years of age – I guess we can go out to sixty to sixty-four years of age as well, almost up to retirement age. That is where we are seeing the bigger brunt of taxpayers there who would be adding to the government bottom line.

What happens right now, how you can actually solve some of government's problems they are going to end up facing for example in the next couple of years as we get that older demographic, as we get more senior citizens in this Province – government is going to have to deal with that issue. Right now I do not see where in this Budget it is really taking it by the scruff and saying this is the big issue of the day that we are going to have to handle because we have to handle it for future generations.

The construction of Muskrat Falls they say will add revenue, but it is not solving the big revenue problem. It still has not answered the revenue issue. How much money, for example, is the taxpayer going to end up paying for Muskrat Falls, or how much revenue is it going to generate for provincial coffers? We still have not seen that.

We are in an age of declining oil revenues. If we are having declining oil revenues, too, and we are going to have to address a huge population shift, a huge demographic shift in our population, government has a number of questions here to answer, for 15,000 less taxpayers in this particular example. As I said before, compared to the fifty to fifty-four year age bracket down to the thirty to thirty-four year

age bracket, there are 15,000 less taxpayers. That is about 30 per cent less revenue, right off the top of my head.

I am no mathematician when it comes to this, but if you equate it, for example, to \$1.1 billion they are projecting in personal income tax they are going to raise this year, that is about \$330 million less in revenue twenty years' time from now in personal income taxes. They borrowed, but they borrowed against what? They borrowed against an older demographic. Chances are people are going to be retired and they are going to have more health care costs. Really, some of these concerns are not answered.

Mr. Speaker, I look at these numbers, and while you see some positive initiatives from government, they are all meant for now, a year from now, or two years down the road, such as all-day Kindergarten. That is something our party advocated for. It was great to see it. It is nice to see the consumer initiative, too, at the same time because I looked at it on a dollar perspective.

Getting child care for half a day costs the parents at the same time, while the kids were getting great education in daycare, they are still getting great education when it comes to the all-day Kindergarten component of things. There is also money there that gets thrown back into the economy as a result. I look at that as being a very positive move. I looked at it from that perspective as well as being a father of two Kindergarten boys, twins, who are in there now and seeing exactly what it is costing us now. It is huge savings – huge savings.

It is great on government. It was only a \$35 million investment on the part of them. Why did we argue in this House since eons for full-day Kindergarten when it costs that much and it is a strategic investment that government has to make? Thirty-five million dollars and we argued for years over that. Mr. Speaker, that is where I am coming from on that.

When it comes to an older population, too, I got into thinking. My brother-in-law is forty-nine

years old. He is handicapped. He has a condition known to all as cerebral palsy. I got into thinking about him, what his needs were going to be, and who is going to be around to look after him when I get older. We obviously have not seen any big monies put into home care needs. We have seen a few dollars, I think, in an experimental program that is going to be coming up, a pilot program for 250 people who are going to be standing in line. I say to the Speaker of the House here today that if we are going to have an older demographic, we are going to need a lot more people than that.

We saw government a few years ago invest, for example, in the home down in Virginia Park but, at the same time, that is not going to alleviate the wait-list of people who are going to be needing that service – and particularly in rural Newfoundland. We are going to have a problem in rural Newfoundland. What happens if we do not retain our own workers here to look after their parents, for example? They are gone away for careers. We are still going to see grandparents, by the way, crossing the country rather than crossing the street to see their grandchildren. That is the type of society that we have become.

What is going to happen to those grandparents when they get a little bit older and are going to need home care or they are going to need the presence of a home or some sort of caregiver program there? Again, government has not met that upfront and dealt with that. This is not just a question that should be answered by government, Mr. Speaker. The answers for this program should be sought by everybody in this House of Assembly and should be sought by every person in the Province. That is how important this measure is.

We have families out there on the decline now that cannot afford to have children, our younger people, because of the cost here. So again, coming back to the education component of it, while it is –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. MURPHY:** – absolutely great to see them invest in all-day Kindergarten, we did not see a strategic investment that we feel would be a labour market retainer, if you will, in the form of child care; a full child care program that everybody may have to pay the same as what they do in Quebec, for example, but we need to retain our own people here in this Province. We need to also provide them with the opportunity to work with our own resources.

People go back and talk about the shipping out of raw product out of Labrador, it is great that mining is happening there, but we would love to see secondary processing of the product in Labrador, as well. People often mention to me because I work with oil and gas issues, they talk about the simple fact that our refineries on the Eastern Seaboard of the US, their stocks are filled, but still we are having to ship our people out to places like Alberta and the Eastern seaboard in the US to work at the refineries far from home. So that is where I am coming from on that.

Again, coming back to the simple fact that my brother-in-law is getting older, I keep asking myself about government and the care for those people who are going to need it several years from now, particularly as my own family gets older. I keep wondering – and I will throw this at government, one particular case that I am drawing now on where government should be making an investment in health care to prevent a problem for themselves happening in the future.

I have a lady in my district who is dealing with the simple fact that she is losing her eyesight. Her eyesight is now on the line and she is heavily dependent on a drug called Lucentis. Lucentis is a drug that in some cases can reverse a condition called macular degeneration. I will come back and I will ask government about this fact. While this lady is losing her eyesight, she is also subject to a cap on the number of injections that she is allowed to have.

Presently, right now, in the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program she is allowed to have a maximum of fifteen injections, and that is hopefully going to save

her eyesight. Well, I tell you, her doctor tells her that she needs more. Potentially one maybe two injections, but she needs it. The cost of having her living on the system if she loses her eyesight, I do not want to put a dollar figure to it; but we can talk right now about what she has and what she can potentially lose.

If she loses her eyesight she is also the eyes and the ears and the hands of her lifelong soul mate in the house, looks after his every need; that is number one. Number two, she has her own independence where she can get out and she can drive her car right now. She can go out; she can do the grocery shopping. She can visit family, she can go to the movies if she wants to, Mr. Speaker, but if she loses her eyesight, she loses everything.

She can no longer drive. She is of the age where she is going to need home care or else she is going to have to be institutionalized. Because she is looking after her husband, her husband is also going to have to be institutionalized. I believe I heard a number out there somewhere that said in order to keep somebody well looked after in a seniors' home right now, it would cost the government approximately – somebody can correct me if I am wrong in the House here – about \$70,000 a year. If it is about \$70,000 per senior in this particular household, it is \$140,000.

We are only talking, Mr. Speaker – and this is the only Province that has a cap on Lucentis injections right now. An injection of this drug to potentially reverse macular degeneration at the same time has helped maintain her eyesight might cost between \$1,800 and \$2,000.

Now we are talking about the possibility, Mr. Speaker, of her losing her eyesight and losing her independence. We are talking about the possibility again of her husband also losing a dependent, the person that he depends on in order to get help along the way.

Government needs to get in and say to themselves no, we should not have this senior citizen pay for drug coverage because this is what it is going to cost the system if we do not.



Next to somebody's dignity and next to somebody's independence, if government invested – I will use the word, invest – in somebody's eyesight, the payoff can be seen down the road by anybody. They do not have to spend for the added health care for them. That government does not have to have special assistants, for example. That this person would not have to go out for services where services have already been left short to various groups, for example, like the CNIB, who thirst to get funding to help out people who are losing their eyesight. They have already talked about the effects on an economy right now when somebody loses their eyesight.

I have heard of two cases right now where they are absolutely brilliant students in high school – absolutely brilliant – but because they could not get funding, for example, through AES, they were not eligible for the funding for one reason or another, they were left home. So now they are drawing on the system. Whereas if government went ahead and made the investment and gave them the assistance that they would need and the tools they would need to carry on their education, for example, in university or the College of the North Atlantic, that they would be able to go and contribute dollars to the economy.

Again, I wonder what is going to happen with my brother-in-law. If there is not going to be any special assistance for him, who is it going to be available for? Government needs to get in there and find out if they can – I will say it – financially benefit by saving money from investing into a system rather than not making the strategic investments where they are needed.

So, that is why I say, Mr. Speaker, that there is an awful lot more here that government can do, and I will say to you there is a whole lot more to the Lucentis argument than just what we are dealing with here now. The company itself has come into question, the manufacturer of the drug has come into question, because, for example, there is another drug out there called Avastin right now that has now been put through Health Canada trials, even though it benefits macular degeneration – and guess what? It does not cost

\$1,800 for that drug, or \$2,000 for that injection. It costs \$100. Why, Mr. Speaker?

So, I say to you, this is my first time, this particular time, standing up and talking to the Budget. Again I want to bring some things up. There are some health concerns that government could do. We have talked about them in the past as a party, Mr. Speaker. We talked about the investment of government; government making investments, for example, in paying for diabetic test strips, what it would be like if somebody could actually control their diabetes and at the same time be able to save a few dollars in having to pay for the diabetic test strips themselves. We talked about that in a private member's motion here several years ago, our leader did. Government still has not invested in preventative maintenance to the point where they could show that their investments lead to preventative health care.

Mr. Speaker, I see my time is up. I have another forty minutes coming up in the future to talk about the Budget. It will be a pleasure to stand on my feet and talk about it again.

Thank you very much.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to stand up here to speak today. As Minister of Education, when I am speaking to the Budget and after Budget day – and to hear some of the commentary around, this is really an education Budget. Myself and the Minister of AES, the advances that we have made in education over the years and the continued investment that we make in education, I have to say, it is a proud time to be in education in this Province. It is a proud time for me to be Minister of Education.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into the essence of what I wanted to speak about, I am going to commend certain people. I will not name them

individually but I will name the people who work at the Department of Education.

When we look at early childhood initiatives, the bringing in of full-day Kindergarten, all the initiatives that have gone on in education over the past number of years, these officials are the ones who work on the ground day to day to deliver, to prepare the documents as we take it into the budgetary process. I will say that at any event I have been at where members from the Department of Education have been present and initiatives are being brought in, you can see the professionalism that comes across.

I know that all sides in this House have to play their role in the political system, but sometimes I have to wonder what they think of the commentary that is made from time to time. I guess they have to just roll with the punches because if they did not they would not survive in the roles they are in. I know that each and every one of them takes pride in the job they are doing, and they take pride in advancing the cause of children who are in our system.

Mr. Speaker, we have certainly done much in this Province around our Safe and Caring Schools. Three more units will go into that as itinerants this year to work with our Safe and Caring Schools.

On Friday, I had the honour of being with Free The Children, the We Create Change initiative that is being rolled out, and then to announce, too, that we as a government are going to enter into a year-long activity under the We Act program. We are going to partner with Free The Children. What we will have is a year-long activity that will happen in the school using some of their resources whereby young people will take on causes, one that is local and one that is global.

To be in an auditorium with about 850 students and then the other partners who have signed up in this – RBC is a sponsor and so is Ford – but to be in that room with these students for over two hours and to think that these are the people who are going to lead the Province in the future, I do not care what side of government you are

on or what political party you are on, it will do your heart good to see that.

A couple of months ago, I got an invitation from a young lady, Marissa Walsh, and she indicated she would like to have me to attend an event called Pencils of Promise. Now, I had not heard much about it, so a couple of days before I went down I checked into it and it fell right in-line with what we are doing around Free The Children. Again, what I saw on Friday night was a young lady, a Level I student, who has organized this Pencils of Promise who then had a group of ten or twelve around with her. I asked them what they were doing. They meet every Thursday to organize activities so they can fundraise to support an initiative globally.

As far as I am concerned, the future of education and the future of the Province are in good hands. Second to that, our education system is in a good place. These students are now more knowledgeable, I think, than any other students in our history. Someone made the comment that this is a group of students who has not known life without the Internet. They have always known that the Internet is there, and they go to it certainly more freely than we do.

I know when I got into Twitter first it was kind of, it was a new thing and you kind of hesitate a little bit. I said to the young girl down there, I will tweet a message. She said, well, I am following you on Twitter. It is quite amazing to see where the youth have moved with technology. More importantly, I think how they have progressed being global citizens who are doing not only for their community but doing for the entire world. Their hope, and they are genuine about it, is to make the world a better place.

Mr. Speaker, I was thinking about the debate we have been having around infrastructure and the demand on infrastructure. I hear some of the comments across the way, and I was thinking of – I cannot remember the name of the movie, but Demi Moore, Jack Nicholson and Tom Cruise were in it. I think it is called *A Few Good Men* or something. They talk about the truth, you can't handle the truth. I think sometimes across

the way, Mr. Speaker, I do not think they can handle the truth. I really do not think they can handle the truth.

When I get up here, Mr. Speaker, and I outline to them that since 2004 we have built thirteen new schools, we have nine new schools under construction, and we have twenty-six major extensions underway. When I talk about extensions and renovation projects, I am not just talking about doing a small piece to it. I am talking about multiple dollars going into these schools. Then we have eleven additional extension renovation projects on the go. It is quite amazing. A total of fifty-nine projects, Mr. Speaker.

The member across the way from Mount Pearl South, there is no trouble to follow him on Twitter. He has been out there tweeting and being rather aggressive in it. I will contend that people in the end will see through that. They will see through it. They will find out and they will decide and know who is genuine in their roles. Mr. Speaker, I will say to the Member for Mount Pearl South, what needs to be done out in Mount Pearl will be done. It will be done.

Mr. Speaker, the people in Mount Pearl, certainly there will be people who are disappointed; I know that. I have been through a school closure, and I know the emotion that comes with it and the attachment that comes with it.

The Member for Mount Pearl South, I have to say it seems that since he crossed the floor, he has become much more aggressive. I just cannot believe it. I have not been able to separate myself yet from what happens once you cross the floor. I will leave that exactly where it is, Mr. Speaker. The people will decide. All I know is that the conversations that he and I had before are quite different than they are now.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to talk about some of the other investments because I want to speak a little about my district as well, but I want to speak to some of the investments in the Province. I do not know if a lot of my own members know this at this point, but we have

increased the budget in education since 2003 by 48 per cent. The important thing for us to recognize is that we have the best student ratio investment in all of Atlantic Canada.

We have put more money into per student than the rest of the provinces in Atlantic Canada and we are among the best in all of the country. We still have the best pupil-teacher ratio of any province in Canada. We have increased our entire budget by 62 per cent and, Mr. Speaker, we have maintained the class caps. Through all of this we said front-line services were going to be key to us, and we have certainly maintained that.

Even though it was done in 2006, I do not think it is ever beyond that we should remind people and remind ourselves that any of us who were administrators in the school system would always remember September, because this was the time when the financial burden on parents, those pressures were there. We had to get monies from parents for textbooks. We had to get monies from parents for fees. Mr. Speaker, since 2006, we have put in the system \$56 million for the elimination of those fees and we have put in \$21 million for the expansion of the textbook program.

I said – I believe it was maybe in the House the other day or in Estimates, and I want to take in a few examples. The new math resource in Level III costs a little over \$75. That is for one textbook. Just imagine a parent equipping their son or daughter in senior high and having to buy all textbooks for that Level III student. Then you put in the English language arts book and all the others that come with it. Then put on top of that a parent may have two or three children. Add to that, then, the fees that have to be charged and you saw the burden that was placed on parents right on the beginning of the year, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes we forget and we need to remind ourselves that, in fact, fees and textbooks, they lift a burden.

Then we also look at our Centre for Distance Learning. These are the people who offer distance education. I had the pleasure a while ago of going to an area where they were offering

music. The teacher, Mr. Mercer, had some students online, one in a school very close to where I live, only about two kilometres from where I live. When I started in this and I was in education, mostly we were offering the advanced courses, like the maths and the sciences; now we are offering music, we are offering skilled trades, and we are offering art.

We know the demographics and what is happening in our Province. These people at CDLI are doing a commendable job. They are recognized world round as a top-notch program that we are offering to our students here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to some of the recent infrastructures. I know my colleague mentioned Coley's Point Primary. I recall that these people have been waiting for years for this. He certainly advocated long and hard for it. The board had it on its list of priorities for a number of years, but it could not be gotten to because of the demands that were immediate in this particular area. The population growth in this area was so fast that we had to build the schools.

I have had some questions across the way: What are we doing with overcrowding infrastructure? Mr. Speaker, we built schools in Torbay; we built schools in Paradise and Baie Verte. The ones in this particular area, the minute you build them they are full. We could certainly go out and build a massive infrastructure that could house 2,000 K-6 students, but research will tell you that is not the way to go for primary and elementary. So we have decided on constructing schools that will house around 600 to 650 students. As fast as we got those and had them filled, we had to go and start the planning for the new schools.

We have new schools – St. Teresa's will hopefully be open this fall; the new West end school, that is underway; Virginia Park; CBS, a new school; Paradise, another one; Portugal Cove-St. Phillips; Torbay; and Coley's Point. In Central Newfoundland, more schools. In Gander, two schools being built.

I will say to you, Mr. Speaker, it is not only here. I was very honoured – as a matter of fact, in my house this weekend, I was in Baine Harbour and I looked on the wall and what should be there only a picture that was given to me by the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair when we were down there, the lovely community of Charlottetown, Mr. Speaker. We were down there a few years back and announced that we were going to do work on their school. We are investing – and I wish she would go over and have a chat with the Member for Mount Pearl South to indicate that we do the right thing by children, Mr. Speaker; we do not do the political thing. We do the right thing by children.

Mr. Speaker, I did not realize that fifteen minutes has gone by, and I could speak for hours on what we are doing in Education. I would expect that members on this side advocate for their constituents, and so they should. If I get an e-mail from somebody who has a concern, I am going to express it to whoever the decision makers are.

Mr. Speaker, in my last three minutes I want to speak about the Budget as it relates to my district. Certainly, I am more than pleased with the Minister of Transportation and the announcement of the roadwork that is being done in the Province. There will be roadwork done in my district again this year.

Somebody over there asked the question about bridges. Well, there is going to be one bridge replaced in my district; I believe it costs around \$600,000 to replace one of the bridges. This was one of the bridges that was deemed, that needed to be replaced, so it was replaced, Mr. Speaker.

The work will continue, and I commend the people who work in TW, who get out there and assess these projects and they bring them forward. These are the necessary works that has to be done in our district around roads, and they will.

I was in Parkers Cove this past weekend and just indicating to them that their road going into their community will be completed.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to see that in the Northern part of my district a clinic is coming to fruition, something that is very much needed down in that particular area. A clinic that will serve several communities. They saw fit to close out some of their smaller clinics that the doctors travelled to and to build one central clinic that will provide things like blood services and things of that nature.

The final one that was mentioned is the planning work this year. The \$2 million commitment for construction in the following year for a long-term care dementia unit that is going to be built in close proximity to the Burin Peninsula Health Care Centre.

I had a call from a gentleman this weekend. He had called and it was four or five days before I got back to him, I was busy with things. When I got back to him I said, so you are looking for me. His comment was, all I want to do is thank you and congratulate you. He had been on the board serving for many years and this is something they had advocated for many, many years. He was very pleased to see that it was coming to fruition, Mr. Speaker.

We know that the demographics are such – I know when I started in this, one of the needs down there was for a dialysis unit. At that particular time when it was acquired down there, there were eight patients. It was not too long after we had it build there were twelve patients. Now there are two full operating cycles, and I believe there are about twenty-four people on dialysis down there. The need is there. The demographics are true to it, that our population is living longer and with that comes challenges of providing services to them.

This long-term dementia unit was a welcomed investment in my particular area, Mr. Speaker. I am looking forward to very shortly accompanying the Minister of Health and the Member for Grand Bank and that we will both work on these projects together. I am looking

forward to myself and the Member for Grand Bank going down with the Health Minister to roll out the details as to what is going to be exactly entailed in that particular project.

Mr. Speaker, from myself, as an MHA for Burin – Placentia West, I am more than pleased with what was in the Budget. As Minister of Education, I have always said that I am proud to be in this role and capacity. I will continue to advocate. As I said, our number one issue in this is the children.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. JACKMAN:** Mr. Speaker, we will always advocate for the children.

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.

It certainly is a pleasure for me to stand here in this hon. House today and speak to the Budget, Mr. Speaker. I had a lot of points I wanted to make about the Budget, but I am going to have two more opportunities to focus on the Budget overall. Over the upcoming weeks I will have two more twenty-minute opportunities.

I am going to concentrate now on a topic which is a very hot topic, certainly a very important topic to me, certainly is a very important topic to the students of Mount Pearl, certainly is a very important topic to the parents of Mount Pearl, certainly is a very important topic to the teachers and staff within the City of Mount Pearl. Of course, Mr. Speaker, I am referring to the recent decision on Saturday by the English school board, the minister's hand-picked English school board to create devastation. That is all I can call it, to create devastation in the education of our children within the City of Mount Pearl.

I have to say, Mr. Speaker, the minister has some face on him to be able to stand up there

with a straight face and talk about how he is proud to be Minister of Education, to talk about the fact that education is so great here in Newfoundland and Labrador. On the heels of what just happened on Saturday, to be able to stand up and say that with a straight face is absolutely amazing to me.

The minister mentioned of the fact that I am being aggressive and so on. I will tell you what, Mr. Speaker, I make no apologies for being – you can call it aggressive, you can call it assertive, you can call it what you want. I call it standing up for the people of Mount Pearl, and the students of Mount Pearl, and the teachers of Mount Pearl. I make no apologies for doing that and calling out the minister on this failed strategy in the City of Mount Pearl. I make no apologies for it whatsoever, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** (Inaudible).

**MR. LANE:** Mr. Speaker, I hear the chirping already from the Member for Cape St. Francis. He will have his opportunity to speak. I never interrupted when they were speaking, so I would ask for the same courtesy.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, it is interesting because this issue has been ongoing now for quite some time. I really hope the people in Mount Pearl – I know there are a lot of them listening and watching. I know for a fact there are. I hope they are listening to the disrespect being shown right now, not just to me but to them by this government. This government that is supposed to be open and accountable, and supposed to be listening to the people, and that is what you call listening. There is nothing over there but hurling insults and heckling. That is the best they can do about a serious issue like this. It is absolutely shameful I say, shameful.

Mr. Speaker, I have been in this House of Assembly the last number of weeks raising these concerns, raising these questions about what is happening here in the City of Mount Pearl, what is happening with the school reorganization, and every time I ask a question to the minister – I would ask the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, if he has something to say he can get

up on his feet and say it instead of chirping over there at me. Again, that just goes to show the contempt in which they are holding the people of Mount Pearl. It is absolutely shameful.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I have asked questions about providing financial flexibility to the English school district to be able to come up with more suitable solutions for the Mount Pearl reorganization. Every time I raise those issues, all I can get from the Minister of Education, which he went on the same thing here again today. He talked about: Well, since 2003 we increased the budget to 48 per cent and we got rid of textbooks. We started including textbooks and fees. We got rid of fees in 2006. Since 2004, we built thirteen new schools and there are nine schools under construction.

Do you know what? That is all wonderful. I absolutely agree with it. It is wonderful, a great job. I am glad you did something since 2003. Thank you very much. That is not solving the issue in Mount Pearl today. It is not solving the issue in Mount Pearl today.

Mr. Speaker, this problem with the Mount Pearl school system – and it is very important to point this out – this never happened overnight. This problem never happened overnight.

I know when I was first elected two and a half years ago, we were dealing with – myself and other members, other colleagues were meeting with, for example, the St. Peter's Elementary school council, as my colleague from Mount Pearl North has indicated. We met with them, and we met with the school board and we advocated. We all did. I give him recognition for doing just that. Absolutely I do, and we advocated.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that back then, and before then, because the St. Peter's Elementary school council advised us before then they were advocating, they were advocating to get the overcrowding issues addressed. Ever since that time, do you know what was done? Despite our best efforts in advocating with the minister and the board, do you know what was done? Zero, absolutely nothing was done.

So you have to ask yourself, this whole situation, when you look at St. Peter's Elementary we have children doing gym class in the lunchroom, they are doing music in the lunchroom because they do not have a music room, because that is gone. They are eating lunch at their desks. They had what used to be two classrooms, they had to take what were two classrooms, tear down the dividing wall, and put up two walls to make it three classrooms and jam them into that. They had to get rid of their computer room, and now they are talking about bringing mobile technology – so bringing them all in on a cart or whatever, and carting them into these already jammed-up areas.

Mr. Speaker, those issues did not happen this year. All these changes, taking away all of this additional space, taking away the music room, taking away the cafeteria, taking away the computer room, their resource centre – that did not just automatically happen that one year we had this huge influx of students and then all of a sudden we are in this case, no. This happened over a number of years, and it got worse, and it got worse, and it got worse, and it got worse.

Now we are into a point where we have all the classroom space filled, we have gotten rid of all of our specialty areas, our cafeteria, everything, we have filled all that, and now there are even more children coming. So now we are in a crisis. Now we are in this crisis mode of what are we going to do with the kids?

Unless we put them in the janitor's closet, there is nowhere left to put them. Unless we start teaching out on the parking lot – now, maybe that might be an option that the Minister of Education has. Maybe he wants to start teaching them – well, we have heard of outdoor classrooms. I am not sure how it would work in the winter, but maybe in the spring and so on we could start implementing these outdoor classrooms and start teaching outside on the parking lot and out on the field. Maybe that is the solution. Have gym outside and all that. So maybe we can do that – but this did not happen overnight.

Now, at the public meeting that they had last week, which I attended, there was also a presentation made by Mount Pearl Senior High, the Mount Pearl Senior High school council, and in that presentation the Chair of the school council told a very similar story. She told a very similar story as to what happened at St. Peter's. Again, it was not a story that at one point in time we had all this space, and then all of a sudden this year, bam, we have no space left. That is not what happened. She indicated the very same thing.

We started out a number of years ago, we had a growth in population, and so now our classrooms are full. What do we do? What can we do? Well, we can get rid of our music room. We can make that into a couple of classrooms. They get rid of the music room and make them into a couple of classrooms. That gets them by for another year. Next year comes, we have even more students. What are we going to do? Maybe we can get rid of the art room, maybe we can get rid of that room, and we can put some more classrooms there. Another year goes by, well, what can we do now? We have two labs. We do not need two. We will get by with one lab. We will change that.

Over time, they ended up getting rid of all of their specialty teaching spaces. Now, like St. Peter's Elementary, Mount Pearl Senior High is in the exact same boat. They have maxed out their space. There is literally nowhere left to put the classrooms – literally nowhere left. Again they are in crisis mode.

The Chair of the Mount Pearl Senior High school council made the presentation and she said: We will go with this option of the school swap. What she said, though, was we will go with the school swap because there are no other options. Come next year, we cannot handle the number of children. There is nowhere left to put them. We would prefer, she said, to stay in our own school. We would prefer to stay there, but because there is no room in our school, because there is no investment and no commitment to expand our school in any way, therefore we have no choice but to accept the recommendation of the school swap.

You have Mount Pearl Senior High accepting the school swap, saying only because there is no other choice, we have no choice, and we are in a crisis mode. We have Mount Pearl Intermediate and the parents, students, and teachers there who are absolutely devastated. We are going to decimate a school community there – we are going to decimate a school community – and they are very, very angry. I can assure you they are very angry. In that case, with the Mount Pearl Intermediate and the Mount Pearl Senior High, there is nobody happy with that solution.

Over on the St. Peter's Elementary side, as I said, this went on and on. Because of total inaction by the Minister of Education over the years, it got worse and worse. Now we are into crisis mode. Now we are into a situation here where we are going to take St. Peter's Elementary, which is a K-6 still, Newtown which is a K-6 – now they are going to make St. Peter's Elementary a K-3 and Newtown a 4-6.

One of the issues that was raised by a number of parents and the school council at Newtown, and even acknowledged again by St. Peter's Elementary school council, was that research shows there is a challenge with children transitioning into new schools. There is a challenge with transitioning into schools.

Best practice says that the least number of transitions a student would have to do, particularly young children, the better it is for them. The better it is for their learning outcomes, the better it is in terms of building up school spirit, and the better it is as it relates to not creating bullying and all that kind of stuff. Having a least number of transitions is a positive thing; that is the way to go.

In a normal course of things the student would have three transitions: they would have their K-6, their elementary school; then they would go to junior high; and then they would go to high school. Under this new system they are going to go from K-3 in one school, that is one, the first school transition. I guess they are going to KinderStart first which is a transition into itself. Then they go in their K-3, then they go in their 4-6, then they go to their junior high, and then

they go to their senior high. That is four transitions, five if you want to call KinderStart a transition, which I would.

Think about a child who is going to Newtown Elementary this year. They are already at Newtown and they are in say, Kindergarten, or they are in Grade 1, or whatever. They are in Newtown this year, next year they have to go to St. Peter's, then they have to go back to Newtown again, then they have to go to junior high, and then they have to go to senior high. That is five transitions for that particular child, not counting the KinderStart. From that perspective it is a definite negative.

Now you have issues with siblings – here with young children and siblings, one child going to one school, another child going to the other school at young ages. It is very stressful on the parents, on the family, and so on. You have people who actually moved, bought homes that were next to say, Newtown, for example, or St. Peter's. While their kids were young they could walk to school and so on. Now they are going to be out of distance for walking, especially young kids, and there is no busing because it is within the 1.6 kilometres. That causes another whole set of challenges for parents. Also, when we had a K-6 system, you had what they call the buddy system, if you will: the older kids, the Grade 5s and Grade 6s, could be prefixes; and then you also had a mentoring program, a buddy system where the older kids would read to the younger kids and all that kind of stuff, take them under their wing. That was a very valuable program. That is going to be lost.

There is a whole bunch of things in this particular system that are going to be lost. Again, both of these situations, at St. Peter's Elementary and Newtown on the one hand and Mount Pearl Senior High and Mount Pearl Intermediate on the other hand, could have been avoided had the Minister of Education done his job a number of years ago. The minute they started seeing classrooms disappearing, music rooms disappearing, and kids doing gym class in the lunchroom, at that point in time a little red light should have come on and said: Hold on



now, we have an issue; maybe we need to take action before this reaches crisis proportion.

Did that happen? No, it did not happen. It was ignored and now a solution is being rammed down the throats of the parents of Mount Pearl and Paradise, their children, and the teachers, by this minister and by this government. It is absolutely shameful. That is what it is – it is absolutely shameful.

Mr. Speaker, there are solutions; there could have been other solutions. There could have been capital solutions to this problem. Granted, they should have been implemented a number of years ago, but there still could have been capital solutions.

The problem is, you see, Mr. Speaker, despite what the minister has been saying, the chair of the board of the English School District has quite clearly come out and said in the public meetings – and I know because I was there – that as long as there is an inch of space in Mount Pearl system, as long as there is an inch of space existing, then there is no capital. There is no point in putting in any request to the Minister of Education. Nothing will be approved as long as there is an inch of space.

**MR. JOYCE:** Who said that?

**MR. LANE:** The minister.

Now, I am not suggesting that we are going to tear down perfectly good schools and build new schools. I am not suggesting that we are going to have schools going around that are half full or half empty. It depends on what way you want to look at it, but there has to be a reasonable balance. You cannot simply say: Boy, we are going to uproot families, we are going to disrupt everything, we are going to reconfigure grade levels, and we are going to destroy school communities in an attempt to jam the numbers into every existing space. That is what it is; it is like a numbers game. We are talking about our children here, not numbers. We are talking about our children.

It is pretty sad in our education system that teachers, for example, are being referred to as units. They are units now. They are not teachers; they are units. You can have a full unit, a half unit, or two tenths of a unit. Now we are going to demean ourselves. We are going to get down to students, now; students are going to be units instead of children, and we are going to start jamming them into every little space that is available, and to heck with the education, to heck with what is in their best interests, and to heck with the issues teachers have, their siblings have, and their parents have. Just ram them all in there. We are going to do this in the name of education.

Then the minister stands up here in this House and talks about how proud he is to be the Minister of Education and how proud he is of all they have done. I would say to the minister, all he needs to do is come into Mount Pearl. I will bring him in. We will have a public meeting. He can come into Mount Pearl, he can sit there, and the minister will find out how happy the parents are. The parents of Mount Pearl will tell him how proud they are of him, I can assure you, and he is going to get an ear full. If he thinks this is over, it is not over by a long shot, I say to the Minister of Education.

Before I conclude, because I only have a minute left, Mr. Speaker, I do want to acknowledge –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. LANE:** I am not thanking the Minister of Education, I say to the Member for Humber East.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Humber West.

**MR. LANE:** I am certainly not thanking him, but I am going to acknowledge my colleague the Member for Mount Pearl North. I am going to acknowledge him and say to him he did the right thing. I applaud him for having the courage to do the right thing. He did it today and good on him for doing it. I really appreciate him standing up.

There are other members in this House who are impacted in this school. There are kids from Southlands involved here. Mount Pearl Senior High and Mount Pearl Intermediate are actually in Topsail District. That is where it is. I am not hearing anything there. It is kind of sad.

I am not sure about the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island. He represents part of Paradise. I think they might be impacted, but it was the Member for Mount Pearl North who had the courage to stand up –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. LANE:** I say to the members across the way, I will not be sitting down for any of you. I have a lot to say and I intend on saying it.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER (Littlejohn):** Order, please!

I remind the hon. member his time has expired.

**MR. LANE:** Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Attorney General.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to be able to offer some comments in this Budget debate. It is always a pleasure to be able to present and espouse the good things your government is doing. Certainly, there are lots of good things this government is doing and lots of good things I want to talk about today.

Mr. Speaker, before I do, I just want to say this is a very predictable time of year. You can predict with some certainty there is going to be a Budget debate. You can predict with some certainty the people on this side of the House are going to talk about the great things we are doing in government, and rightly so, because we are doing some great things.

You can predict with certainty the people on the other side are going to try to pick holes in the

Budget, be negative, and talk about the things the Budget is not doing. They take some program that is not being funded or underfunded, or there is not enough money for roads, or there is not enough money for health care, and there is not enough money for this and that. On the other side of the coin, they may take issue with the amount of the money we are spending. You can always predict that kind of debate is going to take place.

You can predict other things as well, perhaps more mundane. You can predict, for example, the snow is going to disappear this time of year, and you can predict the Toronto Maple Leafs are going to disappear this time of year, much to the chagrin of myself, the hon. the Member for Baie Verte – Springdale, and the Member for Bay of Islands as well. We are long-suffering fans. I said before in this House, Mr. Speaker, I saw them win the Stanley Cup, but it was in black and white. I am hoping I can see it someday in colour.

Mr. Speaker, the budgetary process is a very difficult process. For those of us who are involved in it, sitting around the table, being involved in the budgetary process, it is a very difficult process, a very tedious and very important process. You wish everybody could be involved in the Budget process so they would understand what preparing a Budget is all about.

Mr. Speaker, you have to make decisions of what programs you are going to fund and what programs you are not, because there is never enough money to fund them all. It does not matter how many programs you fund or how many programs you do not, you will never get to a utopian-type situation where there is enough money to spend on all the programs. It is not going to happen. Yet we continue to focus in on single, specific issues like underfunding of a particular social program. Every day we are here, the members of the Opposition, both parties, are coming up with particular programs they felt were underfunded or should be funded.

Mr. Speaker, every department on this side will come to the Budget process with programs they want to fund, all legitimate. There is never

enough money in the government Budget to do them. For example, the Department of Health, which takes so much of our Budget, can come forward every year with dozens of legitimate proposals you would like to fund, but you just cannot do it. You cannot fund every drug program, for example. It cannot be done.

Mr. Speaker, too often in this debate we lose sight of the big picture. We focus on the individual specific issues and lose sight of the big picture. Mr. Speaker, what I want to do today, even though I would like to talk about my district – I would like to talk about the great things that are happening, I would like to talk about the great things that are happening on this side – I want to focus on the big picture. Too often we lose sight of the big picture. When we talk about the big picture in this Province, we realize we are in a place in this Province where we have never been before. This government has brought us to a place in our history that we have never been before in ten short years.

Mr. Speaker, I want to dwell on that today if I could and talk about the economic indicators that make the big picture, and talk about what a place we are in, in this Province. I am going to take my information right from the Budget documents and talk about the economy 2013-2014. I want to talk about the economic indicators that create the big picture. I think if people see the big picture – while the little things and specifics are important, there is no doubt about that, they are important, but when you see the big picture you realize what a good place we are in.

Mr. Speaker, for example, I am going to lift my information out of the Budget highlights. The GDP, gross domestic product, to most people that does not mean very much. It means little to a lot of people. The gross domestic product really reflects growth in this Province. It reflects a strong growth in investment in this Province, a strong growth in exports, a strong growth in consumption. It is a very important economic indicator.

Mr. Speaker, the GDP in this Province in 2013 – and I want to talk about 2013 first, where we are

in 2013 and where we are going in 2014. The GDP in 2013 grew by almost 6 per cent, the strongest among any province in Canada, and it will continue to do so in 2014. When we talk about the big picture that is what we talk about. That is one of the economic indicators we talk about. GDP in this Province – we are the envy of the other provinces in Canada. Our GDP grew by almost 6 per cent in 2013.

What about investment? Investment, Mr. Speaker, in this Province in 2013 increased to \$12.3 billion.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** How much?

**MR. F. COLLINS:** To \$12.3 billion, a record. Up 31.4 per cent from the previous year, a 31.4 per cent increase. It is driven by projects like Muskrat Falls, Hebron, and so on, and it is expected to increase again this year. When you talk about the big picture, these are the sorts of things you talk about, Mr. Speaker.

Real exports to this Province increased by 3 per cent in 2013 due to the rebound in oil and higher iron ore outputs. Here is an interesting one, Mr. Speaker, and a very important one, because it goes back to consumption and increase in earnings. New cars sold in this Province in 2013 total over 35,000, an increase of 5.5 per cent from 2012. It is the highest ever, one of the significant economic indicators.

How about employment? Employment grew by 1 per cent. Now, Mr. Speaker, it sits at a new record in 2013, 232,800 people employed – a record. The unemployment rate went down by 1.1 per cent, to 11.4 per cent. It is the lowest it has been in forty years, 1973. So when we talk about the big picture, Mr. Speaker, that is the big picture. Yes, specific social funding, specific funds, we never have enough money for programs but we have to consider all that in the big picture. That is my intention here today, to point out that big picture.

The average weekly earnings in this Province, Mr. Speaker, increased in 2013 by 2.6 per cent up to \$951, and the weekly earnings in the construction industry increased by 11.4 per cent.

It is the second highest behind Alberta. That is why we are the envy of this country economically in so many ways.

Listen to this, Mr. Speaker, talk about an economic indicator, talk about the big picture. Household income rose in this Province in 2013 by almost 5 per cent to \$22 billion. When you talk about earnings, consumer spending, retail sales and cars being sold, that is where it all comes from.

Aquaculture production increased on the South Coast making the South Coast one of the most viable and vibrant communities in the Province now.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. F. COLLINS:** Construction investment increased up to \$10.2 billion. Consumer spending, Mr. Speaker, consumer spending remains strong and that is why the retail sales is up by 4 per cent. When we talk about consumer spending, we talk about weekly earnings, and we talk about the income of families, reduction in income tax, that is why retail sales are up. That is why more cars are being sold. That is why more money is being spent in the Province. That is why the GDP is so high and growing. We talk about the big picture. Aquaculture projects, I believe, up by 25 per cent this year.

Now, Mr. Speaker, to be fair, I also have to mention the things that did not go up. I do not want to skew the picture. In 2013, the value of provincial manufacturing shipments decreased 11 per cent because the value of refined petroleum products went down. Total fish landings increased, but the value decreased by 0.4 per cent because of some of the low raw material prices.

The value of mineral shipments decreased, lower nickel production, and prices more often offset by higher iron ore production. Mineral exploration expenditures were down. Housing starts decreased, and the number of travel and tourism visitors was down. We have to paint an objective picture here; not everything is positive every year.

Mr. Speaker, that was the big picture in 2013. What is the big picture going to be like in 2014? Let's have a look. GDP is expected to rise again due to higher consumer expenditures. Wages are going up, earnings are going up, and so the GDP is going to rise. Employment will rise 0.3 per cent and unemployment will remain the same. Household income will grow again by 3.4 per cent. Retail sales are going to increase by 3.6 per cent.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the big picture. We are in a place we have never been in before due to the prudent fiscal spending of this government. Capital investment is going to go up again \$12.6 billion due to Muskrat Falls, Hebron, the Kami Iron Ore Project, West White Rose, and so on. Oil production will rise this year. The value of mineral shipments is going to go up this year. The value of provincial manufacturing shipment is going to go up this year as Vale commences production now.

Newsprint shipments, while they were down last year, are going to increase this year. Real estate sales will increase again by 4.4 per cent.

Construction investment is going to be strong again. Non-resident and residential tourism is expected to be strong this year because of the developing national economy as well, of course, as the household increase in wages here in this Province.

Mr. Speaker, that is the big picture. When we talk about if we still have social programs we need to fund, yes, by all means. Are there other things in health we could fund? Yes, by all means. Do we need funding for schools? Yes. Do we need funding for hospitals? Absolutely. Do we need more money for paving roads? Absolutely. It would make me very happy in my district if we could get more, I know that.

Mr. Speaker, we have to look at the picture. When we do, we realize what a place we have come in this Province in ten years, where we have never been before, where we are no longer the weak sisters in Canada, where we no longer go cap in hand, where we are now very proud. We have developed a pride in this Province as a result of the great development we have made.

Mr. Speaker, there are several things I want to say about this Budget, but I want to take a few minutes to vary off that because I want to take this opportunity to do this while I have an opportunity to speak again. I want to take a few minutes to react to some of the comments made from the Member for Torngat Mountains in his last Budget presentation. I appreciate the concerns of the Member for Torngat Mountains that he raised about the delivery of justice services in Labrador. He raises some valid concerns, and we have admitted that we have some challenges and issues in delivering legal services in Labrador.

That challenge, Mr. Speaker, is not unique to Labrador. That is the challenge right across Canada's North. Every province and territory in this country has the same challenges. Mr. Speaker, having said that and having said that I appreciate his comments and where he is coming from, I do have to make some comments back to what he said because he speaks about issues and protocols in the court that most people are not familiar with.

He makes statements with respect to the number of charges in the court, the length of a docket in the court, and with the way cases are being pursued in the court. Mr. Speaker, most people have never been in a court, nor should they, including a lot of people in this side of the House; but the people out there watching this on television would think that by listening to what the hon. member is saying that the bottom has gone right out of her in Labrador. I feel obliged to respond to some of the comments that he did make.

For example, he mentioned yesterday night – and I have alluded to this already – he premised some of his remarks on the fact that the court docket in Happy Valley-Goose Bay for one week was twenty-eight pages long – and it might well be, but that does not have much meaning for the person who is not familiar with criminal and litigation procedures. The court docket in Stephenville is fourteen pages long, a smaller court; the court docket in Harbour Grace is twenty-four pages long, for that particular week;

the court docket in St. John's is ninety-nine pages long.

Again, these are not meaningful figures, Mr. Speaker. Because on that court docket whatever is taken care of today comes off the docket and the docket is reduced by that number of charges. A person might be charged, for example, with a break and enter, but in that break and enter there might be half a dozen other charges, other counts associated with that one incident. If, for example, the individual goes in and pleads guilty, half those charges might be dropped. So, the space it takes up on the docket is really not very meaningful.

Mr. Speaker, first appearances – a lot of these dockets would be taken up with first appearances. First appearances are incidents in court that take place very quickly. If you go into first appearances court in the morning, you will see the Crown prosecutors there with their files, that thick, dozens of files. Some of these would be proceeded with very quickly. The length of a docket really does not mean very much.

He also makes comment, Mr. Speaker, about postponements and how long it takes for things to get through the court. Postponement is a reality in criminal justice and criminal litigation. If a matter is proceeded by indictment – if it is proceeded by a summary trial, it has to be done in six months; but if it proceeded by indictment then a preliminary hearing might be necessary. If a preliminary hearing is necessary, two to three years is not uncommon for the matter to get to the Supreme Court. That is not an uncommon occurrence.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of postponements, the accused has to retain counsel. The disclosure of the information back and forth has to be perfected. New evidence might come up and that means new investigations have to be brought forth. A witness might get sick or ill, or the accused might get sick. All these things lead to postponement.

I am not about to give a class here in criminal procedure and I do not think it would be very meaningful to many people. To quote statistics

and facts about what is happening in the court in that context, it is not very meaningful for the ordinary person listening. Nor should it be. Most people have never been in court and hopefully never will be.

In terms of bails and release, for example, he refers to that on a number of occasions. People are being released willy-nilly back to their communities. I understand where he is coming from, especially in coastal communities. In coastal communities if a person is charged and then released, that person goes back to his community and he is living next door to the victim. That is a matter of geography; you cannot do anything about that. In St. John's the victim might be living across the street, but that is not grounds to keep the person in the system, to detain the person.

Our criminal justice system, Mr. Speaker, was founded on a presumption of innocence. Everybody has a right to bail and release. Most often when the Crown, in considering whether or not bail will be granted, will have consulted with the investigating police, they will look at the circumstances of the case, they will look at case law, the parameters of the Criminal Code and authorize release but with restrictions.

There might be a dozen restrictions, and we have all heard of them: the person cannot drink alcohol, refrain from drugs, cannot visit certain premises, has to stay away from the victim, and on and on. Mr. Speaker, if he violates that release or that bail, those conditions, then he is detained. Now the onus shifts to him to prove why he should be released again, especially if there was a substantive crime committed in the meantime. The onus shifts to him now to prove to the court that he should be released again, and in all of these situations, or most, the Crown will always oppose bail. These are protocols we do not need to get into in this House, but I need to speak to them to set the record straight in response to what the hon. member brought up.

Now, I do not have the time to do it, but there are a number of things that were done in Labrador and we continue to do in Labrador to improve the system there and to improve the

delivery of services there. There are challenges with it, but not all the challenges, Mr. Speaker, can be met with money, resources, or bricks and mortar. There are challenges of geography – tremendous challenges of geography. There are tremendous challenges of culture and trying to get the residents through the justice system. We have to do things like innovative ways of doing that with video conferencing to cover some of the geographic problems, with interpretation services, with court worker community services, and with ways to help these people navigate the justice system.

We are doing enough of them, Mr. Speaker; we are doing a lot of them. I do not have time to get into them today. I will get a chance to speak again. There are a lot of things we are doing, but having said that, we recognize the challenges the hon. member puts forward and we appreciate them. We are trying to deal with them as expeditiously as we can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, I am talking today about an item that is not in Budget 2014 because it was taken out of the Budget in 2013. The item that was taken out was an item for the Family Violence Intervention Court and it was a good investment. This government has had such few successes that you would think they would want to keep one of their successes going.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most serious social ills we deal with in the criminal justice system is family violence, also known as domestic violence. The range across the Nation is quite significant. Some of the similarities are that most of the offenders are men and most of the victims are women.

In April 2009, this government introduced – and to read a quote from the then Minister of Justice, who is now the Premier, he said, “With the implementation of this court we are taking a

significant step forward in tackling the issues associated with violence in the home.”

Mr. Speaker, this was five years ago this month. The pilot project was supposed to cost \$583,000. That is what was budgeted. If we go forward four years, the Family Violence Intervention Court, in addition to being a success, now costs only \$526,000. This is a pilot project introduced by this government that works and after four years is costing 10 per cent per year less than it started out at.

What did they do over the four-year period? Mr. Speaker, over the four-year period what they did, contrary to some of the statements the Minister of Justice made that there was not very much demand there, in the very first year – how this would work is if somebody is charged with a domestic assault, and that means the assault of a partner or former partner, they may or may not be living together but generally are, the person needs to agree to participate. This means that this person has to say: Yes, I am guilty and I want to make a clean breast of it, I want to come clean with the court, and I want to mend my ways; please help me.

It starts out, Mr. Speaker, with a guilty plea, and a guilty plea after the person has been assessed. Then they are provided with adequate resources in respect of legal counselling, psychological counselling, family counselling, and all of the other important supports that somebody who has maybe been a long-term domestic abuser – but generally not, generally someone who has been a shorter term. In the very first year, sixteen of them agreed to participate because only thirty-six people appeared in the Family Violence Intervention Court. Of that sixteen, eleven of them completed a program at the end of the very first year, four were waiting for programming, and at the end of the year there were a further four in ongoing programming.

The second year, the number of people who agreed to participate was forty-five. It increased from sixteen to forty-five. Twenty-three completed programming, sixteen were still involved in the program, and two were waiting. The third year another forty-five people agreed

to participate. Of them, twenty-two completed within the very first year of being charged. In the fourth year, fifty agreed to participate; twenty-one of them had completed the programming.

Mr. Speaker, over the period of four years, 156 people agreed to participate. This is 156 people who were charged with assaulting a domestic partner: a spouse, girlfriend, or boyfriend. One hundred and fifty-six agreed to participate. They said: I am sorry, I plead guilty, this was an awful thing, and please help me. Seventy-seven of those completed the program in the very first year.

When this government slashed the program last year, cut out the program, there were twenty-three of them attending programming on an ongoing basis. So there were twenty-three of them who were cut adrift. What did the government save? They say they saved \$526,000, but did they really? There is no evidence that they saved any money.

By the fact that these 156 people in a four-year period agreed to plead guilty, it meant that 156 trials were avoided; 156 trials where people did not have to call witnesses, people did not have to be subpoenaed, did not have to use court time, and did not have to call witnesses. Of the 156, some of them would have been found not guilty. A certain number of them would have been found not guilty, even though they were guilty because they admitted they were guilty. So in this case, 156 people were diverted away from domestic violence with this Family Violence Intervention Court, a court that started out with an initial budget of nearly \$600,000 and at the end of four years was down to \$526,000.

In Estimates last year, the minister said: I am sure these people can be absorbed into the regular system. That is true, they can be. Not only can they be, they must be. They have to be. How are they absorbed? They are absorbed because now many of them will plead not guilty. Now many of them will have trials. Now many of them will be sentenced to prison.

In the case of the people who completed the program, none of them were sentenced to prison. Some received absolute discharges, which, Mr. Speaker, for the people who practice in criminal law and people who check criminal records, means they ended up without a criminal record, without a record of a conviction. Many of them received conditional discharges, which meant when the conditions were satisfied they, too, had no criminal record. That means they could get a passport and they could go with their family to other countries because they had agreed to take responsibility for the offence, they had agreed to go through the program, and then they received the benefit of the program.

Also, people who would report domestic violence, generally women, are very reluctant to report domestic violence. This is someone who usually a woman is married to or has lived with for some period of time. Often there are children involved. Often the person is a husband. Maybe he drinks, maybe he beats her when he drinks, maybe he beats her when he does not drink, and maybe he beats her when he cannot get a drink. This is someone who has admitted to domestic violence.

If the woman picks up the telephone – and most of us have heard people on Open Line calling and saying: I only wanted the police to remove him from the house. That means the home, not this House. The police are not in the business of removing people from the house. They arrest people who are suspected of committing a criminal offence, in this case a spousal assault. They show up, they put on the bracelets, and they drag the guy downtown. He tries to make bail. He appears before a judge.

The judge says: Well, you cannot go back to the house any more. What do you mean I cannot go back to the house? It is my house. Well, no, you cannot go back to the house anymore because this is part of your bail conditions because you only get out on bail if we think you are going to come back and if we think you are not going to reoffend. You are not going to go home again, get drunk again, and beat up your wife. You have to find someplace else to live.

Meanwhile this is as often as not someone who is gainfully employed, making their mortgage payments, handling maybe half, a quarter, or a third of all of the family responsibilities. She telephoned the police and the police showed up, because he smacked her around, because he was drinking, or maybe because he was not drinking. She gets him charged by the police, and now maybe they are going to lose the home. She is the one now who has to appear as a witness even though she is the victim.

You cannot just lay a charge today. As a society and people who are practicing criminal law, we know quite often charges are laid and in the old days, the woman would go crying to the police and the police say: Well, that is okay; we will let him go this time. Then the next time she shows up with a broken jaw and the next time she shows up with a skull fracture. Sooner or later, statistically speaking, at some point some of the people we divert by using the Family Violence Intervention Court will have become murderers. They will have killed somebody, maybe hit her too hard.

He is a big, strong guy and she is only a little woman. He smacked her around, is used to smacking her around, and has done that lots of times; he hits her a bit too hard and she is dead. She is dead and he is facing a murder charge. Now he is in prison and it costs us \$100,000 a year, more or less, to incarcerate someone. How much have we saved now? How much have we saved of the \$500,000 a year?

There will be some of the 150. If we are taking them out of the system year after year after year then we are doing the right thing. This government had it right. They had it right.

They are going to save four-and-a-half positions that will include a probation office. Even if you have a trial and you are found guilty, you are still going to need a probation officer if you get probation after you get out. You did not get rid of the probation office. You are still going to need a Crown attorney to do a prosecution instead of having them all lined up. You are still going to need a social worker. You are still going to need a Victim Services person. The



Victim Services person is going to be much easier to work with and have an easier job if the offender is going through the Family Violence Intervention Court. I cannot see where there has been any savings whatsoever.

**MR. JOYCE:** Why do you think they are doing it?

**MR. BENNETT:** I cannot understand why they are doing it. I cannot understand at all why they are doing it. I think it is very short-sighted maybe by somebody who just does not understand domestic violence, does not understand the criminal justice system and has not spent enough time in court, has not spent enough time in the lockup with men who are crying their eyes out because they beat her up one more time and they really did not mean to do it and if only they could get some help.

The kind of help they are going to get is going to be two years less a day, which is going to be no help at all; or it is going to be five to seven on manslaughter; or it is going to be life, minimum ten on second degree murder; or it is going to be life, minimum twenty-five on first degree murder. We do not need to have too many go wrong that way. The \$500,000 – which was not saved in the first place because the people are still in the system – is going to be spent time and time and time again.

Mr. Speaker, if you thought that was really a bad deal for the money, consider that research shows that children who witness violence are more likely to grow up to become victims or abusers and suffer more mental health issues than children from non-violent homes. The great majority of men who enter treatment for domestic violence recall their first violent experience as intervening to protect their mother from her mate, maybe their father, maybe another man.

What government is doing here, instead of stopping the cycle of violence, instead of doing the right thing, instead of pursuing a program that this government had that was working, that was costing less per year after four years than it was budgeted four years earlier – it is working.

It is two to three times as effective as the first year, it cost 10 per cent less, and we get rid of it. That makes no sense whatsoever to get rid of this program.

Mr. Speaker, the minister said in Estimates last year, "...we have never challenged the validity of the Family Violence Intervention Court. We have never challenged the success of the people who have gone through it."

The minister also went on to say, "We believe, given the number of clients we are dealing with in the Family Violence Intervention Court, they can be absorbed in the current caseload." Absorbed in what way? Absorbed at a higher cost – and at a higher cost, probably, than the \$526,000 that was being saved.

The minister said, "The Family Violence Intervention Court was a budgetary decision."

**AN HON. MEMBER:** What?

**MR. BENNETT:** It was a budgetary decision. It is a direct quote from the minister. "It was not reflective of any conclusion that there were not benefits to the people who participated in the process." He said, "we have never challenged the validity of the Family Violence Intervention Court. We have never challenged the success of the people who have gone through it."

So, we have the numbers as reported by government. Over 150 people who were agreed to be diverted from the system, over seventy-seven who have successfully completed, twenty-three who were still in the program, and they shut the program down. Mr. Speaker, this program was supposed to have been extended. It was supposed to have been extended to other areas if it was a success story, and it was a success story. If you look at the various costs of incarcerating people, it makes absolutely no sense whatsoever to take a chance on sending people to prison.

An interesting quote from the minister in Estimates, he said when laws are broken we have an obligation to incarcerate people and provide them with a trial. Well, I think that kind

of sounds like we are going to hang you anyway after we give you a fair trial. We are going to incarcerate you first and give you a trial.

Actually, we are going to arrest first, and then we are going to have a trial. If we have the Family Violence Intervention Court, in these cases we will not have a trial because the person, if they qualify, and that means from my reading of this, maybe not too dangerous, maybe if the assault was particularly savage, or maybe if the person has a long history of it, or just not acting in goodwill – but if this is out of character for the person, out of hand, not severe, then maybe the person qualifies to become a member who takes part in the Family Violence Intervention Court.

What this means, Mr. Speaker, let's take an example of what we will say is a four-member family, man, woman, two children, and there is an incidence of family violence. Maybe the people are in their thirties, maybe forties, and a couple of smaller school-age children. With the Family Violence Intervention Court, Mr. Speaker, we can give these people a way out.

We give the woman, and generally it is the woman, a greater incentive to call the police and a greater incentive to press charges. We give the person who is charged, who is generally a man, an opportunity to become rehabilitated, which prison does very little of, an opportunity and a demand that if you come forward, if you admit what you did, you fully acknowledge it, and you show genuine remorse, we will consider this with a guilty plea. You will then go through all of the services of the Family Violence Intervention Court and you will appear before a judge.

When I read the original press release of the announcement, I could not believe it was done away with because the judge was only going to sit on Wednesday, every second Wednesday. It was two days a month for a judge, a little bit of time for a social worker, a little bit of time for a probation officer, a little bit of time for the police workers, and this is generally a self-run program – and a Crown attorney. We see all of the backlog in the system. We see people not

given the trial quickly enough. How many of them now will be held up in the Family Violence Intervention Court?

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that as the Attorney General spoke a few moments ago, if a matter proceeds by indictment, and people who watch television will recognize that as being a felony, similarly, or whether we go by summary conviction, which the Americans more or less call misdemeanours, it is not quite the same, but if the person has an opportunity to come clean and the Crown attorney is looking for a lesser penalty, and if the Crown decides to proceed by indictment – let's say, maybe, it is assault causing bodily harm or aggravated assault on a spouse. Now the person said: Well, the Crown is going to go for a stiffer penalty. That means I am entitled to a jury trial.

If you are charged by indictment on these types of matters, now you are entitled to a preliminary inquiry. Police have to provide the entire file to the Crown. The Crown provides it to the defence counsel. You review it. Now you have a preliminary inquiry. That will take three or four months before you get a date. That will be a day or more in a provincial court where the judge will listen to all the evidence and the defence attorney will start building the case and say: See what the cops said on the prelim; maybe we can get him on the trial.

Then you are going to set it down for a jury trial. Jury trials are generally going to be – at least in Corner Brook; I do not know about the practice here – a day of the month, on a Monday, when you will see we are picking juries, cannot get the courtroom, and there is going to be a whole jury selection process. A jury trial is going to take three, four, or five times as long as a summary conviction trial and far longer than a sentencing. This is going to tie up the court.

Someone has to keep the jury sequestered. You are going to have to feed them their meals. You are maybe going to have to keep them in a hotel. That is for one jury trial. The jury trial is going to take longer and longer and longer, and then there is a better chance of getting an acquittal with a jury because they are going to look at this

nice fellow there and the woman is going to get up and she is going to recant and say: Well, I had better not say too much because he is going to go to jail and we are going to lose the house. She is going to get up and say it was a big mistake, she really pushed him first, and she kind of brought it all on.

Then you only have to get one out of the twelve to go with you, who might be a wife beater himself, and then you get a hung jury. Then the Crown has to decide if they are going to do it all over again. Then you compare the statements on the first trial to the statements on the second trial and you turn the witnesses inside out so you do not get a conviction. It probably costs a couple hundred thousand dollars for a jury trial, which could have been diverted from the Family Violence Intervention Court.

It is a shame to have let it go, a complete waste of money, and it is breathtaking that this government would not reverse itself and put back the Family Violence Intervention Court.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS SHEA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly my pleasure to have an opportunity to speak this afternoon and to address some issues in the Budget for this year. More importantly, I would like to address some of the issues for the District of St. George's – Stephenville East and some of the concerns we have had ongoing in the district and some of the solutions that this Budget has brought forward in order to help us address some of those concerns.

On March 30, I was accompanied by the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs to the annual general meeting at the Bay St. George South Area Development Association. The Area Development

Association of Bay St. George South is a unique organization in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is a number of local service districts that come together and elect representatives who then serve on an umbrella association known as the Area Development. That Area Development Association basically acts as a town council, although they do not have the resources that an incorporated area would have, but they certainly have the volunteers and they have the commitment and they have the time and energy that you would see on a town council.

A few years back, I remember one of the very first firefighters' balls I went to out in Bay St. George South. They indicated, at that time, that they would like to have a new fire truck and the formula for municipal infrastructure at that time was 50-50. When they talked about the price of a fire truck, I thought there is no way we will ever get a fire truck in Bay St. George South because of the amount of money that they would have to raise.

Then the formula changed to 90-10 very quickly, where the provincial government would pay 90 per cent and the Area Development would pay 10 per cent. They very quickly raised the 10 per cent and got their new fire truck. That was a wonderful day in Bay St. George South. It was something the community worked hard to achieve and we were able to deliver a new fire truck to Bay St. George South.

Then, unfortunately once they got their fire truck, they were unable to use the existing fire hall to park their truck. So, they were very concerned about what they were going to do with the truck. In the meantime, they also needed a new building for Area Development because the building they were using had seen its day and it certainly needed improvement. The Area Development set about making a plan and applying under municipal capital works to have this building in their community.

On March 30, as I said, I was accompanied by the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, and he announced \$1.4 million so Bay St. George South could have their new municipal building, which would house their

offices for Area Development and also house the fire truck that they received recently. It was a great investment and the people of that area have worked very hard to come up with their share of the funding. This building, which will be built next to the Lions Club, will serve that community very well and for many, many years to come.

That area of my district, and I do not know if many people are really familiar with it, it extends from Heatherton to Highlands. It is about thirteen communities, I think, altogether in that area. Since 2003, there has been a number of improvements, not all government related but certainly because people believe in the area and contribute to the area. They have seen a new personal care home. A beautiful new home built out there through private funding, as all personal care homes would be. As government, we built a new clinic in Jeffrey's as well, so that is new infrastructure in their community. Their credit union built a new building as well and now their new municipal building is going to be there.

In the last ten years we have seen a lot go into Bay St. George South as far as funding, either government or private investment. It really shows how vibrant the area is, how people come together and they understand their needs. They work well together to get that infrastructure put in place for them.

The other announcement that recently happened in Stephenville – I, along with my colleague from Port au Port, was accompanied by the Minister of Transportation and Works. Over in my district a number of years ago – more than five years ago, I can say that – we developed a five-year roads plan because what was happening we were getting roadwork and we were getting one kilometre in one area and a kilometre in another. We wanted to sit down and do up a big picture because the district is divided into five separate areas. We have the Codroy Valley; Bay St. George South; St. George's, Flat Bay area; Stephenville Crossing; and Stephenville.

We did up a five-year roads plan and at that time Stephenville and enhancements to Whites Road

was put in year five. As we moved through year over year to get the work completed, some intervening road issues came that we could not have planned for. One was the replacement of the Bailey Bridge in the Codroy Valley, and the other was to do the repairs on the Nain Gut Bridge between Stephenville Crossing and Mattis Point-St. George's. Therefore, the roadwork was getting extended longer and longer, but we never came off our plan; we made sure we stuck to the plan.

This year, with the Minister of Transportation and Works, I was very pleased that he came to the area and he announced that there would be work done on Whites Road. That will be multi-year work. It will take at least two years to get the work done. For people who advocated to have that work done and understand the area, what is being done is the road will continue to be the same road you come off the Trans-Canada Highway; however, when you get to Gull Pond the road – instead of going down through Noels Pond and down through the area that is prone to flooding, the road now will go from Gull Pond and it will attach into Route 490, which is the road that comes off the highway and down through Stephenville Crossing. Then you will be able to connect back up to Route 460, Mr. Speaker.

That is something that has been in the works for many years. The people of Stephenville and the Bay St. George area and the Port au Port area, as well, have been extremely patient to let us work through our five-year roads plan and also acknowledge that sometime some issues floated to the top, like the refurbishment of Main Gut Bridge or the Bailey Bridge in the Codroy Valley.

The Chamber of Commerce was very strong in wanting Whites Road completed, and again they were also very patient and understood that sometimes other issues floated to the surface, ones that we had not anticipated. So, everyone stayed to the plan and committed. We were actually able to announce it at a luncheon at the Chamber of Commerce in Stephenville. That was great news for the area.

Mr. Speaker, this morning there was another announcement in Stephenville. This announcement this morning, I was accompanied again by my colleague for Port at Port and the Premier was over, and we announced in Stephenville today a new courthouse for Stephenville.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS SHEA:** This was a very special announcement for me, Mr. Speaker. It has been a long time. Since 2003, this has been on my radar. Again, some things come and go and priorities switch. At one point, after I had been first selected in my first term, I had to deal with the flood that happened in Stephenville, then the closure of the mill and then again the Bailey Bridge. So sometimes some issues become priorities that you did not foresee and they have to be addressed right away, but the courthouse was something that stayed on the radar and did not moved off the radar.

To be there this morning to make this announcement was very special. It was almost twenty-seven years ago to the day – April 21 would have been the twenty-seventh anniversary – that I first graduated from university and applied for work. My very first job was to work with Adult Corrections in the Department of Justice in Stephenville. The office then and the office today is in the courthouse. It was twenty-seven years ago I started working at the courthouse as an adult probation officer. I stayed there for about two-and-a-half years.

This morning when we made the announcement and I looked out at the people who were there – and some of the people who I worked with, the Supervisor of Adult Corrections, Linda Boland, who is now the Director for Correctional Service of Canada on the West Coast; Barbara Cull, who was the classification officer at the correctional centre at the time; Blair Fradsham, who was a correctional officer and is now the captain of the lockup in Corner Brook, they were there this morning. They were people who we worked with who would have felt that this was a very necessary piece of infrastructure for the community.

Then along with some of the people who worked in Corrections, we had representatives from Legal Aid, from the Crown prosecutor's office, from the RCMP, from the chaplaincy who does work in Corrections. We had representation there from Child, Youth and Family Services, Advanced Education and Skills, and people from the general community. We had the town councillors from various towns. It was a very welcomed announcement. People understood the need.

When we talk about corrections and the services that we offer in Newfoundland and Labrador, Stephenville is a very unique community in that regard, Mr. Speaker. We have services in Stephenville where the only other place in the Province where that full suite of services would be offered would be in St. John's. In Stephenville alone we have the RCMP detachment, and we have the courthouse. With the courthouse we have Crown prosecutors and Legal Aid office. We also have private lawyers.

We have adult probation, we have Victim Services, we have the West Coast Correctional Centre, and we have staff for the Correctional Service of Canada, who do both case management and program deliver. Then we also have an office of the John Howard Society, and we have a halfway house called West-Bridge House in Stephenville. We have the full suite of services. In order for the services to be delivered effectively, every piece of that suite needs to be appropriate.

The courthouse was a piece of physical infrastructure that had long outlasted its day. If anybody is familiar with the courthouse in Stephenville, it is one of the base buildings that were left by the Americans. Probably in its day, when it opened – and I believe it opened in April of 1970; I was told by a prominent lawyer that it opened in 1970 - at that time it was probably able to meet the needs, but it certainly does not meet the needs of a modern-day Provincial Court.

Then, to make it even more special, today also, Mr. Speaker, there was a new judge sworn in on Friday. The new judge, Judge Cole, was sworn

in in Corner Brook, and today was her very first day on the bench in Stephenville. When we got there first this morning, she was having some matters heard in court and then she came out. People said this judge must have some clout, because she has only been to work for about one hour and she is getting a new courthouse, and she has the Premier there announcing it. So, it was a great day to be the new judge in Stephenville.

While we were in Stephenville, we had the opportunity as well, with the Premier, to have a quick look at the paper shed and the refurbishment that is happening in the paper shed. We also had an opportunity to visit the Y.

Mr. Speaker, the West Coast Training Centre, which government moved away from last year in last year's Budget, and following that we had negotiations with the Town of Stephenville. We were able to come to an agreement where for \$515,000 the town took over the West Coast Training Centre. To go in there today and to see the people using the facility, the brand new facility, and the equipment that is there, and the programming that is offered – and the fact, Mr. Speaker, there are now 600 members of the Y in Stephenville. It is very heartwarming to see it.

**MR. JOYCE:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER (Wiseman):** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Bay of Islands, on a point of order.

**MR. JOYCE:** I just want to concur with the minister. That was a great move to have the Stephenville rec centre because it does go all over.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

There is no point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

**MS SHEA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it shows that when there are partnerships and we work together, and we work with the town and the town in turn work with the Y, that we are able to deliver this to the community. It is a fabulous facility. Like I said, there are 600 members there today. That will only grow, and it was a well-needed addition to our community.

The centre that we had there certainly was not meeting the needs, it was not vibrant. Instead of bringing the community together and having community groups, it became a haven where there was private enterprise being operated in it. It was not open and as welcoming as you see it today. It is absolutely fabulous. There are people who are members who come up to you and they thank you that this facility is in their town and they are able to work out and to participate in the activities that are happening there.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS SHEA:** Mr. Speaker, that is something I will give full credit to our mayor as well, Mayor Tom O'Brien, and his relentless enthusiasm to make things happen in that community.

Mr. Speaker, further to that, they were the announcements specifically that we have been able to deliver in recent months in the district, but there are some other announcements in the Budget that affect the whole –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS SHEA:** Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, there are some issues that affect the whole Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, not just the District of St. George's – Stephenville East. I want to mention some of those, and one is full-day Kindergarten.

Mr. Speaker, no one disagrees with full-day Kindergarten. I should not say that, Mr. Speaker, when we did our consultations on the

Early Learning Strategy, only one person in Stephenville spoke against full-day Kindergarten and that person happened to run as the NDP candidate after. The only person who objected to it over there, and I was quite surprised to see that they would support it considering they were the only ones very vocal at our consultation who completely disagreed with it.

The parents of the children certainly welcomed this. I know there are so many schools in Newfoundland and Labrador but I am biased, I think that Stephenville – we have a four school system. We have K to 3, 4 and 5, 6 to 8, and 9 to 12. I think that the system we have and the teachers who work in that system are extremely professional and we are quite pleased to have them.

I hope I will have another opportunity to address Budget issues. I wanted to also talk about our tuition freeze and our upfront, needs-based grants and the fact that we spend \$170 million a year in our Poverty Reduction Strategy. They are all great initiatives as well, Mr. Speaker.

At that, I will conclude for the day. Mr. Speaker, my final comment is this has been a great day for the District of St. George's – Stephenville East and I am very proud to be the member.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are just two notes I want to make for the benefit of the members of the House.

The members of the Management Commission are asked to stay behind when the House proceedings end. We have a short meeting right now in the House. Following that, Estimates will begin for the Resource Committee.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Could we have some order?

**MR. KING:** As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, the Estimates that are scheduled for the House this evening will proceed immediately after the Management Commission meeting, which is 5:30 or 5:40. It is going to be a very short meeting.

The Estimates as well for tomorrow morning, there are Estimates at 9:00 a.m. to do the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** That is this evening.

**MR. KING:** That is now this evening?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Yes.

**MR. KING:** Okay. So that is the one that is going to start right after the Management Commission meeting.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, that the House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye'.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

The House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

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